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AN ALMOST INDEPENDENT F1 NEWSPAPER



BACK IN THE DRIVING SEAT

MELBOURNE SUNDAY 16·03·08

The first race is usually when we find out who's fast and who's not, but after a surprising qualifying session yesterday, hard facts will be as slippery as cars without traction control. And with Alonso starting 11th, Webber 15th and Raikkonen 16th, there'll probably be a few more surprises by the end of the day.

Bad day for Kimi
Not only did reigning world champ Kimi Raikkonen have a few off-track excursions during morning practice yesterday, but at the end of the first qualifying session his Ferrari stalled and rolled to a halt in the entry to the pitlane after fuel pressure problems.
Photography: XPB

SMALL TALK

AT&T Williams technical director and resident Australian Sam Michael.



Good Morning Sam
Morning Red Bulletin.

So, does Melbourne suit your car?
Maybe – actually I'm looking forward to seeing where everyone else is.

You can't tell who's fastest? We thought that was just us...
No. It's impossible to tell from testing. It will take two or three races to figure out the relationships. After Bahrain we should know.

Speaking of relations, how do you like your home grand prix?
Racing in Australia is always good. And yes, sometimes I have friends down for the race.

It's just one big party for you?
Ah, not quite. I prefer to go to the track and work – anything else is a distraction. It was great when Australia ended the season. The cars would be running smoothly and you could relax a little, and spend a week out here afterwards. Now it's a flying visit: I'll be jumping on the first flight out to continue developing the car.

So, when do you take a break?
In August, during the test ban. My wife and I take our children down to the South of France for a week. And that's usually it for the year.

Ouch! Shouldn't you find something less demanding. Rocket science maybe?
I haven't won enough races yet! No, if I still enjoy it I might spend my whole life working in F1. Of course, you never know what's around the corner...

Lewis takes the Fed Express

Not accustomed to losing, Lewis Hamilton has been shocked by his team-mate's tennis skills. Heikki has been destroying him on the court, so the Englishman plans to call on a famous friend to help improve his game. At the recent Laureus World Sports Awards in St Petersburg, Roger Federer tapped Lewis on the shoulder and offered his services, in exchange for a family photo. "I was stunned. Roger said his mum wanted a picture of us together," said Hamilton. "He was a really nice guy. I asked him if he could drive. We agreed that I would help improve his driving and he'd help me with my tennis. That's what I say to all the tennis players."

Glow-faster stripes

Bridgestone is considering introducing glow-in-the-dark tyres for Singapore's night race. They're looking into a range of ideas, but the final design will probably include sidewalls and grooves coated in florescent paint. This will create a silver glow, which will help drivers to see the cars and TV viewers to identify the tyre compounds. It's a concept that's already been used at Le Mans and a Bridgestone spokesman told us an F1 version would be straightforward: "It doesn't require advance testing. We'll have to run it past the FIA of course, but we have quite a lot of freedom. It would look really cool, so it's something we're looking into."

No vegetables, please

If you ask for Rob in the Melbourne paddock, everyone knows who you're talking about. Rob – no-one knows his surname – buys food for all the teams and he reckons Williams are unique because there are no vegetarians on the race team. "It's amazing," he told the Williams kitchen, "you guys like your pound of flesh, don't you?"

Nice Price for Super Aguri?

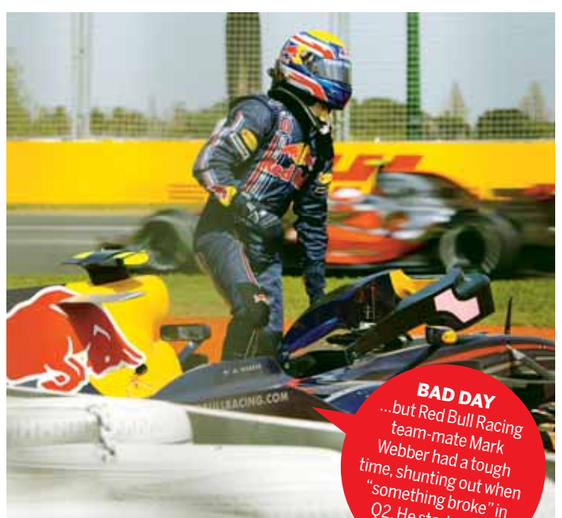
It may sound like a discount supermarket, but could Super Price be the new name for Super Aguri? The team isn't giving much away but, with Magma and Aguri Suzuki reportedly having signed a Memorandum of Understanding, there's much speculation about who will head up the team. It appears that former Ford of Europe chief Martin Leach will leave day-to-day responsibility to someone else, and one name being strongly linked is that of former Sauber COO Jost Capito. But we'll wager another name is also in the frame. DPR GP2 team boss Dave Price has been spotted in private meetings with Nick Fry, and has been enjoying Super Aguri's hospitality.

Second chance for a Kiss

All GP ticket holders can attend tonight's Kiss concert, and that includes paddock pass holders. The concert will kick off immediately after the race at around 6pm. If you want to be close to the stage in the special 'Kiss Pole Position' area, you need to visit www.ticketek.com.au and pay A$50. If you're too busy packing up the garage, filing copy or lying in a darkened room covered in after-sun, you can always see Kiss at the Download festival at Donington Park in the UK, June 13-15, courtesy of The Red Bulletin and event promoter Live Nation. There's no GP then, we checked. We have two VIP tickets to give away. Just answer this simple question: Kiss recorded a version of God Gave Rock 'n' Roll To You in 1991 for the film Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey, but who recorded the original version? Email secret.service@theredbulletin.com before Friday, March 21.



GOOD DAY
2003 Australian GP winner DC showed he still knows how to turn a quick Melbourne lap, and will line up eighth on today's grid...



BAD DAY
...but Red Bull Racing team-mate Mark Webber had a tough time, shunting out when "something broke" in Q2. He starts 15th.

Student talent contest

The deadline to enter Bridgestone's 2008 e-reporter competition for up-and-coming journalists is March 31. Eight finalists will be selected to each attend a European GP weekend to report on GP2 for Bridgestone's website. The panel of judges this year includes Sky Sport's Tony Jardine, Daily Telegraph reporter Kevin Garside and The Red Bulletin's own Adam Hay-Nicholls. Students wishing to enter the competition should visit www.bridgestone.eu/e-reporter to register their details and submit an entry. All students across Europe aged 18-30 and in full time education, on any educational course, have the chance to participate in this journalistic contest to help launch their career.

Wings for Life auction

Fancy a replica of the Red Bull F1 car that David Coulthard drove in last year's British GP? The Wings for Life charity is selling one on eBay, along with 54 other items of sporting memorabilia. The auction runs from March 13-30. To bid, visit www.wingsforlife.com/ebay. Bids for the replica F1 car will close on March 23, and at the time of going to press bidding for it had topped 131,000 euros.

6 OF THE BEST: IN THEIR FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

Nakajima, Piquet, Rosberg... F1 may seem like a family business, but nepotism is rife elsewhere, too.



THE MALDINIS
Forty years after Cesare Maldini lifted the European Cup as captain of Milan, his son Paolo led the Rossoneri to their sixth European Cup. As well as being captains, Paolo is a defender like his dad and both represented their country.



THE BEATLES
All four had musical sons. John's kids Julian and Sean Lennon are the most famous, but Ringo's lad, Zak Starkey, has played with The Who, Dhani Harrison recently formed a group, and Paul McCartney is releasing an album with his son James.



THE COUSTEAUS
Jean-Michel Cousteau had little choice but to follow in his father's footsteps when at age seven Jacques-Yves Cousteau, a famous marine exploration pioneer and former naval officer, threw him into the sea to test his new invention, a scuba tank.



THE ALIS
Muhammad Ali is a boxing legend, so expectations were high when his daughter Laila took up the sport. Since entering women's boxing in 1999, Laila has won the IBA, WIBA and IWBF world belts. Currently, her record stands at 21 wins and 0 losses.

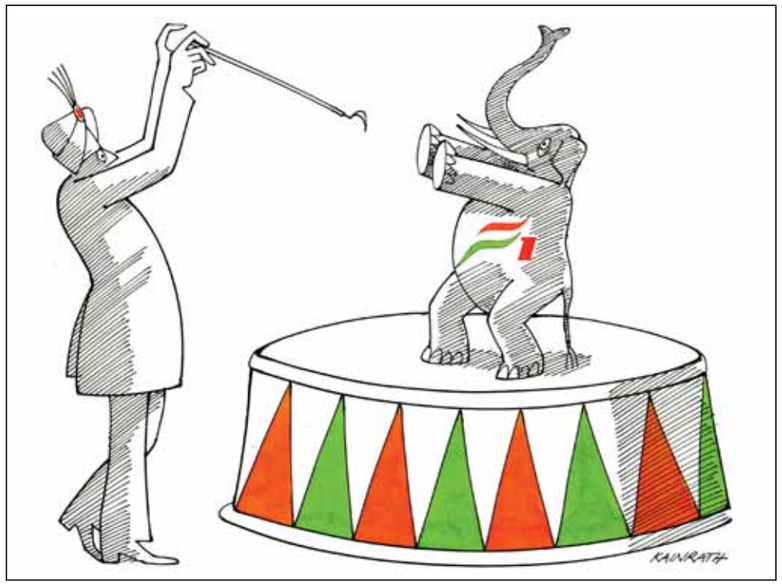


DALE AND DALE EARNHARDT JNR
Dale Earnhardt, one the most successful drivers in NASCAR history, was killed in 2001 when he crashed on the final lap of the Daytona 500. Dale Jr. has had some success but has yet to win a championship.



LUKE AND ANAKIN SKYWALKER
In Star Wars, Jedi Anakin Skywalker turned to the dark side and became Darth Vader. Son Luke was able to eventually persuade his father to be good again, kill the villain and free the universe. Result.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY, BERNARD ASSET, KOBAL, REUTERS, SUTTON, REX



PIT BITCH: WHO NEEDS A NANNY?

Certainly not the French media.

BY HELEN PARADYCE

'The ultimate flip-flop sandal has a hollow heel designed to contain vodka'

So many parties, so little time is the usual theme of the Melbourne weekend but, given who pays my wages, I turned down invitations to a Mumm champagne party, a Tag Heuer bash and the Grand Prix Ball to focus on the Red Bull event in "Shed 4". This wasn't a dull evening of canapés, cocktails and jazz. Instead, the block-rocking beats were provided by a man called Common, who, in the tradition of rappers – Sugar Puff Daddy, Puff Doddy, P Diddy, Fiddy Cent – had inevitably shortened his name from Common Sense, or was it Stands To Reason? The crowd seemed to like it and there was plenty of shouting and high-fives going on. However, I'm English – I don't do high-fives, I do high tea.

Once Common left the stage, we were treated to a circus-style show but, unlike the circuses I remember as a child, with lion tamers, clowns and trapeze artists, the main attraction appeared to be a muscular woman wearing sunglasses and little else, who proceeded to pole dance, leaving the Aussie males with a dilemma: should they look at the semi-naked girl or the waitress circulating with slices of pizza?

As her perfectly toned bottom (how I hate girls under 25!) swung into view yet again, it reminded me about a fantastic new Aussie invention. Cruising an outlet mall in Torquay, I chanced across the ultimate flip-flop sandal with a hollow heel designed to contain vodka. OK, it tasted a bit rubbery, but nothing a drop of Red Bull couldn't cure. What's this got to do with the pert-bottomed pole dancer? Well, what the rest of the English-speaking world refers to as a 'flip-flop' sandal is known as a 'thong' in Australia – but in England you don't wear a thong on the crack between your toes…



Meanwhile, the French media are sharing a serviced apartment complex in St Kilda, but service is perhaps the last word they would use to describe their accommodation as they have fallen foul of the Nanny State syndrome rampant in this country. On Friday morning, one of them was woken by reception to be told the cleaning staff had smelled cigarette smoke in his room and had charged A$200 to his credit card. His explanation that he'd been having a cigarette on the balcony and the smoke must have drifted in was not considered good enough for a refund.

Then, on Friday night, when three of them were having a French-style amicable discussion over steak, chips and four bottles of red wine, the reception desk again rang to tell them to make less noise. Feeling rather stressed the next morning, another member of the group lit a cigarette at the tram stop and was immediately attacked by irate passengers in the queue.

It seems that everyone in the paddock is having fun with the Honda crew and their lime green uniforms, complete with hot and sweaty white plastic lining in the trousers. However, the Toro Rosso boys and girls have reason to sympathise with the Honda mob as their own travel kit caused a stir in airports en route to Melbourne. The striped tops make them look like a cross between escaped criminals, the Santos football squad and a group of Venetian gondoliers on holiday. How would you like to walk through an airport with people shouting out, "Where's your hat? You can't bring that Gondola on my plane" etc.

ON THIS DAY...

16/3/08



1968: GENERAL MOTORS
The car giant produces its 100-millionth car, an Oldsmobile Toronado.
Check out America's "biggest gas pedal".
YouTube.com search: Oldsmobile + Toronado

1971: SIMON AND GARFUNKEL
The folk rock duo win a host of Grammy awards for Bridge Over Troubled Water.
See Simon and Garfunkel perform the song live.
YouTube.com search: Bridge + Over + Troubled + Water

2003: CANDLES
More than 6,000 candlelit vigils are held in more than 100 countries to protest against the Iraq War.
See the protestors in action.
YouTube.com search: antiwar + demo + London

BIRTHS

1926: JERRY LEWIS
Rubber-faced comedy film star
Jerry's famous scene from Who's Minding the Store?
YouTube.com search: Jerry + Lewis + typewriter

ON THIS DAY, VISIT...

GEELONG HIGHLAND GATHERING 2008
Complete with caber tossing, bagpipes, Scottish dancing and a lot of tartan, it's the Highland Games for Australia.
Games take place in Queens Park. Tickets are A$12 for adults and A$6 for children.

ON THIS DAY IN F1...



2002: MALAYSIA
Michael Schumacher takes his first pole of the year with a dominant display in qualifying.
Watch Schumi post his first lap time in the session
YouTube.com search: 2002 + grand prix + Malaysia

PHOTOGRAPHY: SUTTON, REX IMAGES. ILLUSTRATIONS: KAINRATH. MASA



Williams thought they had got away with beating the ban on electronic driver aids by inserting an ECU directly into their brains, but then spotted that they still had to adjust the Vertical Hold on Nico's eyes.



Press Conference Number One and it's just like they've never been away.



PHOTOGRAPHY: MURIEL BROUSSEAU, LUKAS GORYS, GETTY IMAGES

"...One mechanic, slightly tired but otherwise in full working order. Best offer secures sale."



The new dietary regime was taking its toll at Force India and Fisi was not coping too well with hot curries for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

IT'S HOT, HOT, HOT...

And it seems as if some of us have had a little too much sun.

Fed up with the constant "how do you feel on your debut?" questions and endless requests for pictures Bourdais tried tunnelling out of the paddock, but sure enough, the photographers were waiting.



THE START OF SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

Harder, better, faster, stronger – F1 2008 has arrived.

SESSION 01

The 2008 F1 season got underway with Sébastien Bourdais leading off with a tidy, if unspectacular, 1:30.250. The highly experienced rookie then went three seconds faster, while Timo Glock used all of the tarmac and quite a lot of the grass to get the best out of the Toyota. Adrian Sutil, in a repeat of last year, had an early visit to the gravel – he would not be the last.

Rosberg, Alonso and Webber notched up a series of laps within a hundredth of one another, suggesting the midfield will make compelling viewing this year – and then Heikki made all of that look unimportant, blowing those times away by over a second. McLaren were the first of the big teams to blink, with both drivers getting a fast lap in before returning to the shade of the garage, while Ferrari and BMW both left it late. In the dying seconds Button managed to drag himself clear of danger, leaving Super Aguri, Force India, Bourdais and Piquet down and out.

HEIKKI KOVALAINEN
A confident start for McLaren's latest Finn. One untroubled run mid-session was enough to top the timesheets. Last year's nightmare start forgotten.

NELSON PIQUET
...but Heikki's replacement at Renault mirrored his predecessor's debut. Second last and a full second and a half behind Alonso, a horror start in F1.



POLISH POSITION
After showing an impressive turn of speed in Saturday's qualifying sessions, Poland's Robert Kubica managed to put his BMW Sauber on the front row of the grid.

THE GRID


HAMILTON 1:26.714


KOVALAINEN 1:27.079


HEIDFELD 1:27.236


ROSBERG 1:28.687


VETTEL NO TIME
RETIRED AFTER OUT LAP WITH TECHNICAL PROBLEM


ALONSO 1:26.188


NAKAJIMA 1:26.413


WEBBER NO TIME
LEFT THE TRACK DUE TO MECHANICAL FAILURE


FISICHELLA 1:27.207


SUTIL 1:27.859


PIQUET 1:28.330


KUBICA 1:26.869


MASSA 1:27.178


TRULLI 1:28.527


COULTHARD 1:29.041


BARRICHELLO 1:26.173


BUTTON 1:26.259


GLOCK 1:29.593
FIVE PLACE PENALTY FOR GEARBOX CHANGE


RAIKKONEN NO TIME
EXCLUDED FROM S2 AFTER STOPPING IN S1


BOURDAIS 1:27.446


SATO 1:28.208


DAVIDSON 1:29.059

THE STATS

Venue: Albert Park, 5,303 km (3,295 miles) street circuit
Length: 58 laps (307.574 km/191.110 miles)
2007 pole position: Kimi Raikkonen/Ferrari, 1:26.072
Lap record: Michael Schumacher/Ferrari, 1:24.125 (2004)

THE FORM

TODAY'S TOP EIGHT AND THEIR RECORD IN MELBOURNE
Hamilton: 3 (most recent first)
Kubica: R
Kovalainen: 10
Massa: 6, R, 10 R, X, R
Heidfeld: 4, 4, R, R, R, R, 4, 9
Trulli: 9, R, 9, 7, 5, R, R, R, R, R, 9
Rosberg: 7, R
Coulthard: R, 8, 4, 8, 1, R, 2, R, R, 2, 1, R, R

THE STRATEGY

Bridgestone have their medium and soft compounds here, essentially unchanged from last year, so expect a two-stop race for most drivers. In practice the softer compound held up well, and will be the prime tyre for the race. The new qualifying regs would seem to give the upper-midfield a genuine incentive to run light in S3 and gain grid position. Expect anyone who is running light to stop around laps 13-15. A normal fuel load will go to around lap 20. The strategy gurus are of the opinion that, as was the case with single-lap qualifying a few years back, a light fuel load might realise a net gain over the course of the race.

BOX OF SPANNERS


RAIKKONEN: The Ferrari suffered a catastrophic failure, leaving Kimi stranded in the pitlane entry with no drive. Similar to Massa last season.


VETTEL: Stellar second qualifying session saw Seb lying sixth, but he retired to the pits after his S3 out-lap.


WEBBER: "Something went wrong with the right front, I'm not sure what, but that happens and suddenly you're starting in 15th."

SESSION 02

The headlines were written before the session began. After a solid lap in S1, Raikkonen slowed, and coasted into the pitlane. Mechanics pushed the stricken Ferrari to the garage, instantly ending his challenge. While the ramifications of Kimi starting 16th were sinking in, a collective groan went around Albert Park as Webber went into the gravel, bringing out the red flags. The session restarted with eight minutes remaining, allowing everyone the opportunity to have two more runs on fresh tyres, which also provided crews with an unexpected opportunity to practise their pitstop techniques. The two Hondas were hanging onto top 10 spots, before being displaced by the Toyotas with seconds to go. Alonso and Nakajima also failed to make the shoot-out.

MARK WEBBER
A front right failure pitched the Red Bull into the gravel and halted the session. Great debut apart, Melbourne hasn't been a very lucky race for Mark.

SEBASTIAN VETTEL
Another good session for German Seb, taking the Toro Rosso into S3 with places to spare – plenty of cause for optimism in Faenza.

ONE TO WATCH
KAZUKI NAKAJIMA



At times this year the Williams has looked very quick, but Kazuki didn't manage to hook it all up yesterday. Often the latest of the late brakers, expect the mercurial Japanese driver to show his usual aggression and make up places on the dusty Albert Park circuit this afternoon.

SESSION 03

New qualifying rules meant no queue at the end of the pitlane and cars going out in their own time. With Webber already back in the paddock doing interviews, Vettel was soon to join him, retiring the Toro Rosso after its out-lap, while Glock also appeared to be having problems. As we had fervently hoped, the new, shorter, final session was action-packed. While Massa didn't seem to have the qualifying pace to challenge the two McLarens, the BMWs did. With seconds remaining, Kubica's very committed, sometimes agricultural, lap of Albert Park put him on provisional pole, but behind him Hamilton was setting a perfect sequence of purple sectors, taking pole by a tenth. "I could do better," said a frighteningly composed Lewis.

FELIPE MASSA
Behind both McLarens and a BMW isn't where Ferrari need to be. He may have more fuel, but if the leaders can open a gap, it could be a long day for Felipe.

ROBERT KUBICA
A first front row start, thanks to a snarling, sliding lap absolutely on the ragged edge – at one point Robert had all four wheels on the dirt. Great stuff

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES. XPB. ILLUSTRATIONS: EMERIC DE BARÉ

What if...

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER

...had stayed with Jordan

A sequence of pivotal events make up the official history of Formula One, but imagine that things had gone a different way and Michael Schumacher had decided to stay at Jordan in 1992. Clever move or career suicide? The news stories tell it all.

Spa: August 25, 1991
SCHUMACHER SIGNS JORDAN DEAL

After a stunning performance in qualifying yesterday, when he claimed seventh place on the grid, F1 debutant Michael Schumacher signed a long-term deal with the Jordan team. This guarantees him a 1992 race drive for a team which, in its debut season, is heading for an amazing fifth-place finish. It's also much to the annoyance of Benetton boss Flavio Briatore who also tried to sign the young German star.

Kyalami: March 1, 1992
SCHUMACHER'S NIGHTMARE CONTINUES

It's not looking good for Michael Schumacher this season. Following poor performances in winter testing with the new Yamaha engine, Schumacher failed to qualify for today's South African GP. A disappointing start to Schumacher's 1992 F1 campaign and it doesn't look as if it will get any better…

Montreal: June 1992
SCHUMI IN SHOCK LOTUS MOVE!

In a bid to improve his points-scoring chances in the second half of this season, Michael Schumacher has signed for Lotus, replacing Johnny Herbert. The deal, organised by Michael's manager and former team boss Eddie Jordan and Lotus principal Peter Collins, will also give the Jordan team a much-needed financial boost. Jordan had originally tried to secure a place for Schumacher with one of the front-running teams, but with no seats available, Lotus was a good option. The team has a promising car in the 107 and is keen to move up the championship table. The move will see Schumacher partner his old F3 rival, Finnish rising star Mika Hakkinen.

Magny-Cours: July 5, 1992
HAKK HAMMERS MICHAEL ON DEBUT

Michael Schumacher's chances of scoring points this season have suffered a further setback. It appears he's not fitting in well at Lotus, having come into the team mid-season, and can't get used to the car. However, Schumacher's arrival at the team seems to have had one benefit – team-mate Mika Hakkinen has become much more motivated and is putting in some extremely impressive race performances. Schumacher is now definitely the number two in the team and will play a supporting role to Hakkinen for the rest of the year.

Montreal: June 13, 1993
UNLUCKY SCHU CONSIDERS F1 EXIT!

Another poor performance in the Canadian Grand Prix has left Lotus driver Michael Schumacher considering retiring from Formula One for good. The complex suspension of the 1993 car has caused problems in the first half of the season and as a result the team has been left at the back of the grid. Schumacher, who has not had the best track record in F1 despite early promise, has not received any offers from other teams, despite being 'in talks' with several team bosses, and his career seems to have stalled.

Estoril: September 1994
SCHUMACHER: DTM IS OPTION

Beleaguered Formula One team Lotus look set to file for bankruptcy in the next few weeks. It also looks as if this will be the last season for the team's lead driver, Michael Schumacher, who says he's seriously considering an offer from Opel to drive in DTM next year.

Kerpen: May 12, 2001
EX-F1 STAR GIVES KARTERS BIG BREAK

Former Lotus star Michael Schumacher has opened his own karting track in Kerpen, Germany. Schumacher endured a troubled time in F1, never getting the chance to show his talent to the full, but the ex-Formula One racer is now aiming to propel the latest generation of German motorsport hopefuls to grid glory from his family-run karting centre.

ILLUSTRATION: MARKUS ROOST



The Experts' View

Eddie Jordan

"What would have happened if I'd kept Michael in '91? Well, personally I think I could have got a deal from Ford for free Cosworths and we wouldn't ever have had to get involved with Yamaha. And you look at what Michael did with works Cosworths in a good chassis at Benetton and you wonder if he might not have managed the same with works Cosworths in a good chassis at Jordan. Two world championships?"

Gary Anderson

"I don't think we were ready to fight for championships, even with Michael. But a Cosworth and Michael? I definitely don't see why we couldn't have been winning the odd race, stirring it up a bit. But who's to say we would have got the Cosworths? If we'd still had the Yamahas, our '92 season wouldn't have been much different, even with Michael on board."


Emmi Moore


Kristina Vergis


Chelsea Butler


Amelia Pain


Nicole Lucas


Brie Edwards-Adams


Marsha Vassilevskaia


Olivia Simone


Ada Kuang

LA FORMULA UNA AUSTRALIA

Elisha Yarrington has been named the first Red Bull La Formula Una of the season.



PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS BUTLER

F1 debut: GP France 1957







Final race: GP France 1957

First Day/Last Day

MIKE MACDOWEL

Some Formula One careers only last for one race but, with assistance from Jack Brabham, Mike MacDowel's didn't even last that long...

My first and last grand prix was at Rouen in July 1957. Because I had taken part in a sportscar race for Cooper at Rouen the previous year, I was given the opportunity to race in the French Grand Prix. At the time F1 was a 2500cc formula, but this was a very early attempt to get smaller engines onto the grid. Jack Brabham and myself were each entered with a Cooper-Climax. They were only 1500cc… or so I thought.

I have a vivid memory of practising. There was a fast downhill section just after the pits that swerved left and right, finishing up at a hairpin where the road surface turned to cobblestones. I was passed by a Maserati 250F driven by Fangio in shirtsleeves, and witnessed him going through this series of curves. It was something I'll never forget. This man, with beautiful car control, was literally throwing the Maserati from one lock to the other. I realised that, whatever I did, I could never be anywhere near as capable.

I was on the back of the grid, which was not all that surprising. Come race day it was extremely hot and fairly humid. There was a big crowd and terrific excitement. John Cooper was a lovely man, very professional, but the whole thing still seemed to be fun. He said: "Don't break the transmission off the line," and, yes, my start wasn't particularly brilliant. At the end of the first lap I remember seeing a BRM in the ditch and the driver, Ron Flockhart, picking himself up. It was pretty dramatic stuff.

After a few laps I saw Jack Brabham's car parked. He'd had a 'coming together' with Horace Gould. He never explained why. I then began to notice that oil was leaking out of the filler cap at the front of my car and streaming back. Not wanting to blow up the engine, I wondered if I ought to come in to the pits. It was a difficult decision, as the oil pressure appeared to be OK. Eventually I did come in – foolishly, as it turned out. John Cooper said it wasn't a problem; the car was just blowing off some excess oil. Jack Brabham was standing in the pits when I came in and he, of course, got in the car and proceeded to finish the race, ending up in seventh place. And that was it. A few weeks later I was doing my officer cadet training in the RAF.

Not many years ago, Jack and I were talking about the race. Unbeknown to me, the capacity of his engine was not 1500cc but nearly 2 litres. It was one of the first that Coventry Climax stretched. When I mentioned this to Jack he said, "Perhaps that's why you couldn't keep up with me!" I had been a bit surprised at the way he disappeared. In the Formula 2 Prix de Paris at Montlhéry, where we were first and second a few weeks before, I'd been able to stay with him.

However, my experiences did give me a wonderful impetus to become involved in motor racing again, working for Jaguar, twice winning the RAC Hillclimb Championship, and being on the British Racing Drivers' Club board.



COMMON PEOPLE

Grammy-winning rapper Common had his first taste of Formula One this weekend. Adam Hay-Nicholls caught up with him after he came off stage at Red Bull's season-opening party.

The view from the stage in a warehouse in Melbourne's docklands was one of the best hip hop star Common can remember. He even had to be dragged off by DJ Carl Cox, who was eager to start his own set. "There's a lot of beautiful women out there," smiles Common. The US artist was the star of the show until he brought a local girl, Mendoza, up on stage. "Yeah, all eyes were on her. I didn't want her to leave. Australian women are alright and Red Bull parties are alright."

It's 10pm on Friday and the curtain has just been raised on Red Bull Racing and Scuderia Toro Rosso's 2008 campaign. Earlier, Common had visited Albert Park to see race preparations. "It's a whole new world and culture I've had no experience of before and couldn't begin to imagine," says the 36 year-old. "I like that everyone's so passionate about it, it's got its own vibe."

Pharrell Williams, a friend and producer of Common's forthcoming album Invincible Summer, gave him a few hints on what to expect. His tip: to keep an eye on Lewis Hamilton. "I like being exposed to new cats. Anybody doing good at what they do, I respect that."

Common has been recording since 1992, but until his platinum-selling CD Be in 2005, and the Grammy-winning Finding Forever last year, his talent for socially-conscious lyrics and feel-good soul didn't fit '90s fashion, when gangsta rap outsold subtler artists.

Since collaborating with Kanye West and Lily Allen, and romancing Erykah Badu and Alicia Keys, he's joined hip hop's A-list. He's also had roles in hit movies Smokin' Aces, American Gangster and the hotly-anticipated Wanted, alongside Angelina Jolie.

Now living in New York, Common is proud of the Chicago roots he shared with Kanye West. It was there that he got a taste for motor racing. "I love go-karts, man. I used to go karting in Chicago. If a cat had a go-kart that was something special."

Common and Kanye recorded the track The People here last year. "It was cool to spend some time in Melbourne. I'm here this weekend just for the party, but I hope to be back again soon."

With that, Common is gone. But he did say he'd set his video for the race.

PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS BUTLER



‘I wasn’t fazed by Ayrton’

US GP, PHOENIX MARCH 11, 1990: LAP 34

It surprised everyone when Ayrton Senna was outqualified by new team-mate Gerhard Berger. Once the race settled down, however, the Brazilian encountered opposition from a different – and somewhat unexpected – source...

Actually, it was a relief that Ayrton Senna turned up in Phoenix at all. He had spent the winter arguing with FISA (the Fédération Internationale du Sport Automobile, as the governing body was then known) and wasn’t issued with a super-licence until he retracted remarks he’d made at the end of the 1989 season.

Then, you might recall, Senna had accused FISA president Jean-Marie Balestre of fixing the world championship in favour of his former team-mate, Alain Prost. The two had come together at Suzuka the previous October and Senna – who’d recovered from the crash and went on to win the race – was subsequently disqualified. That secured Prost’s third world title and triggered an angry rebuke from Senna. “It was clear,” he said later, “that political and economic pressure groups manipulated behind the scenes to make Prost champion.”

FISA asked Senna to retract his remarks, but he refused. When the 1990 Formula One entry list was initially published, Gerhard Berger and test driver Jonathan Palmer appeared alongside the two McLarens. That triggered the release of a formal apology bearing Senna’s name and the matter was finally settled.

By the time he got to Phoenix, the Brazilian had spent his winter doing lots of arguing but little testing. However, it was engine trouble rather than lack of practice that meant he lined up fifth on the grid. Team-mate Berger took pole in the new McLaren MP4/5 while Pierluigi Martini (Minardi), Andrea de Cesaris (Dallara) and Jean Alesi (Tyrrell) – secured second, third and fourth after making the most of Pirelli’s latest qualifying tyres.

Berger made a decent start but, about four seconds later, took a conventional line into the first right-hander, leaving a huge gap that Alesi immediately exploited. Senna was now fourth, behind de Cesaris.

The Brazilian soon moved up to third and then second when Berger accidentally hit the throttle as he attempted to brake. The Austrian slid sideways into the tyres, his victory prospects now as broken as his car’s front wing. Senna was in no rush to test Alesi’s resolve; he wanted to lighten his fuel load and conserve his McLaren’s Goodyear tyres, but by lap 33 the two leading cars were together.

“I remember everything about that day,” says Alesi. “I made a fantastic start and, as I was diving between the other cars on the straight, I thought, ‘I hope my friends at home are watching this on television.’ I was leading at the first corner and told myself to keep concentrating. Maybe I could lead a lap of a grand prix and that would be very special.

‘After the race had finished, I unfolded my collar to show Ayrton that my vest had his name on it’

“After that I just kept pushing until I saw the red of Ayrton’s car coming in my mirrors. I thought, ‘OK, he will pass me for sure – but maybe I can give him a hard time.’”

Next time they approached turn one, Senna moved to the inside and was slightly ahead, but the move cost him momentum and compromised his approach to the next left-hander. Alesi was alongside in a flash.

There wasn’t really room to run side-by-side at Phoenix – a narrow, concrete-lined labyrinth with plenty of 90-degree corners – and the two cars all but came to a halt as they went through, with Alesi back ahead once more.

“I just braked late and zig-zagged from behind him,” he says. “I wasn’t fazed by Ayrton. I was very excited and enjoying myself thoroughly. I was very fresh in F1 and hungry to show what I could do. We knew the Pirelli tyres would be good for street circuits, so I’d been preparing for something special at Phoenix.”

It was to be brief. Senna tried to pass again on lap 35, this time with a little added force that defused any notions of retaliation – but Alesi had caught the 1988 world champion’s attention. The past few months had caused him to question his motivation, but this had been a reminder of the sport’s true essence.

“Ayrton was very nice to me afterwards,” says Alesi. “When I turned up in America I didn’t have my fireproof underwear, so McLaren lent me some of their spares. After the race, I unfolded my collar to show Ayrton my vest had his name on it. He asked where I’d got it and seemed to think that must have been the reason I was able to fight with him. He was very sharp and we laughed about our race. We had a good time – they are very good memories.”

For Senna, a fight with a Frenchman other than Balestre had been the perfect antidote to a winter of discontent.

ILLUSTRATION: HERI IRAWAN

HAPPY HOMECOMINGS

When it was announced that Fernando Alonso would return to Renault in 2008, the French and Spanish fans (and a certain Italian) were delighted. Here, we celebrate another six of the best prodigal returns.

1 Muhammad Ali's delayed Rumble in the Jungle

Muhammad Ali knew when to keep his mouth shut, refusing to answer the draft when he was called up for US Army service in Vietnam in 1967. Immediately stripped of his belts and refused licences to fight, after a long exile Ali eventually regained the heavyweight crown in the infamous "Rumble in the Jungle" fight of 1974, dumping unlucky George Foreman on the canvas.
Prodigal Brother Foreman himself came out of retirement to win the IBF and WBA heavyweight titles, beating Michael Moorer to become the oldest ever champion at the age of 45, 20 years after his defeat by Ali.

2 Liverpool fans' prayers are answered

After scoring 120 goals in 236 Liverpool games, Robbie Fowler achieved a god-like status at the English football team's Anfield homeground. But in 2001 he signed for Premier League rivals Leeds United, saying he'd been "forced out" by the Liverpool management. After an unsuccessful period away, Fowler returned to Anfield in 2006 for one last 18-month stint, passing Kenny Dalglish's all-time Liverpool scoring record in the process. "Thy transfer has been done/On a free as it is in January," wrote one adoring fan in a reworking of the Lord's Prayer. And no bleached-blond hair or breathable nose plasters this time.
Prodigal Brother In 2007, Kevin Keegan said he would never go back into football management. In January 2008 however, 11 years after leaving Premier League club Newcastle United, Keegan went back, proving that his decision was less permanent than the wave in his hairstyle during the '80s.

3 Superman returns to save Wimbledon

After losing his third Wimbledon singles final in 1998, Goran Ivanisevic said, "I go kill myself." But instead, after three years of injuries and a drop to 125th in the world rankings, Wimbledon's authorities gave the colourful Croat a wildcard entry to the 2001 tournament. Goran subsequently triumphed in the final against Pat Rafter. By the time he arrived back in his native Split he was being carried shoulder-high by adoring fans who, unsatisfied by just a sweatband or shirt as a souvenir, had stripped their idol down to his underpants. That's how hero-worship works in Croatia.
Prodigal Sister Jana Novotná threw away a huge final-set lead to lose the Wimbledon final to Steffi Graf in 1993, and wept on the Duchess of Kent's shoulder when she received her runner-up prize. Five years later Jana did win the crown, just as the Duchess had reassured the tearful Czech she would one day.





Clockwise from middle: Flavio Briatore has welcomed Fernando Alonso back from McLaren; After a bit of head-scratching, Vettel realised Red Bull was the place for him; Sean Connery back in Bond mode; Goran Ivanisevic's fans rejoice; Robbie Fowler made a triumphant comeback for Liverpool FC; a souvenir programme for Muhammad Ali's 'Rumble in the Jungle'. fight with George Foreman.



4 Connery comes back, shaken and still not stirred

Unofficial 1983 Bond movie Never Say Never Again was apparently so called because Sean Connery had said "never again" after turning down the chance to star in his seventh Bond film, Live And Let Die, in 1973. The return of Connery delighted fans unhappy with "official 007" Roger Moore's portrayal of Bond. The same fans were happy to overlook Connery's special new wig, fake tan and weight gain.
Prodigal Brother In 2006, Sylvester Stallone reprised his greatest role to critical acclaim in Rocky Balboa, with 59-year-old Rocky going the distance against current champion Mason Dixon in a charity fight.

5 Germany's wunderkind returns To Red Bull

Supported by Red Bull from a young age, Sebastian Vettel's successful kart career led to a Formula BMW championship title in 2004. A BMW Sauber F1 drive soon beckoned and, replacing the injured Kubica at the US Grand Prix in 2007, Vettel became the youngest driver to score a world championship point with an eighth place at the age of 19 years and 349 days. Now back in the Red Bull fold at Scuderia Toro Rosso, a first podium finish for the young German and STR is surely a realistic prospect for 2008.
Prodigal Uncle Nigel Mansell had tasted some success with Williams from 1985-88, but it was after he returned to the team in 1991 following a lean spell at Ferrari that Mansell had his finest hour, winning the '92 championship with races to spare. Eventually, he became too large to fit into an F1 cockpit and retired.

6 Valentino decides four wheels is two too many

With the 2005 MotoGP championship all but won, in August that year Valentino Rossi tested a Ferrari F1 car. After two whole days at Fiorano, many concluded that the tifosi would have an unlikely Italian F1 hero to cheer at Monza by 2007. But the Doctor was back on two wheels for 2006 and has stayed there, much to the relief of bike fans – and those who had said he didn't stand a chance in F1 before he posted what Jean Alesi called "formidable" test times.
Prodigal Uncle Evel Knievel spectacularly crashed his bike while attempting to jump over 13 buses at London's Wembley Stadium in May 1975, breaking his pelvis. After initially announcing that he would retire, five months later, in October 1975, Knievel successfully managed to jump over 14 buses in Ohio, USA. So, 14 is obviously a luckier number.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ACTION, GETTY IMAGES, REX, SUTTON IMAGES, XPB

24hr Paddock People

Warehouse party

Getting into the swing of the new season, Red Bull threw a monster party on Friday attended by stars of F1, the silver screen and Melbourne glitterati. Shed 4 in the city's docklands area rocked to tunes spun by super DJ Carl Cox. US rapper Common also joined in the fun, celebrating his birthday in style by playing a great set that had the whole warehouse moving. The celeb list was long and glittering and included stars of the new X-Men: Origins movie such as Liev Schreiber, and model and star of Superman Returns Peta Wilson. The Red Bull Racing and Toro Rosso drivers, including local hero Mark Webber, and The Red Bull La Formula Unas, were also kept entertained by lavish displays from strong men and burlesque trapeze artists. The 2008 season has officially begun with a bang...

Photography: Thomas Butler, Incite Images/Mark Watson, GEPA





Travel Guide

Melbourne to Kuala Lumpur direct is eight hours and ten minutes of your life that you'll never get back. If you're lucky on the flight, maybe you'll sleep – if not, there are other ways to use the time profitably.



1. Game

One for all you PSP freaks out there: Football Manager Handheld could have been made for a long flight. The basic format hasn't changed since the 1980s, though it's a sad reflection of the times that you now have to deal with tantrums, mediate in nightclub-related incidents and monitor diets, rather than just choosing the colour of the kit and giving your team an amusing and/or rude name. An eight-hour flight should be just about enough time to play a full season for the obsessive-compulsives among you – and, unlike graphics-heavy games, FMH rarely has to spin up the UMD, so the battery life of a PSP is easily enough to get you to Kuala Lumpur.
Tip: Don't play as Juventus, Manchester United or Barcelona. Fans and shareholders have high expectations and tend to sack you if you're rubbish. Better to manage Queens Park Rangers...



2. Arts & Crafts

These days, airlines tend to be rather uncomfortable with the idea of passengers taking sharp, pointy things on-board, though strangely this restriction has never been applied to knitting needles – possibly because no-one has ever threatened to make the pilot wear a crocheted cardigan if the plane doesn't divert to Mogadishu. Knitters tend to enter a zen-like zone of detachment where hours can pass in the blink of an eye – which really is what you want on a long-haul flight. The good knitter can probably knock out a decent sweater in eight hours – which, judging by the state of some team kit this week, might come in handy. The less gifted might have to start off with something that will eventually be a scarf. Or a sock.

3. Writing

By coincidence, eight hours is a very realistic timescale for turning out the first chapter of your romantic F1 novel. NASCAR has its own series of merchandised romantic tie-in novels, and inevitably F1 will follow suit. Any writer's guide will suggest allocating a set length of time and working without distraction – and barely anything poses fewer distractions than being stuck inside an aluminium tube, 36,000ft above the ocean. Give a thousand monkeys a thousand typewriters and they'd still refuse to debase themselves with a motorsports-themed franchise novel. But you work in F1, and therefore don't have a monkey's refined sense of morality. There's money to be made.

In-flight reviews

Flying Malaysian Airlines to Kuala Lumpur? Here's our recommended viewing...



Juno

Film rating: ☆☆☆
In-flight rating: ☆☆☆☆
One girl's attempt to deal with teen pregnancy sounds about as appetising as the reconstituted liquid egg you get for breakfast on the plane, but the script and cast are great.
That's 96 minutes gone. You've done about 1,250km. If you look out of the window, you might be able to see Lake Eyre, which, on the rare occasions that it fills, is Australia's largest lake. Time for another film...

Enchanted

Film rating: ☆☆
In-flight rating: ☆☆☆
A fairytale princess crosses into real-life Manhattan from her cartoon universe and meets a charming lawyer. No prizes for guessing the ending, but there are some decent laughs along the way. Three hours and 33 minutes – and 2,900km – gone. You're back over land – but it's still Australia. D'oh! Look out of the window on the left and you'll see Highway 94. There are only 16 national highways in Australia, so well spotted! Next film...

Big

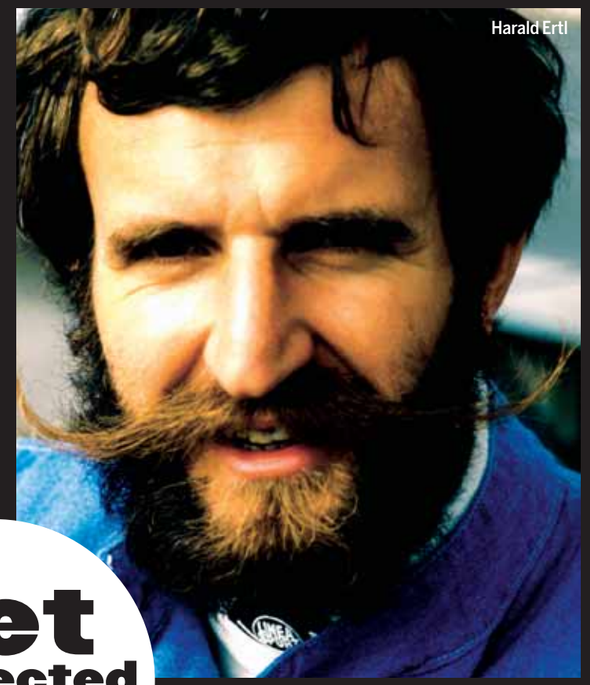
Film rating: ☆☆☆
In-flight rating: ☆☆☆☆☆
Tom Hanks plays a kid who wishes aloud that he weren't so young. He wakes up as a grown-up, and gets a job at a toy company and a gorgeous girlfriend. But he misses his friends. Five hours and 27 minutes down, over two and a half hours to go. You've gone 4,270km and below the cloud is the Indian Ocean. Now then, just time for a quick freshen up and a last movie with that lovely pre-landing light snack.

Sabrina

Film rating: ☆☆☆☆
In-flight rating: ☆☆☆☆
Delightful 1954 Billy Wilder romantic comedy which sees the luminous Audrey Hepburn as the chauffeur's daughter who leaves her home an ugly duckling and returns from Paris a swan. She's pursued by William Holden, the feckless playboy son of her father's employers but is eventually won by his much more serious and outwardly boring brother, perfectly played by Humphrey Bogart. A solid-gold winner. Now, you're just crossing the Malaysian Peninsula and have travelled 6,000 km. The seatbelt sign is on and you're descending into Kuala Lumpur.

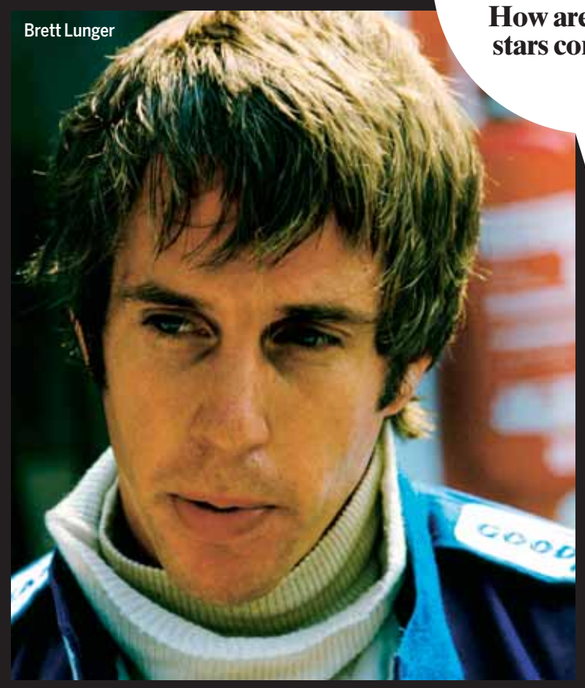
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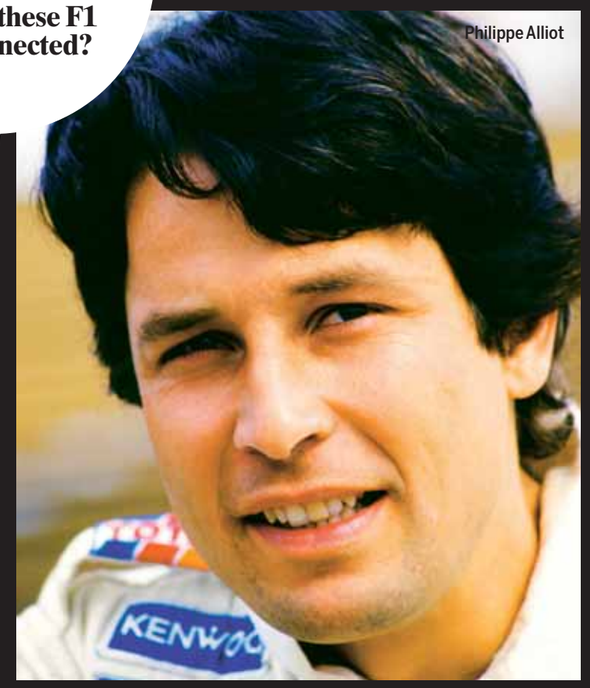




Get Connected

How are these F1 stars connected?





ANSWER: IN 1983 ALLIOT FINISHED THIRD IN THE LE MANS 24 HOURS WITH MICHAEL AND MARIO ANDRETTI IN A KREMER PORSCHE. MARIO ANDRETTI PARTNERED PATRICK TAMBAY FOR FERRARI AT THE 1982 ITALIAN GP. TAMBAY IN TURN PARTNERED BRETT LUNGER AT MCLAREN IN 1978. IN THE SAME YEAR LUNGER ALSO RACED BRIEFLY FOR MO NUNN, AS DID AUSTRIAN HARALD ERTL.

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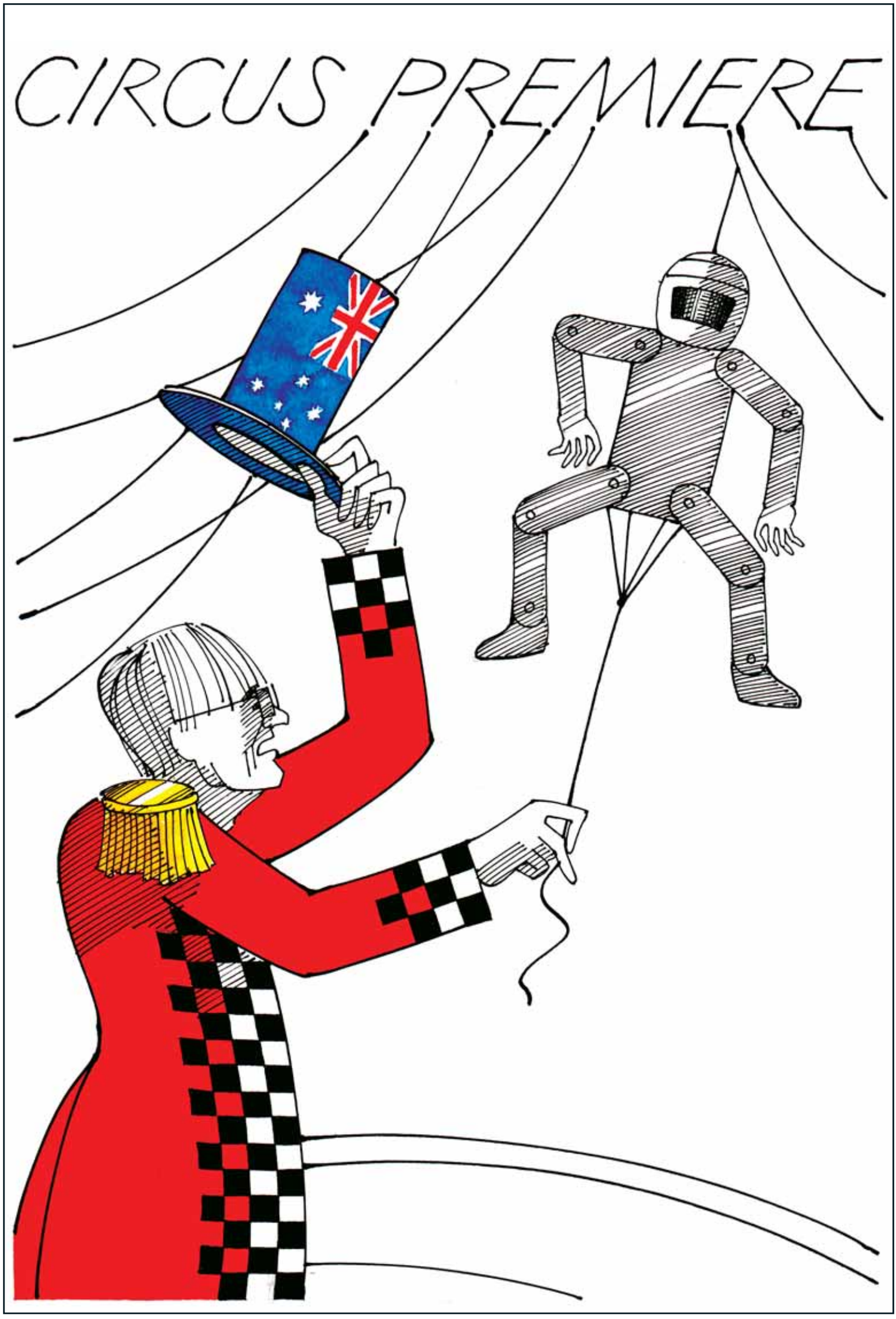


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