



## This month, we've been talking to . . . Craig Smith

Craig Smith grew up living in the scenic South Island tourist town of Queenstown with his mother and five siblings, and has worked at a variety of jobs, from cook to ski instructor. As a child he remembers telling his mother, 'When I grow up, I'm going to become a musician.' Her answer? 'You can't do both!' She was right. Although he spends much of his time writing songs for an adult audience, Craig couldn't escape his childish side and was soon writing songs 'for the less mature'. His #1 bestseller *The Wonky Donkey* was published by Scholastic in 2009, followed by *Willbee the Bumblebee* in 2010, both with hilarious illustrations by Craig's friend, Katz Cowley. His new title, *Square Eyes*, is due out in October.

We asked Craig some questions about himself and his writing, and here's what he said...

*Where were you born? Where do you live now?*

I was born in Clyde, Central Otago, and I live in Queenstown, New Zealand.

*Where did you go to school? Did you have a nickname?*

I went to Queenstown Primary School, Wakatipu High School, Southland Boys High school, Invercargill, and Cargill High School, Invercargill. My nickname was Smithy.

*What were you like in school? What is the naughtiest thing you did?*

I was very talkative and questioning, sometimes to the frustration of my teachers. Some teachers had a tough time teaching me. I used to drive my mum to near insanity by wandering off, often on little adventures by myself with my dog, sometimes for hours. I did this from as young as 6 or 7 years old. I'd be off. We lived not far from a lake or a river and I remember my mum telling me, 'don't you ever do that again' ... several times.

*What was your favourite book growing up?*

*Bad Jelly the Witch* by Spike Milligan when younger, and later on, *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George.

*Who is your favourite children's author?*

Spike Milligan, Jean Craighead George and Roald Dahl.

*What is your favourite food/colour/movie?*

**Food:** Mexican. **Colour:** Green. **Movie:** *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* with Gene Wilder.

*Who inspired you to write?*

My Mum, my Nana, my nieces/nephews and little cousins.

*How did you get started? How old were you?*

I was 31 years old. As a full-time musician I was asked by my nieces/nephews and cousins to play a song on rainy days so I started writing stories in song.

*Why did you want to be a writer?*

To make children laugh!

*How do you think up ideas?*

They come from all over the place. The idea for *The Wonky Donkey* came from the old joke, 'what do you call a donkey with three legs?'

*What is the best thing about being an author?*

Smiles on kids' faces, emails I get from parents telling me how what I've written has made a difference to their lives.

*Have you had a funny or embarrassing moment as an author/illustrator?*

Yes: answering questions from students and saying 'the young boy' when it's actually a young girl or vice versa (I've learned to say 'young person with long hair' now).

Do you have a special place where you write?  
Anywhere that's quiet with no one else around.

What do you do when you are not writing?  
This morning I went skiing and in the afternoon I went paragliding. I enjoy performing to children too.

What would you have chosen to be if you were not an author?

A professional basketball player! ... lol. I love to fly and I enjoy seeing fun on people's faces, so a tandem paragliding pilot seems like a good job!

Which famous person from the past would you like to talk to?

Albert Einstein.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

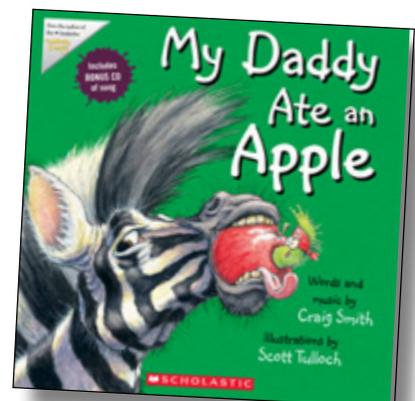
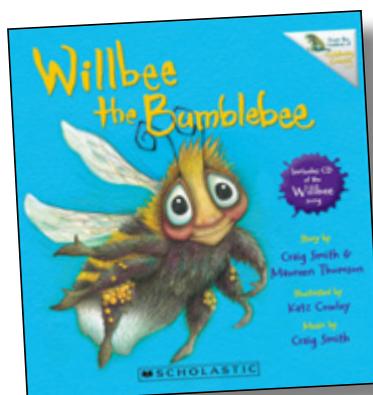
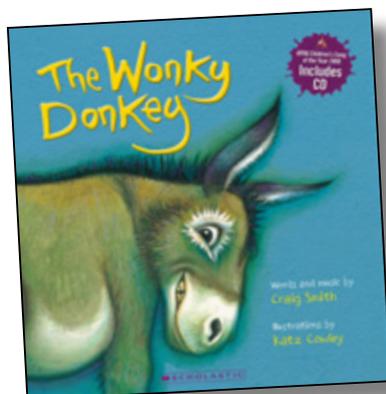
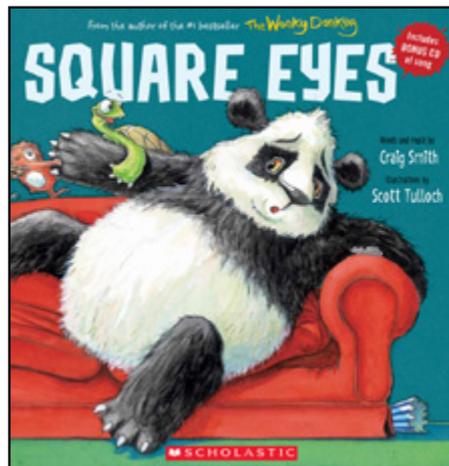
I'm working on being a neologist and trying to be an awesomist.

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## SCHOLASTIC NZ BOOKS BY CRAIG SMITH

### Square Eyes

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Format	250 x 240 mm
Extent	32 pp + Audio CD
Age	All



 SCHOLASTIC

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