

FREETIME

OBE academic pens baby book

Former Watford Grammar pupil Peter Taylor-Gooby wonders what it would be like if children were currency in his dystopian novel *The Baby Auction*. Jyoti Rambhai reports

Every transaction has to be between buyer and seller - no exploitation, no charity, no discrimination, no gifting, no slavery and no compassion. That is the strict lines of the market world in which Peter Taylor-Gooby has set his very first novel, *The Baby Auction*.

The 69-year-old, who grew up in Bushey Heath where he loved riding his bike and chasing his older brother around Aldenham Reservoir, explains that his novel, dubbed as a dystopian thriller, explores a world where there is a lack of trust between people and the only way they can relate to one another is on market principles.

He says: "I spent a lot of time thinking about how this society would work."

"One of the problems it faces is that it is very difficult to get people to have children and bring them up, because it is a huge investment. So the government pays a bounty for each child you produce up to the age of 18. So babies are worth money and that produces the population and enables society to keep going."

"Of course though, once you have a product that is worth money, you can have a futures market in it... exactly like all the futures market that have developed in the City of London. Therefore one thing you can do is auction babies as there is a very good chance they would get a very good return by the time they



Peter Taylor-Gooby is a professor at the University of Kent

get to 18."

Peter, who is a professor at the University of Kent in social policy and has received an OBE for his academic work, admits that it was his research that inspired him to write the novel.

"I have written a lot of academic work that is great at depicting society, the aggregate and doing surveys," the former Watford Grammar School pupil tells me, "but it doesn't really let you deal with how people feel and think about issues in their own lives and how they behave - that was my big reason for writing the novel."

"It is completely different from academic writing - writing a novel is twice as hard but it is so much more engaging and exciting, taking up 110 per cent of your attention."

"One of things I found is when I started is I had mapped it all out, and thought of characters and then you find that the characters don't do what you expect them to do. It's very strange. You write a scene and suddenly they start saying things and doing things you didn't expect and the direction of the whole thing changes."

Peter enjoys dystopian and utopian fiction and believes it is a



Peter has written his first novel

way of expanding the way people deal with things.

"You can treat utopia as if it were a laboratory experiment on ideas about society," he adds.

Speaking about his academic work, he says: "Most of my work is on contemporary society and a lot is on how people deal with risk and uncertainty in their lives."

"The ideas about trust and society have been the main focus of my work for the past six years and really these issues came out when I was thinking about the reforms of the National Health Service."

"The NHS is very highly trusted



The Baby Auction

and there are really only two kinds of reasons," he explains. "One is you trust the doctor because you think they are on your side and wants to do the best for you and there's a commitment there and the other is you trust them from what you know about their market position."

"What you find when you talk to people, is that actually it is the old style of trust, the warm trust that matters not this intellectual idea of how markets work and how people might behave in a market. And this formed the basis of my novel."

Details: theconradpress.com

Q&A Headline Maniac

Having been members of the punk legends, Eddie and the Hot Rods, for the best part of 20 years, Ian Dean aka Dipster, Simon Bowley and Chris Taylor have now come together to form the three-piece band Headline Maniac.

The trio from Essex, who will be performing at The Horns in Watford, say that forming the band was a "natural progression" and allowed them to pursue a their own project. With Dipster, 45, on lead vocals and bass, Simon, 46, on drums and Chris, 43, on guitar, the group have gone on to release their very first album and already have a tour lined up. To find out more we caught up with the main man Dipster.

How would you describe your music?

Hard rock with punk and blues infusion, likened to The Cult, Foo Fighters, Green Day etc.

Can you tell me about your latest album?

The album is just called Headline Maniac although sometimes its referred to as Rock'n'Roll Thuggery and it was released on RodHot

records in July. It has 11 original songs that are all based on my life, the road, lying, loving and lusting. The common theme is desire and deceit, reward and regret.

What have you got lined up for the band?

We've got a tour in Europe in September and a tour of the US planned in November

Are there any musicians who inspired you all to become a musicians?

We all have a mixed love of music and to be on the road, probably impossible to pin down a specific influence.

How do you write your songs?

I wrote all the songs, though the whole band contributed heavily to the production. I sometimes hear a song on the radio and discover a harmony

that works and then I work with that or I'll have a riff idea in mind and start to compose from that. Sometimes I'll delve back into song ideas that I tried way back and use bits to write new songs.

What have you learnt most about being a musician?



Headline Maniac is drawn from former members of Eddie and the Hot Rods

That its hard work and there are a lot of liars out there, but that's not to say it isn't rewarding.

Do you all have day jobs?

We all do something but that'd

ruin the rock'n'roll dream.

Can you tell me some background information about yourselves?

I grew up on Canvey Island, Simon

in Rochford and Chris in Southend. The Horns, Hempstead Road, Watford, Thursday, August 25, 8pm. Details: 01923 225020, thehornswatford.co.uk