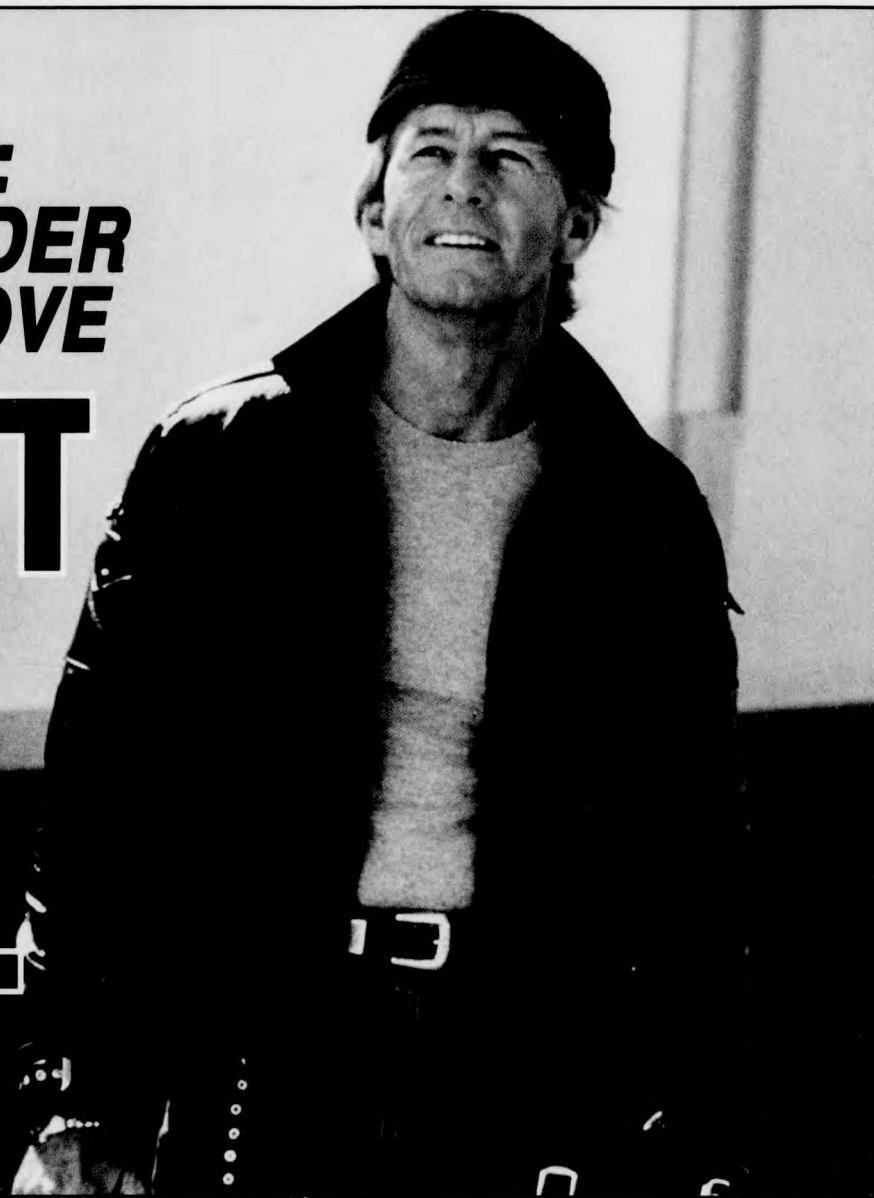


PAUL HOGAN: FROM DOWN UNDER TO HEAVEN ABOVE

ALMOST AN ANGEL



Quick, name an Australian, the first one that pops into your head. To paraphrase *The Family Feud*, "Our survey said — (Ding!) — Paul Hogan!"

You were expecting maybe Yahoo Serious? As the man who replaced the koala as the living national symbol of Oz — courtesy of "*Crocodile Dundee*" and those old shrimp-on-the-barbie Australian tourism ads — Hogan sometimes wonders what he has wrought. A good day for him is one in which he doesn't have to hear the word "G-day."

"Yeh, people say it to me all the time, all over the world, most of them a little worse than you," the fatigued, sun-baked bloke-turned-superstar told us on the heels of "*Crocodile Dundee II*." "Gd-eye, gud-oye, gud-oooye. But Barbara Walters was the worst: 'Gid-yewee' or somethin' like that."

Therein lies part of the reason Hogan claims to have retired the character of Michael J. (Mick) Dundee.

And those ads? He's through with them, too. "I don't know if you've noticed, but Australia has more tourists than it knows what to do with now. I think they're gonna bring back the koala [a symbol Hogan hates] to slow things down until they can get some hotels built."

Little wonder, then, that **Almost an Angel** — his hope-filled first starring role not as a certain knife-toting outback legend — is as far away from "*Crocodile Dundee*" as possible. "It doesn't have anything to do with Australia or New York or culture clashes. It's a comedy, but it has more to do with people and situations."

The situation is this: Hogan plays professional thief Terry Dean, whose one good deed lands him in the hospital. Through a weird series of events, he becomes convinced that he has died and come back as an angel (and thus is safe from harm). Emboldened by his "supernatural" abilities, Dean sets out to do good on a grand scale, with little regard for physical danger.

Rounding out the cast are hot Canadian actor Elias Koteas (from

Gardens of Stone) and, as Terry's love interest, Linda Kozlowski ("Mick's" girl in "*Croc*" I and II, she recently became Mrs. Paul Hogan offscreen).

"**Almost an Angel** is basically about this guy with a criminal mind trying to be an angel of mercy," says Hogan. "In his own strange way, Terry becomes a hero. Though ostensibly a comedy, it's a very uplifting film and hopefully makes a lot of points about how people should treat each other."

Will people embrace Hogan as warmly without his outback alter ego? He told *Interview* magazine there's a lot of his personality "that the public has yet to see. Then again, they might not like what they find," he quipped, self-mockingly.

On the other hand, Dundee wasn't a completely fabricated personality. Even before he created him, Hogan said in *Playboy* he had an idea of what audiences might be hungry for and where his personality might fit in. "For anyone under 20, American movies were high-school's-a-drag dramas and karate-chopping messengers from hell. Adult movies were about middle-aged people dying of

cancer or marriages breaking up or financial disasters.

"I remember thinking, 'There's gotta be something in between.' There was a dearth of grownup leading men; no one filled those roles that Cary Grant and Humphrey Bogart once did, particularly comedy roles. The only grownups doing hero roles are Clint Eastwood and Charles Bronson and *they're* not getting any laughs.

"I've no big scenes where I have an emotional breakdown and burst into tears. I haven't experienced that [in real life], I probably can't do it, so I won't put that in the script."

Hogan says that he's basically happy "any day that I'm in good health and the sun shines. Since 1973 [the year he talked his way from a job as a rigger on Sydney's Harbour Bridge to one as a featured comic on Aussie TV], there's hardly a day I haven't felt that way."

Almost an Angel opens Wednesday, December 19th in theatres across Canada.

— Jim Slotek

