

APRA: representing the world of music

It's appropriate that SxSW 2005 sees the largest-ever contingent of Australian and New Zealand bands to ever hit North American shores and the largest number of Australasian attendees ever at this high profile music event. The last few years have seen Australasian music go from strength to strength.

While the music market has proved challenging, as it has almost everywhere else in the world, Australian and New Zealand songwriters and composers have continued to see their works hit the charts at home and abroad.

The Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) is a proud supporter and celebrates the increasing domestic and international success of its members.

"As a major sponsor of the Australian and New Zealand contingent at SxSW, we're happy to put our money where our mouth is and our faith in the quality of Australasian music," says APRA member services manager, Milly Petriella.

APRA is a non-profit association that administers the rights of the world's composers, songwriters and publishers in Australia and New Zealand. Established in 1926, the association now represents a membership approaching 40,000 Australasian writers and publishers through direct membership and over two million writers and publishers throughout the world under reciprocal, bilateral agreements with similar overseas service organisations members.

APRA collects and distributes royalties to composers, songwriters and music publishers. APRA members can also draw on the support and services of a professional team who know the industry, and can provide

expert advice on the issues that affect songwriters and their careers. They can participate in a range of member activities including seminars, our prestigious awards and industry showcase events.

Cottle explains, "Our role is to bring together music creators and music users, to offer a simple and easy way for music users to get the permission, or licence, they need to be able to use copyright music in their businesses or at their events. Without that licence, a music user may be infringing copyright laws. APRA provides a one-stop-shop solution for music users through its licence schemes.

"We licence radio and television stations for their broadcast use of music. We also licence concert promoters, cinemas and venues that provide any form of live or recorded music. At the moment, APRA has more than 60,000 licence agreements in place.

"We then make sure that the people who created the music that was used are paid equitably for the use of their work.

"In this way, we do collectively what would otherwise be difficult for writers or music users to do on an individual basis."

The licence fees APRA collects are distributed to writers and their publishers around the world, based on survey data provided by licensees.

For the 2003 - 2004 financial year, APRA AMCOS's licence revenue grew by 6% to a new high of \$146 million. Of this over \$126 million was distributed to members. APRA's distributable revenue has now grown for 12 consecutive years. Our expense to revenue ratio has now fallen to 14% - one of the lowest expense ratios of any collecting society worldwide.

APRA CEO Brett Cottle says APRA is committed to keeping its expenses down. "Our effective payout rate of 87 cents on the dollar is just about the world's best practice, and something we're very proud of", he said.

The strong NZ dollar contributed positively to APRA's business results. Despite a strong Australian dollar, export income from performances of Australian music abroad reached \$15.5m for the 2004 financial year.

"APRA's steady international income is evidence of the fact that the world has woken up to Australasian music and has decided to stay tuned. Look at the international appeal of Australian songwriters like Angus and Malcolm Young (ACDC), Kylie Minogue, and JET, and independent artists like The Waifs and John Butler, who have developed a huge following on the festival scene internationally. It's a trend that we're confident is going to continue," says Petriella.

"In New Zealand the APRA Membership has increased 300% in the last 10 years", says Anthony Healey, director of APRA's NZ Operations. "Rock bands such as the D4 have made excellent inroads into the US, UK, Europe and Japan with no signs of stopping. The positive response that New Zealand enjoyed at events such as MIDEM conference in Cannes has resulted in a very focused approach by the entire New Zealand music industry and government agencies to the international market."

APRA's primary business is licensing its members' performing rights. It also manages the reproduction rights business of its sister collecting society, AMCOS. This involves collecting royalties from independent record companies, film-makers, educational institutions and others who record or reproduce music in some form.



Western Australian Artist Showcase:

BD Riley's, 204 East 6th St, Saturday March 19, 3-6 pm

3 pm Saturday, March 19 sees three acts, who have probably travelled further than any others who have gathered for South by Southwest, come together at BD Riley's Pub for what will be one of the high-light showcase parties of SxSW 2005. Little Birdy, Gyroscope and The Panda Band represent all that is amazing about bands that hail from Western Australia, and demonstrate why the Australian music industry as a whole spends half their life on planes flying across a continent the size of the USA to see the latest next big thing from The West. Stylistically diverse, it will become apparent to the observer what the common strength of these acts is - great songs, and great live performance. A result of being so incredibly isolated, they breed acts in Perth with a live presence that is world class, before they ever even travel to other cities within Australia.

Another result of the isolation is the camaraderie that is built up in the local music scene. With strong support from the local music industry association (WAM) and the State, and a common goal to show the rest of the world where the best bands are bred, Perth, Western Australia is frequently referred to as the new Seattle the new Manchester

And with an amazing diversity that produces talent across all styles from rock to pop, blues to country, hip hop to dance, jazz to gospel and all points in between, anyone can find what they're looking for. Testament to this is the annual WAMi 4-disc Compilation CD set, which in 2005 contains tracks from 69 talented artists. More info about this CD can be obtained through WAM wamicd@wam.asn.au. Produced for promotional purposes only, this is one compilation that you have to have.

This showcase is being presented by WAM, the Western Australian Music Industry Association, which is the peak industry body representing the local music industry. Among a whole range of different programs, WAM organizes Australia's biggest showcase event (The WAMi Festival, Conference and Awards) in February each year, and maintains a database containing over 800 local original acts. See www.wam.asn.au.

So, what will you experience on Saturday afternoon at BD Riley's? A rich musical journey that will take you from the incredible off beat indie stylings of The Panda Band, through the rock/ punk assault of Gyroscope, to the delightful pop rock of Little Birdy whose singer Katy Steele has become the hottest property in Australia. Little Birdy's debut album Big Big Love launched at number 5 on the Australian

Record Industry charts last year and was a multiple nominee at the ARIA Awards in October. You will be picked up, spun around, set down, and left wondering what on earth YOU can do to make things better than they already are.

Believe me, things will be pretty damn good at BD Riley's on Saturday the 19th.

All enquiries should be directed to Paul Bodlovich, WAM Executive Director, +61 438 007962 paul@wam.asn.au

