

# Thrillers in all directions

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## *Paperback issues*

By *LYN FROST*

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**A** HOST of new thrillers is on your bookseller's shelves.

'The Golden Sabre' (Jon Cleary, Fontana, 288pp, \$4.95) must be one of that Australian author's most enjoyable books. It is set in Russia in 1917, when the White army is fighting the Red, and marauding tribes rule the countryside. Matthew Cabell, an American oil prospector who has decided to head for home, finds the military have designs on his truck. In flight from a rapacious general he happens upon two children of the Russian nobility, their British governess and their father's Rolls Royce Silver Ghost. With a young Cossack of undetermined sexuality they set out for the Caspian Sea. The epic journey brings them close to death many times. But the incongruity of the glorious car sail-

incongruity of the glorious car sailing through the steppes and impossible hill passes with such unlikely passengers provokes memories of 'The Great Race' and even 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'.

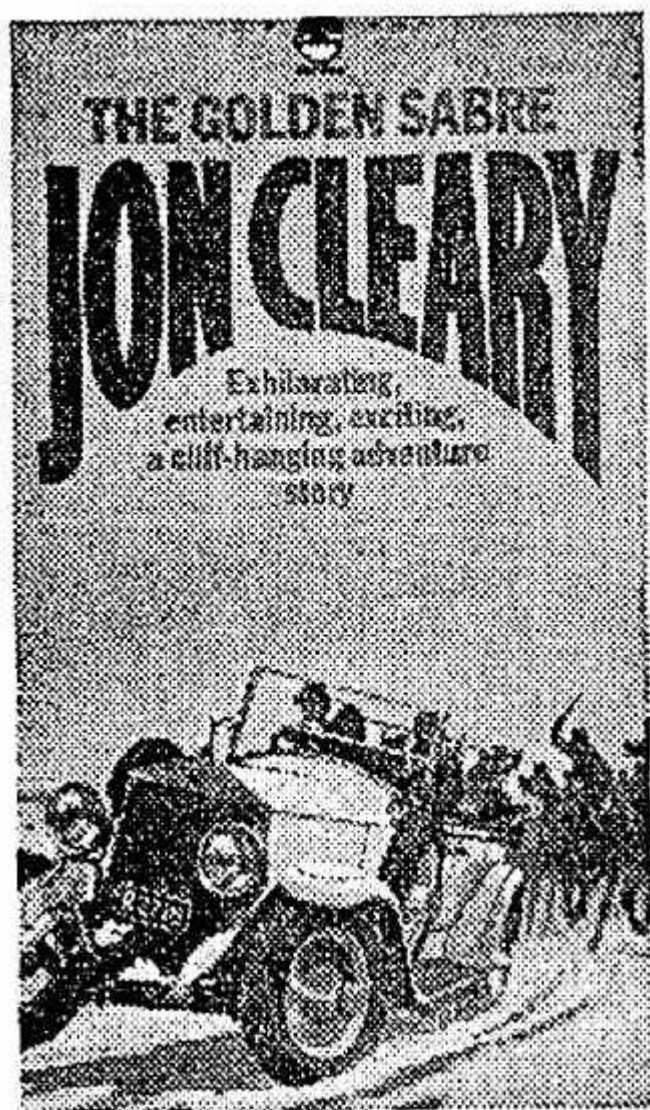
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**'Tension'** (John Wainwright, Magnum, 192pp, \$5.50) benefits from the author being a former policeman. Wainwright's subject is a bank siege. Four men burst in and shoot the first person in sight. It's just before closing time on a Thursday afternoon. And a quarter of a million pounds is sitting in the vaults, ready for factory pays and market day. The author follows the police line of attack, the robber's reasoning and the hostages' thoughts. It's very easy for a reader who has stood in a bank queue observing the "have you seen this man" posters to identify with the situation. The book is aptly named.

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**'Rearview Mirror'** (Caroline B. Cooney, Magnum, 196pp, \$4.95) has a similar "this could happen to you" momentum. Susan Seton is out gathering decorative weeds when she sees two men throw something into a creek. It's a child in a garbage bag.

a creek. It's a child in a garbage bag.  
Susan saves the child but is forced  
to go along with Jerry Sam, a psy-  
chiatric killer on the loose from a  
prison, and his equally violent  
cousin. When Jerry kills the cousin  
Susan thinks the odds have im-  
proved. Now she has only a madman  
and a desperately ill child to cope  
with. Her life, too, flashes before he



eyes. Meanwhile, all she can see in

eyes. Meanwhile, all she can see in the rearview mirror is her tormentor's face.

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**'Kangaroo Court'** (John Jost, **Magnum**, 233pp, \$5.50) recreates a dusty, dying Australian mining town. Jost has obviously lived in one. Every peeling weatherboard and lazy mongrel dog is carefully noted. As are the characters, the runaways, the money-makers, the old-timers who work in every open cut across the country. Kovac is one, a misfit, a loner, but sex-mad and unfussy where he finds his satisfaction. Even his best mate Murphy's de-facto is fair game. When Kovac's eye roams to the couple's 15-year-old step-daughter, however, he has gone too far. The miners, locked out by a landslide at the decaying mine, turn their fury to the betrayer of their womenfolk. A well-written evocation of much that most of us would like to forget about the 'lucky country'.

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Another psychosexual horror, less successful, is **'Parlour Games'**(Robert Marasco, **Coronet**, 300pp, \$5.50). Maggie Newman, advertising artist, falls in love with her boss, the dashing young head of Playcraft Toys. But what is his connection with a woman just released

nection with a woman just released from a psychiatric hospital who keeps insisting that he killed her daughter. And why is his relationship with his sister closing Maggie out? It becomes clear that there was a murder, but was the brother

or sister responsible? Maggie makes a grave mistake in waiting about to find out.

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**'Fixation' (Jack Pulman, Arrow, 281pp, \$6.95)** pits Frank Slovak, master criminal, against George Groczek, master cop. Groczek cleaned up a city single-handed. As retirement nears, his final coup is the confiscation of heroin valued at \$10,000,000. But Slovak, whose life forces are also ebbing, sees the need to end his career with a greater coup. He decides to steal the heroin from the police. The two minds are at war, outsmarting each other at every turn, but too evenly matched. That neither wins in quite the manner expected is not surprising.

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Like a reviewer before me I cannot fail to draw a comparison between **'A Quiver Full of Arrows'** (Jeffrey Archer, Coronet, 190pp, \$3.95) and Roald Dahl's **'Tales of the**

**\$3.95) and Ronald Dani's 'Tales of the Unexpected'. Archer, the author of 'Kane and Abel' has written 12 short stories. In each he establishes the character and settings, then turns them around with a 'sting' in the tail.**

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**'The Interrupted Journey' (John G. Fuller, Corgi, 386pp, \$3.95) has been reissued following the success of the author's book, 'The Ghost of Flight 401'. In this one he expands interviews he did while employed by *Look* magazine, with a couple who claimed to have been on board an unidentified flying object. Betty and Barney Hill were driving home to New Hampshire, US, from Canada in 1961 when they lost two hours of their journey. As recollections filtered through in the next few days they became increasingly worried. They developed serious anxiety symptoms and were referred to a psychiatrist. During seven months of treatment they built up remarkably similar pictures of an examination by "men" from outer space. *Look* subjected them to hypnosis then, believing, published their story.**