

1981

Written by FIREBIRD

A narrative that takes place in the universe of Mad Max 1-3 and
Heads Will Rock: A Chronicle Of Postapocalyptic Mayhem

John "Firebird" Binns
wastelandfirebird@gmail.com
<https://youareawaited.com/heads-will-rock>
<https://www.youtube.com/wastelandfirebird>

FADE IN:

AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK - MIDDAY

"Oil donkey" (AKA pumpjack) pumping. Credits. The title "1981" appears, taking up most of the frame. We hear the voice of a radio announcer with an Aussie accent.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

In the US territory of Puerto Rico, explosions destroyed several Air National Guard aircraft. Police suspect it was yet another act of terrorism in a wave of violent rebellion sweeping the US.... Researchers in South Africa have identified several new cases of a mysterious and deadly immune deficiency disease affecting young men. The researchers suspect that the mens' illnesses are all being caused by the same unidentified virus.

We hear the notes of Happy Birthday beginning to play on a music box.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - MORNING, JANUARY 1981

DEBBY, a punk-rock girl with long brassy blonde hair, sits propped up in bed with a music box on her pregnant tummy. She is turning the crank of the music box, playing Happy Birthday. The radio announcer can still be heard faintly in the background. Debby doesn't play the last three notes of Happy Birthday because she is interrupted by the sound of a ringing timer coming from the kitchen. She sets the music box down and leaves the room. We can now see BRUCE asleep in the same bed. He slept in a work cap and a denim work vest. Inexplicably, on his bottom half Bruce is wearing only his underwear, and his underwear is nothing more than a g-string that shows off his buttocks. Bruce's cap and vest have been heavily personalised to make them look more punk. On one side of Bruce's vest there is a nametag patch. On the other side there is a patch with the company logo of 7 Sisters Petroleum. Above the 7SP patch Bruce has written "I DRINK" [7 SISTERS PETROLEUM].

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, KITCHEN - MORNING

Debby is preparing breakfast. Closeup of frying pan with eggs. The radio can be heard more clearly now.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Biologist Paul Ehrlich (ERR-lick)
predicts hundreds of millions will

starve, and the prices of raw materials will continue to skyrocket over the next decade. He predicts oil reserves will be depleted in 20 to 30 years. Oil prices have more than tripled, leading prime minister Fraser ("FRAY-zer") to announce this morning that Australia's oil resources have been nationalised and will now be managed exclusively by the government.

Debby brings a bacon and egg roll on a plate to Bruce in the bedroom.

CUT TO:
BEDROOM

Debby leans over and whispers into Bruce's ear.

DEBBY
Time to get up Brucie.

BRUCE
(Mumbling) Fuelling the world.

DEBBY
I made you brekkie.

Debby playfully shoves the sandwich into his face.

BRUCE
Could you wrap it up for me? Zed's going to be here any minute.

DEBBY
I'll wrap a couple up for Zed and Neil, too.

Bruce gets up, puts on some pants, and makes a minimal attempt to get ready for work. Debby returns to the kitchen to wrap up the sandwiches.

INTERCUT:
DEBBY/BRUCE

DEBBY
Did Pappagallo have you working late again?

BRUCE
He wants every vehicle we have up and running and ready to go. He's preparing

for something big but he won't say what it is.

DEBBY
Fraser ("FRAY-zer") nationalised the oil companies.

BRUCE
It's about bloody time.

DEBBY
Is that good news or bad news?

BRUCE
It worked for Chile ("CHEE-lay").

DEBBY
I mean, are you going to lose your job?

They are interrupted by a knock at the door.

CUT TO:
KITCHEN

Bruce emerges from the bedroom.

DEBBY
There will be three of us soon.

Bruce gives her a peck on the lips. He kneels and gives her peck on the belly, too.

BRUCE

(To Debby's tummy, as though speaking to a child) There already are three of us.

CUT TO:
HOUSE EXTERIOR - MORNING

Bruce's coworker ZED is waiting outside, wearing a grey work vest with a white shirt under it, and an aqua-coloured bandana around his neck. Zed is shouting in a manner that is rudely inappropriate for the time of day.

ZED
Wake you bloody slacker! 7 Sisters
Petroleum, fuelling the world!

Bruce rushes out the door. Zed tries to peek in the door but Bruce immediately slams it shut. They both start heading off to work but then we hear Debby inside whistling the distinctive call of the

grey butcherbirds of Werrington, New South Wales. Bruce forgot the sandwiches. He immediately replies with the same whistle and returns to the door. Zed wonders about the purpose of their whistle, but he imitates it successfully, without Bruce or Debby hearing him. The door opens. Debby hands Bruce a bag with the sandwiches in it.

BRUCE

If it weren't for you, I'd tear this
whole bloody world to the ground.

Zed and Debby share a look. Her face tenses up and she shuts the door.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, KITCHEN

Debby takes a bite out of the sandwich that was on the plate. She returns to the bedroom to find a human-shaped oil stain on the sheets. She sighs and removes the sheet.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

American economist Deanna Binns has been invited to address the Australian parliament later this year. Binns believes that Australia should adopt economic policies similar to those of Chile's ("CHILL-eez") reactionary dictatorship. With unemployment and inflation both over twenty percent, these controversial reforms are just as likely to devastate Australia's economy as they are to save it.... The Tynong ("TIE-nong") North and Frankston murders remain unsolved after three more women's bodies were found last month.... And speaking of serial killers, now back to the music. This song is about Brenda Spencer, a 16-year-old girl who shot up a school. It's the Boomtown Rats, with "I Don't Like Mondays."

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE EXTERIOR - MORNING

The 7 Sisters Petroleum office is run down. There's graffiti on the sign by the front door. NEIL is leaning under the open bonnet of a car, trying to work on the engine as best he can while in a wheelchair. He is dressed in a white work vest with a yellow shirt under it, and a dark blue bandana around his neck. Bruce and Zed arrive at work. Both of them are eating their sandwiches. Zed talks with his mouth full.

BRUCE

Do you ever sleep?

NEIL

No. But I do eat.

Bruce hands Neil the last sandwich.

NEIL

Have you heard the rumour?

BRUCE

We're being nationalised.

NEIL

No, the other rumour. Pappagallo is bringing some of us into his office for a one-on-one meeting.

BRUCE

He's firing us.

ZED

That's not what I heard. I heard he's picking the best of us for a special project. I hope he picks me!

NEIL

You just said he's picking the best. So you know he's not picking you.

Zed opens his mouth and shows Neil his chewed-up food.

ZED

I love Debby's cooking. She used to cook for me all the time.

NEIL

She never cooked for you.

ZED

Yes she did. She used to be my girlfriend.

NEIL

She went on one date with you.

ZED

One date she'll never forget.

NEIL

One date you'll never forget.

BRUCE

Or shut up about.

ZED

Bruce has got her up the duff. You reckon the baby feels it when he roots her?

NEIL

You reckon you could say something intelligent for once in your life?

ZED

(To Bruce) You ever choke her? She likes it when you choke her.

BRUCE

No she doesn't. And that's why you only got one date.

ZED

One date so far.

Bruce moves to attack Zed but Neil grabs his arm. Bruce tugs so hard that he pulls Neil's wheelchair sideways.

NEIL

Pay him no mind. The last woman he was inside was his mother. He's not going to try anything with Debby. Not with you around.

Neil lets Bruce go. Bruce feigns another attack and Zed flinches. Bruce walks away and begins work on another nearby vehicle. PAPPAGALLO appears. He is a middle-aged businessman wearing a cheap 70s suit and a wide tie.

PAPPAGALLO

Bruce, can I see you in my office?

Neil and Zed make schoolboy sounds, as though they are making fun of Bruce for being in trouble with the principal. Bruce leaves with Pappagallo.

ZED

I've had heaps of girlfriends. I still have all the presents they've given me. Look.

Zed opens his pocket and pulls out a locket, an earring, a button, a toy figurine, a seashell, and a barrette. Neil ignores him.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE INTERIOR - MORNING

Pappagallo is seated at his desk. A photo of oil derricks is mounted on the wall behind him. The nameplate on his desk indicates that he is the CEO of 7 Sisters Petroleum. Pappagallo has a list of employees' names in front of him. He has drawn lines through the names of some of the employees, and circled others. We see him circling Bruce's name as Bruce enters. Bruce closes the door, but doesn't sit down. Pappagallo doesn't bother asking him to.

PAPPAGALLO

I don't have time for long speeches.
You've probably heard we're being
nationalised. We all knew it was coming.
7 Sisters Petroleum no longer exists.
I'll pay you what I owe you by the end of
the day.

BRUCE

It's been nice working with you.

PAPPAGALLO

This doesn't have to be the end. A few of
us are going out to one of the oil
donkeys to build a refinery around it.
We'll use the fuel to barter for
everything we need. We'll start a new
life while the rest of the world goes to
the dogs.

Bruce gives him a funny look and takes a moment to collect his thoughts.

BRUCE

You're acting like a child who won't
share his toys. That oil doesn't belong
to you. It belongs to everyone.

PAPPAGALLO

That may be, but it takes the brains of
people like you and me to get it out of
the ground and turn it into something
everyone can use. We're the ones with the
know-how and the... do-how. That's why I
want you there with us. You're the best
mechanic we've got.

BRUCE

No I'm not. Neil is.

Pappagallo looks out the window at Neil.

PAPPAGALLO

We need someone... with more... mobility.

BRUCE

Can Debby come?

PAPPAGALLO

Once the compound is built you can send for her. Four weeks. Six tops.

BRUCE

No way.

Bruce walks out of the office. Pappagallo gets up and follows him.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE EXTERIOR - MORNING

Bruce goes back to work on the car. Zed runs up to Bruce. Pappagallo joins them.

ZED

What's the special project?

BRUCE

He's pissing off to an outpost in the desert. He wants a few of us to come with him.

ZED

(To Pappagallo) Can I go? (To Bruce) Are you going to go?

BRUCE

I have everything I need right here.

PAPPAGALLO

You don't have a future. I can offer you that. You think you can find another job? You'll be fighting over scraps. I can triple your pay.

BRUCE

Cash isn't worth anything anymore.

PAPPAGALLO

I can pay you in fuel.

BRUCE

I'm not going without Debby.

PAPPAGALLO

We can't have dead weight mulling about, getting in the way. Does she have any skills?

BRUCE

She fixes things around the house.

PAPPAGALLO

That's not good enough. We wouldn't have any use for her.... Unless you'd allow her to be... community property.

ZED

(Giggling) Breeding stock.

BRUCE

No thanks.

Bruce keeps trying to get his work done as Pappagallo hounds him.

PAPPAGALLO

You think you're happy here? You want to run with the dogs? The punks? The misfits? You're a nobody with nothing to do and nowhere to go.

Bruce is trying to ignore him but Pappagallo gets in his face.

PAPPAGALLO

Why is Debby so special? You've got no one else in your life? What about your family? What about your parents?

Bruce turns and walks away. His manner suggests Pappagallo has touched a nerve. Pappagallo grabs him and stops him from leaving.

PAPPAGALLO

Is that it? You lost your parents? Well you know what? We all lose our parents. If we're lucky enough to live that long.

Bruce angrily shakes Pappagallo off of him, but Pappagallo grabs him again.

PAPPAGALLO

Bruce....

Bruce punches Pappagallo and knocks him over. Zed runs to Pappagallo's aid. Bruce leaves and starts walking home. Zed helps Pappagallo up. Pappagallo nods and mutters a few words. He waves to Zed to join him in his office. Zed jumps and cheers.

CUT TO:

HOUSE EXTERIOR - MIDDAY

Debby is outside on the porch with her hair tied back in a bandana, pounding some nails down. Bruce arrives home and walks right by her. He enters the house and slams the door. Debby follows him.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, KITCHEN - MIDDAY

DEBBY

Did you lose your job?

BRUCE

There is no job anymore. I punched my job in the face. Pappagallo is dissolving the company.

DEBBY

Did he fire you?

BRUCE

Not exactly. He offered to triple my pay.

DEBBY

What would you have to do?

BRUCE

He invited a few of us to come with him out into the desert. He thinks he can put civilisation into a little jar and take it out there with him.

DEBBY

That doesn't sound so bad.

BRUCE

He said you can't come. At least not at first.

DEBBY

How long would it be till I could come?

BRUCE

Six weeks.

DEBBY

I'm not due for another eight weeks.

BRUCE

Do you think I should take the offer?

DEBBY

The world is falling apart around us.

BRUCE

I'm happy here, with you.

DEBBY

I'm happy with you. But I'm not happy here.

BRUCE

If I go, you'll be alone.

DEBBY

(Pats her belly) I won't be alone.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bruce packs his bag, including three books.

VISUAL MATCH CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE INTERIOR - NIGHT

Pappagallo packs his briefcase, including three books. He has a bloody lip and occasionally presses a cold rag to his jaw. There is a knock at the door. Bruce enters but does not sit down.

BRUCE

I'll take the job.

PAPPAGALLO

I've already given the job to Zed.

BRUCE

Do you want the best? Or do you want Zed?

Pappagallo sits down and thinks. He opens his briefcase and goes through the books he was just packing: The Last Whole Earth Catalog... Atlas Shrugged.... Then he finds the one he was looking for and hands it to Bruce: How To Win Friends And Influence People.

PAPPAGALLO

Read this. And next time let your mouth do the talking.

Pappagallo touches the rag to his jaw. Bruce smiles and goes through the books in his bag: The Art Of War... Das Kapital.... Then he finds the one he was looking for and hands it to Pappagallo: Solar Energy.

BRUCE

You read this and we've got a deal.

Pappagallo smiles back and stands up.

PAPPAGALLO

There's a bus waiting out front. Get on it. And tell Zed to get off.

CUT TO:

BUS INTERIOR - NIGHT

The bus is full of former 7 Sisters Petroleum employees waiting to begin the journey out to the oil donkey. Zed is sitting in a seat listening to his headphones. He's looking out the window.

Zed looks up. Bruce is standing in the aisle looking down at him. Zed takes off his headphones.

ZED

Pappagallo gave me the job!

Zed gets up and starts to run toward the back of the bus, but he trips. Bruce begins to drag him up to the front of the bus by his feet.

BRUCE

Pappagallo gave and Pappagallo hath taken away! Blessed be the name of Pappagallo!

Zed claws at the seats and the feet of the other passengers. No one on the bus helps him. He screams but we cut away, cutting him off.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE EXTERIOR - NIGHT

Pappagallo dumps petrol onto the exterior of the 7 Sisters Petroleum building. We see a closeup of his face as he lights a match and throws it. We hear the whomp and crackle of a fire starting. Pappagallo's face is lit up in progressively brighter yellow and orange light.

INTERCUT:

ZED, DARK ROAD INTO TOWN / BRUCE, BUS INTERIOR / DEBBY, HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM

Zed struts intently back into town in the darkness, muttering to himself as the burning 7SP building disappears into the distance behind him. Bruce rides the bus as his compatriots sing Waltzing Matilda. Debby turns the crank of the music box on her tummy. The sounds are dissonant and the transitions are jarring. Suddenly all of the sounds stop and we have silence.

CUT TO:

HOUSE EXTERIOR - NIGHT

Zed is standing alone in front of Bruce's and Debby's house. Zed whistles the same birdsong that he heard Bruce whistle to Debby.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debby hears the whistle and looks up. She stops playing the music box, leaving the last two notes of Happy Birthday unplayed. She runs to the front door and whistles back. The radio is playing faintly in the background.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Police suspect the killer strangles his victims, as no murder weapon has been found. The killer steals a trinket from each of his victims to keep as a souvenir.

Closeup of radio as we hear the door open.

ZED (off camera)

Honey, I'm home.

CUT TO:

OIL DONKEY COMPOUND - NIGHT

Bruce and the other former employees of 7 Sisters Petroleum are hard at work building Pappagallo's compound. Saws are grinding and sparks are flying. Pappagallo approaches Bruce with a solemn look on his face. Bruce looks up casually, then freezes.

PAPPAGALLO

Bruce, I don't know how to tell you this, but I just got word.... Debby... was... killed.

Bruce leaps up in a primal rage and attacks Pappagallo. The other compound dwellers try to stop Bruce. In the fray, Bruce's hat falls off, revealing that his hair is cut into a red mohawk.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE INTERIOR - NIGHT

We see Pappagallo's employee list, burning. We see Bruce's name and address, as we did earlier. But now we see that there is a section for "Notes" as well. The notes section beside Bruce's name reads, "Hometown--Werrington NSW (nickname 'Wez')."

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Zed bends over. He takes the music box from Debby's dead hand and puts it into his pocket of trinkets.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Prime minister Fraser ("FRAY-zer") has declared that stage three of the national emergency is effective immediately. Citizens are warned (radio cuts off and all we can hear is static).

FADE TO BLACK, THEN CUT TO:

MUNDI MUNDI LOOKOUT - SUNSET

The title "FORTY YEARS LATER" appears on screen. GROWN FERAL KID from Mad Max 2/The Road Warrior is in his late 40s/early 50s now. He is wearing torn-up old clothing, but not animal skins. It's clear that some rebuilding of the world has taken place in the past forty years. He pulls out the same music box Debby held on her tummy 40 years earlier. He turns the crank until, finally, we hear the last note of the song: happy birthday, to... you. Credits announce that this film was created in celebration of the fortieth birthday of the film Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior.

FADE OUT.

THE END