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The Southland Times

# Unwind



**SCARY YOUTH**  
 ... fear of the unknown D3



# Troubled enemies

**J**OHNNY DEPP and director Michael Mann circled around John Dillinger for decades. Independently, each imagined the infamous Depression-era bank robber filling the big screen. Good-looking, sexy and charismatic, Dillinger is a role Depp was destined to play.

Meanwhile, the rat-a-tat style Mann displayed in *Miami Vice* and *Heat* seems well suited to a 1930s gangster movie.

The gestation of what became *Public Enemies* – a promising movie pitting Dillinger against federal agent Melvin Purvis (played by Christian Bale) – began in earnest three years ago.

Mann is known for working slowly, accounting for an output of just 10 movies in 30 years, and he took his time even after Depp and Bale were cast.

So how does one explain releasing *Public Enemies* at a time when people loathe banks almost as much as they did during the Depression and might cheer a bank robber, as they cheered Dillinger back then?

“The timing is an accident,” Mann said. “We couldn’t have planned it.” All the film-maker’s instincts told him that he had the right leading man, a feeling confirmed when he talked to Depp and found out the actor had thought about playing Dillinger for 20 years.

Depp’s inspiration was a grandfather who ran home-distilled alcohol during Prohibition.

“A lot of what goes on inside Johnny Depp could be used and revealed,” Mann said.

“I know there are dark currents within Johnny and also from his past life, and I know he has a lot of John Dillinger inside of him.

“He has a deep understanding of a troubled past and a troubled life, but is someone who is a very passionate man.

“He could understand those currents in unique ways.

“I’m not saying Johnny Depp was troubled,” the director clarified, but that the actor “could really empathise” with Dillinger’s troubles.

Mann is eager to defend his other star in the wake of Bale’s expletive-riddled outburst at his director of photography on the set of *Terminator Salvation*.

Almost 2 million people have checked out Bale’s rant on YouTube.

There was “absolutely no” similar behaviour on the *Public Enemies* set, Mann said.

“Christian is a sweetheart to work with,” Mann insisted.

“This is a guy who doesn’t even travel with assistants.

“I can only surmise, if something like that happened, the provocation to Christian must have been extreme and going on for a long, long time.”

Even in a shoot-’em-up there’s got to be a girl.

In *Public Enemies*, she’s played by Marion Cotillard, an Academy Award winner last year for her portrayal of Edith Piaf in *La Vie En Rose*.

Cotillard takes on another actual person – Billie Frechette – who was Dillinger’s girlfriend and drove a getaway car for him.

Growing up in Paris and Orleans, Cotillard had never heard of Dillinger.

“I only knew Bonnie and Clyde because of the movie,” she said.

Cotillard, who did extensive research on her character, dismisses rumours that Dillinger beat up Frechette.

“I cannot picture him doing those kind of things,” she said. “He was a real gentleman.”

Listening to her praise Depp to the skies – “generous”, “amazing”, “a passionate actor” – it’s possible she may be blurring her co-star with his role. As an example of Depp’s generosity, she talked about how supportive he was during scenes together when she was struggling to achieve a proper accent.



Johnny Depp as John Dillinger.

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Stag rugby, this is living

**MATE**  
 MARK WILSON



**I**T’S August in the Deep South and despite the regular irrigation we have been receiving from Mother Nature there is no shortage of reasons to look forward to waking up each day with rampant enthusiasm and vigour.

Australian university holidays, for one, are a good start. You would think it was impossible to improve the scenery in Queenstown but 150 Sydney university students, dressed as nurses, gives it a good nudge.

However, what really has me buzzing around like a teenage girl at a slumber party after too many coke and raspberries, is the Air New Zealand Cup and Stag rugby.

We have had to endure the long and drawn out Super 14 – which once was a bright and shiny ornament that took pride of place on Nana’s shelf and now lurks in the bottom of Granddad’s used golf sock draw – this followed by an international season which has resembled more of a New York traffic jam, dominated by the officials’ whistle and defensive lines crammed like New York’s yellow taxis – bumper to bumper stifling attack.

What a breath of fresh air the Air New Zealand Cup is – real unions reigniting long, proud and entertaining rivalries, some of which stretch back to the 1800s, grass roots players most of whom hold jobs and play as much if not more for the love of the game as for their paycheck, which in some unions is by no means a certainty. The public seem to shake off their rugby apathy and, like the spring growth down in the farm paddocks, emerge from a winter slumber fresh and excited about what lies ahead.

In recent seasons this interest has been punctuated by much political-natured debate over the future of the game and even more fiery debate about the future of the Air New Zealand Cup itself. Arguments have polarised opinion and put province against province and, if anything, have added to the rivalries that existed on the field. Southland has been the one province over the last decade which has been subjected to the most feverish scrutiny in regards to its place in the premier tier of the competition. But through hard work, great fan and community support as well as some powerful performances both on and off field by players and management, have earned respect and built a team that can not only compete but succeed.

All guarantees are off after this year, however, and with winning unfortunately not the only criteria we could still see our beloved Stags exit stage left. We are a resilient bunch and will survive this latest storm. To help out an online Stags support site, known as the Stags Den, has been set up at [www.southlandstagsfan.co.nz](http://www.southlandstagsfan.co.nz)

All Southlanders near and far, local or global can join the fight to keep Stag rugby alive for the future and have a darn good time interacting with other fans, the players and coaches while they’re at it. Stag rugby, this is living.

# Call our team...



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