

## Texas Death Row

**Edited by Bill Crawford**  
**\$25, Penguin**

SINCE reinstating the death penalty in 1977, Texas has executed nearly 400 prisoners. This book dispassionately presents 391 of their names, mug shots, personal details, crimes, last meals and last statements. Some spoke of remorse, others pleaded their innocence. I was left in no doubt who committed the greater crime: Texas, for defying the commandment of thou shalt not kill.

**Richard Conrad**

## The Illustrated Pirate Diaries

**Alex Exquemelin**  
**\$35, New Holland**

PIRATES have an especially permanent place in the imagination of young boys who relish the chance to play Captain Kidd. In literature, pirate personalities range from Long John Silver in *Treasure Island* to Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*. Real pirates were mostly lusty, hard-drinking, thieves who murdered indiscriminately. A rollicking, well-illustrated tale of the sea.

**RC**



## Heath: A Family's Tale

**Janet Fife-Yeomans**  
**\$35, Pier Nine**

SO MUCH was written about Australian actor Heath Ledger's death, yet there seems so much more to say. *Daily Telegraph* reporter Janet Fife-Yeomans reveals family secrets, including the idea that Ledger fathered a child in Perth before stardom in the US. It also looks at the mysterious disappearance of his fortune and the turmoil that divided the family.

**Lisa Power**

## Finnikin Of The Rock

**Melina Marchetta**  
**\$25, Penguin**

MELINA Marchetta (*Looking For Alibrandi*) turns her hand from family drama to fantasy. Her latest tale is set in a land divided by language, custom and culture into different kingdoms. Finnikin has been wandering with his guardian, Sir Topher, for 10 years. At a primary level, this is a ripping adventure. But Marchetta also deals with real-life issues such as identity and politics.

**Susan Bugg**



**Daily Telegraph**  
Saturday 15/11/2008  
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## The Given Day

**Dennis Lehane**  
\$33, Random House

THIS book differs from Lehane's gritty detective stories *Gone, Baby, Gone* and *Prayers For Rain*. This sprawling novel of US life in the tumult after World War I opens with a baseball game and slowly unfolds into a story of crime, politics, black disadvantage and immigrant life in Boston. It's a good enough read, but the legacy of other epic realist novels seems to weigh heavily.

**Russell Robinson**



## All Together Now

**Monica McInerney**  
\$33, Penguin

IRELAND-based Australian author McInerney is best known for her novel, *Those Faraday Girls*. This offering is a collection of her short stories drawn from her early days as a writer. Many of the offerings are almost juvenile in their concept and presentation and were perhaps drawn from contributions to magazines. They revolve around family, finding and losing love and confrontations between sisters

**LP**

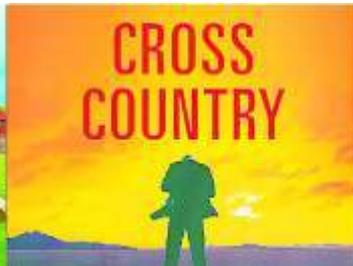


## From Russia With Lunch

**David Smiedt**  
\$30, UQP

SMIEDT, praised for his witty observations in *Are We There Yet* is back on the road. Birzai in Lithuania is the hamlet his grandfather Moses Dibobis left 82 years earlier. Smiedt binds geography, history and his personal search into a spellbinding series of bizarre sketches, history and reflections about the circumstances that created his own life. Clever and moving.

**LP**



## Cross Country

**James Patterson**  
\$35, Century

ALEX Cross goes international in this bloody tale of rampant murder by an African gang of teenagers and their leader Tiger, loose in the US and slaughtering families with machetes. After the frenzied murder of Cross's oldest friend, Ellie Cox, the gang takes off for Nigeria and Sierra Leone with Cross in pursuit. The chase plunges him deep into lawless societies and murderous attacks. Great read.

**RC**