

# STM

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CUP FEVER  
THE FOOD, THE FASHION,  
THE FANFARE

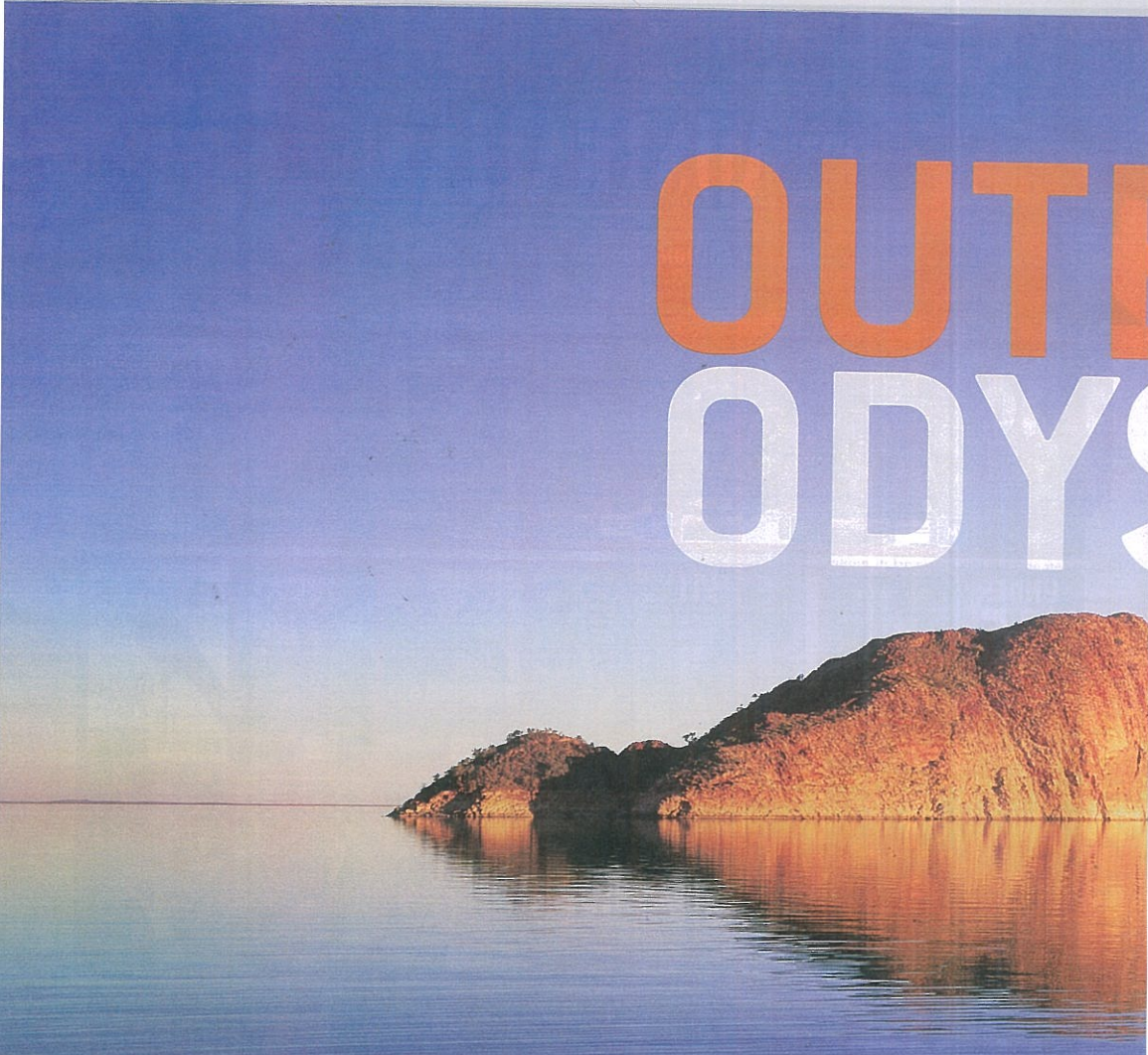
FOX TALES  
AN AUSSIE ICON  
ANSWERS HER CRITICS

OUTBACK  
ODYSSEY  
IN BAZ'S FOOTSTEPS

DOWN  
TO EARTH

NICOLE KIDMAN REDISCOVERS AUSTRALIA





# OUT ODYS

IT'S THE **LITTLE TOWN** THAT COULD. A **SPLAT** ON THE MAP WITH A MERE **7000** POPULATION AND ONCE **DISMISSED** AS A WHITE ELEPHANT, **KUNUNURRA** IS TODAY AN INLAND **OASIS**. **SALLY MACMILLAN** WENT TO DISCOVER THE BEATING **HEART** OF THE KIMBERLEY.

**K**UNUNURRA HAS BEEN EVOLVING since its birth in the 1960s with the Ord River irrigation scheme and the creation of the southern hemisphere's biggest man-made lake, Lake Argyle. Now this gateway to the eastern Kimberley – meaning “meeting of big waters” – boasts its own millionaire rows of mansions along the upper and lower Ord River banks.

It was down the lower reaches on River Farm Rd that Baz Luhrmann, Nicole Kidman,

husband Keith Urban, Hugh Jackman, wife Deborah-Lee Furness, and children, rented waterfront mansions as their base while on location for the *Lawrence of Arabia*-meets-American western epic, *Australia*.

When the Ozjet Boeing 737-200 carrying 102 members of the cast and crew – the rest arriving via production road-train convoys – touched down in early August 2007, Kununurra really came of age.

Now, on the eve of the worldwide release of Luhrmann's – and Australia's – biggest ever

home-grown production, the tourism hopes are riding high. None more so than here in the North-West frontier town and its far-flung outposts that provide the panoramic backdrops to the story of British aristocrat Lady Sarah Ashley (Kidman), travelling to meet her philandering husband, who turns up dead, and finding herself unexpectedly fighting to save her Faraday Downs cattle station – the size of Belgium – from local cattle barons.

She reluctantly teams up with rough-hewn “The Drover” (Jackman) to drive 1500 head of



# BACK SSEY

cattle across northern Australia. Love ensues but the pair still have the bombing of Darwin to face. In the mix is a cavalcade of well-known Australian actors including David Wenham, Bryan Brown, Jack Thompson, David Gulpilil, Ben Mendelsohn, John Jarratt, Sandy Gore, Ray Barrett, Barry Otto...

Newcomer Broome boy Brandon Walters, now 12, plays the drover's assistant, Nullah. Aaron Pedersen plays Nullah as an adult.

Within the vast 121,189sqkm of the eastern Kimberley, Luhrmann found filmic lode-

stones at El Questro Wilderness Park, Home Valley Station, the Cockburn Ranges, the Bungle Bungle Range, Carlton Hill station (the mythical Faraway Downs homestead), Digger's Rest station and King George Falls near Faraway Bay.

While the film was also shot in Bowen and Darwin, the star location – and inspiration for the movie look itself – is definitely the Kimberley; iconic, epic, outback Australia of sunburnt land mystique.

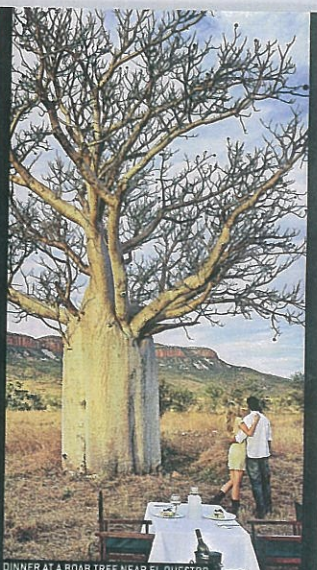
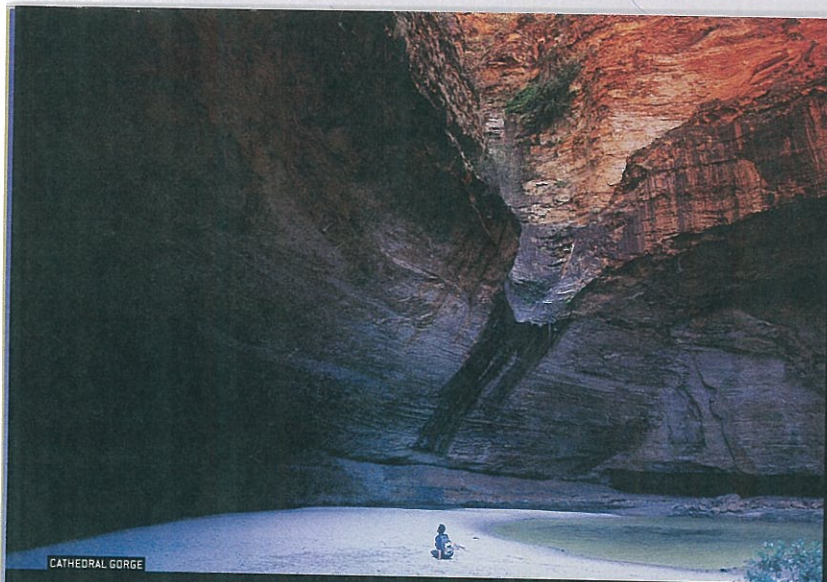
Luhrmann, who researched *Australia* for

10 years, reflected on one pre-shoot foray to the town and outlying areas: "Kununurra is where I reconnected with the movie. I went there before we started shooting and stayed by the river one night. I had a fire. I may have had a tiny splash of wine. OK, maybe two tiny splashes ... let's not go there. And I never left for six weeks. The sense of stillness was incredible."

The Kimberley, with its waterhole oases, spectacular light and rugged terrain, worked its magic on the







entire 400-odd cast and crew who spent a month steeped in searingly hot locations across the sun-burnt remote land. While production, crew and some of the cast camped at location outposts at various times, the town remained the base hub.

Cast and crew roamed the small town centre, bought up at Kimberley Fine Diamonds and Lovell Gallery, stayed at the Kimberley Grande, drank at the Kununurra Hotel and Kununurra Country Club, hung out at the hot-coffee and wireless spot Boab Book Cafe, worked out at the gym, mixed with everyone during the inaugural NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Ball and planted trees in Celebrity Tree Park.

"Keith and I enjoyed our visits to local bistros, shops and cafes. Everyone made us feel at home," Kidman enthuses.

Kimberley Fine Diamonds owner-founder Frauke Bolten-Boshammer hosted Luhrmann at her and husband Robert's riverbank mansion property and sold Nicole a swag of pink diamond jewellery for herself and some lucky personnel. In a place where a small pink diamond boab pendant starts at \$16,000, the mind boggles.

Frauke is used to wealthy patrons and celebrity buyers - Marcia Hines and Jimmy Barnes are two of them - but Luhrmann, Kidman and Urban blew her away.

"Baz, he is gorgeous," she says as she serves up mango puree (from her own orchard) with strawberries at her store. "So hardworking. So wonderful - and so are his wife and children."

Her eyes twinkle as she looks over to the framed autographed photograph of Kidman astride a horse on location.

"So much in love," she says softly of the Urbans. "The first time they came with minders but when no one bothered them they went about town without them. The second time they came in here just by themselves. They didn't expect special treatment."

One fallacy to refute here: Kidman didn't order and fail to pick up a diamond ring. She agreed to look at one Frauke wanted her to see but decided when it arrived that the yellow diamond was not for her - Kidman's a pink diamond girl.

There's no word on Luhrmann buying up, but he did go away with a very special gift from Frauke - an 18-carat yellow-gold boab pendant encrusted with diamonds.

"Just a little good luck charm for when he goes to the Oscars," beams Frauke. "He can put it in his pocket or maybe his wife could wear it on a necklace. It's a little piece of the Kimberley."

Artist Nadeen Lovell, whose gallery showcases 16 Kimberley landscape artists, including her own work, not only became the location man-

ager's landlady and mixed with the crew out on the Carlton Hill Station but had her veggie patch dug up and transplanted out on the station when a veggie patch grown for a film scene died.

"It was all pretty crazy here," she laughs. "But a real eye-opener and everyone was great fun. We're just all hoping it will give Kununurra some profile. That it will say 'This is the real thing here. Come visit us. Come and see why Baz Luhrmann chose this ancient area'."

"I'm really just waiting for the credits - 'Veggies by...!'"

Out from the oasis it's scenic bliss - yawning blue skies, rich red rock and rugged landscape, with hidden plunging gorges, waterfalls and thermal pools. Cast and crew were choppered in and driven through pindan country and boab tree clusters to reach one set at the Packer family's sprawling 3675sqkm Carlton Hill station, about a 50-minute drive out of town.

The local indigenous people journeyed out to conduct a welcoming ceremony at the beginning of the shoot, with locals later given an insider's tour of the homestead grounds.

Here, and at mass cattle mustering locations at El Questro, Digger's Rest and Home Valley station, filming was arduous with 4.30am calls for sunrise shots, 15-hour days of blood, sweat and



PICTURES: SALLY MACMILLAN

FROM LEFT: FINE DIAMONDS OWNER AND FOUNDER FRAUKE BOLTEN-BOSHAMMER AT HER KUNUNURRA STORE; DIGGER'S REST OWNER ALIDA WOODLAND AT THE STATION WITH HUGH JACKMAN DURING FILMING OF AUSTRALIA; AND CHAMPAGNE AND NIBBLES ARE LAID OUT AT A LOOKOUT TO THE COCKBURN RANGE NEAR HOME VALLEY STATION.

## FEATURES

some tears. Choppers churned up the required dust. In this entire landscape, you won't hit a traffic light. You will hit red and white dust tracks that rock your ribs.

Carlton Hill station isn't open to the public, but the stunning scenery can be seen at nearby Macka's Barra Camp - just 4km from site. Extended tours with Macka use Carlton Hill as an overnight camp - bungalow-style accommodation on the banks of the lower Ord River, where some crew stayed during filming.

Over at Digger's Rest, a rustic working cattle station 40km off the corrugated Gibb River Rd on the banks of the King River, 110km from Kununurra, crew and cast camped out in tents, bush huts or the bunkhouse by the old homestead. They even defied the 38C temperatures for a bit of cricket on the claypan flats.

Digger's Rest owner Alida Woodland says the station's infrastructure was upgraded for the film crew with an increase in capacity of power and water systems that can now be enjoyed by visitors following in Luhmann's filmic footsteps. Here you can doss down as they did, hang out at the homestead, fish and ride out to muster.

On to El Questro Wilderness Park - location for a romantic scene at the majestic Emma Gorge rock pool and waterfall and many of the cattle-driving sequences. El Questro is home to an array of stays including the exclusive Homestead (where Luhmann and other celebrities have stayed), the luxury tents of Emma Gorge Resort (Kylie Minogue's favourite) and the hub of the

town's riverbank bungalows, cabins, private river site camping and general camping.

In the wake of the filming, El Questro has added the Big Day Out tour taking in Australia locations such as Emma Gorge, the flats of the cattle stampedes with the Cockburn Range as backdrop, river crossings and drought scenes.

The tour circumnavigates the awesome Cockburn Range, which is like a never-ending mesa fortress that marches across the landscape, rising more than 600m above the plains. At dawn and dusk there's the pink-orange glow of light reflected on the rock, following in drovers' footsteps as the Karunjie track leads over the mud flats and on to Wyndham. There's a visit to the Boab Prison Tree, wild (cleanskins) and not-so-wild brahman and shorthorn cattle, a lunch prepared by homestead chef Alan Groom, with a return along the banks of the Pentecost River.

The Kimberley boabs (a shortened version of the African baobab) are something to be seen, with the immense swollen trunks on older trees measuring more than 15m in circumference, dated from 1000 years and more.

From El Questro you cross the Pentecost River on the way to Home Valley station - at the exact point where Kidman drove the ancient battered bullock through the ford.

And at Home Valley you can see the vehicle itself, along with another used in the film.

Home Valley HV8 is a working cattle station and tourism operation, an Indigenous Land Corporation-owned outfit, 120km west

of Kununurra. Luhmann filmed here scenes of the rugged landscape including the distant Cockburn Range and the Pentecost River.

In the wake of this, the station has added a HV8 Station Australia Movie Tour that takes in such locations as Nyarl tagoon, Bindoola Falls, HV's private lookout out to the Cockburn where you sip champers as the ranges turn pink, blue and purple.

You can birdwatch, swim in the lagoons, billabongs and waterfalls and gorges, fish, croc spot, ride one of the 30 horses down to the river, take part in the weekly cattle muster or just loiter around the sprawling homestead itself that offers eight Grass Castles (bungalows on the banks of the Bindoola Creek that leads to the Pentecost); stockman-styled guesthouse suites, Sandcastles (eco tents), landscaped camping grounds, two resort pools and huge restaurant and bar.

The station's Chris Fenech says they're having fun renaming some sites - Luhmann's Leap, Kidman's Crossing and Jackman's Jump-up.

Back in the Kununurra hub, take an Alligator Airways flight over the Bungle Bungle - the fascinating tiger-striped, beehive-like gorges with water 700m wide in the wet - and which also feature in the film.

Kidman says she has swathes of Kimberley tracks she wants to explore - this time at leisure. "I'll be back," she has vowed. "I think all Australians should put this area on their must-see list and do some of the amazing things available here."

### FACT FILE

**GETTING THERE**  
Dantass flies to Kununurra from Perth, via Broome.

**WHERE TO STAY**  
El Questro  
Wilderness Park, 110km west of Kununurra. Open Apr-Oct. See [www.elquestro.com.au](http://www.elquestro.com.au)  
Home Valley, 120km west of Kununurra. Open all year. See [www.homevalley.com.au](http://www.homevalley.com.au)

Digger's Rest, 124km west of Kununurra. See [www.diggersreststation.com.au](http://www.diggersreststation.com.au)  
The Kimberley  
Grand, Kununurra. See [www.thekimberleygrande.com.au](http://www.thekimberleygrande.com.au)  
For more, see [www.westernaustralia.com](http://www.westernaustralia.com)

# SHOP INSIDE THE SQUARE

At Times Square, you'll find a fabulous shopping playground, where high-end Australian and international fashion, beauty, lifestyle and food go hand in hand and with convenient undercover parking, it's easy to see why Times Square is being called "Perth's most high-end shopping haven". It's time to shop inside the square, at Times Square.

## LOOK WHO'S INSIDE THE SQUARE

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BETTINA LIANO

breathless

cision!

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STYLING & DESIGN

Lara Edén

LEMON GRASS

CLAREMONT  
LUIRE  
CARITA  
PARIS

momentum

Robert Allen  
The Ultimate Gentlemen's Hair Dresser

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