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The Southland Times Unwind



THE BOYS
... are back
D3



Ryan Kwanten

Can you smell the Australian-scented testosterone? It is one part Vegemite, two parts meat pie and three parts true blue Aussie bloke. Walk the streets of Los Angeles and the waft is particularly strong. **Peter Mitchell** reports.

AUSTRALIA is once again the favourite flavour in Hollywood, but it is not the old guard of New Zealand-born Russell Crowe, Eric Bana and Hugh Jackman commanding the spotlight. It is a new breed of young, square-jawed Aussie. There are the Hemsworth brothers from Phillip Island, Chris and Liam, both standing over 190cm tall with physiques like AFL ruckmen. There's the equally buffed Ryan Kwanten, as the audience of his Emmy-nominated United States vampire TV series, *True Blood*, can attest because his character, described by *The New York Times* as a "strapping, dimwitted Casanova", spends most scenes without an inch of clothing. Of course, there's that other fella, Sam Worthington, the former brickie's labourer who starred in three Hollywood films in the past year - *Avatar*, *Terminator Salvation* and *Clash of the Titans* - that earned a combined US\$3.5 billion

(NZ\$4.9 billion). That's billion, not million, box office dollars. Chris Hemsworth, who quit *Home and Away* in 2007 to give Hollywood a shot, beat thousands of other aspirants to star in Marvel comic's new big screen adaptation *Thor*, playing the title role of the arrogant warrior and Norse god. While back in Australia working on *Home and Away*, Hemsworth fondly watched Kidman, Blanchett and co win Oscars and score the best roles, but now he is enjoying being part of the new wave. "There's another wave at the moment and I'm thankful to be part of it," Chris Hemsworth, 27, said. The rise of these young, strapping Aussies is not a surprise to Hollywood. Lorenzo di Bonaventura, the former president of worldwide production for Hollywood studio Warner Bros and currently one of the top

producers in the industry with the *Transformers* franchise and the soon-to-be-released action-comedy *Red* - starring Helen Mirren, Bruce Willis and Australia's Julian McMahon and Kiwi Karl Urban - among his credits, has noticed a cultural change in the United States. There once was a conveyor belt of genuine tough US stars for Hollywood to choose from, whether it was Lee Marvin, John Wayne, Robert Mitchum or numerous other no-nonsense leading men. di Bonaventura says the pool of US actors who radiate genuine toughness is drying up, so he and other producers and directors are forced to look globally, particularly Australia. "I think there is something that is going on in American culture which is interesting - the toughness is getting a little bit eliminated from the culture," said di Bonaventura, while doing the promotional rounds for *Red*. "I think that's what you want out of big screen people. I've done movies with Mel (Gibson) and so many people from Australia - Hugo Weaving is one of my favourite actors. "They are not afraid to be men." It has been more than two decades since Willis, Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger were at their action star prime. Tom Cruise, pre-Oprah couch bounce, was *The Man*, but his previous two films, *Valkyrie* and

Knight and Day were disappointments compared to the cash hauls made by *War of the Worlds*, *The Last Samurai*, *Minority Report* and the first two *Mission Impossible*s. Will Smith remains one of the few money-making US action stars, but he has not released a large-scale movie since 2008's *Hancock*. Another top-tier Hollywood producer, Donald De Line, has spent plenty of time in Australia, making 2008's Kate Hudson-Matthew McConaughey adventure-romance *Footloose* and the upcoming animated film, *Legends of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole*, created by Sydney animation house Animal Logic. Australian men, he says, possess unique qualities. "We used to talk about it when we were down in Australia," said the American producer, who cast a Canadian, Ryan Reynolds, to be the superhero star of his new comic book adaptation, *Green Lantern*. "Even the crew guys. The guys are hale and hearty. They are outdoorsmen. They're guys' guys. "There is a different cultural thing and they bring that toughness, earthiness and rawness."

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Nearly the Shield's Last Supper



MATE
Mark Wilson

THERE has been a lot written and even more said about what the Ranfurly Shield means to New Zealand rugby and its holders. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to calculate the Shield's positive effects, not only to the rugby community in the south, but for the region economically and the morale of the people here. I would imagine there are few provinces that have managed to get the Shield out into the community in the way that Southland has done. The Shield entertained and excited people over what can only be called a summer of dreams down south. The Shield attended weddings, funerals, rugby functions and numerous other social events; it visited more schools than head lice in the 80s and even the most hardened alcoholic would behard pressed to achieve the kind of pub crawl status it did. The Shield has been touched, caressed and fondled by many of Southland's 98,000 residents. A trawl through Southlanders' Facebook galleries (I'm still not on Facebook by the way) and it wouldn't be hard to imagine the New Zealand Rugby Union getting a little nervous at the antics of their major prize. The odd trip to the jeweller for repairs has possibly validated a few of their cardiac flutters. One photo of it held aloft by a bunch of children in the pool at Splash Palace was particularly impressive and possibly nerve-racking for the caretakers of the Log of Wood. The appeal of the shield is real - it can be touched, handled and passed around. There would be no shortage of memories to share at it's 21st birthday nor material for an obituary. It's not like the America's cup or the Crown Jewels locked away in oxygen vacuum casing surrounded by cameras sensors and security, with cavity searches at the door to get in sort of thing. The appeal of the Shield is its history, in the story's it can tell from being handed around our fair country on the mother-of-all road trips during the past century. Last Friday, before the Otago Challenge, myself and a few other members of the Satanic Verses RFU were warming up for another Stag Day and had the shield as our dinner guest at the Ale House, it then attended a muddy reunion game on Saturday. Just a few moments later, it would be fair to say, I thought I might have had my last opportunity to hold the shield, but the lads pulled through. It's going to be a long-hard season with each and every challenger bringing Otago's level intensity to Rugby Park. The people of Southland and the Stags, who have enjoyed the company of the Log of Wood during the past few months, must turn up with their A-plus game each week so Southland can add more chapters to the shield's long and vibrant history. Tonight will be no different, so get to the Counties game and don't miss your moments in Shield history, because you never know when this great run will come to an end.



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