

The Australian Government's new **AUSTRALIAN MUSIC OFFICE** welcomes you to SXSW, 2006



The **AUSTRALIAN MUSIC OFFICE** has been established to help artists pursue their dreams across the world...through innovative export initiatives.

A proud sponsor of:

The Aussie BBQ in Brush Square Park

(across from the Hilton)

Friday, March 17

12-7pm

7 hours, 11 bands

With:

The Living End
Something For Kate
The Mess Hall
The Flairz
Kisschasy
Airbourne
Decoder Ring
The Grates
End Of Fashion
Dappled Cities Fly
Gyroscope

and

The 'Australians at sxsw' trade show stand in it's fourth year at L3-L4.
Here to spread the Aussie Gospel.

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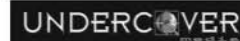
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AUSTRALIAN MUSIC

By Christie Eliezer

"Starting out in Australia was the best thing that happened to us. Australian audiences are tough. If you could survive them, we knew we could survive any other audience" - Barry Gibb, the Bee Gees.

"The whole idea of my rolling around on the floor onstage started in Australia. I figured that if I kept moving, they couldn't hit me with anything" - Angus Young, AC/DC

2006 is going to be the year that Aussie rock will make an impact on American audiences yet again. Australian music is like the sets of waves that come with a great surf—there is a rhythm to their movement, a crescendo and then a pause before the next set hits the shores of North America.

Over the next few months, Jet, The Living End (whose "State Of Emergency" crashed into the Australian charts last month at #1), Silverchair who're returning after a four year break, psychedelic-metal trio Wolfmother who keep scooping up awards and platinum awards downunder, End Of Fashion, Evermore, Thirsty Merc, The Butterfly Effect, the Vines, Youth Group and Airbourne plan to turn their amps up and blast audiences away.

"These bands are great live and they're not shy of hard work," says John O'Donnell, managing director of EMI Music Australia, which has six of these acts mentioned above. "The U.S. market complains that British acts don't come and work the market. You'll never hear that levelled at Aussie acts. They love to play live. And they know because their home market is small, it is essential for them to make an impact outside."

One American executive who is a fan of Australian music is Seymour Stein, New York based head of Sire Records. He's been signing Aussie acts since the early 1970s, like the Mixtures, The Saints and Radio Birdman. More recently, he's added Evermore (three brothers who grew up on a secluded farm in New Zealand

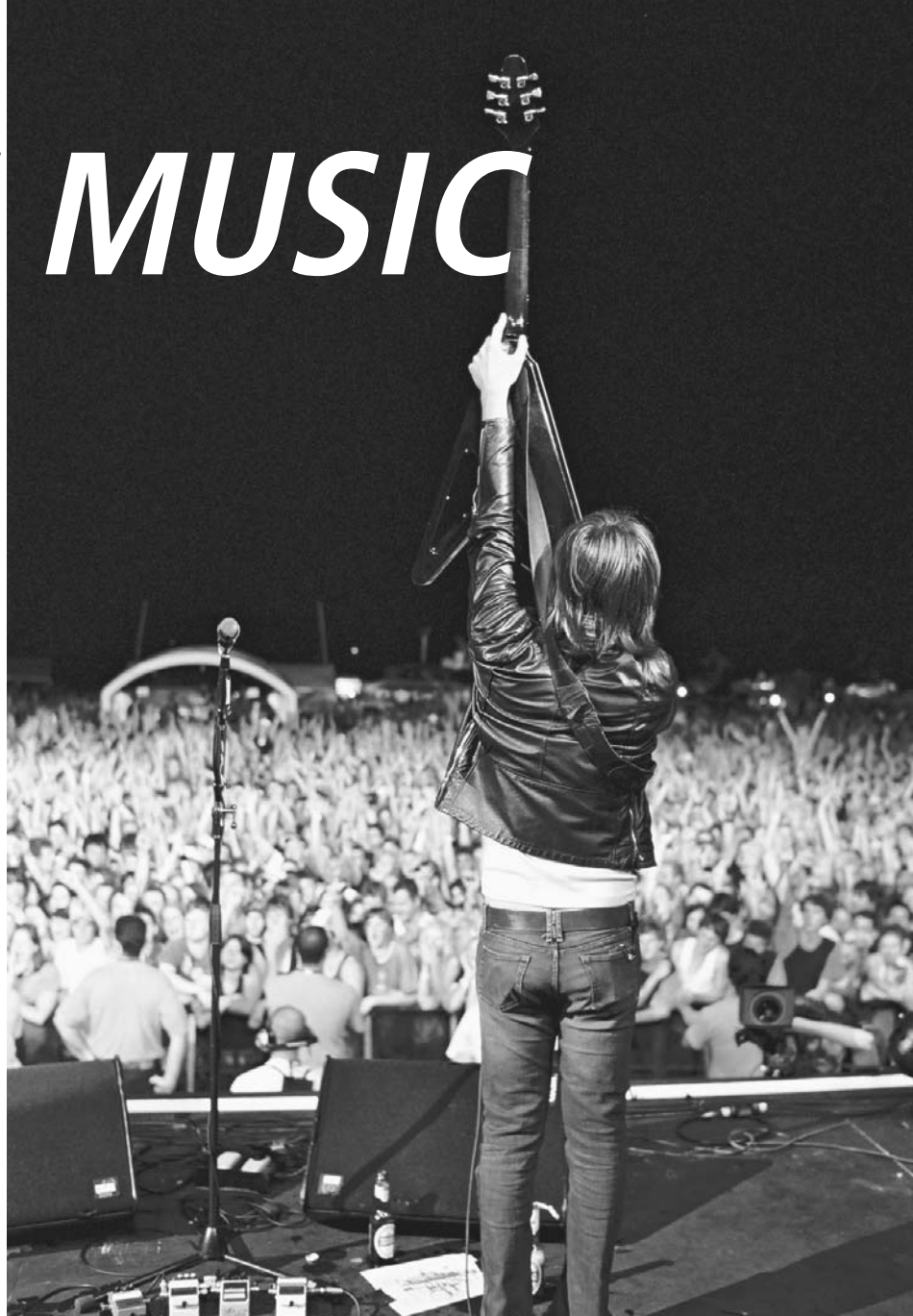
and only listened to their parents' 1960s record collection) and Brisbane twin sisters The Veronicas who named themselves after the cartoon character.

Stein is not interested in whether others see Australian music as "the buzz". He shrugs, "That's difficult to say. I do what I do and I don't pay attention to what other people do. I'm not a follower. Given the track record Australia has had for a country of 20 million, people would be fools not to pay attention. To me it's happenstance. It's a healthy A&R source like Canada, Sweden and Ireland and the UK, and soon, South Africa and India and China."

Of course it's not just rock bands that come from Australia. There are singer songwriters like Missy Higgins, Sarah Blasko, Pete Murray, Xavier Rudd, Alex Lloyd and Ben Lee. Dance acts like Infusion, Cut Copy (who opened for Franz Ferdinand in America last year) and Rogue Traders. R&B singers like Kate Ceberano, Vanessa Amorosi, Guy Sebastian, Eran James, Samantha Jade, Jade McCrae and Fijian-born Paulini who're just as good as anyone playing a R&B club in America. Pop acts like Delta Goodrem who is currently based in New York, Che'nelle who got signed to Virgin and The Veronicas whom Seymour Stein of Sire who says he saw in them the same hunger he saw in Madonna when he signed her up. Alt-rockers like the Grates and The Sleepy Jackson. And Latin-spiced ensembles like The Cat Empire who recorded their current album "Two Shoes" in Cuba.

US labels, looking at the huge success of Keith Urban, are rummaging down under to see if young versions like Jake Nicholai and Jedd Hughes could repeat his success.

Blues acts keep winning U.S. blues awards from the sheer quality of their records and roots musicians like John Butler Trio have used SxSW to make major inroads into a country filled with the genre.



Jet by Tony Mott

"Australia has always been a breeding ground for great music but recently it seems that the [U.S.] majors are particularly interested in the territory," Tony George, general manager of the Los Angeles based Australian Music Office, told "Billboard" magazine.

(The office was set up by the Australian Government to help Aussie musicians through its export division, Austrade. Austrade plays a big role at South By Southwest, including paying for the Australian stand and the BBQ showcase, as well as a sold-out pre-festival gig at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, and two club shows in New York after).

Australian music is said to come with its own beer can holder. In November 1971, the laws were changed to allow pubs and clubs to have live entertainment. Promoters quickly started to book acts to draw more people into the venues. The pub crowds could be rough (although they have yet to introduce chicken wire strung before the stage as they do in certain parts of the United States.) Generally in such places, the audience is there for a drink, pull someone for the night, and listen to music - all in that order.

Hence, any band worth its salt had to pull some tricks to survive. The singer had to be flamboyant and charismatic, and know how to work the stage. The band had to play loud. Its songs had to

be catchy, singalong and melodic. To make sense to their audience, songwriters would sing about Australian experiences and Australian cities. They had to take no prisoners and were separated by crash barriers from the sweaty, heaving masses in packed beer barns-unrelenting audiences who also gave no quarter and don't tolerate showgazers.

As a result, Australian rock has created some of music's most dynamic and memorable figures. Angus and the schoolboy uniform. Chrissie Amphlett of the Divinyls and her schoolgirl uniform. The ambivalent sexuality of INXS's first singer Michael Hutchence and Savage Garden's Darren Hayes. The punchy aggressive nature of Cold Chisel's Jimmy Barnes or Angry Anderson of Rose Tattoo. The theatrical flourishes of Doc Neeson of Angel City who confronted crowds with menace and humour. The formidable presence of Peter Garrett of Midnight Oil who used his music to teach audiences about racism, greenism, corporatism and every other "ism" going.

With a certain arrogance, most of the hard rock acts refused to tone down their sounds just to get on commercial radio. Instead, they hit the road, touring endlessly along the highways that criss crossed the Great Southern Land. And even though Australia is the same size as the continental US, there are only six major cities along the



Powderfinger by Tony Mott

coasts, smaller towns strung distant in between and mega-miles of scrub and kangaroo roadkill between gigs.

"In a lot of ways, the fact that radio wasn't playing our stuff helped us," says Billy Thorpe, who was frontman of The Aztecs, one of the fiercest blues-rock bands to come out Australia in the 1970s. "We didn't need to soften our sound at all. In fact, we could turn the amps up and not give a damn."

During their time, the Aztecs were the most popular band to play rock festivals. They'd exhort their audiences to "suck more piss" (translation to American: "drink a bit more beer."). In 1972 when they headlined the Sunbury Rock Festival, outside Melbourne, they hired every amp in the city, and played in front of a blitzkrieg wall of amps. A pub ten miles away complained that the noise was upsetting its drinkers.

Some like Midnight Oil took their road creed a step further. They refused to go on powerful TV shows like "Countdown". Drummer Rob Hirst once remembered, "We could have reached 3 million people in one performance. But our live show was our calling card. We decided we would rather do 4,000 gigs and build a loyal following instead. They were not going to discard us if our latest single didn't work."

As it turned out, radio was forced to play their music. In the 1980s, radio tuned into bands like the Oils, Cold Chisel, Icehouse, Mondo Rock, Angel City, Split Enz, Dragon, the Hoodoo Gurus and Moving Pictures. As their record sales exploded, they had money to come up with stage production that put them on par with international touring acts. They also had money to tour abroad.

Iva Davies of Icehouse said of that time, "The Australian industry in the late '70s was a cottage industry run by enthusiastic amateurs." That shifted by the '80s. In 1984/85, the Australian music industry generated an estimated A\$1,545million and employed 60,750 people. By 1990/91, that figure rose to \$2 billion and 80,000 people.

Dave Faulkner of the Hoodoo Gurus said that the greatest development was that Australian musicians had a change of attitude. "They weren't just making music for one market but thinking on a global level," he explained.

Because of their hard road work, Australian rock bands evolved into lean mean machines. When

they hit the United States, they might have been unknown. But their live shows were dynamite. They quickly blew American bands off the stage.

American audiences have been listening to Aussie acts since the 1960s, right from Rolf Harris' "Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport" and Slim Dusty's "The Pub With No Beer." But many times, they didn't even realise that an act they dug was from down under.

They'd have probably thought that the Bee Gees, or the Easybeats ("Friday On My Mind") or the Seekers ("Georgie Girl") were from England. Olivia Newton-John and Helen Reddy ("I Am Woman") could have been from L.A. or maybe Canada. In the mid-1970s, harmony soft-rockers like Little River Band and Air Supply proved that Aussie acts could have No. 1 albums and singles in the U.S. while still based downunder, yet still weren't 'identified' as Australian-it was all about the music, the song and the emotional connection. Their achievements were significant for Aussies. Yet for most American audiences, they could have well come from Colorado or southern California.

The change came in the early 1980s with the arrival of MTV (which, as a concept of wall to wall videos, began in Australia in the early 1970s, by the way). There was no mistaking that Men At Work were from Australia, not with a hit titled "Down Under" and with lines about vegemite sandwiches and introducing slang like "chunder" for hurling). And using the song as a theme for that little boat race called the America's Cup which the Aussies stole, certainly burned it into the Yank psyche.

More bands have followed since, particularly INXS whose fusion of funk and rock saw them become one of the first bands in America to draw both black and white audiences. The Church, Hoodoo Gurus, the Saints, Icehouse, Kylie Minogue, Crowded House, Screaming Jets, Paul Kelly, Taxride and Shihad were just some acts that had varying success.

Interestingly, some acts huge at home like Cold Chisel, Powderfinger and John Farnham could not translate their success to America. Either they sounded (or looked) too American to start off with. Or they just blended into the background at the A&R annual lineups of overseas talent from affiliated labels from overseas seeking US release.



The Wrights at WaveAid (featuring members of Jet, The Living End, Grinspoon, Powderfinger, Spiderbait, You Am I & Dallas Crane) by Tony Mott



The John Butler Trio at the Big Day Out by Tony Mott

Or their record companies didn't have the savvy to break them. For instance, Mondo Rock had no success Stateside. Yet Rick Springfield covered their "State Of The Heart" and took it into the U.S. Top 10 in 1985. In another instance, Tina Turner took John Farnham's blues-rock rendition of the Beatles' "Help", a hit in Australia, and turned it into a chart buster for herself in America.

Often, the Aussies have learned they needed the guts to stand up to their international labels and say, "we'll handle the image and the marketing". The Americans reaction is, inevitably, "no, we're the experts here". But they never are.

Dragon went over to the States in 1978 and were portrayed as a blues band. A Sports EP released in England by the ultra cool Stiff Records showed the cover of a girl feeding a koala. LRB's press ads in Europe were full of images of kangaroos and use of words like "strewth" and "bewdy" in the headlines

Midnight Oil particularly had courage. In fact, the original lines of 'Don't Wanna Be The One' went "We've got to forget about the wombats and the geckoes and the fools/If you want to make it to the top, you've got to break the rules." In the 1990s, Savage Garden sold 20 million copies of their first two albums while a teenage Silverchair also made an impact.

In more recent times, Jet and The Vines opened the door for other acts, and seen US record companies send their talent scouts on flights to Sydney. Antipodean acts have crashed through in iPod ads as well as on stages and charts. This year, artists like Airbourne, The Grates and End of Fashion have been snatched up as the next new thing along with Wolfmother and Missy Higgins.

Australian acts continue to make a connection with American audiences because they sing in English, and their experiences (and humour) are similar. It's not like trying to market an unfunny band from Iceland, an uncommunicative Russian pop act or a bunch of slickly dressed dandies from Manchester.

The strength about Australian music is its live scene. This has been aided by a network of influential college radio stations, giveaway music magazines ("the street press) and vibrant clubs; a national Government run youth radio network called Triple J which has unearthed many alt-rock acts; the growth of the pay-TV sector; and a series of rock festivals like Big Day Out and the East Coast Roots & Blues Festival which have broken new acts.

While there are acts that this year are poised to break into America, there is already another breed of baby acts who are already showing promise about making an impact in Australia and will head to the U.S. in the next couple of years. Australian audiences who go specifically to music clubs to hear their music, are supportive of new talent.

Australians by and large do support all kinds of arts. A report by the Australian Entertainment Industry Association (AEIA) found that 12.5 million live entertainment tickets, worth A\$689.6 million (US \$517.6m), were sold in Australia through 2004. The figures cover 10 categories - including rock concerts, musicals, opera, ballet, plays and classical concerts. As a result, the AEIA is lobbying the Australian Government to introduce more tax investment breaks so that more investment is poured into the Aussie entertainment biz. Which means you can expect a steady supply of Aussie acts on your doorstep in coming years.

Yes. We're coming in another wave this year. One of many that have come in the past and will thunder into America in the future. And we've got a lot of power in this push from the industry which is sending over 200 executives, managers, mini-moguls and aspirant businesspeople through to the Federal Government's export arm which is putting a broad range of resources, facilities and technology behind its music marketing thrust.

Our government has supported a stand presence in the Exhibition at L3-L4; we've got special shows for SxSW registrants only in the afternoons also supported by our government and you're holding this newspaper (or viewing it online) as another industry and government partnership initiative to give a greater presence to our homegrown acts as they launch themselves out in Austin amidst the throngs and noise everyone is churning through that is the magic of SxSW.

Christie Eliezer is the Australasian bureau chief of **Billboard**. He also produces a weekly column on music business news which is carried by the top street press throughout Australia and an even larger one weekly that appears on www.themusic.com.au. He's on eof Australia's longest serving music writers in uncensored media and is certainly its most respected.

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