



The Eighties: The Decade That Transformed Australia

Frank Bongiorno

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It was the era of Hawke and Keating, Kylie and INXS, the America's Cup and the Bicentenary.

It was perhaps the most controversial decade in Australian history, with high-flying entrepreneurs booming and busting, torrid debates over land rights and immigration, the advent of AIDS, a harsh recession and the rise of the New Right.

It was a time when Australians fought for social change – on union picket lines, at rallies for women's rights and against nuclear weapons, and as part of a new environmental movement.

And then there were the events that left many scratching their heads: Joh for Canberra ... the Australia Card ... Cliff Young.

In *The Eighties*, Frank Bongiorno brings all this and more to life. He uncovers forgotten stories – of factory workers proud of their skills who found themselves surplus to requirements; of Vietnamese families battling to make new lives for themselves in the suburbs. He sheds new light on 'both the ordinary and extraordinary things that happened to Australia and Australians during this liveliest of decades'.

The Eighties is contemporary history at its best.

Shortlisted, 2016 Ernest Scott Prize

'Frank Bongiorno has successfully negotiated the minefield of Australia's political egos to write the definitive account of an inspired, infuriating decade.' —George Megalogenis

'Meaty and entertaining ... *The Eighties* reconjur[es] the full flavour of the time – the tackiness of its fraudsters and jailbird entrepreneurs, the cruelty of its economic fallout' —the *Australian*

'A rattling account, quick-cut and filmic, of contrasting, often overlapping, events: high and low culture, the big moments nestling in the finer longforgotten detail. And the detail here is the thing, a running authorial sleight of hand that salts a nimble, skipping narrative with enough fine-grained close-up to give the impression of a dense and exhaustive study without being tempted into the many digressions that detail might, in less disciplined hands, provoke.' —the *Age*

'A very impressive achievement of historical synthesis, written in lucid, fast-moving prose with an eye for the telling detail. This is fine writing for the decade that brought Australia fine dining.' —the *Monthly*

'My guide down the foggy ruins of time is a 1980s teenager who's now an ANU historian. His comprehensive tour is a canny mix of economic history and news headlines.' —*Canberra Times*

Frank Bongiorno is associate professor of history at the Australian National University and author of the award-winning *The Sex Lives of Australians*. He has written for the *Monthly*, the *Australian* and *Inside Story*.

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