

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 - DAY

"Oil donkey" (AKA pumpjack) pumping. PAPPAGALLO, a middle aged man in a 70s suit with a wide tie, stands in front of it. His expression is serious. He takes off his hat and sits down on the ground, still watching the pump. The title "1981" appears, taking up most of the frame.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - MORNING, JANUARY 1981

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.

DEBBY, a punk-rock girl with long brassy blonde hair, sits propped up in bed. She is turning the crank of a music box that is sitting on her pregnant tummy. The music box plays Happy Birthday. 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. BRUCE, asleep in the same bed, rolls into the frame. He slept in a work cap and a denim work vest. 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:

KITCHEN

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.

CUT TO:
BEDROOM

Debby brings a bacon and egg roll on a plate to Bruce in the bedroom. She leans over and whispers in his 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 you work late again?

BRUCE
The CEO is coming in to town today.

DEBBY
Pappagallo?

BRUCE

Yeah. He wants every vehicle we have up and running. He's got us preparing for something big but he won't say what it is.

DEBBY

They 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, is that good news or bad news for us?

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

There already are three of us. One of us is just stuck inside of you!

Bruce gives her a kiss.

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 light-blue bandana around his neck. Zed is banging on the door and shouting in a manner that is rudely inappropriate for the time of day.

ZED

Wake up slacker! 7 Sisters Petroleum,
fuelling the world!

Bruce rushes out the door. Zed is uncomfortably close to the door and tries to invite himself in, but Bruce immediately slams it shut and pushes him out of the way. They both start heading off to work, but then the door opens again and we hear Debby whistling the distinctive call of the grey butcherbirds of Werrington, New South Wales. Bruce immediately replies with the same whistle and returns to the door. Debby's hand is sticking out of the door, holding the bag of sandwiches. She's hiding her face behind the door to avoid Zed's creepy gaze. Zed wonders about the purpose of their whistle, and he imitates it successfully, without Bruce or Debby hearing him. Debby hands Bruce the bag. Bruce pushes the door open wider, revealing Debby's face to Zed.

BRUCE

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

Zed and Debby share a look. Zed gives her a creepy smile. Debby's face tenses up and she shuts the door.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM

Debby 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.... A \$250,000 reward has been offered for information related to the recent bombings of several Woolworths stores. The reward is the largest ever offered in Australian history.... 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

Nah. 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's in town. He's been bringing a few of us aside 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 know.
You reckon the baby feels it when he roots her?

NEIL
You reckon for one sec you could be something other than a total fuckwit?

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 has a clipboard with a list of employees' names on it. He has drawn lines through the names of some of the employees, and circled others. We see him circling Bruce's name.

PAPPAGALLO
Bruce, can I speak to you for a moment?

Neil and Zed make schoolboy sounds, as though they are making fun of Bruce for being in trouble with the principal. Bruce and Pappagallo leave the shop area so they are out of earshot of the others.

ZED

I've had lots of girlfriends. I still have the presents they gave me.

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

PAPPAGALLO

As you've probably heard we're being nationalised. We all knew it was coming. So I took steps to ensure that when they come to take my company from me, there will be nothing left to take. I've destroyed all the maps, all the survey data, all the employee records. 7 Sisters Petroleum is no more.

BRUCE

It's been a pleasure working with you.

PAPPAGALLO

This doesn't have to be the end. A few of us are going out and claim one of the oil donkeys for ourselves. We're going to build a little refinery around it. We'll build a wall to keep out the riff-raff. Start a new life while the rest of the world goes to the dogs.

BRUCE

That oil doesn't belong to you. It belongs to everyone.

PAPPAGALLO

That may be true, but it takes guys like me to get it out of the ground. It takes our engineers to turn it into something everyone can use. And it takes guys like you to keep the trucks running. And that's why I'd like you to come with us. You're the best mechanic we've got.

BRUCE

No I'm not. Neil is.

Pappagallo looks at Neil in the distance.

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 weeks tops.

BRUCE

No way.

Bruce goes back to work on the car. Zed runs up to Bruce. Pappagallo joins them. This scene is intentionally written and shot as an homage to the scene in Mad Max 2 in which Pappagallo tries to prevent Max from leaving on his own.

ZED

What's the special project?

BRUCE

Pappagallo doesn't want to share his toys, so he's chucking a wobbly and pissing off to an outpost in the desert. He's taking a few of us with him. Everyone else has got the sack.

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 out here? 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 - MORNING

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 - MORNING

DEBBY

Did you lose your job?

BRUCE

I punched my job in the face.

DEBBY

What do you mean? Did Pappagallo 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 out into the desert and start a little colony. He thinks he can put civilisation into a jar and take it out there with him.

DEBBY

That doesn't sound so bad.

BRUCE

He said that you couldn'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 go?

DEBBY

The world is falling apart.

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.

FACE TO BLACK, THEN CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bruce packs his bag, including three books.

VISUAL MATCH CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE EXTERIOR - NIGHT

Pappagallo packs his bag, including three books. He has a bloody lip and occasionally presses a cold rag to his jaw. Bruce appears.

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 considers it for a moment. He opens his bag 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. 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 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

No! No! 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!

We see an extreme closeup of Zed's face as he 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 while the radio announcer reads more ominous news.

CUT TO:

HOUSE EXTERIOR - NIGHT

All of the sounds stop and we have a brief silence. Zed is standing alone in front of Bruce's and Debby's house. He's about to knock, but then he stops himself. Instead, he whistles the same birdsong that he heard Bruce whistle to Debby earlier that day.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debby hears the whistle and looks up in delight. She stops playing the music box, leaving the last two notes of Happy Birthday unplayed. She whistles back, runs to the front door, and opens it. We cut to Zed's POV of Debby's face as the door opens.

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 is approached by an employee who informs him about something we can't hear. He walks across the compound and takes Bruce aside with a solemn look on his face. This scene is intentionally written and shot as an homage to the scene in Mad Max 2 in which Wez rages over the death of the Golden Youth.

PAPPAGALLO

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

Bruce's emotions go from sadness to primal rage, and he attacks Pappagallo.

BRUCE

Zed. Zed did this! I'm going to kill him!
I'm going to kill all of you! Burn it all
down! Kill! Kill! Kill!

The other compound dwellers restrain 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 walks through Bruce's and Debby's house like he owns the place. It is unclear where Debby is. We hear the radio. Zed casually picks up a chicken leg from a plate and begins eating it while staring at the floor. The camera sits on his face for a full minute as he chews and swallows.

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.... 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).

Zed bends over. The camera follows his hand to the floor. We see him take the music box from Debby's dead hand and put it into his pocket of trinkets.

ZED

I always loved your cooking.

Zed walks out the door.

FADE OUT.

THE END