

# JONATHAN AGNEW



There can be no more intimate radio experience than commentating on an Ashes series from Australia. I sit there in my air-conditioned commentary box and imagine the vast majority of my audience snuggled down in bed at home on a chilly winter's night. Earpiece in and hot coffee on the go – it becomes an essential

ritual for so many people, with a badge of honour earned by those who manage to make it through every night of a five day Test match. Mind you, not everyone is tucked up. We are company for those working a night shift – and students never seem to go to bed.

As a commentator, I feel closest to my listeners when I'm working through their night. Most are lying in the dark with their eyes closed, giving me direct access to their imaginations as I describe the scene in front of me. It really does allow me to transport cricket lovers from the drab grey of winter to the sunshine on the other side of the world. It is a wonderful privilege.

It is how many of us get into cricket in the first place. I can remember lying in bed listening to the commentary from Melbourne in 1977 as Derek Randall scored a brilliant hundred in the Centenary Test. I particularly loved the great Australian commentator Alan McGilvray – although I never understood at the time why he always said the score the wrong way round. The crackles on the line made Australia feel so very

powerful, and thanks to the power of radio, the names associated with Australian cricket became engraved on my mind. The Gabba, for instance, with its evocative Vulture Street End – little did I know then that I would be commentating from that very Vulture Street End this week.

The only problem with commentary of the intimate variety is that not only do the listeners im-

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## ***'Commentary becomes an essential ritual for many'***

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agine the scene I am describing, but they also imagine what the man whose soothing voice is in their head all night might look like. This creates some confusion as I discovered last time I visited Brisbane and hailed a taxi.

'The Gabba', I said.  
'Jeez mate!', the cabbie replied, looking rather startled.

'You're Aggers.'  
'Indeed', I said, understandably smug that I had been recognised merely by saying two words.

'Oh dear', he sneered. 'You're not half as handsome as you sound on the radio!'

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