

Cult heroes

AUSTRALIA's best-known newsreader, James Dibble, is rumoured to be a guru of fun.

A childhood portrait of Dibble MBE is supposed to be the face of Adrian, Guru of New Wave Consciousness, a cult and graffiti hero created by Sydney artist David Art Wales.

Both men say the story is untrue.

"Adrian doesn't even look like I did," said Dibble, living a busy retirement at seaside Manly in Sydney since reading his last ABC newscast in 1983.

Dibble, however, admits to attending an "Adrianist" party at Giebe in 1984 and to being a friend of the guru's designer for two years.

Art Wales and Dibble met through Sydney ABC rock station 2JJJ. Dibble had done a half-hour surreal radio show called *What's Rangoon to You is Grafton to Me* for producer Russell Guy in 1978. Art Wales had been designing the 2JJJ fan magazine *Alan* after running a mail-order flattery service called *Nice Enterprises*.

Guru Adrian's first appearance was in a strip in the magazine, quoting from the dictionary and giving wise advice about Sydney's Centrepoint Tower. Since then, Guru Adrian has developed a philosophy as bizarre as Catholicism and more catching.

The Guru is a seven-year-old child who discovered the secret of eternal youth from a schoolboy chemistry set. He lives by the mantra *Having Fun is Half the Fun* and gives followers such advice as: "Celebrate your birthday everyday."

Already, 60,000 stickers and hundreds of T-shirts have been printed bearing his disarmingly, grinning likeness. His creator has been interviewed by radio star John Laws; items on the philosophy have appeared in *The Bulletin* magazine *Truth* newspaper and on *Simon Townsend's Wonder World*.

The cult has blossomed further in the past three months. The guru's perpetually seven-year-old face expounds dogma in a full page of *Countdown* magazine each month and Sydney's *On The Street* made him cover guru on a recent issue.

Dibble says that he is amused by the rumour and says he identifies with the Guru: "I try to be a bit more lighthearted about things and this is a send-up of the serious."

For Art Wales, his send-up is serious. "So much pop culture these days is devoid of warmth," Art Wales says. "Guru Adrian is putting spiritualism in a modern context."

"I am trying to make spirituality less serious and more accessible," says Art Wales, a blue-eyed 22-year-old. "If you are going to pose a model for people's lifestyles, which these things often turn



Above, Art Wales and, below, with James Dibble



out to be, you may as well suggest the best way of living you can see possible."

His Guru is a model of clean fun. Adrianists are advised not to watch TV, to smoke only the Respiratory Alternative (fresh air sucked through a paper tube) and use the dictionary as a bible.

The urge to give a better alternative to the hip generation than bad news and heroin is the link between Art Wales and Dibble. For the past three years Dibble has been chairman of a non-profit company that organises late-teenagers to give guidance talks to their younger peers. The Peer Support Program runs in 240 NSW high schools and started in New Zealand this year.

"In a way, our attitudes line up," Dibble says of Guru Adrian.

"Guru Adrian has always thought James Dibble is a warm guy."

— DAVID MONAGHAN