



The Brave Ones: East Timor, 1999 (Short Black)

John Birmingham

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As the convoy growled and squeaked to a halt in the dark, angry militiamen and soldiers began to shout and wave at the Australians, demanding they move aside. The Brave Ones' vanguard presented as a B-movie vision of some pirate biker gang from Hell, a rat bastard outfit in black tee-shirts, camouflage pants, long hair and bandanas, with axes in their eyes and guns at the ready.

The Brave Ones follows the Indonesian Army's Battalion 745 as it withdrew from East Timor after the 1999 independence vote, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake. Birmingham's unflinching account reveals the scorched-earth tactics of the retreating troops, and shows just how close Australia came to armed conflict with Indonesia.

Short Blacks are gems of recent Australian writing – brisk reads that quicken the pulse and stimulate the mind.

John Birmingham is the author of *He Died with a Felafel in His Hand*, *Leviathan: The Unauthorised Biography of Sydney*, three popular fiction series and two Quarterly Essays.

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