

**TRENDS** Buckets of bile, wild eco solutions, porcine liberation, a Hugh superstar ~~abse~~ in your yoghurt, brainwave-driven marketing, yummy mummies, kicking baby boomers — just some of the action to watch out for in 2006 writes Michelle Griffin.

# All the rage — the prognosis for 2006

## The new grumpy

**I**N THE LAST WEEK BEFORE Christmas, a container-load of bile was dumped in Australian bookstores — *Is It Just Me or Is Everything Shit?* — the bestseller of Britain's Christmas season. It's a foul-mouthed A-to-Z compendium of rants about everything from chick-lit to loyalty cards. It's also the next step in the packaging of peevishness, an emotion proving very profitable. First came BBC's *Grumpy Old Men*, then *Grumpy Old Women*, then the franchise was extended with two Christmas specials and four books. *Is It Just Me*, written by unknowns Alan McArthur and Steve Lowe, dumps the celebrity factor and amps up the swearing — Prince Charles is described as a "loony feudal shithead parasite bastard". It's bound to find a receptive audience on our surly shores. We like a rant. The *Grumpy* TV shows rated well here, and Australian publishers have been swift to copy other British fads, such as *Schott's Miscellany*. Expect at least one local version of *Is It Just Me* rushed to print here by next Christmas, plus several shit-on-liver rip-offs throughout the year.

## Pigs' rights

This year people will become increasingly aware of both the dire conditions in many piggeries and the talents of the pig. In Australia, animal activist group Voiceless plans to capitalise on the September release of the new Australian-filmed movie adaptation of *Charlotte's Web* by touring one of the former piglet stars throughout the year. The once cute but now heavyweight sow Daisy is the face of their campaign against Australian Pork Limited. Human actor (and occasional ham) Hugo Weaving has also lent his support to Daisy's cause, so you know it has cachet. And little Dakota Fanning sobbing as only she knows how will turn a new generation of children against their ham sandwiches.

Meanwhile, grown-ups are reading a litter of new books celebrating porcine intelligence and good nature. Most notable in this summer's non-fiction is naturalist Lyall Watson's

quoting British chef Fergus Henderson's *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating*. So yes, people will still want to eat pigs, but they will want them to lead happy farmland lives before killing them.

## Consumer carbon credits

What can you do about global warming? You could pay a company to plant enough trees to offset your greenhouse gas emissions: your house, your car, your plane travel. Rock stars have made "carbon neutral" consumerism fashionable by embracing the plant-a-tree model offered by British company Future Forests (now trading as The Carbon Neutral Company). The members of Iron Maiden sponsor a grove in Leicestershire to offset the energy consumption of their world tours; Dido makes do with reforestation in Mozambique. The rest of us can pay \$50 for five trees in a celebrity forest to offset our own international travel. In Australia, Melbourne entrepreneur Brendan Condon is launching Climate Positive, a website where people can calculate their carbon output and then pay for Australian revegetation projects to reduce the damage. Condon calculates that about \$180 worth of replanting should offset the 22 tonnes of greenhouse gases produced by the average three-bedroom, two-car household. Expect all sorts of businesses to promote themselves as carbon neutral.

## The long tail

Most retailers calculate their trade on the 80-20 rule: 80 per cent of business comes from 20 per cent of the stock — the bestsellers. But information technology types are buzzing about a concept that suggests real riches come from the bulk of stuff that doesn't attract much attention. This is called "The Long Tail", after the trail of slight sales that follows the bestseller bulge charted on any sales graph. It was coined in 2004 by *Wired* magazine editor-in-chief Chris Anderson in an essay exploring the success of some of the web's massive catalogue businesses, such as Ama-

back catalogue, thousands of obscure items for thousands of niche audiences. Last year he started the popular *The Long Tail* blog. To borrow the popular marketing catchphrase, the tipping point will be *The Long Tail* book, published here spring in the US, Britain and Australia, and hyped and serialised as a likely bestseller.

## The Australian miracle

Here's a contention to start an argument: the Australian "brain drain" is a myth; we really are the clever country again. In April a new book from Picador by Brendan Nelson, a former science adviser, Dr Thomas Barlow, proclaims "The Australian Miracle", a nation of innovation. Australians particularly our scientists are pessimistic about Australia," Barlow says. "But not only is the pessimism unfounded it's counter-productive: the more people believe in the miracle, the more likely it is to be self-fulfilling."

In the book, Barlow outlines what he sees as 10 myths about Australian science: that we are innately inventive but hopeless; that our best ideas are developed overseas; that we don't invest in research and development; that we need to produce more high-tech goods; that our scientists all need to work together; that the Australian public doesn't value science; that we're excessively dependent

Brain drain

