

Bali

lest we forget

The Bali bombings killed 202 people, 88 of them Australians. Coming to terms with the tragedy is a journey of mind, body and spirit, writes **David Leser**, as the first anniversary on October 12 approaches.



IT WAS THE SONG HE DIDN'T LIKE.

Marc Gajardo had been dancing with his girlfriend Hanabeth Luke at the Sari Club on October 12 last year when Cher's song *Believe* came blasting through the speakers.

*After love, after love, after love ...
Do you believe in life after love?*

"I have some pride," Marc told Hanabeth in mock indignation at Cher's overly synthesised sound. "I'll see you in a bit."

"See you in a bit," Hanabeth replied, as the man she loved turned towards the bar. They were the last words she ever spoke to him.

Of all the horrific images that have assailed me in the past 12 months – bodies torn apart, flesh and metal and bloody carnage everywhere, innocent lives ended senselessly, murderously – it is this rather simplistic idea that has stayed longest: you like the song on the dance floor and you live. You don't, and you die.

It's this randomness, this cruel arbitrariness that strikes me now, and perhaps haunts all of us in this new, nefarious world. Who gets chosen? Who survives? The man at the bar who bent down to pick up his wallet just as the first bomb tore through Paddy's nightclub. He lived, while his friends sitting beside him were decapitated.

The families delayed over dinner, the backpackers who took a little longer in the shower, the car full of teenagers held up in traffic and forced to walk, the Byron Bay mother, Jodi Osborne, who had a premonition of something evil occurring that night and insisted her two teenage sons stay in rather than go to the Sari Club as planned; the ones who came down with Bali belly and were suddenly too ill to go out; the ones who took a nap – and there were six of Hanabeth's friends who did so – and ended up sleeping past their appointed hour? "A magic sleep", is how Hanabeth describes it now.

How is it that they were not taken, while all those others – equally innocent, equally beloved – found themselves walking, riding, driving, dancing into the arms of death?

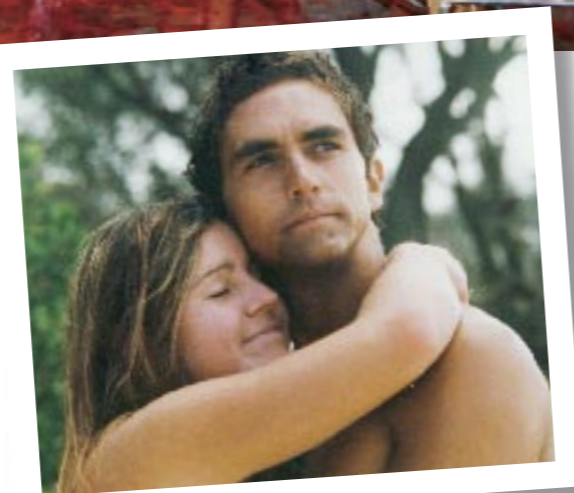
The photograph of environmental science student Hanabeth Luke on the front page of *The Australian* helping a stranger, 17-year-old Tom Singer, out of the inferno became one of the iconic images of that sickening, unforgettable night.

And yet talking to her now, in her home in Byron Bay, NSW, I can't help but go back to those songs, particularly their lyrics. ▶

LEFT: EXPRESS SYNDICATION/PICTURE MEDIA. RIGHT: RENEE NOWY/TARGETNEWSPIX



Orphan, Putu Purnama, four, holds an image of his dead mother, Kadek Alit Margini, killed in front of the Sari Club on October 12 last year. His father had died only months previously. He is now cared for by his grandparents. Opposite: The scene of devastation along Legian Street on the morning after the blast.



"TRY AND IMAGINE the biggest wave you have ever known and then times it by about 1000. Imagine it breaking over you. All around you. The whole place exploding."

Above: Hanabeth Luke, 23, today. Her boyfriend Marc Gajardo, 30, (with her, inset left) died in the Sari Club (far left). She managed to escape, but could not find Marc. Hanabeth helping wounded Australian Tom Singer, 17, (above left) in one of the defining images of the night.

No sooner had *Believe* finished when Sophie Ellis Bextor's *Murder on the Dancefloor*, came on.

*You'll just have to pray
Don't think you'll get away
I will prove you wrong
I'll lead you all astray
Stay another song I'll blow you all away
Hey, it's murder on the dancefloor*

Hanabeth remembers it well because it was during this song that two guys sidled up to her and her English friend Mel Coen and began trying to chat them up. How ironic she thought. "I feel like killing them both."

After nudging them away, she moved to the back of the dance floor with her friend and it was this movement which saved both their lives. "Everyone who was standing where we were was killed," she says.

Eminem's song *Without Me* followed straight on from *Murder on the Dancefloor*. Then mayhem. "Try and imagine the biggest wave you have ever known," Hanabeth says, "and then times it by about 1000. Imagine it breaking over you. All around you. The whole place exploding.

"I remember my body being lifted. I really thought I was dying. I thought, 'This is it', and then I realised I could move. And so I did. I ran like I had never run before.

"Everything was hot to touch – dry heat,

stench, my nostrils filled with smoke ... I kicked my shoes off and began to climb. There were these electrical wires which had been severed and I thought they could be live, but I had no choice. I was moving so quickly I was one of the first to get out of there – probably because I was sober. If I have any regrets it was not standing at the top of the wall and shouting, 'You can get up this way'.

"I just remember grabbing these electrical wires and climbing up this 12-foot wall ... and then I climbed over three garages and dropped onto shrapnel and glass and bits of metal. I landed without barely cutting my feet."

Hanabeth's thoughts then turned to Marc. She wanted to get to the front of the nightclub to find him, except her path was blocked by scenes of utter devastation. The dead and the dying and those burnt and blackened beyond recognition.

She then saw Tom Singer. "He was conscious and I said to him, 'Can you walk?' He said, 'I don't think so.' I said, 'I don't care if both your legs are broken, you have to get up now, otherwise you will die. I didn't know a photo was being taken. If I had I would probably have sworn obscenities at the photographer."

As we know, Tom Singer died a month later from his burns. Marc Gajardo probably died instantly. "As soon as I knew, I went to a phone at the hospital and called Marc's parents [Ray and Carole] in Cornwall

[England]," Hanabeth says now, her eyes brimming with tears.

"That is the worst thing I have ever done in my life. Nothing I ever do will compare to that. I spoke to his dad – I didn't know what to say. I said, 'Ray, Marc is dead. There's been a bomb and Marc is dead.'

"He started yelling, 'NO! NO!' ... I heard the sound as his knees hit the floor and Marc's mum screaming in the background.

"They had so welcomed me into their family. They considered me a daughter ... Losing a boyfriend is horrific and I loved him so dearly. He was my best friend. He was my rock, my family, but to lose a child is incomparable.

"For me, there will be other boyfriends. There will be no other Marcs and I will always

miss him, but to lose a child ... I can't even think what that would be like."

BALI WASHES THE EYES CLEAN. LUSH rice paddies which shimmer in the afternoon light. Ceremonies of colour and pageantry and temples filled with offerings to a multitude of gods. Children with dancing, smiling eyes who wave and shout, "Hello" at the passing tourist. Men with rippling muscles and women of such loveliness that it literally takes the breath away.

In many parts of Bali you can still find, despite the obvious trappings of modernity, an exotic, timeless splendour, where people move in tandem with the tides and seasons, bound to one another through family and ritual and a collective sense of honour.

And yet Bali is hurting, perhaps as never before. During 10 days there recently, it was distressingly obvious that, one year after the catastrophic events of October 12, and compounding problems caused by SARS, the Gulf War and the recent bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, the island was reeling.

Despite a slight upturn in tourism, some hotels have seen zero occupancy for months on end and been forced to lay off all their staff. Shops, restaurants, spas, guest houses, cafes have gone for weeks without a single customer. Businesses have collapsed. The economy has lost hundreds of millions of dollars. Farmers have seen their markets disappear. Food has been dumped. Many fishermen have been reduced to one meal a

day because no one is buying their produce. Debt has skyrocketed.

"Some young people have no idea what to do," says Kejit Wayan Arnaya, a director of the Bali Hati Foundation, a non-government organisation leading the recovery program. "So we have to teach them how to use the land now, how to raise pigs, how to raise cattle."

Up in the achingly beautiful highlands of central Bali, in the woodcarving village of Umah Anyar near Ubud, Wayan Kenik, a 21-year-old man explained to *The Weekly* how his entire community had been affected by the terrorist attacks.

"Before the bombing, I worked six days a week as a waiter in the hotel. I also worked as a woodcarver. ▶



Above: Kuta Beach without the tourists who kept the Balinese economy buoyant. Right: Bombing widow Endang Tsanik and her son.



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“Now I can only work 15 days a month in the hotel, because there are no guests. And there is no woodcarving work, so there is much sadness in the village.”

“Before the bombing, we had good orders from America and Australia ... but one week after the bombing there were no orders. We have lost our confidence.”

Throughout Bali, the population of small villages like Umah Anyar has swelled as the unemployed return home from the tourist industry and other businesses. Often there is not enough rice to go around. Burglaries are up, drug and alcohol problems are on the rise and social divisions have become more stark than ever.

In Nyuh Kuning, a small village close to Umah Anyar, the old are now going hungry in order to feed their children. Breast-feeding mothers, deprived of a protein-rich diet, have become increasingly emaciated. Once strapping young men have taken on the shrunken look of the hungry. Students have dropped out of college because their parents can no longer afford to pay their fees. And far from this being an isolated example of struggle and hardship, it is being replicated the length and breadth of the island.

Gloria Goodwin, an Australian crisis-care worker operating in the north of Bali, told *The Weekly* that orphanages had doubled their capacity because parents could no longer afford to keep their children.

“We are dealing with people who are extremely poor,” she said. “They are starving. They have all lost their jobs. People are stressed and depressed.”

She also said prostitution had “gone through the roof,” and that paedophiles had begun moving in from Thailand since the joint crackdown on paedophilia there by Thai and Australian police. “They’re moving into Bali because the people are so poor. It means food to these children.”

And this is just the indirect cost of the bombing. In one desperately poor neighbourhood of Denpasar, I visited four-and-a-half year old Putu Purnama, whose father died suddenly from typhus in May last year.

Five months later, his mother, Kadek Alit Margini, was working at the Sari Club to try and earn enough to support her child. Just after 11pm on October 12, she stepped outside the club to buy some food when the second bomb exploded.

Somehow she survived the blast and was flown three days later to Darwin for an emergency operation. She died on the plane, one of 39 Indonesians killed and 125 injured in the terrorist attacks.

Putu is now being cared for by his paternal grandparents in a single concrete room off a side alley filled with barking dogs, squawking chickens and the overpowering stench of urine. There is virtually no space in which to move, let alone for a child to play.

In a small shrine in a corner of the courtyard there are two photographs, one

each of Putu’s mother and father. “Putu thinks they are away from home,” his grandmother, Nyoman Resi, says through an interpreter. “He thinks they are in the hospital!”

Nyoman Resi says that before the bombing she was earning a living by selling ceremonial offerings to temples. “Now,” she says, “I cannot work. I must look after Putu.”

Is she worried about the future? “No,” she replies with a smile. “I am helped by my children.”

What does she think of the terrorist attacks? “I keep thinking this was black magic, or that my [dead] son needed his wife to come with him. Now maybe Putu’s parents also need their son to go with them [to the spirit world], but I will not give him to them. He will stay with us.”

South of Putu’s home, in a small village near the capital, I also visited five women who had all lost their husbands on the night of October 12. Four of the men were cousins, all of them transport drivers, and they had been standing outside the Sari Club when the second bomb tore through the Kuta ►

ABOVE: NEWSPIX. ABOVE RIGHT: CHRISTOPHER LEGGETT.



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It keeps me awake
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Above: Byron Bay resident Barry Wallace. The beach brings memories of his daughter Jodi Wallace, one of the hundreds of victims of the October 12 bombings.

Australians have been the most generous and we thank you so much for your love and support."

IT USUALLY TAKES A CALAMITY FOR THE collective heart to crack open, for us to realise the common humanity we all share. We saw that after September 11 and again after October 12 – the way unbearable shock and sadness touched us all, softening us to the pain of the world, deepening our connection with others.

All the gestures, big and small, that attempted to salvage the unsalvable. Who even knows the names of some of those who rushed in to help at the bomb site and in the hospitals and morgue following the explosions? Rescuing the injured, sitting vigil at bedsides, holding the hands of strangers, contacting loved ones, searching for remains, bringing in medicine, ice, water, bandages, creams, doing what they could in the face of insuperable odds.

Daniel Treacy, 19, still can't bring himself to talk about what he saw that night. Only that as soon as he heard the blast, he came running to see what had happened, to see if he could help.

He's not sure, but he thinks he carried 20 or 30 people out of that inferno, many of whom were already dead or in the process of dying terrible deaths. "It's still pretty vivid," he says, "and I can't really share it. It's painful and I don't want to burden others. It keeps me awake at night."

Like Hanabeth Luke and Jodi Osborne, Daniel Treacy is from Byron Bay, NSW, the community I happen to share with them. But they could be from a community anywhere in Australia – Dubbo, Forbes, Rockhampton, Newcastle, a suburb of Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane ... All have felt the ripple effects of terror, all can take their place now as exemplars of life in the post September 11 and October 12 world.

My daughter's new friend in the neighbourhood happens to be Olivia Salvatori, whose mother, Kathy, died in the Sari Club while celebrating her birthday.

The place in town where I buy my clothes happens to be owned by Barry Wallace, the man who lost his daughter, Jodi Wallace, in the bombing. Often I go to the beach and see Hanabeth Luke's mother, Maggi, who nearly lost her daughter ...

In other words, we all know someone who knew someone who knew someone else who died or who lost a loved one or who was horribly disfigured or who is still in hospital receiving skin grafts, or who will never walk again, or who will suffer from nightmares for years to come because of what they saw. All of us are now living in six degrees of separation or less to an unbearable agony.

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neighbourhood. Between them, they left behind 12 children.

"It affects our lives so much," says one of the widows, Made Rathitiasih, "because the head of the family is gone. Sometimes, we don't know what to do because we have to raise the kids ourselves.

"The older children can understand what has happened, but the younger ones don't. They think their daddies went somewhere and will be back some day."

Made Rathitiasih says she is now doing a beauty course so that she might eventually find work to support her family. Three of the other widows are learning to sew, courtesy of a sewing co-operative established and paid for by Australians.

All of them are worried that their new skills might not sustain them. And they are angry for what the terrorists have done to them.

"I hate Amrozi," Made Rathitiasih says, speaking for them all. "I hate him so much, we would like to see him executed. There is no mercy, because they have taken so much from us. Our children lost their fathers."

Endang Tsanik, a mother of three small children and the only Muslim among the five, said the terrorists had acted against God. "This was not religion," she said. "A good Muslim would never have done this."

Since the bombing, these women have received some financial support from the Indonesian government, as well as donations from overseas. In one case, this has only served to aggravate the pain. One of the widows, Wayan Rastini, and her two children were forced to leave their home because of jealousy from her brother-in-law's family over the amount of money she'd received. She now lives with her sister. For the entire time I sat with her and the four other widows, Wayan Rastini said not a word. All she could do was cry.

Made Rathitiasih spoke for her when she said, "We are scared. We can't really talk about the future. It is hard enough to get through each day," even though she was at pains to thank Australians for the help they had given them.

"From all the countries," she said,