

## An Indecent Proposal?

By Katrina Partridge

They were the yearlings whose confirmation and pedigree, an ounce of luck, and a lashing or two of the marketing dollar captured the dreams of some of the wealthiest participants in the thoroughbred industry. In so doing, their sales generated the loudest applause from auctioneers and vendors alike across Australian and New Zealand sales rings in 2002... and, perhaps not surprisingly, the biggest outlay in funds.

The annual million-dollar gamble on prospective superstars provides the thoroughbred industry with some of its greatest stories. But just as "champions" can emerge from the glossy price tags, so too can the failures whose stories of lackluster ability seem to almost eclipse the success stories of their peers in terms of the number of times you hear the tales of woe repeated.

One of the best examples of this has to be Keeneland's record-priced 1983 yearling. Offered during the heady selling days of the 1980s, US\$10.2M was paid for a son of Northern Dancer. The colt - Snaafi Dancer - never reached a race track (ability – or, to be more precise – a complete lack of it – denied him that opportunity). To add further salt to his investor's wounds he also failed in his fallback career path. As a stallion Snaafi suffered the curse of infertility. He sired a total of only four foals - only one of which ever won a race.

The Australian/New Zealand 2002 sales toppers have had mixed success as the 2003 Spring Carnival draws to a close. Whilst some have been diligently repaying their initial investment, the future of others may instead rely on an ability to emulate the mighty Nureyev who earned only \$42,522 on the track, but went on to earn an estimated \$100 million at stud.

Keeping these factors in mind, it is worth taking a look at the "golden graduates of 2002" to see if any have fulfilled – or are on their way to fulfilling - the aspirations of those who first looked at them and saw "future champion" stamped all over the auctioneer's million dollar proposal.

**AUD\$1,500,000:** The top priced yearling of the 2002 class was the authoritatively bred bay filly by Danehill out of Sommes Sound. Demi O'Byrne (as agent) held the final bid. **LA BOISSELLE** (as she has since been named) is the half sister to the exceptional G1 gallopers Assertive Lass (7 wins - 3 in succession - 3 at 2 and \$686,743 inc. AJC Flight S. Gr 1 (d/h), STC Coolmore Classic Gr 1, 2d AJC Oaks Gr 1) and Assertive Lad (Champion 2YO 1999/2000, 3YO Miler 2000/01. 8 wins - 3 in succession - 5 at 2 - and \$3,358,275 including the AJC Doncaster H. Gr 1, Champagne S. Gr 1, Sires Produce S. Gr 1 and 3d STC Golden Slipper S. Gr 1). Although La Boisselle didn't match her siblings' success at 2, she has had (apart from a win and four seconds) a stakes placing in the Hill Smith Stakes. She may have returned less than 1% of her purchase price at this stage of the game but she is a filly who need feel no pressure. Whatever her racing future she stands guaranteed an elite position in one of Australia's most prestigious broodmare bands.

**AUD\$1,400,000: CRITICAL LIST** (Danehill (USA)/Verocative) was purchased by Gooree Stud at the Magic Millions Premier Sale. The colt prompted media attention well beyond his sale date by being returned to his Queensland breeder Ron Gilbert (at Highgrove Stud) after failing an x-ray examination. He was subsequently operated on & given time to recover before being placed in work with Brian Mayfield-Smith. CRITICAL LIST'S dam was a smart two year old in her day with 6 wins - 3 in succession - 3 at 2 - and \$130,760 including the VATC Thoroughbred Club S G3. As a broodmare she has produced 6 foals, 2 of whom have raced for one winner. A check of the pedigree page sees the third dam as the mighty Summoned whose winning progeny include the black type performers Zeditave, Alannon, Pampas Fire, Zedagal and Square Deal. CRITICAL LIST scored a second and a win in his first barrier trials in May of this year and romped home by four lengths at his October debut at Seymour. Word on the grapevine is that this is a colt to keep an eye on.

**AUD\$1,200,000:** Tony McEvoy trains the already credentialed **KEEP THE FAITH** - a brown colt by Sunday Silence out of Duelling Girl. By late July, nominations for this colt included the Caulfield Guineas, Caulfield Cup, Cox Plate and Victoria Derby – perhaps not unrealistic expectations when you consider that the colt won his barrier trial with ease and went out as favorite in his first start at Cheltenham to score an impressive 4 length win. Alas, the colt has shown just one minor placing since that date and we may have to wait until the Autumn Carnival for any major shift in the current ROI figures – which currently stand at less than 1%.

**AUD\$1,100,000:** When Rob McAnulty secured the final bid on the full brother to the G1 Golden Slipper winning Catbird, he took home not only a future star performer, but one that also secured him an early return on investment. **DANBIRD** has already repaid his connections \$315,400 after 2 wins at 1100 and 1200m (including the G2 STC Pago Pago S), a dead heat for second in the Gold Coast Magic Millions 2 YO Classic RL plus placings in the Spring Stakes and the Up and Coming Stakes. Expect his full brother to assume a high public profile at the 2004 yearling sales.

**AUD\$1,100,000:** Rob McAnulty must have been comfortable with the \$1.1M price tag as he bought a second colt for the same amount. The (as yet) unraced **SUNDAY GIANT** (a brown colt by Sunday Silence out of Tinaca) is half brother to the G2 winner in the USA – Quest Star (3 wins 8½f. to 1½m. and \$612,590 inc. Gulfstream Park Pan American H. Gr 2, Saratoga National Museum Of Racing Hall Of Fame H. Gr 2. 2d Belmont Bowling Green H. Gr 2). The real value in this colt's pedigree however, derives from his dam's half-sister - Mariah's Storm (herself a G2 winner and earner of in excess of US\$950,000) - who is the dam of none other than the 2000 Cartier Horse of the Year – Giant's Causeway.

**AUD\$1,050,000:** Graeme Rogerson signed the cheque for the leading colt at the 2002 New Zealand Premier Sale – a brown colt by Zabeel out of Marquise. The dam's name will be familiar to many as she is the regally bred producer of Shower of Roses (a full sister to **MUTHEER**) who in 6 starts has managed to accrue 3 wins and 2 placings over 1200 to 2000m and \$440,030 including the STC Arrowfield Stud S. Gr 1, 2d AJC Australian Oaks Gr 1 and 3d in the AJC Hobartville S. Gr 2. **MUTHEER** is being trained by Graeme, and to date has only trialed.

**AUD\$950,000:** A star in the making perhaps for our next graduate – the G2 placed son of Danehill out of Canny Miss? The aptly named **UNTOUCHABLE** is a full brother to Camarena (9 wins - 4 in succession - 1 at 2 - 1030 to 2400m. and \$938,260 inc. QTC Queensland Derby Gr 1 and 3d AJC Australian Oaks Gr 1). Purchased by Darley Australia and trained by Gai Waterhouse the colt demonstrated early ability at his trials where he scored a 5.5 length win at his first outing. He raced four times as a 2-year old for 2 wins and a placing (2d STC Todman S. Gr 2) and \$100,600.

**AUD\$925,000:** The second of the Sunday Silence's is the filly **GLENDELVINE** (out of Grilse). Her breeding reflects a heavy influence of talented European horses, and at the third dam, a shift to the US and the talented producer IT'S IN THE AIR (by Mr Prospector) - the Champion 2YO Filly in the USA in 1978 (8 wins - 3 in succession - 2 at 2 - 6f. to 1¼m. and \$626,219). This regally bred filly is inbred to former Champion Sire Halo, one strain coming via his son Sunday Silence, while the other appearing via his daughter Glorious Song. Her first trial (1st August 2003) saw her run over 850m to place fourth. She won her next trial and at her first outing scored a win in a strong Class 1 field at Newcastle on Newcastle Cup Day. Arrowfield remain part-owners in the filly suggesting she is destined for lofty heights either on the track or back at the farm.

**AUD\$850,000:** Summing up the nature of the thoroughbred industry – and indeed the challenges awaiting those who invest at the top end of the curve - is the aptly named **THEATRE OF DREAMS**. The colt by Danehill (USA) out of Piccadilly Circus started only once – placing fourth at a barrier trial in 2002– and has now been out for over a year.

**AUD\$800,000:** Of all the pedigrees of the 2002 graduates, if there was one to make you think “future investment” – it has to be this one. The bay colt is by Danehill (USA) out of the superbly bred and performed Tristalove (11 wins - 5 in succession - and \$770,629 incl. AJC Sires' Produce S. Gr 1 and SAJC Australasian Oaks Gr 1, sister to ANTWERP, three-quarter sister to DON EDUARDO and PERUZZI and three-quarter sister-in-blood to KAAPSTAD). The colt (named **KEMPINSKY**) also has a trio of talented siblings – full brother VIKING RULER, winner of the AJC Spring Champion S. Gr 1 (1800m.) and \$353,300 (now first season sire at Cambridge Stud) and full sisters Chimeara (G3 placed) and the Listed winner Diamond Like.

KEMPINSKY may have had a few investors anxious with a lackluster 9<sup>th</sup> for this first outing. But like a number of the 2002 golden graduates his blue blood simply hadn't warmed sufficiently and by the close of the Spring Carnival this colt had scorched home with two wins (including the G2 AAMI Vase), a second in the G1 Victoria Derby and a third in the G1 Caulfield Guineas). In so doing, his earnings exceeded by \$450,000 by 1 November 03 – ROI 57% ... and counting.

This colt's pedigree ensures him a future in a serving barn no matter how partial (or otherwise) he remains to ongoing G1 racing fame. \$800,000 well spent perhaps?

**AND FOR THOSE WHO PREFER TO BACK THE UNDERDOG:** Keep an eye out for **ANGELBONNE**. The \$300 brown colt by Darbonne out of Christmas Message qualified as the cheapest 2002 yearling currently in training. Of note, the colt ran a credible 4<sup>th</sup> in his barrier trial at Eagle Farm on 8 July and whilst you have to look hard to find much black type in his pedigree and his sire/dam will be unfamiliar to some... well, stranger things have happened!

## **STATISTICS**

Of the ten highest priced lots sold in 2002: Seven were sold at the Australian Easter Yearling Sale, one at the Magic Millions Premier Sale and two at the New Zealand Premier Sale.

Danehill (USA) sired 6 of the top ten yearlings, Sunday Silence (USA) 3 and Zabeel 1.

Colts made up 8 of the top ten yearlings, 2 were fillies.

Stratheden Stud consigned 1 lot, Coolmore (as agent) 1, Highgrove 1, Vinery (as agent) 1, Collingrove (as agent) 1, Cambridge 2 and Arrowfield (as agent) 3.

Demi O'Byrne (as agent) signed for a total of 2 lots, Gooree Stud 1, Darley Australia 1, Rob MacAnulty (as agent) – 2, Emirates Park 1, Inglis (as agent) 1 and Newlands Thoroughbreds 1.

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