

Fractured country meets unfulfilled man

Chuckling the Dragon
by Mark Wilde

‘Chuckling the Dragon’ is written by a Sri Lankan. Mark Wilde the author presents a vision of the island that’s far removed from the country that you see in guidebooks or on the Discovery Channel. On the idyllic shores of the Island, a blip in the ocean under India, with its tall coconut trees and lawless white sand, Mark Wilde finally manages to ‘kick’ his heroin addiction, locked in a beach hut for days, hallucinating wildly and lying in a pile of his own filth. But when he finally returns to regular society, how likely is he to remain there?

proud of both albums. This time round we’re more mature. It’s taken us four years to hone and craft.”

Psalms will include a whole new range of styles - more *bata* and Eastern music, but also “a hell of a lot of jazz”, punk, technical and classical death metal, extreme metal.

Stigmata, you will know - if you’ve kept up, is ten years old, not much by international standards, but a big deal in the local industry. Is it showing? Do they feel old, all veteran-like?

“Musically, no. In a sense, it’s not a big deal. In Sri Lanka and Asia, choosing to be passionate about



is rarely anything less than extraordinary.

But this is not only Mark’s story. This is the story of modern day Sri Lanka. Wilde reveals and explores the dark side of life in a country troubled by civil war from 1983 to 2009, riots and the terror of the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami, the world’s largest ever natural disaster: 1,000 illegal abortions every day; 40,000 children prostitutes; 50,000 heroin addicts; 100,000 deaths from overdoses. NGO volunteers smuggle drugs into the country in their ‘aid containers’ following the tsunami in the name of ‘helping the country’, replacing valuable medicines underneath the legal tablets with identical looking acid pills, drunken boyfriends and husbands who regularly beat their partners, the police quelling student demonstrations with brutal force, then going to celebrate in nearby bars and Journalists mysteriously disappearing, never to be seen again. All of this is just part of everyday life in Sri Lanka, which is so common it’s considered ‘normal’. With the government essentially in control of all media, “journalists could die like Lasantha Wickrematunge, disappear like Prageeth Ekneligoda or be assaulted like many others. This is not to accuse the president of having committed these crimes - but only to point out that they happened under his watch and, rightly or wrongly, history will remember them that way”, as Namini Wijedasa wrote, very carefully, in Lakkima News.

Nirvana on the stereo

A highly intelligent and well-read man trapped in a superficial society, surrounded by disinterested rich kids concerned only with their own petty boredom, disgusted by their apathy, the teenage Mark, wanders around aimlessly looking for a purpose. A vacuum lay before him, and he tried everything to fill it: books, music, love, sex, taking stupid risks, seducing older women in ‘serious relationships’, but nothing could push his limits far enough. So, with ‘Fight Club’ on the TV and Nirvana on the stereo, Mark turned to heroin and was launched into a whole new world.



Having lost his childhood ideals he had wandered rootless in a “moral desert”, until now. But through Heroin Mark seems to have found a purpose, a reason to exist and a new group of friends completely different from anyone he’s ever met before: friends who never talk about their mortgages, the size of their LCD TVs or getting married. Together they steal car batteries to pay for their drug, get into fights in bars and discuss Romantic literature. Anything seems possible, but in reality being *high* does not lend itself to action; only ‘high-minded’, idealistic talk. But the dire conse-

quences of taking heroin are never far away and Mark’s new friends have an average shelf life of merely six months.

Something more meaningful

After having an epiphany, armed with a few cans of soup and plenty of valium, Mark manages to go ‘cold turkey’. Life, however, does not become any simpler. Before, he hid his addiction, locking himself in toilet cubicles to shoot up and performing the ritual of flushing and washing his hands for an imaginary audience. Now he is still in the toilets, addicted instead to sex with pointless girls in dingy club bathrooms or rich kids’ posh homes. Still in search of something more meaningful, he starts spiralling out of control in a society he finds unchanged, and now he must conceal his junkie past and everything he learnt on the streets.

Devastatingly fearless and darkly funny, Wilde invites us into his rock ‘n’ roll world and holds us there, rapt. The pages of the book are filled with original artwork and quotes from rock songs, poetry and films, embodying his attitude and philosophies of life. He is a modern day Karl Marx who wants people to take control of their lives and not accept the unacceptable. Mark wants to stir people up and agitate them; he believes that if he robbed 100,000 people it would cause enough chaos to trigger a revolution. He feels “philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways, but the point is to change it”. ‘Chuckling the Dragon’ is a blisteringly honest true story which will change your perceptions of drug addiction, and everyday life in Sri Lanka, forever.

Now out at Barefoot and all leading Sri Lankan bookshops for 500 rupees and can be bought direct from Sri Serendipity.com From June 1st 2010 it can also be purchased for 06.99 from Amazon.co.uk. This extraordinary book will be available to buy in the UK from November and then worldwide from 2011.