

Cannes toasts Aussie blokes

By CHARLES MIRANDA

A 14-MINUTE Australian film about a footballer who does not drink beer has become the surprise toast of the Cannes Film Festival, receiving offers for Europe-wide distribution.

Jon Lucas spent more than three years trying to get state and federal government funding to shoot his quirky take on the Aussie male called *The Un-Australian*, but after fruitless attempts he paid for it himself on his credit card.

The Melbourne-based short film was shown at the prestigious film festival last week, and after just a day two companies want to buy the rights for distribution.

"I can't believe it happened in just a day," Lucas said yesterday.

"I was rejected for all government support so I called in favours and took a gamble and maxed out my credit card. It's been an interesting journey. I had to take the gamble to get here but you have to believe in yourself and what you do."

The Un-Australian tells the story of four third-rate suburban footballers watching the AFL grand final between Sydney and West Coast when one of them



SUCCESS: Aussie filmmaker Jon Lucas.

refuses a beer, claiming he is allergic to hops. His manhood is challenged with hilarious results.

The comedy drama cost just \$25,000 to make with friends completing the post production at below going rates. Lucas borrowed a friend's car for one sequence, his mother's dog as an extra and shot the film in the living room of his rented apartment.

"It's an observation on the Australian manhood without trying to be judgmental," he said of the film which he wrote, directed and produced.

"I just wanted to really look at a compressed version of Australian society in the 21st century. It's not your typical quirky Australian film."

Stirred-up sitters keep clots at bay

OFFICE workers stuck behind their desks for at least three hours double their risk of developing life-threatening blood clots, researchers say.

Scientists have discovered deep-vein thrombosis is just as prevalent in desk-bound staff as it is in plane passengers.

The New Zealand research is to appear in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*.

Prof Richard Beasley, who led the study of 200 people, said "the real risk is immobility".

"What intrigued us most in this study was just how long people are spending sitting," he said.

"We know from travellers that the total duration of sitting, and the length of time you spend without getting up, are both factors."

He recommends desk-bound workers become "fidgety sitters".

"And every half an hour or so, get up and walk around. It's good not just for your circulation, but also your concentration," he said.

Triumph over

From outcast Hobart schoolgirl to foreign correspondent, Helene Chung discusses her new autobiography with **Mike Bingham**

HOBART in the early 1950s. You are a girl in your first years of schooling. Your mother is divorced and describes herself as "Miss Henry" at a time when the prefix applied only to innocent young ladies or career spinsters.

Worse, Dorothy Chung drove an open-top red MG and did nude modelling for aspiring young local artists like Max Angus.

You and your older sister, enrolled at a convent school run by caring but strict nuns, were mortified. Surely things couldn't be worse.

But Helene Chung's mother was Chinese, thus daughters Helene and Lehene had an additional problem — they were Australian-Chinese. Just two of 100 such people in a city of 100,000 or so who looked "different".

"Ching, chong," some of their young classmates chanted. "My mother said I can't play with Chinese," said a five-year-old Anglo-Australian.

Chinese? A five-year-old girl who spoke no language but English. A fourth-generation Tasmanian different from classmates only because of the features she had inherited.

It must often have been painful, even without mother pranging the MG into an apple truck on Sandy Bay Rd. Not to mention how the nuns at St Mary's coped with a divorced parent.

But today, Helene Chung, more than 50 years on from all that "mortification" is almost joyous at the recollections as she prepares for the launch of her autobiography by Max Angus in Hobart on Thursday.

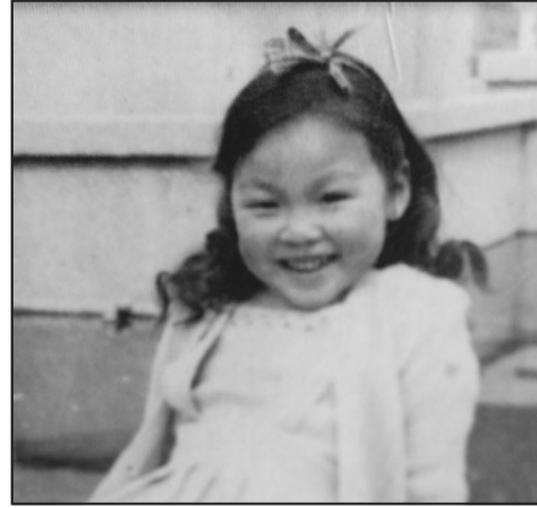
Her admiration for Dorothy, a mother who dared to be different and to challenge social norms, is obvious.

The book, *Ching Chong China Girl* is subtitled "from fruit shop to foreign correspondent". Those references are the boundaries of a life which began in Hobart in 1945.

She was the first non-white reporter on Australian TV and later was the first female journalist appointed to represent the ABC overseas. That was her three-year posting to head the Beijing bureau. A posting during which she met the young and newly arrived third secretary at the Australian embassy — a man named Kevin Rudd.

Earlier in her journalistic career on TV she had fearlessly slugged it out with the ABC hierarchy after a management comment that she should not use makeup on TV because it accentuated her narrow eyes.

This is an autobiography like no other. Here is a Tasmania few remember; here is the individual; here is the pain, strength and humour of families; here is love and isolation; here is the world we have all inherited. And in Helene Chung's case, influenced.



BELIES THE PAIN: Growing up Chinese in 1950s Hobart was not easy for Helene Chung.



DIVORCED: Mum Dorothy at the Pekin Gift Store.



SCHOOL DAYS: Little Helene, front left, with St Mary's schoolmates in 1950. Her sister, Lehene, is front right and cousin Laraine is in the second-row from the top on the left.

We chat by phone about the book, and the phone line from Melbourne to Hobart echoes with her laughter.

The book, her fourth, has obviously been a wonderful opportunity not only to openly discuss her life but to reflect upon every aspect of it.

"As I have re-read the book I have come to discover myself, to realise why I became so involved in drama and theatre," she said. "I see now that it gave me the opportunity to step aside from the isolation I felt and instead be involved with the wider community."

"And now I am able to laugh at so many things which were once so stressful."

I tell her that reviewing the book has meant sharing it with my wife, each of us reclaiming it from the other. "Oh, put that in your review," she laughingly ordered.

Helene Chung, now in a form of retirement in Melbourne but with the germ of another book idea formulating, is looking forward to Thursday afternoon's launch at the Hobart Bookshop. Pushing the book, of course, will be a stimulant, as will chatting to Max Angus about the time she and her sister peeked through a glass door and

Aussie dads chastised over child care

By ELLEN CONNOLLY

FATHERS across the country will no doubt scoff, but compared with the rest of the world they are downright lazy.

A study has found that dads in Denmark, France and the United States devote many

more hours to the physical care of their children than their Aussie counterparts.

"Australian men are not doing much compared to the rest of the world," Dr Lyn Craig, from the University of New South Wales, discovered.

"I think it shows how diffi-

cult it is for mothers here, especially if they want to participate in the paid workforce."

All women do much more child care than men.

"However, the difference is least in Denmark, where work/family policies are pretty generous," she said

The US was next, followed by French fathers, then Italian.

In terms of overall time input with child rearing, Australian men do a quarter of what women do.

"They're low by world standards and it is quite inequitable," she said.

Trout weekend to reach a grand scale

THE Inland Fisheries Trout Weekend is on track to draw 5000 people to the Central Plateau.

Fishing enthusiasts flocked to the Great Lake yesterday to watch hundreds of wild brown trout on their annual spawning migration.

During the two-day event trout are trapped

in Liawenee Canal and stripped of eggs by Inland Fisheries Service staff for growing at their hatchery and salmon ponds, and restocking the state's inland fishery.

The weekend features a trade exhibition and casting demonstrations. Activities continue from 10am-3pm today.

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