



British blockbuster author Jeffrey Archer is releasing the fourth in his series featuring Detective William Warwick.

# Archer's race against time

KERRY PARNELL

**H**e's an avid collector of Australian art and Jeffrey Archer might even give some back – especially after being ambushed by a “wicked” VIP.

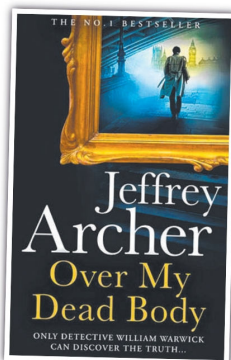
The blockbuster British author, who has mixed with movers and shakers for decades, is the proud owner of several artworks by Aussie artists including Arthur Boyd, Rupert Bunny and Ken Done. But he was surprised when he got an official request to send one of them Down Under.

“I am very privileged to have a Shoalhaven by Arthur Boyd,” he says. “Your former governor-general, Quentin Bryce, wrote me a sweet letter after I met her, but then she’s a cunning, wicked thing, as she asked would I consider leaving it to the National Gallery.”

Her plan might have worked, as Archer has earmarked much of his vast collection for galleries around the world. But that can wait. First, says the 81-year-old politician-turned-writer, his most pressing problem is living long enough to finish his book series.

Speaking to the Sunday Book Club from his London home, Archer is about to publish *Over My Dead Body*, the fourth in a series of eight books about Detective William Warwick.

While he doesn’t map out his series before he starts, he



• *Over My Dead Body*, by Jeffrey Archer, published by HarperCollins, is out now.

knows how it will end – hopefully.

“My problem is I have to live to 86 to make sure William becomes the commissioner. I know he’s clever enough, I’ve just got to make sure I stay alive,” he bellows down the phone.

Something tells us single-minded Archer will see it through. With a fortune estimated at £210m (\$391m), he says he has sold 320 million books – including Kane and Abel, which famously sold one million copies in its first week.

But it was not always so. His first novel *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* was rejected by 16 publishers in 1976 before Jonathan Cape printed 3000 copies, and it was not until 1979’s *Kane and Abel* he finally believed he’d made it.

“I remember the day it was

number one on the New York Times Bestseller List and I thought, ‘Now I believe it,’” he says, adding he’s still nervous before the publication of every novel. “I am very aware how many people there are out there with expectations. I do become anxious,” he says. “It’s a hell of a relief to hear someone say they couldn’t put it down.”

He puts his ability to pen page-turners down to a combination of discipline and divine talent.

“There is a big difference between being a writer and a storyteller and I am certain that being a storyteller is a God-given gift. I discovered by mistake I could tell a story. But talent isn’t enough, you need energy and discipline,” he says. He certainly has that – he works in two-hour blocks every day, from six to eight, 10 to 12 and two to four, saying, “I like having a routine that I can’t escape.”

And he writes his first draft in the same place, every year.

“I have a lovely home in Majorca, so I write the first draft there, then I’ll do the corrections in England,” he says.

It is indeed lovely – a £30m Mediterranean villa to go with his £40m London penthouse and his £5m country home in Cambridgeshire.

“I look out this window in the morning and think, you lucky bastard,” he told *The UK’s Sunday Times*.

With 47 books and plays behind him, Archer credits his life experiences – from

politician to peer to prisoner, plus his 55-year marriage to wife Mary – as enabling his success. Even his two years in jail for perjury in 2001 led to three volumes of *A Prison Diary* – which were all, naturally, bestsellers.

Everything he does is stored up. “Having so many political friends becomes experiences,” he says, “Working with Margaret Thatcher for 11 years, going to tea with John Howard when he was prime minister ... if it ever arose in a book, I’ve done it.”

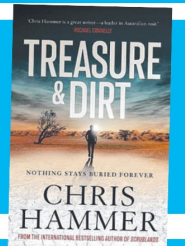
He has several Australian friends, including art dealer Philip Bacon and Alan Jones, “who I think is among the best radio commentators I’ve ever heard in my life. He is vicious to those who he does not love, but his sheer depth of knowledge, scholarship and discipline is remarkable,” he says.

Like Jones, don’t expect Archer to change his formula. “You don’t find sex, violence or bad language in my books and of course it makes me a bit old-fashioned, but it doesn’t stop the fact that I’ve sold 320 million books,” he says.

“I say to anybody writing, do what you want to do and pray the public like it.”

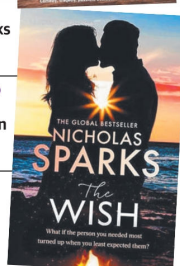
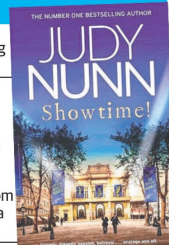
**OUR BOOK OF THE MONTH IS CUCKOO’S CRY BY CAROLINE OVERINGTON. GET 30 PER CENT OFF THE RRP OF \$19.99 AT BOOKTOPIA BY USING THE CODE CUCKOO AT CHECKOUT. AND TALK BOOKS OF ALL SORTS AT THE SUNDAY BOOK CLUB GROUP ON FACEBOOK.**

## BEST SELLERS



### TOP 10: FICTION

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <b>Apples Never Fall</b><br>Liane Moriarty<br>Macmillan<br>\$32.99               | Echo Publishing<br>\$32.99  |
| 2 <b>Beautiful World Where Are You</b><br>Sally Rooney<br>Faber & Faber<br>\$29.99 | 7 <b>2 Sisters Detective Agency</b><br>Candice Fox & James Patterson<br>Penguin Random House Australia<br>\$32.99 |
| 3 <b>Treasure And Dirt</b><br>Chris Hammer<br>Allen & Unwin<br>\$32.99             | 8 <b>The Wish</b><br>Nicholas Sparks<br>Hachette<br>\$32.99   |
| 4 <b>Showtime!</b><br>Judy Nunn<br>Penguin Random House Australia<br>\$32.99       | 9 <b>The Man Who Died Twice</b><br>Richard Osman<br>Viking<br>\$32.99   |
| 5 <b>It Ends With Us</b><br>Colleen Hoover<br>Simon & Schuster<br>\$19.99          | 10 <b>The Butler</b><br>Danielle Steel<br>Macmillan<br>\$32.99  |
| 6 <b>Three Sisters</b><br>Heather Morris   |   |



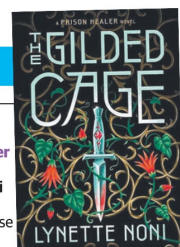
### TOP 10: NON-FICTION

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 <b>The Storyteller</b><br>Dave Grohl<br>Simon & Schuster<br>\$45                                | Guinness World Records<br>\$44.99  |
| 2 <b>Ottolenghi Test Kitchen: Shelf Love</b><br>Yotam Ottolenghi & Noor Murad<br>Ebury<br>\$49.99 | 7 <b>Atomic Habits</b><br>James Clear<br>Random House Business Books<br>\$35       |
| 3 <b>Home</b><br>Stephanie Alexander<br>Macmillan<br>\$59.99                                      | 8 <b>How I've Kept The Weight Off</b><br>Anna Van Dyken<br>Macmillan<br>\$39.99    |
| 4 <b>What Really Happened In Wuhan</b><br>Sharrif Markson<br>HarperCollins<br>\$34.99             | 9 <b>The Barefoot Investor</b><br>Scott Pape<br>Wiley<br>\$29.95                   |
| 5 <b>Well Hello</b><br>Leigh Sales & Annabel Crabb<br>Puffin<br>\$39.99                           | 10 <b>Sort Your Money Out &amp; Get Invested</b><br>Glen James<br>Wiley<br>\$29.95 |
| 6 <b>Guinness World Records 2022</b>  |  |



### TOP 10: CHILDREN

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 <b>They're Bee-Hind You! (The Bad Guys Episode #14)</b><br>Aaron Blabey<br>Scholastic<br>\$15.99 | 6 <b>The Gilded Cage (The Prison Healer Book 2)</b><br>Lynette Noni<br>Penguin Random House Australia<br>\$24.99 |
| 2 <b>Do Not Open This Book or Else</b><br>Andy Lee<br>Lake Press<br>\$19.99                        | 7 <b>Ride The Wind: Skydragon 3</b><br>Anh Do<br>Allen & Unwin<br>\$15.99  |
| 3 <b>Bluey: Hooray It's Christmas!</b><br>Puffin<br>\$9.99   | 8 <b>Bluey: Verandah Santa</b><br>Puffin<br>\$16.99  |
| 4 <b>Bluey: Charades</b><br>Puffin<br>\$14.99  | 9 <b>Weirdo #17: Spinning Weird</b><br>Anh Do<br>Scholastic<br>\$15.99   |
| 5 <b>Disney Storybook Collection: Advent Calendar</b><br>Scholastic<br>\$39.99                     | 10 <b>Claris: Palace Party</b><br>Megan Hess<br>Hardie Grant Egmont<br>\$24.99                                   |



Source: Nielsen BookScan