Television celebrity Andrew Daddo is also an author of children’s books, and now he has written a memoir, *It’s All Good*. It isn’t a typical show-biz puff piece, though. It’s a tribute to an American friend who died young, written (ostensibly) in the form of a letter to the friend’s three-year-old daughter, so she can to add to her own sketchy memories when she’s old enough to read it. In the meantime, he’s decided we all might as well have a chance to read it too.

Daddo met Ray O’Neal in New York in 1991. Having managed to get himself fired from his job as an MTV presenter (by the surefire means of grossly insulting a senior network vice-president), Daddo decides he wants to ride across the USA on a motorbike, and he needs someone to come along. His friends aren’t interested, or are too busy, and they introduce him to Ray, another 24-year-old. Off they go, not on Harleys – they can’t afford Harleys – but on high-powered Japanese equivalents. If there’s a masculine version of chick lit, this is it. They ride their bikes, they fish, they camp out, they drink far too much – though if they get laid we don’t hear about it:

Daddo has a girlfriend back home he later married. They are conscious at every moment of their image – is a brown leather jacket permissible? Do their goatees make them look like proper bikers? On their way across the continent they visit all the sacred sites of television history, like the Grand Canyon, famous from an episode of the Brady Bunch, which Daddo rather disarmingly remembers as his family’s favourite TV role models.
Nostalgia for the faraway days of the 1990s, when Farrah Fawcett hair was hip and rap wasn’t mainstream, colours Daddo’s story. Sometimes he tries to be clever and philosophical, but it’s usually pretty superficial: ‘GOD BLESS AMERICA … is a sign you see and a phrase that’s heard often in America. Maybe Americans know they need blessing, because we all reap what we sow.’ And his closing wrap-up is a real tear-jerker: ‘I am sorry you’ll have to grow up without your father, Rose. He would’ve been great at throwing that disapproving dad face at you every time you overloaded your fork …’ etc. etc.

This isn’t an autobiography, but we do learn quite a lot about the Daddo family growing up, and I suspect that this will be one of its strongest selling points. The character of Ray seems affable and pleasant, and his story is a sad one: dying in his mid-thirties in a workplace accident. But It’s All Good is not particularly well-written or profound. Despite the nostalgia, Daddo doesn’t appear to have changed or matured in the 15 years since the events described in the book: there’s none of the sense of distance from a younger self that you find in the best memoirs. Although he makes some cracks about corny show-biz memoirs and ‘shitful Hollywood movies’, it can’t be denied that this is a pretty corny book. It’s sure to do well.