

Pooh is back

Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh are reunited in a new book that goes on sale today

BY JENNIFER QUINN
AP, LONDON

When we left them, Christopher Robin was going away, and Things were going to be Different.

Now, more than eight decades later, a rumor is sweeping the Hundred Acre Wood. According to Owl, who heard it from Rabbit, who heard it from Piglet, the adventures are about to resume. It falls to the bear to pass on the news to Eeyore.

"It's Christopher Robin," said Winnie-the-Pooh. "He's coming back." The drama (and for the Hundred Acre Wood, where life is lived gently, this qualifies) unfolds in the first authorized sequel to A.A. Milne's classic children's tales. Called *Return to the Hundred Acre Wood*, the book by author David Benedictus goes on sale today and picks up where Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner*, first published in 1928, left off.

Pooh purists are surprised anyone thinks there's a need for a new book, arguing that Milne's work should be left to stand alone. But the Trustees of Pooh Properties — which manages the affairs of the estates of Milne and illustrator E.H. Shepard — had long wanted to carry on with the books first published in the 1920s.

"When I first mentioned it there was sort of a shocked silence, and the people to whom I spoke said, 'ooh, you can't do that. Oh, no no no. That wouldn't do at all,'" recalled trustee



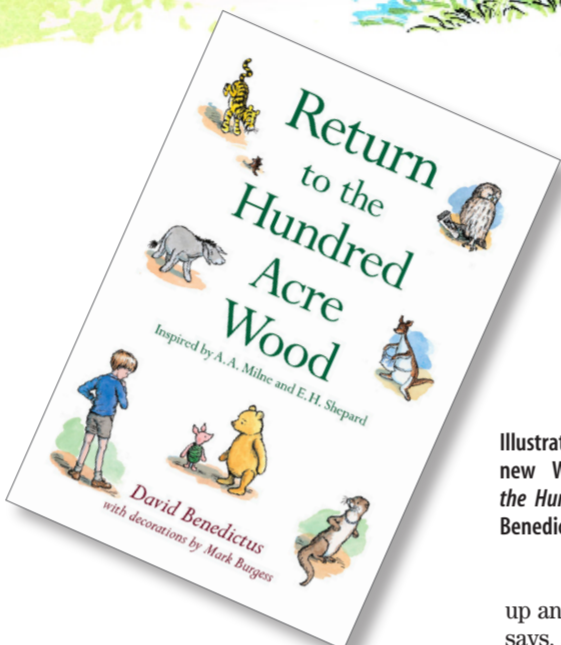
Michael Brown, when he first raised the possibility of a sequel.

It wasn't until the trustees read an early version of the story that Benedictus sent them that they felt there was an appropriate successor, Brown said.

This is a classic-looking Pooh. In the illustrations by Mark Burgess, Christopher Robin seems a little older, but Piglet returns to his traditional green outfit, and the bear hasn't dropped any weight. But there is a new addition to the Wood's residents, according to advance publicity: Lottie the Otter, a stickler for etiquette who is also a keen fan of the very English game of cricket, joins the crowd. Benedictus said it seemed right that a new friend arrive for

new adventures. He said he was careful to keep the spirit, tone, and language faithful to Milne — though he didn't feel any particular pressure in taking up where the classic left off.

"If I did it badly, it wouldn't be like I'd destroyed the originals," said Benedictus, a novelist and playwright who was responsible for the audio adaptations of several Pooh stories. "I hoped I could do it well. But no, I don't think I felt a weighty responsibility — that would have been a bit pompous, perhaps, but understandable. In Britain, Pooh is 'an intrinsic part of our culture, terribly English, a national treasure and all that,'" said Brown. The manuscripts are held by



Illustrations by Mark Burgess from the new Winnie-the-Pooh book, *Return to the Hundred Acre Wood*, by author David Benedictus.

Cambridge University, the British Library has important Pooh items — correspondence and small figurines of the characters, for example — and Milne's work is held in high esteem by fans and academics alike.

"It's absolutely the best book ever written, and I mean it," said Maria Nikolajeva, a professor of education at Cambridge University, who has taught Milne's work for 30 years.

"All the primary things that are necessary for human life are there," she said. "It's a philosophical book, it's a book with incredible depth, and it's a pity if it's misinterpreted as light entertainment." In fact, Winnie-the-Pooh inspired a runaway best-seller in the 1980s, he called *The Tao of Pooh*, which used the beloved bear to explain the basics of Taoism.

In the final chapter of *The House at Pooh Corner*, Christopher Robin asks for understanding, "whatever happens," and makes Pooh promise he won't forget about him, ever. Pooh does, and Milne then makes a promise of his own to the reader: Wherever they go, and whatever happens to them, there will always be a little boy and his bear playing in an enchanted place.

The book addresses topics such as the necessity of growing

up and moving on, Nikolajeva says, and she believes that if Milne had wanted a sequel to the books, he would have written it himself.

"The whole point is that the boy has to go away from his childhood, from this very idyllic pastoral world of his childhood," she said. "This is an absolutely perfect ending, and doing anything beyond this is pointless."

Benedictus disagrees, suggesting that Milne was turning his attentions to a more grown-up audience. "I think he always rather resented the fact that he'd had so much success with his children's books," he said, adding that Milne, who died in 1956, might have run out of ideas or have been finished with his characters.

Milne had written books and plays for adults pre-Pooh, and also worked at *Punch* magazine as a writer and editor. Post-Pooh, he continued to write for grown-ups but remained best known for his works for younger readers.

Brown said the book, which is published in the UK by Egmont Publishing and in the US by Penguin imprint Dutton Children's Books, tried to be sensitive to the original, greatly beloved, works.

"The good professor and other great lovers of Pooh will have to form their own conclusions," Brown said. "And they may say, 'oh, it's not quite as good, it's not quite the same.' I can't help that.

All I can say is we tried very hard to do something that's not offensive, shall we say."

[THE WEEKENDER]

Migration Music Festival's grand opening concert ends on a high note

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

Looking down the promenade in the drizzle of Friday night toward the open-air plaza at the southern end of the new Bitan (碧潭) riverside development, my first impression was a slight sense of disappointment at the small cluster of people gathered around the stage. Umbrellas were out, the staff were handing out plastic raincoats, and it seemed that the Migration Music Festival (流浪之歌音樂節) had once again failed to elude the attention of the rain gods.

This free concert was the grand opening of the festival, with five international folk music groups and Taiwan's own indie-folk celebrity Lin Sheng-xiang (林生祥) participating. When I arrived, Oren Fried and Armand Sabach of the Kol Oud Tof Trio from southern Israel were holding the audience rapt. Despite the poor weather, there was clearly a core of supporters who were there to stay. As the concert progressed, the performers, each in their own way, began to draw in the crowd, which grew to a pretty respectable size by the end of the show.

As lovely as the venue on the banks of the Xindian River (新店溪) was, I couldn't help but speculate that this new location in Taipei County might have kept audiences away, and the performance space at the very end of the promenade certainly reduced the number of passers-by who stopped to take in the music.

Nevertheless, among those who were there, the mood was determinedly celebratory. Lin helped lift the atmosphere with two new numbers from an upcoming album with his own brand of understated intensity. There was clearly a small group in the audience to support Nityalila Band from the Philippines, and Habi Koite from Mali exercised his own special magic, delighting the audience by coming off the stage to sing without a microphone. The concert came to a rousing conclusion with Lo Cor de la Plana from Marseilles, whose simple mix of vocals, clapping and percussion, which seemed to reach back to the minstrelsy of the Middle Ages, with hints of North African and Middle Eastern influences, brought the concert to a close on a high note.

Trees Music & Art (大大樹音樂圖陣) had, as always, provided commendable production values, and disruption from the weather was kept at a minimum. The mix of musical styles was well thought out, ranging from the protest rock of Nityalila Band with anthems about supporting local communities and fighting for freedom, to the lilting chants of Lo Cor de la Plana with their songs in the ancient Occitan language, to Lin's songs in Hakka about family life in southern Taiwan. It was an enormous pity that more people were not on hand to enjoy this rich selection.

The free outdoor concert was followed by two days of indoor concerts by the visiting groups. Having criticized Lin's most recent album *Growing Up Wild* (野生) as being self-involved and anemic (reviewed in the *Taipei Times* on May 27, 2009), it seemed only just to hear him perform these tracks live, so I was among the painfully small crowd inside the Guangfu Hall (光復廳) of Taipei's Zhongshan Hall (台北中山堂) on Saturday.

Most of the numbers performed were taken from *Growing Up Wild*, but in this live performance there seemed to be a much better balance between Lin's earnestness and stark performance style and regular collaborator Ken Ohtake's subtle accompanying guitar, which proved vital in providing an undercurrent of humor and melodic elements. The songs I had found bland and unappealing on the CD came alive, literally. Lin is never very talkative on stage, but his occasional comments about his family, and particularly the serious consideration recently given to taking up the family business of pig farming, helped create an easy intimacy that made it possible to forget about all those empty seats.

At the free concert the night before, Lin had performed two numbers from an upcoming album currently being developed with Ohtake and longtime collaborator Zhong Yong-feng (鍾永豐). He performed both again at Zhongshan Hall, and they proved the highlight of the concert, suggesting that working with material less intimately related to his own life freed Lin up musically, diverting some of his earnestness from a sometimes cloying sentimentality to areas of musical invention. The two days of music, if nothing else, should certainly whet the appetite for Lin's next album.

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS

SEPT. 25 TO OCT. 1



1 Kuo Shu-yao (鄒書瑤), aka Yaoyao (瑤瑤), and Hug of Love: Farewell to 18 (愛的抱抱: 告別18歲) with **21.89%** of sales

2 Angela Chang (張韶涵) and Season Five (第5季) with **15.1%**

3 Joseph Cheng (鄭元暢) and Chang a Song (變一首歌) with **8.94%**

4 Compilation album Faith Map with **7.8%**

5 Eason Chan (陳奕迅) and Fifth Floor's Happiness (上五樓的快樂) with **6.84%**

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC (WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW), BASED ON RETAIL SALES

PLANET POP



The joke is now on David Letterman. PHOTO: AP

individual, recently married his long-standing girlfriend and the mother of his child, Regina Lasko. Now he finds himself at the center of a media storm that is likely to be good for ratings and putting his show in the headlines but has made him the butt of water-cooler jokes and gossip across the nation.

Indeed, Letterman himself has already got in on the joke. As he announced the plot and details of his affairs to a stunned studio audience, and millions of viewers watching at home, Letterman could not resist

cracking jokes at his own expense. "I know what you're saying. I'll be darned. Dave had sex," he said.

Meanwhile, the CBS News employee charged with trying to blackmail Letterman is out of jail on bond after pleading not guilty.

Prosecutors say Robert Joel Halderman demanded US\$2 million last month in exchange for not releasing information that would ruin Letterman's reputation. Halderman is a producer for the true-crime show *48 Hours*.

The BBC is looking for the next Michael Jackson. The late King of Pop's brother Jermaine, who was a member of The Jackson 5, will appear as a judge on a new talent show *Move Like Michael Jackson*. The six-part series will be aired on BBC Three later this year.

Executive producer for BBC Entertainment Commissioning, Karl Warner, said the show wanted to "hear from anyone who's ever been inspired by the Moonwalk, the Smooth Criminal lean or the crotch grab and find out if they can move like Michael Jackson."

In other news, a North American tour by Kanye West and Lady Gaga has been cancelled with no reason given, just weeks after the rap star came under public fire for humiliating

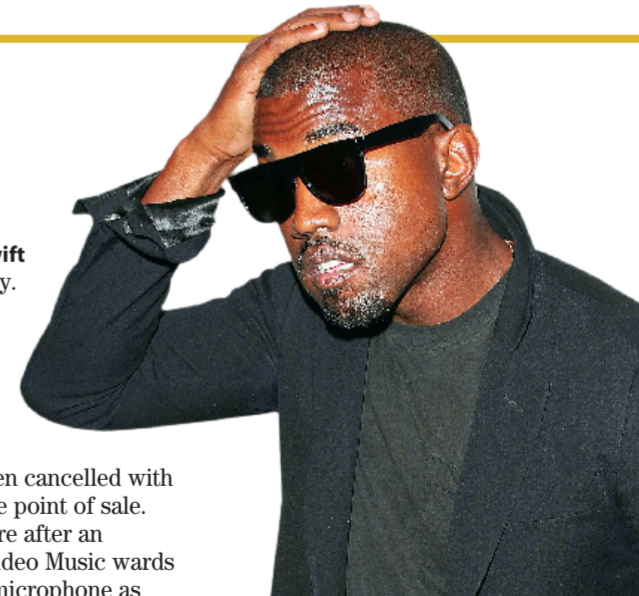
country star Taylor Swift at an awards ceremony.

Concert promoter Live Nation said in a statement on Thursday that the Fame Kills tour, which was due to kick off on Nov. 10, had been cancelled with refunds available at the point of sale.

West came under fire after an outburst at the MTV Video Music awards when he grabbed the microphone as country teen star Swift was responding to her best female video award to say that R 'n' B star Beyonce should have won Swift's trophy.

The Grammy winner has since apologized to Swift and expressed regret twice on the Web and in a TV appearance on *The Jay Leno Show* for his behavior that drew boos from the crowd and prompted a ban of his music by some radio stations in California and Florida.

West told Leno last month that he needed to take "time off," saying he hadn't taken enough time to grieve for his mother who died two years ago. "I need to, after this, take some time off and just analyze how I'm going to make it through the rest of this life, how I'm going to improve," he told Leno last month.



Kanye West said he needs to "take some time off" — and he's getting it. PHOTO: AP

Another prominent rapper in hot water, Lil Wayne, will go on trial next March on felony drug possession and weapons charges he faces in Yuma County, Arizona.

The trial date was set during a court hearing in Yuma on Thursday.

The case against Lil Wayne, whose real name is Dwayne Carter, stems from his arrest at a US Border Patrol checkpoint on Interstate 8 east of Yuma in January of last year. Authorities said they found cocaine, Ecstasy and a handgun on his tour bus.

Lil Wayne has pleaded not guilty.

— AGENCIES