

# So... you want to do business with Australians?

The final page or so of this publication that we prepared is devoted to those of you who want to do business with Australian artists, labels, companies, mini-moguls, promoters, agents, managers, emerging entrepreneurs and venues. It's based on what I've learned as a 25-year veteran of Australia, having moved here in 1981.

First you must realize that we're the same size as the US, but with our cities running along the coasts and Sydney being the main city for music, Melbourne a close second. Just imagine if 80% of the US's population were laid out in six cities-roughly positioned distance wise as Boston (Brisbane), New York (Sydney), Miami (Melbourne), Houston (Adelaide), Los Angeles (Perth) with a little city about where Washington DC is (Canberra).

We're half a world away and a day ahead so as I'm writing this Monday at noon, it's Sunday - 8 pm in New York, 7pm in Austin and 5 pm in Los Angeles as well as being 1 am in London. We hate being called by idiots overseas who can't tell time or day-so use [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock) to figure it out if you need help.

Second, we hate to be told "how we do it in [insert city]". The worst thing you can say to an Aussie if you're over here is "Back in Los Angeles, we..." because we always do things differently here anyway. Our water even swirls in the opposite direction to yours going down the drain in the Northern hemisphere. So telling us how it's done in the US or how it's better in the US is like trying to convince a Texan that Rhode Island is a bigger, superior state. If you're down with that, then there are a few cultural things you need to absorb.

We're really no different to you in English speaking countries, except, where Americans like to analyse themselves openly and freely admit to going to a shrink, proudly telling of their problems, we just tend to take the piss out of each other and hold in the unnecessary details about our mental health. In other words, if an Australian meets you and addresses you as "G'day you bloody Yank bastard!" He's merely being affectionate.

Where Americans take and return every call and are happy to say 'No.' if they don't want to do a deal, in Australia, if someone doesn't want to deal with you, they just won't take or return your call. It may seem strange but we hate to say no. Unlike the Japanese to whom no means no, maybe probably means no and yes doesn't always mean yes. It took me a while to not get offended by people not responding. But as soon as you realize that it's not personal--it's more to avoid embarrassment or because the person lacks courage--you'll get over it.

Now we come to the matter of timing. It's a joke that our national standard is "Near enough is good enough" and the general attitude is "Not to worry mate, she'll be right!" which loosely translates in the Mexican "Manana", which in turns means maybe soon, maybe not, probably sometime, my friend." This applies more to getting a tradesman to fix something than the way the music business does business. You'll find that when you communicate over to us by email, we're pretty rapid in getting back to you, usually overnight. And if you fine tune talking to us and faxing or mailing using our business hours, things can progress very quickly. That's because we've always suffered that 'tyranny of distance' from our overseas markets that caused delays in communicating which we overcame with technology.

About the money. This week, the Australian dollar is worth US\$.74, or 74 cents. Or if you look at it the other way around one dead US President is worth A\$1.35. Only a short time ago, the exchange rate was A\$1-US\$.48 which prevented us from importing overseas artists in the concert market, inhibited us from traveling to the US, UK or Europe and made imported music more expensive. But that's changed now and is why you see close to 200 Australians and New Zealanders registered as delegates and close to 35 artists showcasing.

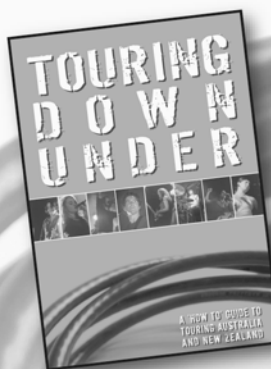
One of things that is not generally understood by overseas music industry pros looking at our continent is why certain styles of music don't work over here and why we are often the first territory to have an odd release go #1. A few truths here, though we do speak English, some things are lost on us. And because our multicultural population is so diverse, we often get major hits from Greek, Italian, Chinese and Indian artists. But reggae, for example, doesn't really work in Australia though it did have a moment a few years back. We're so far removed from that other island and don't have a large black populous plus our white Aussie population just didn't adopt Bob Marley as a patron saint nor his contemporaries as apostles.

Hip-hop, urban and rap have made a lot of advances in the past few years and are becoming concert draws as well as airplay staples. We even have our own proponents of these styles but more imitative than innovative. Still, bands like Hilltop Hoods and solo artists like Figgkidd have carved out an admirable following on the local scene with their unique styles.

Blues is taken seriously here with our own artists like Dave Hole and Jeff Lang carrying the religion back to the US and a new generation of roots artists storming the shores like John Butler Trio (a three time SxSW veteran), The Waifs, Mia Dyson, Ash Grunwald and Xavier Rudd. Jazz, less so but our hero in that genre is James Morrison whose trumpet has been heard round the world and has his own label.

# TOURING DOWN UNDER

Available at the Australians @ SxSW stand for US\$20 or by mail order for US\$20 (plus US\$7.50 postage) from IMMEDIA!, 20 Hordern St, Newtown 2042 Australia or go to our secure website [www.immedia.com.au/books](http://www.immedia.com.au/books).



A "HOW TO" GUIDE TO  
TOURING AUSTRALIA  
AND NEW ZEALAND

Dance is huge here with massive raves every week, overseas DJs hauled in with regularity and a major retail slab devoted to it. Dance festivals are quite the rage and there are dance street press in major cities alongside their rock counterparts.

As for the Grateful Dead, jam bands, Phish, the Allman Brothers and their ilk, they never took off here much to my regret. Australian concert audiences want a lot of action, not guitar noodling and 80 minute songs. There is a bright side to not adopting American trends though-we don't have our own flock of warbling songbirds like Mariah Carey, Celine Dion and other triple octave screamers. But to our shame, we seem to keep coming up with a new crop of television produced Idols and Popstars every year.

Radio is a different matter. Most commercial stations of any large ratings play Hits and Memories, AOR rather than AC, and tend to go for an older demographic. Things have started to change though with the Austereo Network (compare it to Clear Channel with a major station in every city) getting pounded by the Nova stations which have taken over in the ratings in Sydney and are eroding the Austereo share elsewhere. You won't find the sort of variety on the radio dial that you get in the US. There's almost no country music except in the rural areas. Dance is not that hot on radio as its own format though it's mixed in with AC or rock formats. Jazz is fringe and tends to be left, like classical, to the national government broadcaster, the ABC, which runs networks around Australia in various styles.

But youth music is another story and the key teller is the Triple J Network, which transmits in all major cities and throughout most of the rest of Australia's smaller towns as well. It doesn't play the sort of music you'll find on commercial radio and it introduces with regularity the trends that young listeners adopt rather than following others leads. It is commercial free-other than

plugging its own products and also deals with youth issues and politics though is far more music oriented than chat. It often hits 40% Australian content and has an Unearthed program, which goes around the country trying to find new artists and give them airplay.

Which brings us to the matter of Australian content on radio. We used to have a quota which was 25% and was mandatory but often outwitted by stations playing most of their Australian music midnight to dawn. Stations would also have late night local music programs or play the same Aussie standards like 'Eagle Rock' or 'Cool Change' or hits from the 60s, 70s 80s. Now the local content quota is voluntary and nearer 30% in most cases. We still complain that newer music doesn't get a look in to commercial radio but there are alternatives.

In Sydney, a major non-commercial station called FBI started up with as much transmitter power as the big boys but with a 50% Australian content and half of that local. We also have college radio stations but the big influences in other cities like Melbourne are community radio such as 3PBS and 3RRR, Brisbane's 4ZZZ and others. Punk shows, dance programs, blues and harder edged rock find their way through community radio, which is a great supporter of homegrown artists.

As for satellite radio, we don't have it. We do have music radio on cable, but no dedicated broadcasts by bird to car. We also don't have digital radio though it's been promised. So if you're planning to do business Down Under, remember what you've gleaned from this publication and our accompanying AustralAsian Music Industry Directory. Or if you're just looking to come South by South by South and enjoy our unique country, we hope that we've added to your pleasure and knowledge.

Cheers,  
PHIL TRIPP-Publisher