

together.

"We're getting together every Thursday night and you should come along."

He did that for about two months before I finally thought, oh I better go. And I was at Morrie's [Lounge] and Kate Young and Des, they're a married couple.

Kate was our director, she's a musical genius, and she was able to direct these blocks.

Des and I were the basses. We were at Morrie's [Lounge] one night and they had a performance coming up in a few months, and if I wanted to join, I had to join now.

So, I came in about half-way through the preparation for the upcoming gig.

That was in about 2012. So, she [Kate] took a bunch of rough stones and polished them until they were slightly less rough stones.

She did. **BQ:** I heard this afternoon that there's also The Splinters.

So, who came first? The Splinters or The Shavings?

**Shavings:** The Splinters came first.

The Splinters are all female, and the guys (partners of The Splinters) thought if the women are gonna sing, we should sing.

So, when the blocks came about, Kate called them The Shavings, and that's how it happened.

That was about 2012, so we're nearly ten years.

**BQ:** From last night's concert and the workshop this afternoon, I see you've got a fair old repertoire that crosses a lot of genres.

What's the process of working out what you're going to sing?

**Shavings:** Whoever's got the strongest passion for a song that they think would be appropriate, it's incumbent on them if they want to nominate a song to back it up with some words and some direction, and then everyone comes in behind that.

So, Kate used to do some arranging which she was very good at.

But she had a full-time job, and she was doing [arrangements] for The Splinters as well, and she didn't have a lot of time.

When we'd come up with a couple of ideas, she would always say, "Show me the dots."

Because at that stage, we always sang set parts, set harmony parts.

If Kate had a passion for the song, she'd arrange it, but if she didn't have time, we'd have ideas and they'd never go anywhere.

When Kate left, we had to fend for ourselves, so we've got a couple of people who've arranged songs or transcribed songs for us within the group, and family and friends, Albert O'Loughlin.

My son who's studying music in Melbourne.

We wanted to do 'Full Force Gale' but we didn't have the dots.

He transcribed it, and he wrote it all out.

It's a shame because we can't even read the dots!

We know if a dot goes up, our voice goes up, and if it goes down, our voice goes down.

**BQ:** That's the way I do it too! I heard you when you pulled up to the campground, you said this is your first festival, so what other performing have you done before now?

**Shavings:** Well, it's not our first festival, but it's our first time outside Alice Springs, I think.

We did perform at the Top Half Folk Festival in Glen Helen [Lodge] which was two years ago, and there have been a few festivals in Alice we've been part of.

The Glen Helen one was a lot more homely.

This one has got a lot more interstate people, and in some ways it's upscaled and bigger and better and we were pretty intimidated when we got here!

**BQ:** So, Glen Helen is mostly Alice Springs people, is it?

**Shavings:** No, there were people from Darwin and interstate, but not as big or as many as this.

The standard here is way above what we thought we were at. When we heard the opening night, I thought, "Hmmm, okay, I don't know how this is going to go." And then when we were singing on the deck after the concert, and it's all these strong voices singing in harmony...

But it went well. In terms of the performances and festivals, the very first community-based and we used to have those Christmas shows, and we would combine with The Splinters.

We'd get together and it was usually a gold coin donation which usually went to ALEC [Arctic Land Environment Centre] or some charity and everyone would have to bring all the food.

Heaps of people would turn up. We had it in a house to start with we had a few people.

Then we had one out at White Gums, one in the old courthouse.

They were great. Singing together with real community involvement, it wasn't all about to make money.

It was groups of friends and family coming and just sharing singing.

And it grew from that with people wanting to join or do bits and pieces.

So, we did the song festival [Desert Voices].

Started getting a few paid gigs started getting really big heads.

Then we listened to the recordings and the heads shrink back pretty quickly.

**BQ:** Going back to food, can somebody unpack the nexus between singing and cheese, which I've just only learnt about during the singing workshop?

**Shavings:** When Kate left, we were in deep despair as a group because we really valued her, and she nurtured and sustained us with her ability.

Then I think we basically took solace in cheese, we ate a lot of cheese.

And then gradually we emerged like a bloated, cheese laden Proenix from the ashes of our despair.

I'll have to write that one down. When Kate and Des left for Tasmania, which was about 2017, I think, there was a real fear that we just wouldn't survive without a musical director.

But our love of getting together every week and singing survived and made us find a way, and we didn't want it to finish, so it survived.

There's kind of like friendship and fellowship and singing and music, in kind of equal measure.

So, we're all friends and get on well together, but we're not all close friends outside of singing, but we help each other out if there's something going on.

Like moving a bloody pool table! There is another dimension that we've added this trip, I think, and previously it's been stinking cheese and an occasional glass of wine, but this is the first festival I think we've really had the chance to get pissed together.

And we've been on a road trip. **BQ:** I can tell you firsthand, I saw this last night, it happened. **Shavings:** We do have two teetotalers in the group. **BQ:** Otherwise known as designated drivers. **Shavings:** We embrace their choice.

Being part of the group for me has really helped with my journey to sobriety, because when you watch these boys on a night like last night, it makes you glad you're sober. **BQ:** You said something this afternoon that I latched onto about harmony and confidence, and that confidence is a bit more important than getting the note right.

Yeah, I didn't labour the point as much as I wanted to...

**BQ:** They, rest of the group, wouldn't let you?

**Shavings:** I really found my own ability improved just purely if I was confident, and singing together gives you that confidence, because you're so supported in lyrics and supported in the notes and the music.

I'm familiar with a lot of people who can sing and could sing so much better if they sang confidently and in a supportive environment.

My son is 12 years old, and he won't sing in front of me, but he's pitch perfect.

**BQ:** You haven't tried to drag him along to a singing session?

**Shavings:** I'm really pleased that he's joined the choir at his school, and that was a choice that he made himself.

He's one of only two boys in a big group in a cross-gender school.

So, he has seen both his parents bloom through their choral experience, largely through singing with Asante Sara.

My ex-partner and I sang with trade union chors when we first met in the nougites and then we would alternate our singing with Asante Sara, so one of us would sing and one of us would stay home and look after the children.

And then that balance went a bit skew whiff where I had a few years at home and my partner, for the benefit of her mental health which was in greater need, did more consecutive years.

So now that group is 11 years in the making and is probably going to have their last sing together in September under the direction of an amazing man called Morrie Stuart.

**BQ:** And after this festival, what's next for The Shavings?

**Shavings:** I think the next big thing for us is the Desert Song Festival which is in September. I'm part of a group that's pushing

to hire Witchetty's, an Alice Springs theatre venue, to do a cabaret show with The Splinters and maybe some other friends.

We'll probably have room for maybe 150 or so guests and have it as a fundraiser for a friend who's in need of some funds through illness in the family.

I think that'll be quite a big show for us.

That should be August, I reckon. And we're about to take on two new members as well.

We've just taken on Tim and we're about to take on Francois, I know that's not his name, but he's French! **BQ:** His name is Francois, or at least, that's what the lads call him to his face.] **Shavings:** The process of getting new members has been kind of interesting, hasn't it?

**BQ:** That was my next question, are you open to, not putting my hand up here myself, -new members? And there, dear reader, is where we leave the exciting story of The Shavings.

Stay tuned to [www.OverheadProductions.com](http://www.OverheadProductions.com) to find the answers to these critical questions:

Is Francois really called Francois? How do you do the little comma thing under a c on a bottom of the range Lenovo laptop? I should know the keyboard shortcut. It's not a skill currently possessed by the typer.

Did Bill in fact change his mind, put a hand up, and join The Shavings? How did the gig at Desert Song in Ormiston Gorge (Kwaraturna) go?

I'll start you off with some wild guesses: 1. Durno. 2. Durno. 3. Whaddayouthink? 4. Brilliant.

For more on The Shavings, stalk them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/AliceShavings>

Next time, another interview from Top Half Folk Festival with the remarkable story of singer-songwriter, Barry Skjosey.

# Festival Directory

Attention Festival Organisers

If this is you, see pages 72-73 for more information on how you can have your festival listed in a festival Directory. Entry is free to subscribers.

## NSW - Kangaroo Valley Folk Festival

A 3 day celebration of music, poetry and dance in Australia's most beautiful valley.

Next scheduled for October 14-16, 2022.  
KangarooValleyFolk Festival.com.au

## NSW - Sydney Folk Festival

Next date TBA: A World of Music in the Heart of the City  
Join the e-News list: [www.sydneyfolkfestival.com.au](http://www.sydneyfolkfestival.com.au)  
<https://www.facebook.com/SydneyFolkFest>

#sydfolkfest  
Tickets: <https://www.sydneyfolkfestival.com.au/buy-tickets/>  
Margaret Walters 0427.958788

## NSW - Wingham Akoostik Music Festival (1955-153)

The festival brings a burst of activity to the mid-coast for three brilliant days on Wingham Showground with on-site camping and walking distance to town centre.  
Three day event on the third weekend October across Friday, Saturday and Sunday.  
[hello@akoostik.com.au](mailto:hello@akoostik.com.au)

## NT - Top Half Folk Festival

Mary River Wilderness Retreat  
June 2022  
Alternates annually between Darwin region (Mary River Wilderness Retreat, even years) and Alice Springs region (Glen Helen, odd years). 2021 is the 50th THFF.  
secretary@tophalffolkclub.org

[www.tophalfclub.org](http://www.tophalfclub.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/tophalffolkfestival/>

## Qld - OzManouche Festival

Festival celebrates jazz manouche and is held on the last weekend in November annually in Brisbane.  
The festival presents concert performances and masterclasses featuring Australian musicians and international guests.  
Phone: 0418 113 7831  
[CameronJones@tpg.com](mailto:CameronJones@tpg.com)

## SA - Fleurieu Folk Festival

An annual three day family friendly multi-staged event set in the historic township of Willunga SA 15th-17th October 2021  
[admin@fleurieurfestival.com.au](mailto:admin@fleurieurfestival.com.au)

## Tas - Cygnet Folk Festival

Showcases local and international music, dance, poetry, workshops, kids' entertainment and a festival marketplace: set in the breathtaking scenery of Tasmania's Huon Valley.  
2nd weekend of January each year.  
[info@cygnetfolkfestival.org](mailto:info@cygnetfolkfestival.org)

## Vic - Newstead Live

A celebration of folk and acoustic music, spoken word, kids shows and sessions all in the welcoming village of Newstead in beautiful Central Victoria.  
Held annually over the January weekend before schools go back.  
[newsteadlive@gmail.com](mailto:newsteadlive@gmail.com)

## Vic - Port Fairy Folk Festival

Established in 1977 and has grown to become one of the highest regarded festivals both in Australia and on the international festival circuit.  
Has won numerous awards and is inducted into the Australian National Tourism Hall of Fame.  
Held on the March long weekend every year.  
[Admin@PortFairyFolkFestival.com](mailto:Admin@PortFairyFolkFestival.com)

## Festival News & Reviews

# Endless Sky - A personal musical love letter to Mparntwe

Darwin Festival 2021 went ahead from 4 to 22 August and as the song says, it was against all odds.

Well, not all, but many. I have to tip all of my hats in the direction of Harbour View Plaza in McMillin St, Darwin, NT and say the sincerest and deepest of thanks to everyone at Darwin Festival who made DF21 happen.

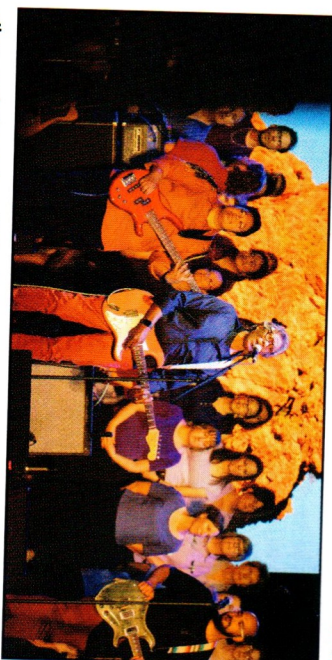
If you were from out of town, or new to the festival, despite the mad chaos that ensued for festival staff to keep the ship afloat and balanced, it may have appeared to you a seamlessly professional and comprehensive series of so many events covering all the aspects of the arts imaginable.

And so it was, with some mad duck paddling under the serene waters' surfaces (Gratuitous Ducks Crossing Publications reference).  
Apart from three days off for Darwin's 'lockdown light III' (17-19 August), the show went on and every spot on the program that I can recall was filled with sparkling talent.

"Resets? We've had a few. But then again, too few to mention."  
First draft before Frank Sinatra had some regrets.

Yeah, many of our southern artists sadly could not ply a path to the Top End to join in the joy and fun.

That was sad, a shame, and let's leave aside our (my) rage and fury at Covid19, anti-vaxxers and



by Bill Quinn  
Photos: Folddack Media NT facebook page

other uninformed selfish types who, as I type, are musing in clueless, narcissistic ungainly circle jerks to protest against mandatory vaccination.

I won't write exactly what I'm thinking, but let's say it's three words and ends in 'yourself'.  
Moving on.

Festival CEO, James Gough, Artistic Director, Felix Pevral, and the scores of production, box office, talent wrangling, stallholder herding, sales, corporate liaison, sponsor schmoozers, and the (my boss) remarkable volunteer coordinator, Matilde Mercadier, all of them ducked, weaved, bobbed, reorganised, rescheduled, reordered, and (strike me down, I'm going to use the P word) pivoted.

And by crapes they made an amazing event, a jewel in a groaning, heaving, bloated, glorious calendar of Darwin and Top End events.

I'll have more, oh so very, very,

very much more, to say at [www.OverheardProductions.com](http://www.OverheardProductions.com), or check my social media in all the usual suspect places, except TikTok.

That's in the in-tray and coming soonooooonetime.  
You know what? I'm accepting of almost everyone's musical preferences because that's yours and yours only.

I can't tell you it's right or wrong, because a) there's no such thing, and b) it's not my place.

Let's not disappear down that rabbit hole.

Suffice to say that, as much as I have re-embraced my love of country music generally, there is a certain slice of the genre that makes my flesh crawl, and one of those is currently playing on the tannoy here outside my favourite new radio station: 8CCC Community Radio, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, and online at [www.8ccc.com.au](http://www.8ccc.com.au).  
On Sunday, August 15, just over

# Festival News & Reviews

program, I was standing outside the Darwin Bowls & Social Club in Fannie Bay.

This was not so much my local club, but a place I joined in May, 2020, as Darwin was emerging from 'lockdown Lite I' - yes, as previously advertised, we were back in the pubs and clubs in the middle of May, scarcely 2.5 months after Smirko mumbled, "Aw, guess youse guz'z better stay home for a bit, y'know? Is that ok with you, Gina and Ruppees?"

Long story short (famous last words), I'd bought a ticket for a show called Red Desert, Endless Sky: Songs From The Centre.

Being a no spoilers kind of guy, I had very little to go on, and wanted even less.

Singers, music, Alice Springs, NT.

A picture of three people who I later learned are Xavia, Dave Crowe, and Casil Williams.

That was enough for me.

Off to the box office to purchase my entry ticket from a lovely bunch of festival-staffers who by then already knew me by sight, had included me on their Christmas Card lists, were naming future children 'Blathery Douche' in homage, and (this bit is actually true) reunited me with my Darwin Festival baseball cap, which has since again gone off on its own trek into the world.

I name thee 'Festy-Capp the Gypsy'.

Or, perhaps it's buried under 36 layers in the motorhome?

Let's spend the rest of this article talking about the Red Desert etc. event, because there's so much to talk about.

Rather than try some linear approach, I'm going to riff about what I'm hearing, and for the first time, not seeing.

On my laptop. Now, 'Bambadino', what an amazing revelation.

Some people have musical chops, some can write incredibly resonant-able lyrics, some sing like you'd imagine an angel would sing if angels did exist on this earthly or other plane and some are incredible collaborators who glide easily between their own personal art, and the sharing, caring, and creating together process.

Some... feck, tingles all up my spine as 'Bambadino' belts out the chorus of this song and 'Alice Sings', the 40ish person community choir, harmonise behind her.

Some do all of that and more.

I'm gripped, and my focus becomes laser like when I sense that combination, and the glazed cherry on top of that particular mango ice cream dessert is the ability to radiate, beam, physically transmit the joy, love, pain, hurt, exaltation of what they do.

'Bambadino', love your guts.

I'm still wondering, though, where are you from?

Next song. And now I'm not only tingling, I'm actually shaking slightly.

I'm listening to my song of 2021.

I don't always do this, but I'm going early and declaring 'Solae' by Xavia my favourite song for 2021.

Because whatever song this (probably in vain) to usurp 'Solae' is going to have to do a Force 10 From Navarre like belt of ordinance to knock this amazing piece of art off its perch.

Xavia, like all of the artists on stage, deserves several thousand words here on her own.

Luckily, many others in the music media have already done so, and I urge you to go web-search about all of them.

I'll merely mention that Xavia is a multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter, music producer, loop pedal artist, and...

No, you'll have to read online for the rest because there's no way I can access any sort of brevity for the story of how I met Xavia (think you'd miss it briefly).

But in those short seconds, a tiny pair of butterfly wings beat imperceptibly, and in time those ripples in the air spread outward and a trickle became a torrent.

It's a resonance back to another time, place, person, and it resonated SO strongly.

We're talking characteristics manner, and some intrinsic nature of being. Deep, huh?

I'll cut forward and say that on that Sunday night...

Oh, glory, I've left myself standing on Conacher Street outside the DB&SC.

Let's go back quickly and pick me up, plunk me on an orange electronic dockless bicycle, and get me 4.4kms into Festival Park.

That's exactly what happened that night.

But for the flip of a coin, I may have trashed that ticket and gone home to bed because for reasons, I was almost completely jatz-crackered and barely capable of speech, thought, or movement.

But later, at just after 9pm ACSI, when I was plonked in the brown Garamilla dirt of Sunset Stage, and Xavia walked out, sat and pulled her bow slowly over the cello strings, I had an immediate, instantaneous, and completely spontaneous visceral reaction.

That response and action kept up for about 45 minutes of the hour long presentation.

Meanwhile, in East Side, Xavia has finished on your Youtube, and now we're on to 'Resin Moon'. Aka Dave Crowe Music.

# Festival News & Reviews

Ok, for this one I've hit pause. Not on the Youtube concert, on the typing.

If Xavia's cello strings ignited an intense physical response for this little bronzed\*\*\*\* duck, then the very first strains of 'Salt' by 'Resin Moon' did so five-fold.

I can't explain it. Don't want to. Don't know why.

But I have listened (mostly watched and listened) to 'Salt' maybe 100 times in the last month and a half and I could count on one hand the times I've NOT experienced the same physical response to varying degrees.

Sitting here, writing at the 8CCC Café outside the 8CCC 102 JFM studios on Lindsay Avenue, East Side, Mparntwe (Alice Springs), it's a wee bit public for overt displays of emotions.

That said, if you're gonna, there are worse places to do so.

Today, feelings running rampant, but under some sort of control for privacy and deportment I'll see Dave Crowe ably assisted by Tom Cox backed by Alice Sings and the other performers on stage.

Unlike those album tracks that you might skip to and then play on repeat, I've not done that with this live version of 'Salt'.

Sure, you can go to any streaming service and check out 'Resin Moon', and I highly recommend you do so.

Or my more old skool source of choice, Youtube, because then you get to experience the complementary visuals of the film clip starring James Stocks, directed and edited by Kyle Wilson, and produced by The Wild Above. Do it now. We'll wait for you.

Good, innit?

But with the hour long live version of Endless Sky, I've only watched it from go to whaha. Again, like those favourite of

favourite album tracks, maybe you need to hear the previous song or two to build the anticipation for what's to come.

So it's been with 'Salt'.

I've seen the live version maybe 12 to 15 times, but only in the context of the whole concert.

Seven of those views were within the first 12 hours of its broadcast from 8CCC on 13 September.

On that night, I was planning to be in Mparntwe at the Gap View Hotel for a live viewing with many involved in the production there in attendance at that fabulous watering hole, in the shadows of the East and West MacDonnell Ranges, split twixt the midships by the eponymous The Gap. Oops! Back up a step.

After the initial performance at Darwin Festival, which the concert was commissioned for, the massive array of musicians, singers, and producers and plus support crews then took the show back home.

On Saturday 21 August, they performed the show, rebadged as Endless Sky at the magnificent Araluen Arts Centre theatre.

8CCC Radio captured the audio-visuals, and that's the version available to you, dear reader, right now at Youtube via the station's page.

So much more to say about 8CCC, their radio station, their productions of local community events, the superb café that has become my surrogate office and morning chill-out place, but mostly where I meet/meetup with locals. More on this in future editions.

Back to 'Resin Moon'.

I'd fannyed poor Dave back to the Stone Age for weeks as I unexpectedly lit out of Darwin at a rate of knots, NOT to the south-west as I'd been planning for months, but almost due south to Mparntwe.

I've done that trip twice, once in a plane (headed south), taking 90 minutes to two hours, and once in a car (headed north) taking travel time 1.5 hours, and door-to-door maybe 32 hours.

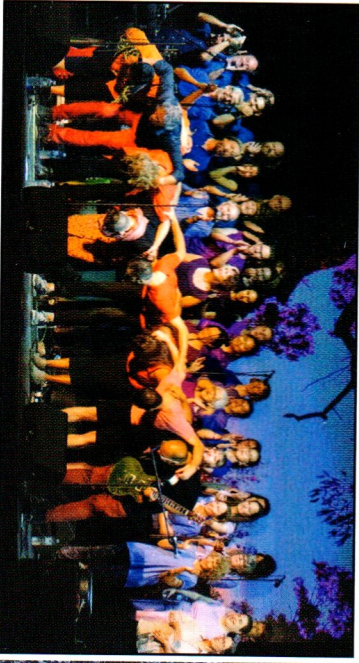
This time? After collecting my Let's Go Motorhome from Winnellie, Darwin: 18 days.

18 days, via Darwin CBD, Zen Quarter (one night), Fannie Bay (eight nights), Parap (two nights), Coolalinga (five nights), Adelaide River (one night), Daly Waters (one night), then the last 910kms in one x10hr hit including regular stops.

What has that eye-watering level of travel itinerary minutiae got to do with Endless Sky?

Quite a lot.

Because as I've written and spoken about over the years and



recently, I have only one mental condition, as regularly checked by qualified shrink: over-reactivity.

After that initial exposure to all these artists, their music, their songs, and the 'Alice Sings' community choir, I raced out of Sunset Stage and immediately publicly proclaimed my adoration of the concert to the world(s), which is ok, to a point.

However, the distilling and maturation process of the following one month and three days was very necessary for me to come to know where I was going, but didn't yet know I was.

Not so much the artists, though that was definitely a by-product and completely unavoidable after the release of the 80CC Radio production on 13 September.

No, it was my introduction to Mparntwe, to the REAL Alice Springs, the town, the city that you'll rarely hear about, or read about, or see in the mainstream media.

Which also brings us to Casil Williams and Paul Ah Chee.

I'm not saying I've saved the best for last, but for me, Casil is the beating heart, the strong strain of tight connection of singers, artists, musicians and people to the land, to this continental mass of many, so many nations, and on cue, Casil introduces 'A Million Pieces'.

Endless Sky was a superb introduction to an Mparntwe, an Alice Springs I never truly met on my fly by, drive by visit in April.

You can go to my social media for more reflections on that. I will say that I have, in less than two weeks, discovered a place unlike any other that I've encountered in 8.5 years being 'Bill The Gypsy' (Facebook), in 16.5 years bouncing around the country to music festivals, or in 55.25 years as a born and bred gudba Australian.

Mparntwe/Alice Springs is stunning.

Its music, arts, entertainment, hospitality scene is electric, extensive, boundless.

The people here are more than mostly friendly, open, welcoming, invitational.

In just over 24hrs here I'd been invited over for wine, cheese, and singing.

Tonight, I'm performing with those guys you can read about elsewhere this edition at the Totem Theatre as a singing pirate.

And while in Darwin, I got a very small boost along my very slow path to understanding more about the custodians of this land mass we call Terra Australis.

It's gone from zero to 136kms/hour in Mparntwe.

In Garamilla, I gleaned bits of pieces about Larrika country and the saltwater people, but it was drbs and drabs, which says more about my efforts, engagement, and attention span than the amazing work done by Larrika Nation, and various associations and groups such as land councils, health services, community support groups, and so many others.

I'm going to say for sure and for certain that my eyes, ears, heart, soul, sole, place, place, and eighteen other senses would 'not

have been so open, enquiring, and receptive to soaking up what I've gleaned so far of the people of Central Arrente (pron. Arr-uh-duh), West and East Arrente, as well as Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, Luritja, and Desert, had it not been for Red

Dress, Endless Sky, Songs From The Centre and its almost identical sibling, Endless Sky.

Casil Williams.

Standing out on Lindsay Avenue between paragraphs, I had a resonance from 1986 with singers from another continent and

cultures.

It was Sydney Entertainment Centre for 'Ladysmith Black Mambazo' supporting Paul Simon live in concert.

I'm going to rely on a dodgy 35 year old memory and NOT look it up, however, I believe the group name may refer to firstly, a place, Ladysmith in South Africa and secondly, Mambazo, strike me down if I'm wrong, but I reckon it's something about a large machete style knife because the lyrics cul

like a knife.

And that's how I felt, without making a connection until now about Casil Williams and her two show-cased songs: 'A Million Pieces' and 'Spirit'.

Before both, Casil tells of the hurt, sadness, and despair she feels for her people.

Of people lost and needing to reconnect.

Of the need to go home to country and heal.

As I've told him to his face on Instagram, Paul Ah Chee is a goddamn rock god.

He's got the look, he's got the moves, he's got the lyrics, the pitch, the tone, the cadence.

He's a [populature expelive redacted for a family publication] ing legend.

I have been wandering around, walking, driving and humming/singing the refrains to 'Roll On The Wind' and 'All About A Girl'.

I'm almost up to him in my lineup of all five singersongwriters to Hoover up (buy their music in one format or the other).

Time to call time on this very personal, very heartfelt love letter to Mparntwe, and all those, ok, most of those who sail in her.

If it's within your powers, get thee to Mparntwe (pron. Uhm-Burn-Ah-Wuh) is my serving suggestion.

Come sit at the 80CC Café and chase the shade or the sun, depending on the time of year, as it creeps up the long communal tables.

Go lose yourself for days at the Aralien Arts Centre, stopping periodically at Yaye's Café for all your coffee/food needs with distinctive South American/Spanish flavours, tastes, and sound.

Go to trivia at Monte's Lounge on Thursdays, or their many music nights.

See amazing musicians at Epilogue Lounge upstairs.

Then, and I'm not saying this did happen, but it probably did, come downstairs at closing time

and spend half an hour playing kick-to-kick with the first nations youth up and down Todd Mall, and get happily schooled by teens and tweens in how to boot an AFL match ball roughly in a straight line, not cannon it off the roofs, lampposts and passers-by, at and after midnight, with the tacit

approval and/or disinterest of the local authorities.

"Carry on, nuffin' to see here."

But for now, you can see the whole concert on Youtube via 80CC Radio and/or Alice Sings.

From Mparntwe, this has been Bill 'Quirny' Quinn wishing you 'alkrangpeme', and 'anetle-arene', and maybe sing an 'aweyle'. Calai

## A festival that wasn't cancelled

by Angela



It's been a week since we

packed up the eskies and the tents and the tables and the lights and the lumpy couches and returned from Neurnum Creek Bush Retreat

in South East Queensland and the festival, and what a festival it was.

Thank-you.

You all made the 2021 Neurnum Creek Festival so

successful.

You put your trust in us by marking your calendars, buying your tickets, accepting and scheduling performance and workshop spots and volunteering to help.

And then of course, turning up and playing, applauding, singing, stretching, drinking, eating, and, importantly, reconnecting.

Our aim is always for a festival where everybody

feels included, everybody is relaxed and everybody enjoys themselves.

We think we achieved that and of course we're always open to feedback.

For those of you who couldn't make it in 2021 for whatever reason, we hope you can join us in 2022 when we'll do it all again.



# Festivals update

Following is a summary of information received in the last two months from festival organisers around Australia in chronological order.

See also festival update in the Bluegrass pages of this edition for more information.

## September 29 - OzManouche Festival

This is just a quick note to let you know that this year's OzManouche Festival will be going ahead in November 25 - 28.

We initially delayed organising the festival to wait to see what was going to happen regarding Covid travel restrictions, the status of the lockdowns happening across the country and any changes to capacity limits at the Brisbane Jazz Club.

With those factors in mind we have decided to run the festival in a similar format as last year, drawing on musicians from the Brisbane gypsy jazz scene.

## September 29 - Bluesfest

Christmas has come early, Bluesfesters!

Bluestest Easter 2022 keeps building and building evermore into the greatest line-up of the finest Australian talent and guests from NZ ever and we're not even close to stopping.

There are many more amazing artists yet to be announced!

The good news doesn't stop there.

How incredible it was to hear, not only for Bluesfest but the entire music industry, the NSW Premier announcement earlier this week of the roadmap moving forward, the easing of restrictions especially for those in the music industry, and the re-opening of the economy.

We look forward to seeing other states announcing their roadmaps

moving forward, including their plans around re-opening interstate travel.

It's been a really tough journey for all of us in these times, and to finally see the way ahead feels like Christmas has come early.

"How wonderful it is to be able to tell all of you that Bluesfest will be happening, officially", Peter Noble OAM.

## September 23 - Woodfordia

Bookings for Lake Gkula Camping in January 7 - 23, 2022 are now open.

Yes we know it is more news about what is going on in Queensland and there remains the uncertainty about border openings, however we still wanted you to know we are thinking of you. If border restrictions permit it, we are hopeful you might take up the opportunity for a summer camping escape to Woodfordia in the new year before school heads back.

It will certainly be a glorious time to chillout in Lake Gkula, enjoy some time in nature and thoroughly shake off 2021.

The General Store will be operating for tea, chai and coffee, some treats and those essential supplies.

We are so delighted with the response to our ticket launch for our Bushtime event to be held over the traditional WFF dates (27th Dec - 1st Jan).

Almost half of the tickets have been purchased.

Thank you Woodfordians for your trust in us to create an

experience and programme worthy of your immersion.

## September 20 - Queenscliff

Sadly, it looks extremely unlikely that we'll be able to hold the Festival we had originally planned for this year's November event.

We are however working extremely hard right now to salvage some form of an event for November 2021.

The Government's Road Map out of lockdown suggests that by the end of November a smaller event may be possible.

Our organisation cannot responsibly proceed in to October without confidence and assurances in place to be able to hold any type of event in November.

So I expect we will be communicating with you our plans, either way by early October at the absolute latest.

In the likely event that our November Queenscliff Music Festival is unable to go ahead as planned, it will be postponed until November 2022 and you will be given the opportunity to either request a refund, or hold on to your ticket for next year's Festival. If by chance we're able to hold a new smaller event this November, we would be putting new tickets on sale for this event separately.

So whilst we don't have solid answers for you just yet, they're coming very soon and we thank you for your patience. We just need a little more time

as we have some things brewing that might be some good news we all desperately need!

In the meantime, we would encourage those of you who can to go and get vaccinated.

## September 16 - Northern Beaches Music festival

Grounding Day!

Yes, Covid has struck again and the Northern Beaches Music Festival has had to be postponed until 4th-6th November 2022.

We are pleased to invite all those performing artists who were successfully selected for this year to perform at the festival in November next year.

Thank you so much for your support and we look forward to a brighter day in November, 2022, when the Northern Beaches Music Festival returns to the Transhed Community Arts Centre and Berry Reserve, Narrabeen, NSW.

## September 14 - Illawarra Folk Festival

The Illawarra Folk Club has cancelled the 2022 Illawarra Folk Festival scheduled for January 13-16 at Bulli Showground because of COVID-19 concerns.

The club also cancelled the 2021 festival scheduled for last January for the same reason.

Festival Artistic Director, David De Santi, said: "We are extremely sad to announce that the 2022 Illawarra Folk Festival will be cancelled."

"It is just too hard in the current COVID-19 climate for a non-profit association to take the risk on a festival of the scale of the Illawarra Folk Festival."

De Santi said if the club was able to secure a grant with the Federal Government's RISE Fund, there was a small chance that the

festival could be rescheduled for later in 2022.

"That is a small glimmer of hope," De Santi said.

"If somehow we were able to get the funding we might try and reschedule to later in the year - maybe May."

"However, if that doesn't work, then we will be working hard to be back in 2023 from 19-22 January."

"We also hope that we will be able to put on our second smaller festival, Folk By The Sea in Kiama, from 24-26 September, 2022."

De Santi paid tribute to the club's many volunteers who have kept the Illawarra Folk Festival alive for 35 years and vowed to bring the festival back as soon as possible.

## September 10 - Dashville, NSW

Yesterday's news, though somewhat anticipated, seems to have us all here in Regional NSW working through the hurdles of the vaccine roll out that currently isn't available to most of us.

Like most businesses, we want to make sure that we are ready to open our doors as soon as we are all able, ensuring that it's safe to do so.

The plan being Dashville Nights Concert Series will likely be our first manageable show option under the new vaccine passport health regime.

With the latest news, there's a lot to get wrapped up in here and no doubt you're considering how it's going to affect you and your family.

As an events provider and small business, it appears we are being forced into policing who can and cannot attend.

This has already created a lot of pressure and unknowns for us as a small team, we only know what

the general public knows.

I guess the one thing to remember, which has been an important factor since the start, is that we are all in this together and together we will work and navigate our way through.

Please be kind to us, we're doing our absolute best with what we've been served.

Fortunately, we've got a great community of people who support all the good things which we're about and this is just a moment in time, with light and good health at the end of the tunnel.

Speaking of some positive light down the tunnel, let's move on hey. Please welcome the announcement on the return of the mighty Dashville Christmas Party on December 11, 2021, which was a bonafide hoot last year.

Trashville was originally planned for this weekend, though due to the evolving situation has made an official move to Plan B - February 12th, 2022.

## September 8 - National Folk Festival, ACT

We are so excited to share with you that applications are finally open for the 2022 National Folk Festival (they closed on September 26).

We're seeking traditional and contemporary performers and teachers of dance, spoken word, circus, street performance, theatre, and of course music, to consider joining us as we celebrate a return to festival life in 2022.

The National Folk Festival has carefully developed an artistic vision that will guide the programming for the 2022 Festival. Because of this focused vision, we ask that all past applicants reapply, and consider this framework in their performance submission.

August 31 - Numeralla Folk Festival, NSW

Like most festivals we are very unsure if we will be able to go ahead in January 2022.

If there is a marked change in the COVID situation and we can stage our festival in January, I will contact you.

August 30 - Gygnnet Folk Festival

While the world seems to be tilting on its axis at present, we are still planning for a celebration of all that is wonderful for the 40th anniversary Gygnnet Folk Festival next January!

The full line-up will be released next month, and tickets are already selling fast.

August 28 - Wingham Akoostik, NSW

The folk that meet and plan for the Akoostik festival every year met last night and agreed that we cannot safely and responsibly bring the festival to the Wingham Showground in October this year.

This may not come as a surprise to you as we have all become accustomed to the cancellations and changes that are happening every day, but I must admit we all feel a little surprised as we had been very positively focusing on weaving together another three brilliant days of music for your enjoyment.

We grow together as a group of committed friends each working to our strengths to chat with artists, meet with volunteers, book and hire equipment and create some magic, and we look forward to continuing to work and plan for

October 2022.

We really feel for the artists that are continually being asked to change arrangements, and thank them for their support in holding arrangements over to 2022.

For stallholders that have had an extremely quiet time, thank you for being connected with our community and we really look forward to supporting you next year.

Thanks to our volunteer community who had put their hands up for being in our build team, and our event team, we will need you all again in 2022, we will stay in touch.

We thank all of you who had already purchased your tickets, your support has been incredible. You will receive an email from Ozlix.

We know we had something really special brewed for 2021, so things will only develop more over the next 12 months, and we really can't wait to bring it all to life in 2022.

August 25 - Patonga Blues Across The Bay, NSW

Due to the ongoing situation with the Covid 19 resurgence, we have had to make the difficult and heartbreaking decision to cancel this year's 20th Anniversary of "Patonga Blues Across The Bay".

The new date will be November 5, 2022, and while we will endeavour to rollover this year's line-up to 2022, we cannot 100% guarantee this.

However, as you've come to expect, whatever the artists we will have perform at next year's BAIB, they will be like those in previous years, "RED HOT AND BLUE". All ticket holders can simply

rollover their tickets for next year.

This will mean anyone with ticket protection will also retain the same cover.

You won't need to do a thing, you can use the same tickets that you have already received.

If you decide that you can no longer join us, we can issue a refund.

Obviously, we are hoping that you will continue to support our little non-profit community event.

August 16 - Freedom Day Festival, NT

After today's news of the NT lockdown, we've had to make the incredibly difficult decision to cancel Freedom Day Festival.

With our key health and safety partners now focused on other priorities, it became clear that it was just not possible to carry out our COVID-19 festival plan.

Our intention has always been to keep our community safe, and this decision was 100% made with this in mind. We understand this news will be very disappointing for many people.

We're truly sorry it has happened like this. We'll be contacting our performers, partners and suppliers individually as soon as we can, but we wanted to get this general message out immediately.

Just so you know, our intention is to reschedule the event, but we can't be sure when just yet. We'll give you more news on this soon.

We thank everyone for their support and understanding with this difficult announcement.

# 19th Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival 2021 cancelled

It is with deep sadness that for the second year running we are announcing the cancellation of the 19th Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival.

Again, this decision is due to the difficulties of running an event during COVID-19 and the associated risks, and it is of paramount importance that we can maintain future Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festivals.

To run a successful Festival we rely highly on unrestricted interstate travel and with many state borders closed, we cannot guarantee that our musicians will be able to travel safely from areas within and outside of NSW. Just as important are you, our

dedicated patrons, who travel from all over Australia to be with us.

We would like to thank the performers, volunteers, sound crew, infrastructure suppliers and other key personnel for the time already invested and commitment made to the 19th Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival 2021.

If you were one of the wonderful people who purchased tickets to the 2021 Festival, you will receive a full refund as the committee has decided to revise our Cancellation Clause for this year.

We now feel that we are able to direct our biggest hopes, energy and time towards holding the 20th Dorrigo Folk &

by Bridget Rees  
Bluegrass Festival on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd of October in 2022.

We will have the biggest smiles on our faces as we welcome you back to be part of the celebration.

If you feel that you would like to support our future festivals, thank you.

We welcome this by a donation on our Donation Page or please contact us regarding our Sponsorship Packages.

There is still a lot to do, so although it might seem that we are quietly hibernating, be assured that we will be working hard towards October 2022.

We look forward to celebrating our 20th festival with you.

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## Interview with Greg Blake Part 1



Greg Blake with Jeff Scroggins and Colorado at Dorrigo

In 2018 we were fortunate to meet Bluegrass singer, Greg Blake, at the Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival NSW and Mountingrass, Beechworth Vic.

Originally from South Charleston, West Virginia, Greg attended Bible College in Overland Park, Kansas, where he met his wife and settled down and started a family.

Within the Bluegrass community, Greg has won much acclaim both as a singer and as a guitarist.

He currently works with several groups including Special Consensus, Jesse Brock & Streamliner, Hometown, Savage Hearts and toured Australia in 2018 with Jeff Scroggins and Colorado, when we met him, together with Rod Jones of the Bluegrass and Traditional Country Music Society of Australia.

**T&N:** With the help of the Bluegrass and Traditional Country Music Society of Australia's Rod Jones, who likes to ask a lot of these questions, we have Greg Blake, vocalist and guitarist for the Jeff Scroggins and Colorado band.

Thank you for being here, and thank you to Rod Jones for lining up these questions.

**RJ:** Yes, thank you Lindsay and thank you for inviting me.

**T&N:** I think he has been lining these questions up for the last 45 years.

**GB:** I bet he has. (laughs).

**T&N:** Greg, thank you very much for bringing your vocals to Australia, we really appreciate it, and for those who may not be aware, Greg has won or been nominated at various places such as SPBGMA (Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music of America) and IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) for awards as a vocalist.

**GB:** Right, a few years back I had two nominations at SPBGMA for Traditional Male Vocalist of the Year, and then recently, for the last couple of years, I have made it to the second round of the nominations for IBMA male vocalist of the year.

**T&N:** Quite an accolade I would say.

**GB:** Well, I feel extremely honoured that people within the industry would nominate and recognise me, that it is quite something and I am quite humbled.

**T&N:** Give us a little bit of your background and where you are from.

**GB:** Well I was born and raised in West Virginia, South Charleston, that was my home.

**T&N:** That immediately gives you brownie points in this room straight away. (lots of laughing).

**GB:** Well, there is not too many places I can go in the world where I can go to get brownie points for being from South Charleston, West Virginia.

**T&N:** Yes sir.

**GB:** Yes, that is where I grew up and where I definitely developed my love for Traditional Country music and Bluegrass music.

I cut my teeth so to speak on Traditional Country music, there

really weren't any musicians or singers in my immediate family, I grew up in my grandparents' home and they loved Country music and they had Country music playing on the radio all the time.

**T&N:** So what sort of music did they have on the radio at that time?

**GB:** Johnny Cash, Buck Owens, Roy Clark, Porter Wagner, Dolly Parton, on TV, the Wilburn Brothers.

**T&N:** Can you still see them on RFD TV?

**RJ:** Yep.

**GB:** Actually, I think you can, and then there was Merle Haggard, George Jones, Lefty Frizzell, all those, basically the 60s, well, I am 54, born in 64, and so I grew up, as a kid, with the music of the 70s and going back to the 50s and 60s too, and that was my primary listening.

Then I got turned on to Bluegrass, a little later I found some of my friends in the community picked Bluegrass and so I fell in love with that.

So it is a bit of a love triangle between me, Traditional Country and Bluegrass, I can't give either of them up.

**T&N:** Noticed that in your sets there is a lot of Johnny Cash, and a lot of what else did we hear in your sets?

**GB:** George Jones, and then Elle did a Kitty Wells tune.

**T&N:** What is the difference between Bluegrass and Country vocals?

**GB:** When I was growing up I didn't hear a lot of difference in them, the major difference, may be what I heard, and what I still hear, is the quality, tonal quality and resonance in the voice of a lot of Country singers. I feel like a lot of Bluegrass

singers sometimes don't really get that smoother tonal quality and resonance, they don't really get that, like Merle Haggard or a George Jones.

**T&N:** Why is that?

**GB:** Well, the only thing that I can think of is that singing in those higher frequencies, and upper registers, and trying to get that high lonesome sound, but then again I don't think you really have to sacrifice that, because, you know, I still try to sing a lot of those songs as high as I possibly can and stretch it, because I like that intensity and energy and you know, like as high as you can get it, and so I think it is a matter of just your overall tonal quality and resonance, that you try to express.

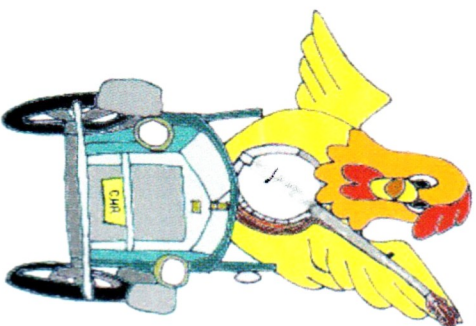
**T&N:** Do you suppose that some of the Nashville singers get training that the Bluegrass

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singers don't?

**GB:** Yeah, that could be true. **T&N:** Could it be the culture in the recording studios, like this is the way you should do it.

**GB:** Yeah, there could be that and the other thing that I thought of as well, that there is more emphasis in Bluegrass on the instrumental side of things, there is just as much energy given to the instrumentation and instrumental expression as vocals, and sometimes with that divided allegiance, sometimes the vocals might suffer sometimes.

**T&N:** So the vocals aren't perhaps worked on as much might be?

**GB:** In Country music you got a vocalist who sometimes doesn't necessarily care if they have to do a solo on their instrument, all they have to do is focus on their vocals and they have a band, from hundreds that they have chosen from, to provide the instrumental backup.

**RJ:** And that is one of the things that for a Bluegrass band, you have to be incredibly talented to do both, not only do you have to play to backup your vocals, but you also have to be able to do something to stand out as a lead, and then of course, being in a Bluegrass band you also have to be able to sing all the parts, in Country you only have to sing the one.

**GB:** That is very true Rod, I remember very distinctly when there was time when I was living in Kansas City for some time, 25 years, before moving to Colorado, it just so happens that I am back in the Kansas City area now, but played in a band and we were in the studio, and we had worked over this Gospel quartet song for weeks and weeks, you know, in preparation to record it, but sometimes when you step into the studio



Greg Blake with Jeff Scroggins and Colorado at Dorrigo

it is almost like you step into a brand new world and you forget everything you have done and your nerves and anxiety that come with the pressure, and the guy that was doing the bass part, he couldn't do it like we had practiced it, and when you are in the studio, time is money, and I was singing the tenor part in the quartet and so what I ended up doing in that recording, I ended up singing both the tenor part and the bass part.

**T&N:** So Rod Jones of the My-T-Fine band can you relate to this?

**RJ:** Certainly, certainly, years ago we were trying out and our bass player couldn't make it and there was somebody else there, and we said we needed someone to do the bass part in this and when we came to do this Gospel number and we headed into it and this guy was singing boom, boom, boom, boom.

To be continued.

**Festival watch**  
The Wirrina Bluegrass &

Acoustics Roots Festival at the Wirrina Cove Holiday Park SA continues to plan for the weekend of Nov 26-28 – don't be afraid to book as they have a Covid cancellation full refund policy.

**Covid-19 cancellations**

The Sep 18 Guildford Banjo Jamboree VIC had been reduced to a single day event but was eventually cancelled altogether due to Covid, with the committee promising to return in 2022.

The Katoomba Old Time Folk Festival NSW Oct 15-17 has been cancelled.

The Oct 15-17 Fleurieu Folk Festival, Willunga SA, which was to have included the dynamic and droll Pete Denahy, has been postponed until further notice.

The Dorrigo Folk and Bluegrass Festival in Oct 22-24 of northern NSW has been cancelled with consideration of interstate artists, audience well-being and the immense difficulties and uncertainties of state border closures.

The Dorrigo committee, in light of Covid, has revised its cancellation clause for 2021 and will be providing full refunds under the singular circumstances.

The 20th Dorrigo event will be scheduled for Oct 21-23, 2022.

Maldon Folk Festival VIC Oct 28-31 was to have headlined Rod McCormack, but has sadly been cancelled for this year.

Mountaingrass, Nov 2021, to have been located at the George Kerford Hotel, Beechworth VIC has been cancelled, but the next date has been announced as Nov 18-20, 2022.

The Illawarra Folk Festival, Bulli NSW Jan 13-16, 2022 has been cancelled for Covid, and the dates for the next festival have been announced as Jan 19-22, 2023.

**Other Bluegrass news**

Congratulations to (originally a Newcastle NSW girl) Ashlee Watkins, husband Andrew Small and their band the Alum Ridge Boys, who won 1st place in the Old Time Band section at the 85th Galax Old Fiddler's Convention, Virginia in August.

Burning Bridges, the band consisting of Pete Somerville banjo and resonophonic guitar, Fran Martin, guitar and lead vocals, and son, Tom Somerville, guitar, with Andrew Forrer bass and guests, Pete Denahy, fiddle, guitar, bass and Craig Woodward, fiddle, has released

a 14 track album entitled "Close to Home" that includes 5 covers and 9 original songs and tunes. The Bluegrass inspired band, "The Water Runners" of Kiama NSW, has released a twelve track CD of self-compositions entitled "Further Down The Road".

**Australian artist dates**

The Davidson Brothers play Oct 31 Goulburn Valley Country Music Festival, Shepparton VIC.

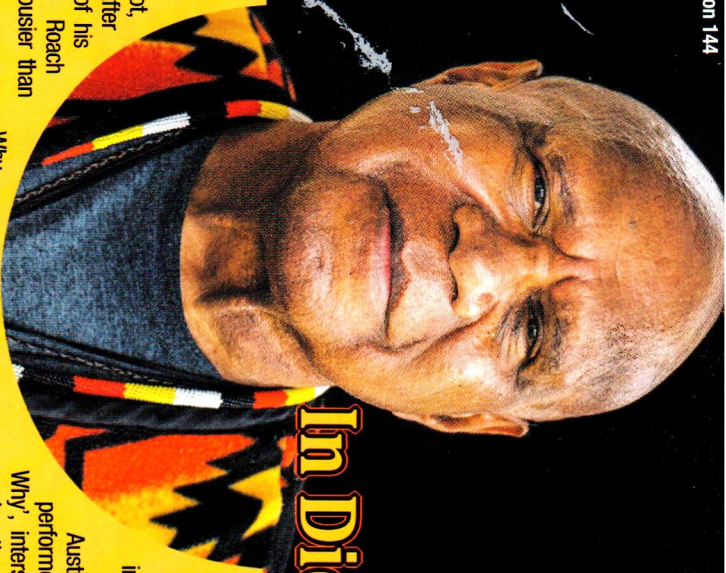
The Weeping Willows are scheduled for the Nov 12-14 Healesville Music Festival VIC.

**Transcription**

This issue's tune is Southern Creek, as from the memory of Len Newland's long experiences of jam sessions.

**Southern Creek**

As learned at a Galax jam session August 1990 by Len Newland



## In Didj'n'Us



by Peter James Dawson

### UNCLE ARCHIE INDUCTED

Believe it or not, despite failing health after the premature death of his beloved wife, Archie Roach seems to have been busier than ever.

Picking up where he left off last year, his farewell tour from May until September had a highlight in the concert at Melbourne's Myer Music Bowl.

It was briefly available in early June as a digital stream courtesy of Victoria Together.

Last November, Archie had performed 'Took The Children Away' at the 2020 ARIA Awards, where he was inducted into the Hall Of Fame.

This classic performance can be seen at <https://youtu.be/vGcmBw6LDQ> and features Paul Grabowsky (piano), Paul Kelly (vocal), Linda Bull (vocal), Jessica Hitchcock (vocal), Steve Magnusson (guitar), Sam Aning (bass), Dave Beck (drums), Erkki Veitheim (violin), and Nola Roach (vocal).

Along with his induction, Archie also won ARIA Awards, including Best Male Artist and Best Adult Contemporary Album for Tell Me

Why.

Last year he also celebrated the 30-year anniversary of his groundbreaking debut album, Charcoal Lane.

Archie's songs have been described as having "monumental and lasting impact on the Australian music industry".

The debut album was certified Gold and received two ARIA Awards in 1991.

Since then, Archie has garnered three more ARIA Awards, a Human Rights Achievement Award and was made a Member Of The Order of Australia in 2015 for his significant service to the performing arts as a singer, songwriter and guitarist, and to the community as a spokesman for social justice.

After postponement of his 2020 tour I finally got to see Archie at the Kyneton Town Hall one Sunday afternoon in May 2021.

Accompanied by former Tiddas singer, Sally Dasty, with the tight

little combo of Steve Magnusson, Erkki Veitheim and Sam Aning, the show was intimate and emotional.

The 2020 Victorian Australian of The Year performed songs from 'Tell Me Why', interspersed with rambling explanations, excerpts from the book

"Releasing my debut album, Charcoal Lane, back in 1990, was the most amazing experience in my life.

"I never imagined that I would be here three decades later still recording and singing on stages in Australia and the World.

"Music has kept me going, kept me alive, so it's something that I have come to love, especially the relationship that I have with those who come to my shows."

A new online series entitled 'Archie's Kitchen Table Yarns' will feature 12 emerging First Nations songwriters and musicians, which Archie will host via online video from his kitchen table.

They will share stories about their songs, languages and communities.

The first two episodes were released on August 4 and 18, with new episodes released throughout the year on the first Wednesday of

each month.

"When I started off in music, nobody had much of a clue about who I was and what I was writing about," Archie explains. "I was considered a curiosity.

"Yarning at my kitchen table with these young artists will help people understand who they are and give them another platform to promote their music.

"The kitchen table has always been a place of inspiration for me, as it's a place where I've written most of my songs, drank many cups of tea, ate meals, and played music while my children ran around making plenty of noise.

"It represents family, community and love.

"It's important that their voices are heard so they don't have to go through what I went through.

"They are our future and when the time comes for us older singer-songwriters to finish up, we know it's in good hands."

### BENNY'S LIFE CHOICE

Soulful rocker 'I Don't Blame You' was the first track released from Benny Walker's latest album 'Chosen Line' and debuted at No. 1 on the iTunes Blues chart, followed by the bluesy 'All Ya Gotta Do Is Call'.

Chosen Line features collaborations with songwriters Joel Quatermain [Eskimo Joel], George Carpenter, Alex Henriksson [Matt Corby], as well as some co-writing with the album's producers, Jan Skubiszewski and Pip Norman.

In August, Chosen Line received a NIMA nomination for Best Album of the Year 2021.

It had been almost a year since Benny Walker took to the stage with a band when he performed at the new Play on the Plains Festival in Deniliquin in March.

Since leaving Melbourne and returning to his hometown, Echuca, 10 years ago, Benny has started a family.

Professionally, his career was on the rise until slowed by Covid-19, but this has not daunted his creativity.

"Last year was a bit different, but normally I have been touring so much it made sense to find a base where I wanted to be and lead out from there."

"There were not too many gigs last year, and I have a huge craving to get out and play, particularly with a full band."

"It just adds to the environment.

"I can feed off the band, and that spills on to the crowd."

Apart from a few live-stream performances, Benny has had to put his energy into writing and recording.

"I put an album out mid-COVID and I have not been able to tour with it.

"The songs start to take on a life of their own once you play them live, and I am looking forward to doing that.

"The title (of the album) represents my 'chosen' career path, as I didn't really choose it, I embraced it," Benny explained.

"I come from a long line of storytellers and musicians, and they've all had a significant impact on the person I've become and the musician that I am as a Yorta Yorta man, and in our culture, we would call that my songline.

"Both my grandfathers were musicians.

"Archie Walker was a pedal steel player and a country artist, and EJ (Elwyn) Anderson was a jazz saxophonist and a drum teacher, while my dad Rob was a guitar player too.

"I played piano from the time I was eight and when I was about 10 dad showed me a few chords on the guitar and I took it up from there.

"It is only in recent years that I have gone back to the piano and used it in some of my music.

"We are quite a musical family overall really.

"I have a lot of aunts, uncles and cousins who are musical too."



Benny Walker



Emmanad and Putbacks Photo: Cesar Rodriguez

### EMMA SCORES!

In the 2021 AIR Independent Music Awards, the Best Independent Soul/R&B Album prize went to Emma Donovan & The Putbacks for 'Crossover'.

Emma and the band came together after she had worked with drummer, Rory McDougall, and guitarist, Mick Meagher, during a season with the Black Arm Band.

In 2014, their album 'Dawn', launched them on the scene with a blast of soulful energy.

Emma's Gumbaynggir, Dungalutti and Yamaji heritage comes to the fore in 'Warrell Creek Song', a traditional song in her grandmother's mother tongue concerning an unfamiliar tugboat sailing along the coast.

A stalwart activist through her music, Emma supports the Black Lives Matter movement in Australia with 'Mob March', coming across as a call for action, as in her own words: 'Get on ya feet, we're takin it to the streets.'

Except for the Ruby Hunter song, 'Yarian Mitji', which is sung in the South Australian language of Ngarrindjeri, the other tracks are fresh originals.

Growing up on the north coast of New South Wales, Emma sang gospel with her

grandparents, then at seven, joined her mother and five uncles in the Donovan's family band.

Meeting Nardi Simpson and Kaleena Briggs at Redfern Eora Centre in Sydney, Emma was a founding member of the Stiff Gins, and later an integral voice in the Black Arm Band.

With The Putbacks, she has found the ideal outfit to push her expressive style forward.

### FROM LITTLE THINGS

Ziggy Ramo Burmuruk Fatnowna is one artist who has performed live in the past two covid-blighted years, most notably at the Sydney Opera House as part of the 'From Our House to Yours' weekly program. And last March, Ziggy played alongside Jimnah, JK-47 and J-Milla at the Adelaide Festival's hip hop finale concert.

Born to an Aboriginal and Solomon Islander father and a mother of Scottish heritage in Bellingen, NSW, he grew up in Arnhem Land and Perth.

Ziggy had moved to West Australia at six years old, where his interest in music was ignited as a teenager.

Despite beginning a Pre-Medicine degree, because of his concern for health issues

concerning First Nations people, he was drawn back to music, which has traditionally been a healing tool.

The 2015 debut album, 'Black Thoughts' covered the very sensitive themes of "colonial dispossession, systemic racism and intergenerational trauma".

However, he was concerned that "non-Indigenous Australia wasn't ready to engage with truth-telling".

After putting the album on the backburner, Ziggy put out an EP of the same name in 2016.

The singles 'Black Thoughts' and 'Black Face' were no less hard-hitting and he joined the global voices promoting the Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality.

It was then that he finally released the album saying: "It was just still so relevant".

Following George Floyd's death in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, Ziggy released a revamped version of the Key Carmody & Paul Kelly classic, 'Little Things' with a whole set of new and timely lyrics.

The emotive song was aired at the Opera House program in May.

Where the original was a celebration of Land Rights, Ziggy has used the classic song to



NGAIRI

bring to the public's attention the ongoing problems affecting First Nations people, such as black deaths in custody.

"Since 1991, four hundred and forty-one Indigenous Australians have died in custody.

The casualties of a war that never ended. But we are not yet defeated. Always was, always will be

Sovereignty was never ceded"

### BLACK MUJIK WOMAN

Ngairi is described as a "Papua New Guinea-born Australian-based R&B and soul singer-songwriter", whose musical career commenced in 2003 with an enrollment in a bachelor of Jazz Studies at Central Queensland University.

Her origins are the Eastern Highlands and New Ireland provinces, but she spent her first few years in NZ in an almost exclusively Maori primary school, with her parents feeding her a cultural diet of ballet and opera.

After her family moved to Australia, Ngairi was exposed to the music of Ani DiFranco, Jeff Buckley, Tool, Sarah Vaughan, Debussy and Gershwin, while as a youngster, her Murni's Mariah Carey and Cliff Richard albums also had a big influence.

Over the past 18 years, she has developed into a fine songswoman.

Having landed on Australian Idol, she then found herself touring extensively throughout the UK, Japan, Europe and Canada as a backing singer with Blue King Brown.

Mentored by electronic maestro, Paul Mac, Ngairi handled the vocal on 'It's Not Me, It's You' off 'Panic Room', Paul's second studio album.

Her soul debut, 'Lamentations' in 2013, led to a slot at Glastonbury and shows with Alicia Keys and John Legend.

She has written music for dance companies, created sound installations for David Walsh's MONA FOMA and collaborated with fashion designers.

Four National Live Music Awards and the inaugural Australian Women in Music Award for Artistic Excellence grace her trophy shelf.

New album "3" came out on August 27, in both vinyl and digital formats.



Ziggy Ramo and Paul Kelly