

OZ ROCK'S MOST TRAGIC TALE HOW EVERYTHING WENT WRONG FOR STEVIE WRIGHT



Stevie Wright (Courtesy of Alberts)

By Jeff Jenkins

It was a moment of triumph, a comeback so immense, it rivals John Farnham's *You're The Voice*. Just on fifty years ago, Stevie Wright topped the Australian charts with *Evie*, the start of a six-week reign on the national Top 40 charts.

But no one knew that the singer was harbouring a dark secret.

There are no bones about it: *Evie* is the greatest epic in Australian music. It is a three-part rock opera that strangely mirrors Stevie Wright's own story, capturing the heady days of youth followed by the highs and lows of love and a tragic twist.

In his last major interview with Judith Durham's biographer Graham Simpson in 2002, Wright revealed how Vanda & Young had written the song especially for him. "*Evie/Stevie*," he smiled. "*Stevie*, let your hair hang down!"

Wright then provided a rundown of the song: "It's mainly about a guy and a girl gettin' it on, being young, dancing, going out, foreplay ... Then he finds he reaches a deeper stage in their love and he's not just going out rockin' on. And then every man's fear - don't let me lose her now." *Bottom of Form*

Part One was a reminder of Wright's young years when anything seemed possible. "I got some money in my pocket/ I got my car keys in my hand," the song starts. "I got myself a couple of tickets to see a rock 'n' rollin' band."

Wright was just 17 when he formed The Easybeats with George Young, Harry Vanda, Dick Diamonde and Gordon "Snowy" Fleet. They were all migrant kids - Wright had come to Australia from Leeds in England with his family when he was 10. The Wrights initially settled in Melbourne before moving to Sydney, where they lived in an army house just near the Villawood Migrant Hostel, where the band formed.

While still a teenager, Wright co-wrote a string of classics: *For My Woman*, *She's So Fine*, *Wedding Ring*, *Sad and Lonely* and *Blue*, *Women (Make You Feel Alright)*, *Come And See Her*, *I'll Make You Happy* and *Sorry*. He always looked back fondly on his days with The Easybeats. "It was magic for me. I was a teenager, and I don't think I could have had a better time. Heaps and heaps of ladies." He paused before adding: "And heaps and heaps of ladies. Adulation, hysteria ... you could not have had a better time."

The singer in *Evie Part One* is impatient and impetuous. It's all about good times; you can worry about the consequences later. "Come on, babe," he sings, "you know there ain't no time to mess around."

But in *Part Two*, the singer is forced to grow up fast when he discovers that *Evie* is pregnant. He struggles to communicate exactly how he feels but manages to say: "*Evie*, I'm nothing without you ... Oh *Evie*, so much in love with you."

Continued page 2



THE DEMISE OF STEVIE WRIGHT

Continued: In the UK, George Young forged a new songwriting partnership with guitarist Harry Vanda. Stevie Wright would never write another hit for The Easybeats.

In Part Three, the singer's life is changed forever when Evie dies in childbirth. "When I woke this morning, I was king of the world," Wright sings. "It seems so unreal, but I just can't understand that with each passing minute, the one that I love is slipping away from me."

Wright was just 21 when The Easybeats broke up. He then worked at the House of Merivale in Sydney, selling suits, before being lured back to the music world. He starred in the stage production of Jesus Christ Superstar, where he tried heroin for the first time at a party celebrating the final Melbourne show.

Evie and Wright's first solo album, *Hard Road*, came more than four years after The Easybeats split. Clocking in at 11.11 minutes, Evie is the longest song to top the charts, eclipsing Russell Morris' *The Real Thing* (6.20 minutes), The Beatles' *Hey Jude* (7.12), Don McLean's *American Pie* (8.42) and Taylor Swift's *All Too Well* (10.13).

Toilet Break

Wright joked that radio DJs loved the song because it gave them a chance to go to the toilet. He also noted the genius of Vanda & Young presenting the song in three parts – the rock stations could play Parts One and Three, while the softer stations would find Part Two more suitable for their format.

Chris Gilbey – the man who put the lightning bolt into AC/DC's name – was Alberts' A&R man when Evie was released. He'll never forget the phone call from our GoSet Club member Trevor Smith telling him that he'd placed the song on high rotation on 2SM, then Sydney's top music station. "I can still feel the chills now," Gilbey says. "High rotation back then was once every hour. So, we had an 11-minute song on the radio once an hour on 2SM."

John Tait, author of *Vanda & Young, Inside Australia's Hit Factory*, explained Evie as "a tragic tale told in three parts: boy wants girl, boy gets girl, boy loses girl. It was a ballad sandwiched between two rock songs. Each one could have been a hit."

AC/DC's Malcolm Young played the solo in Part One, while Harry Vanda provided the lead break in Part Three.

Vanda & Young had asked Michael Chugg, then a young booking agent, to manage Stevie Wright. He remembers the record went "berserk", but all was not well. Chugg discovered that his artist was addicted to heroin. The manager was heartbroken. "Stevie, you're a fucking superstar," he cried, "why are you doing this to yourself?"

"It couldn't go on," Chugg adds. "It just got ridiculous because Ted [Albert] didn't know, Fifa [Riccobono] didn't know, Harry and George didn't know."

The truth finally came out during a recording session at Alberts. "George and Harry are in the booth, and Stevie's in the voice booth, and I've walked past the voice booth and the little prick – on the fucking ledge inside, he's got the alfoil, and he's doing heroin," Chugg recalls. "And I've walked around to George and Harry and said, 'Listen, come with me. I just want you to know what I've been going through for two and a half years.' And they walked around, and he couldn't see us, and I said, 'He's been doing smack, he's been doing it for three years.' It was very painful and emotional."

"The world was Stevie's oyster," Chugg reflected in his memoir *Hey, You In The Black T-Shirt*. "This was the shot at managing an artist who could have a number one hit all over the world."

Atlantic Records in the US took out a two-page ad in *Billboard* to herald Wright's arrival in America. But two days into his promo tour, the singer got on a plane and headed home to Sydney, going straight to see his drug dealer in Randwick. "In one fell swoop," Chugg notes, "Stevie's overseas career was dead."

I'm Losing You

As Wright sang in Part Three, "Before I know it, I'm losing you." The Alberts family tried to help. The company's longest-serving employee, Fifa Riccobono, remembers a heart-to-heart chat with the artist: "I said to him, 'How can you do something that makes you feel so bad?' And he said, 'That one high makes up for ten lows.'"

John Paul Young supported Stevie Wright on his first solo tour. "This was at the start of Stevie's well-documented problems," JPY recalls, "and there were times when the situation took on a comical look. In sheer madness, he headbutted a louver door in the motel; his head went straight through, and then we spent quite a bit of time trying to extricate his head from the louvers."

When Bon Scott died, Molly Meldrum suggested that Stevie Wright would become AC/DC's new singer. But he was unaware of the extent of the singer's problems.

Reunion Tour

Wright did a reunion tour with The Easybeats in 1986, a show at Selina's in Sydney in 1992, before a showstopping turn at the Long Way To The Top tour in 2002. The singer was damaged – he could no longer walk – but his rock 'n' roll spirit was unbroken.

In 2005, an Aussie supergroup, The Wrights – featuring Nic Cester, Bernard Fanning and Phil Jamieson on lead vocals – celebrated Stevie Wright by covering Evie (after doing Part One at the 2004 ARIA Awards). It hit #2, but it was kept out of the top spot by Nelly and Tim McGraw's *Over and Over*.

Michael Chugg still wonders what might have been if Wright hadn't suffered the disease of addiction. "To watch it all disappear for Stevie like that was unbearable. I admit that at least some of my anger towards him was due to my own investment, personally as well as professionally. I wanted to manage the number one act in Australia. I wanted to have a hit worldwide."

So Close

"We were so close to it, so very close. Everything was set up for him. He could have been a superstar. Perhaps that was what drove him to do what he did. He had a self-destructive nature. It was like he couldn't handle the thought of success."

Part Three of Evie features a poignant plea: "Won't somebody help me, won't somebody, please."

"I wish I could have done something to help him," Chugg admits, "but I couldn't."

Stevie Wright died two days after Christmas in 2015, a week after his 68th birthday.

SOMER JOINS GOSET ADMIN TEAM

Following on from the recent appointment of Bob Pritchard as Marketing & Sponsorship manager, we are pleased to announce that Somer Peeters has joined the GoSet Administration team taking on the role of Treasurer.

Her appointment is immediate, and Somer is responsible for the collection and banking of all monies collected and forwarded to the charity of choice. Somer will also be involved in the planning and decision-making of special projects that are planned for 2025.

"We are delighted to have Somer join our team and with our plans for 2025, it is imperative that we have now have someone to manage our finances, and Somer is the perfect fit," says President Brian Cadd".

Somer previously owned the iconic Khyats Hotel in Brighton which regularly supported local music with acts including Bobby Bright, Ross Wilson, Russell Morris, Issi Dye and Brian Cadd amongst others. Up from Melbourne, Somer lives along the northern rivers in New South Wales.

"I am honoured to have been offered the role as Treasurer and look forward to working alongside such a talented and dedicated group of people and helping support Samuel Johnson's 'Love Your Sister' charity and to become involved with other GoSet Club initiatives," says Somer.

Love your Sister

The GoSet Club has ended its association with Support Act and will be financially assisting Samuel Johnson's 'Love Your Sister' charity for 2025.

"Unlike Support Act, who receives \$35million of government funding, 'Love Your Sister' does not receive any government funding," says Cadd. "All donations received are used to support its aim to ensure precision treatment for all new cancer patients, whatever the cancer, regardless of location, age, income or status," he added.

"It is our vision that patients are offered the right treatment, first time, every time, says founder Samuel Johnson. And our association with the GoSet Club will help further our ongoing challenge to beat cancer."

Sam's sister Connie dared her brother Samuel to unicycle around the country to remind every mum in the land to be breast aware and raise \$1M for cancer research.

Samuel completed the challenge, broke the world record for long-distance unicycling and helped raise \$1.4M for research.

He was expecting a pat on the back when he returned. Connie was quick to remind him "It's not over when you get off the unicycle. It's not over when I die. It's over when we stop losing mums to cancer." Samuel promised on the spot to raise their fundraising goal to \$10M.

We are planning to have Sam as a special guest sometime next year.

For the record door entry money raised for the October, November and December lunches and will be banked to pay for costs associated with fund-raising projects planned for next year. Details will be announced soon.

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GLENN A. BAKER FINDS A NEW HOME FOR HIS MONUMENTAL COLLECTION

by Tony Healey

Glenn A Baker's mammoth collection of records, CDs and memorabilia has been sold at auction. It is believed it contained some 50,000 vinyl records, more than 30,000 CDs, cassette tapes and stores of rock and pop magazines.

It also includes much sought-after memorabilia from Baker's heroes, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix. It also includes rare music videos and photos and a collection of first-pressed albums, that includes original Beatles and Rolling Stones records are worth thousands on their own.

Baker started collecting more than 50 years ago and is thrilled that his collection, sold reportedly for \$314,000, will not be broken up. It was described by Lloyds Auctions as "one of the largest music collections in the country."

It was bought by property developer and sometime drummer Paul Lambess and will be housed as a permanent display at the \$235 million entertainment precinct he's building on NSW's Lake Macquarie set to open in 2026. It will include a 30,000-seat amphitheatre for live music, as well as a food precinct and hotel.

According to Michael Bayley in the Financial Review, Lambess says "The true value of this collection lies in Glenn's memories. We look forward to collaborating with him to capture the stories and emotions behind each piece of memorabilia."

"It's going to be a huge but exciting job to organise and catalogue the entire collection so we can put it on display for music lovers to enjoy."



"The true value of this collection lies in Glenn's memories. We look forward to collaborating with him to capture the stories and emotions behind each piece of memorabilia."

And Baker expressed his satisfaction in knowing his collection will remain intact: "I'm so pleased that my archives are not going to be broken up and have ended up with someone like Paul, a former musician, who is going to treat the collection with the respect it deserves and share it with music lovers."

Baker is an accomplished author, having written 16 books and award-winning travel writer, commentator and broadcaster. As a member of the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) he inducted Max Merritt, Australian Crawl, Masters Apprentices and Billy Thorpe into the Hall Of fame.

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RYMER & PIERCE - MAGI

by Tony Healey



Two of our favourite club members Michael Rymer and Shirley Pierce have joined forces to form a new Australian film production company, Magi Pictures.

Together they have nearly six decades of industry experience between them, with the former having helmed a mix of Australian and international projects since the mid-90s,

Based right here on the Gold Coast, the duo is currently working on several film projects including a romantic comedy set in a Queensland zoo about a employee tasked with finding mates for certain species but cannot find one for herself; and a psychological horror film set in the Daintree rainforest.

"I'm now at what I'm going to call the third act of my filmmaking career and while I'm very proud of what I've been able to accomplish and the opportunities I've been able to take advantage of, now's the time to do the real work of what I'm really capable of."

Shirley is an acclaimed screen writer, and Michael is a producer and internationally renowned director who has won numerous awards for his movies and TV shows.

Michael studied at the University of Southern California where his short films earned him the Warner Communications Scholarship for directing. He made his directorial debut from his own screenplay *Angel Baby*, a tale of two schizophrenics who fall in love and try to live on their own.

The film, stars John Lynch and Jacqueline MacKenzie and premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 1996 and earned seven Australian Film Institute Awards including Best Picture, Best Direction, Best Screenplay as well as best actor and actress. It also won four Australian Film Critics Circle Awards, and the Australian Human Rights Award. (Available on Netflix).

Award Winners

In 1997, Michael directed the crime thriller *In Too Deep* and in 2001 directed fantasy horror *the Queen of the Damned*. He went on to produce, as well as write and direct the Australian feature *Face-to-Face*, based on the acclaimed play by David Williamson, starring Sigrid Thornton, Luke Ford and Vince Collosimo. The film won forty awards at international festivals.

Rymer also directed the reimagined mini-series *Battlestar Galactica*, (now on Prime) and won a Hugo Award, a Peabody Award and an AFI Award and was nominated for an Emmy for directing the three-hour series finale.

He also directed episodes of TV series *Flash Forward*, *The Killing*, *Longmire*, *Jessica Jones*, *Man in the High Castle* and *American Horror Story* for which he was nominated for a US Directors Guild of America Award.

More recently Michael directed several prestigious Australian mini-series - *Deadline Gallipoli*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Gloaming* for ABC International and STAN. and the opening and closing episodes of *Fires* an anthology mini-series about the Australian bushfires of 2019, for the Australian Broadcasting Company and NBC Universal, for which he received an Australia Director's Guild nomination. '

Writing for Walt Disney Studios, Shirley worked on projects ranging from features *Dinosaur*, *Home on the Range* and *Meet the Robinsons* to the holocaust drama, *Misha*. The short, *John Henry*, won international film festivals and was shortlisted in its category for an Academy Award and her screen adaptation of the opera *Aida* was source material for Elton John's successful Broadway production.

Elton John, Lena Horne & Quincy Jones

Shirley wrote the *Lena Horne Story* for Sony and ABC (America), the BET thriller *Incognito*, TNT's *Passing Glory* for Quincy Jones and the racially charged *Colour of Rage* for the USA network.

She wrote and produced the short film *No Means* which was an official selection at five international film festivals including festivals in Los Angeles, Melbourne and New York. Shirley also wrote and co-produced the successful anti-bullying music video *Free You Be You* which was nominated for a Heart of Gold award.

Shirley has written for studios in the U.S., Australia, Japan and Spain and developed projects for MGM and Sony. Other credits include the urban drama *Hothouse Flowers*, the TV teen drama *Kaleidoscope*, the story for thriller *Murder on the Reef* and an adaptation of romance novel *Seducing Mr. Maclean*.

Box office of her films is over half a billion dollars.

Shirley has developed projects for Fox Television, NBC, Proctor and Gamble, Hanna Barbera, Crawford Productions and the Australian Children's Television Fund. Her comedy *Lullaby Eve* has been staged in N.Y., Los Angeles and Sydney and adapted for the screen for Magi Pictures.

And to cap it off, Shirley is married to our GoSet Newsletter's Barry Pierce who is the Magi company's business manager.



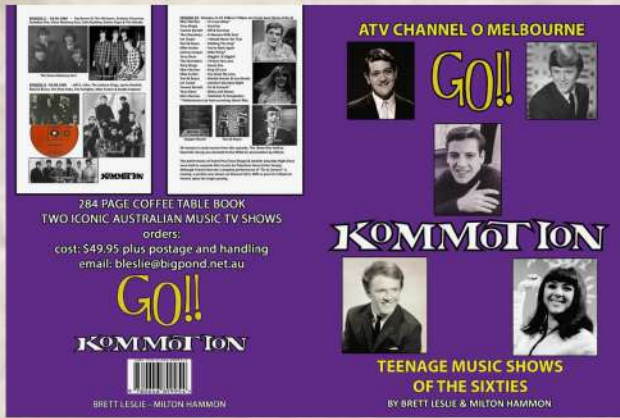
Magi Pictures' Barry Pierce, Shirley Pierce and Michael Rymer

Pics by Linda Willmott

GO!! KOMMOTION BOOK LAUNCH

The launch of the heavyweight GO!! KOMMOTION book bought out a few relics to help celebrate the occasion Kommotion's Keith Millar, Grant Rule, Terry Sparks, compere Bob and author Milton Hammon

Pics by: Anne Pritchard, Milton Hammon, Loretta Rymer



Anne 'Mighty Mouse' Pritchard with Marcie Jones, Carmel Chayne and Kel Monaghan



Bob with Jeff Phillips and radio legend Duane Zigliotto

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The Rymer's... Helena, Michael and Loretta at Lady Bird, Main Beach



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Pics by: Linda Willmott



Carmel and Kel with their Soliloquy album



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Loretta Rymer with GoSet production editor Barry Pierce and Melissa Burrows



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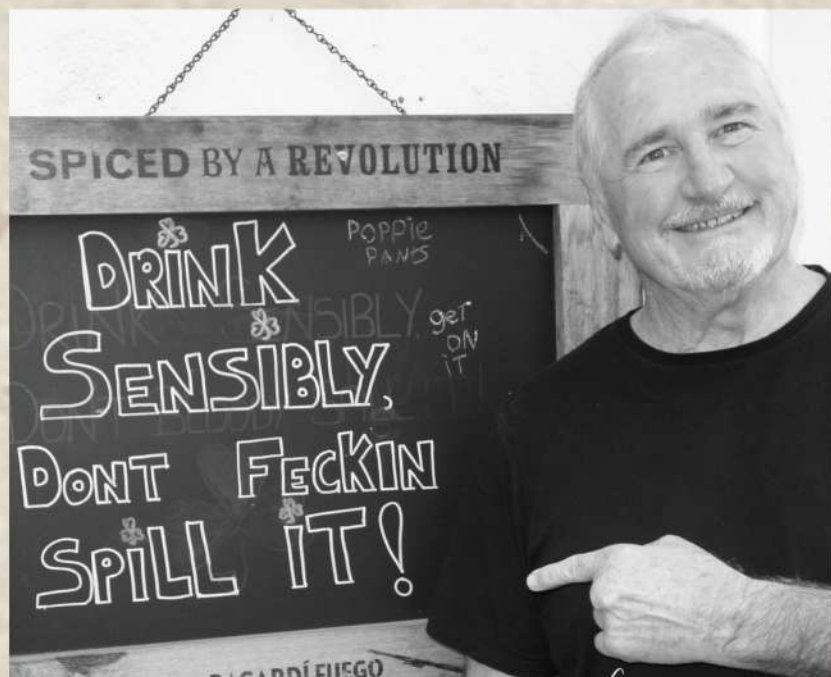
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Rockin' Ross Mercer's Thought For The Day



CRANKY FRANKY'S RAVE

by Jeff Jenkins

They don't make tours like this anymore.

On 9 July 1974, fifty years ago Frank Sinatra played at Festival Hall in Melbourne. The city's glitterati were out in force, having paid \$20 to be there.

When the Chairman of the Board hit the stage for his first Australian gig in thirteen years, he was fuming. The local media had got under his skin, relentlessly chasing him since he'd landed in Sydney three days before.

The 58-year-old singer's reputation preceded him. But in the lead-up to the shows, Brian de Courcy, who was working on the Melbourne leg of the tour, told the ABC: "They've built him up as a bit of an ogre; I can't believe this at all."

Showtime, Tuesday 11 July and Sinatra had had enough...

"We have a name in the States for their counterparts: they're called parasites because they take and take and never give," Sinatra said. Absolutely never give [up]. I don't care what you think about any press in the world, I say they're bums and they're always going to be bums, every one of them".

"It's the scandal, man, that really bugs you, it drives you crazy ... they're pimps, they're just crazy. And the hookers, the broads who work in the press, are the hookers of the press. Need I explain that to you? I might offer them a buck and a half, [but] I'm not sure. I once gave a chick in Washington two dollars and overpaid her, I found out."

The crowd initially laughed and cheered, but you could sense the singer crossed the line.

And things got worse when Sinatra returned to the Southern Cross after the show, with the singer's bodyguards engaging in a nasty scuffle with the waiting media.

In the '70s, Australia was highly unionised, and the media union, the Australian Journalists Association, didn't appreciate how Sinatra dealt with its members.

"This is just not done in Australia," snapped the AJA head, Rick Hill. "The mafia might be able to do it in the United States, but it certainly doesn't happen in Australia, and our union won't tolerate it happening to our members, and that's the end of it."

Sinatra was slapped with a union ban. It meant no room service at the Southern Cross, and members of the Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees Association refused to provide lighting, staging and backing musicians at his shows.

And the Transport Workers Union refused to refuel Sinatra's private plane, meaning he was stranded in Australia.

The journalists wanted an apology; Sinatra said he'd never apologised to anyone in his life and wasn't going to start now. In fact, the singer wanted his own apology – "after 15 years of shit" from the world's media.

Sinatra's second Melbourne show was cancelled. And he started to call his powerful friends.

Holed up in his suite on the 15th floor of the Southern Cross, the singer barked at his attorney, Mickey Rudin: "Get Hank on the phone!" It turned out that Hank was US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Sinatra also wanted to contact his old buddy Jimmy Hoffa, head of America's most powerful union, the Teamsters, and order them to black-ban Qantas in retaliation. He considered calling the US Navy to get them to send a helicopter from their aircraft carrier docked in Japan.

Sinatra's crew realised his Gulfstream jet had just enough fuel to get to Sydney, so they relocated to the Boulevard Hotel, where they agreed to meet with Hawke on July 11.

"They [Sinatra's people] started to realise they had a bit of a problem," Hawke reflected. "I made it clear it could be resolved through discussion and negotiation."

But the singer was still not in the mood to apologise.

When Hawke ventured to the Boulevard's Presidential Suite, he was greeted by Rudin, who declared, "You can't stop us leaving the country!"

Hawke's response was a classic. "Well, as far as I know, there's been only one case recorded of someone walking on water. Unless Frank is going to be the second, I don't understand how you're going to get out. "You're here until you apologise."

Sinatra told Hawke he was a big supporter of unions. "That's not the point, Frank," the Aussie union man replied. "You might be able to get away with it in the United States; you're not going to get away with it here. "What do you want?" "It's pretty simple, Frank: an apology."

After a bottle of Courvoisier brandy and a few cigars, Robert Raymond remembers that Hawke was "almost legless", but they managed to issue a joint statement "on behalf of Frank Sinatra and Bob Hawke on behalf of the unions":

Frank Sinatra did not intend any general reflection upon the moral character of the working members of the Australian media. Frank Sinatra also expresses his regret for any physical injury suffered by persons as a result of attempts to ensure his personal safety.

It wasn't quite an apology, but the tour was back on, with Sinatra's three shows at the Hordern Pavilion going ahead, with one televised nationally by Channel Nine.

Sinatra would later explain, "A funny thing happened in Australia – I made a mistake and got off the plane." He vowed never to return, but he came back in January 1988 to open the Sanctuary Cove resort on the Gold Coast.

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GONG FOR COLIN PETERSEN



by Tony Healey

Colin Petersen is one of Redcliffe's Humpybong State School's most famous students, along with Barry, Robin and Maurice Gibb that is!

While at school Colin developed an interest in music, starting out on piano but switching to drums and became acquainted with Maurice Gibb. In time he ended up playing on the Bee Gees' early Australian sides and became the first non-Gibb brother to become an official member of the Bee Gees.

A special ceremony recognising Colin's remarkable career achievements as an actor, musician and producer was held at the Redcliffe Wall of Famers, 200 years to the day that Redcliffe was established.

Now aged 78, Colin continues to work, presently playing and speaking on the national Best of The Bee Gees Saturday Night Fever tribute shows (Tour dates below)

In 2013, Moreton Bay Regional Council unveiled a 70-metre monument in a renamed laneway now known as 'Bee Gees Way' Redcliffe. In 2015, Colin joined Barry Gibb for the grand opening of Bee Gees Way and this unique tribute is attracting thousands of visitors each year.

Drum roll for Colin!



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MR MUSIC MAN SWINGS IN

OCTOBER LUNCH

Bill Duff is widely regarded as one of the music industry's most popular mover and shakers. Known as Mr Music Man, Bill started his career in the 50's, working in a Melbourne music shop, selling 78rpm records (two years before the introduction of vinyl records) sheet music and musical instruments).

He became state manager of Festival Records working artists including Johnny O'Keefe, Normie Rowe, and with Warner Music/WEA Records worked with artists such as Cold Chisel, Goanna, Mondo Rock and INXS. Stories abound and interviewed by Normie Rowe. Seating is limited, so book early!

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FARNHAM AND SADIE



Sadie, gold record lady

SADIE, that little old lady with the mop, has certainly taken the pop world by storm.

This week she earned a gold record for young Johnny Farnham, the singer who was a plumber's mate until last November.

Johnny received his gold medal in a ceremony in Melbourne, his home town, on Thursday night.

Two days earlier he had received an award from the Major Network Company for the best male vocal of 1967.

The record has covered Johnny with glory. It has been the quickest gold record winner in Australia's pop history and is E.M.I.'s fastest selling single since "The Pub With No Beer."

And it has rocketed 18-year-old Johnny from \$22 a week last November to about \$300.

How has it affected his life?

To begin with it's made him busy.

"I just haven't had time to do anything," Johnny said. "I've been making all this money,

but I haven't had time to do anything with it. It's just been gathering in the bank.

"This week I had my first taste of money. I just went out and spent \$50. Just like that.

"I bought a present for my manager and I bought myself a ring and a pair of cuff links. It was beaut."

Johnny's plan for staying on top is rather curious, but pretty logical. His next record is an oldie with the same old "Sadie" sound.

It's "Underneath the Arches," an old English classic.

"But the other side will be straight pop," Johnny said. "We hope the oldies will like 'Underneath the Arches' and the kids will like the pop number."

"We'll cop it both ways."

Johnny is also enmeshed in an LP which will feature old and new material. Included is the oldie: "Are You Having Any Fun?"

Which material does Johnny prefer? "I'm a pop fan," he said. "I



JOHNNY FARNHAM

like the old stuff, too. It's interesting, but I really like the modern stuff."

His life has been so hectic lately he's only just starting to enjoy it.

"At first we were so busy and it was all so strange I thought I'd done the wrong thing. I missed the plumbing job and the people I used to work with.

"But now I'm getting used to it and I love it."

What does he dislike about being a pop star?

"I don't get home as much as I'd like," he said. "I miss my parents."

"And it's a bit strange going home because my little sister—she's 12—likes to put me on display."

"Every time I go home her girl friends hang around and she drags me out so they can see me."

"She says, 'This is my brother, Johnny Farnham' and I just have to stand there feeling like a real idiot."

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Queen of Soul

Renee Geyer, the incomparable Australian soul singer whose powerful voice and uncompromising artistry left an indelible mark on the music world both here and internationally. (She was born on 11 September 1953 and would have turned 71 this year.)

For over five decades, Renee Geyer's powerful, smoky voice has captivated audiences and earned her the title of Australia's Queen of Soul. Born in Melbourne in 1953, Geyer blazed a trail as one of the country's most respected and enduring artists, leaving an indelible mark on the Australian music scene.

Geyer's musical journey began in the early 1970s when she joined jazz-rock group Sun. Her distinctive vocals quickly garnered attention, leading to her debut solo album in 1973. It was her 1974 single, a cover of James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's World," that catapulted her to national stardom. The raw emotion and gritty power she brought to the track showcased her exceptional talent and set the stage for a remarkable career.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Geyer continued to evolve as an artist, experimenting with various genres including R&B, jazz, and rock. Her albums "Ready to Deal" (1975) and "Moving Along" (1977) cemented her reputation as a formidable vocalist and songwriter. Geyer's ability to infuse each performance with soul-stirring intensity made her a sought-after live performer, both in Australia and internationally.

In 1981, Geyer took a bold step by relocating to the United States, where she collaborated with renowned producers and musicians. Her time in America saw her providing backing vocals for artists like Joe Cocker, Sting, and Chaka Khan, further honing her craft and expanding her musical horizons.

Returning to Australia in the mid-1990s, Geyer experienced a career resurgence. Her 1994 album "Difficult Woman" was both a critical and commercial success, introducing her to a new generation of listeners. The title track became an anthem of sorts, reflecting Geyer's unapologetic approach to her art and life.

Throughout her career, Geyer faced numerous challenges, including battles with substance abuse and health issues. However, her resilience and passion for music always shone through. She openly discussed her struggles, becoming an advocate for recovery and inspiring others with her honesty and strength.

Geyer's impact on Australian music is immeasurable. She paved the way for future generations of soul and R&B artists in the country, proving that authentic, powerful music could resonate deeply with audiences. Her influence can be heard in the work of contemporary Australian artists like Meg Mac and Kaiti.

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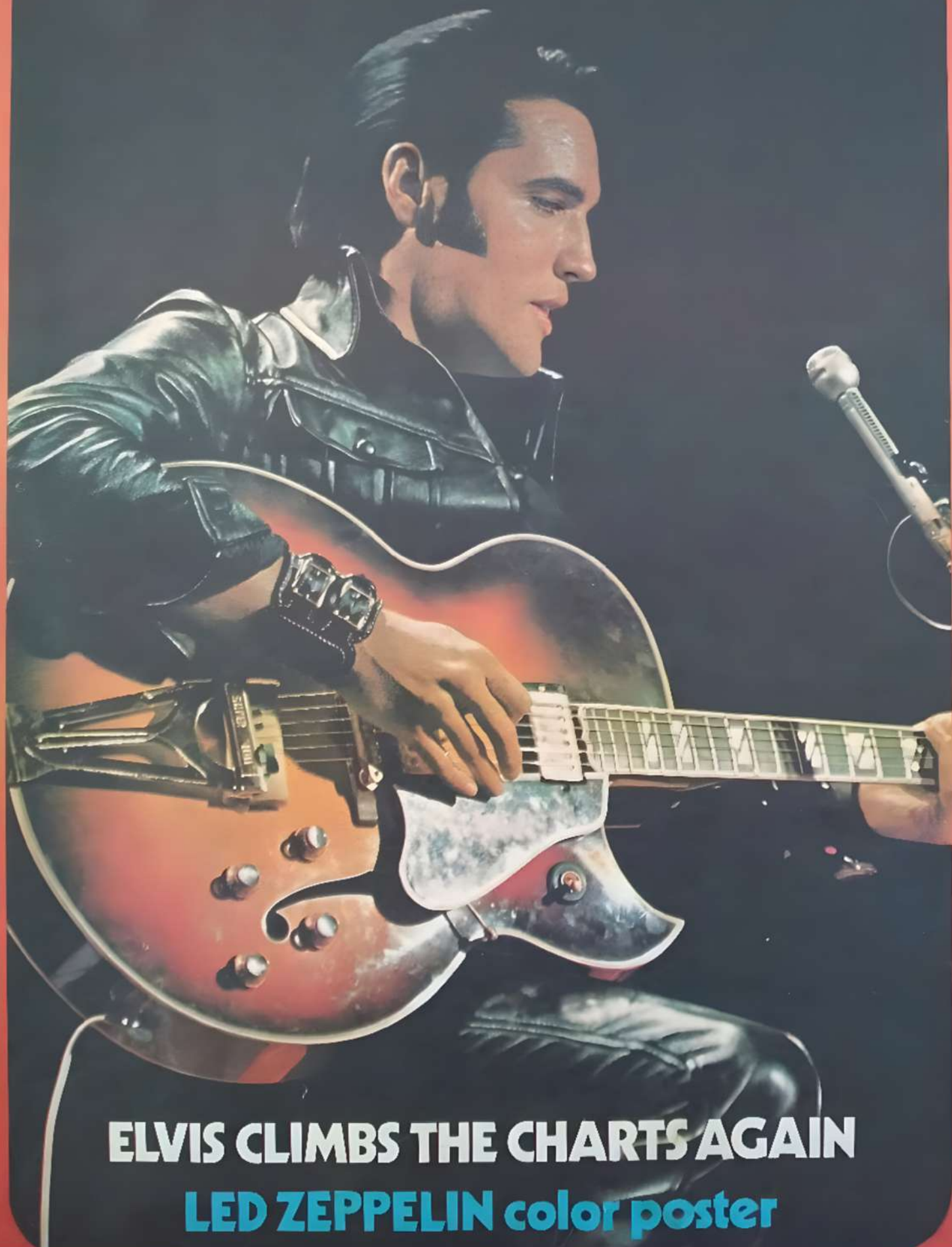
In 2005, Geyer was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame, a testament to her enduring legacy. Her autobiography, "Confessions of a Difficult Woman," published in 2000, offered insights into her remarkable life and career, further endearing her to fans.

Sadly, Renee Geyer passed away in January 2023 at the age of 69. Her death was mourned across the Australian music industry and beyond, with tributes pouring in from fellow musicians, fans, and media personalities. She left behind a rich catalogue of music that continues to inspire and move listeners.

Renee Geyer's legacy is one of raw talent, unwavering authenticity, and the power of soul music to transcend boundaries. Her unique voice and passionate performances will forever be remembered as a defining sound in Australian music history. As we reflect on her incredible journey, it's clear that Renee Geyer was not just Australia's Queen of Soul, but a true icon of music whose influence will be felt for generations to come.

GOSET

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