

6TH EDITION | MARCH 2013



The BLUESLETTER

Col's Two-Bob Worth COLIN THOMPSON

THANKS FOR PICKING UP THIS ISSUE OF THE BLUESLETTER, THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO BLUES & ROOTS MUSIC FESTIVAL.

Well, we are into year 3 of BB & RMF and momentum is building nicely indeed. I'm extremely proud of the way the local music community – and Bendigo's community as a whole – has gotten behind this truly grass-roots initiative.

It's a home-grown music event in every sense of the word. And, believe me, we have acts contacting us every day from all over Australia (as well as a number of internationals) wanting to be part of our program... I only wish we could fit them all into the November program!

Much of our success in gathering such a head of steam in such a short time has been attributed to the supporting events we stage throughout the year, in the lead-up to the Festival itself in November. We've stepped it up substantially for 2013 and have lots more on the calendar for you to enjoy and to be part of. Our Fundraiser/ Showcase events are attracting bigger names and we're able to include many more local acts who are coming out of the woodwork, so these events are full of thrills and discoveries every time out. Please be sure to check the 'Events' page of our website to see what's coming up. Visit our Facebook page and subscribe as well to be kept up-to-date with the many opportunities to enjoy top class live music while supporting BB & RMF.

I'd like to briefly acknowledge the sponsors who've confirmed their cash support for 2013: Bendigo Bank has once again kicked in to help keep the growth of the Festival on track, making

this their third year of being our biggest corporate sponsor; Bendigo Community Telco has also continued their financial support, for which we are extremely grateful; Southern Bay Brew Co have commenced an exciting partnership with BB & RMF as a financial supporter and we look forward to working with them indefinitely, in co-operation with our mutual partner Bendigo Beer, who are integral to the success of our Festival; Mawby Property have also thrown their support behind the Festival and we thank Darryn and the team for coming on board also; Our main event concert in particular is made possible with the financial and logistical assistance of City of Greater Bendigo's Major Events team and we look forward to working with them on the centrepiece of our program again this year; COGB's Tourism and Marketing areas have been brilliant in assisting us with getting the word out to more and more people from across Victoria and beyond, as evidenced by the amount of visitors we had from all over Australia last year.

We look forward to working with all the departments of COGB in 2013 who contribute in their own way to making the Festival itself possible.

If you're looking to get your hands on some BB & RMF merchandise, be sure to check out the new online store at our website and place your order.

In the meantime, we hope to see you soon at one of our Showcase events or on the increasingly popular Blues Tram. Don't forget, quality live music is around you every week – so don't just peruse tunes on TV, on your ipod, or on the internet; get out amongst it in your own home town and be a part of the real thing!



Pat Ward

Photo by Jim Marshall

TWO WARDS TO WATCH BEN CAMERON

They might look alike, and share the same enviable gene pool, but Pat and Cass Ward are different beasts when it comes to music.

Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival fans got their first taste for the talents of the teenage brother and sister from Heathcote at the festival's first showcase for 2013 at the Golden Vine.

Some would already know Cass from winning the regional final of the FReeZA competition in 2011, but there's another Ward to keep an ear out for, 14-year-old brother Pat, whose solo performance was an early highlight at the Vine.

The younger Ward first played to an audience at a quiz night at the local golf club at the age of seven – not long after he first picked up a guitar – and has been racking up the gigs over the past few years, building an onstage confidence beyond his years.

"For some reason the only place where I get nervous is when I'm playing in front of people I know," Pat says. "When I am playing in front of a large crowd I not only play better but I also don't get nervous."

Neither parent can lay claim to their children's talents Cass says, as neither have a musical background, although Mum did plant the seed.

"My first guitar was bought from a local garage sale by Mum for around \$12 and was a small nylon that I

fingerpainted and stuck Santa stickers on," Cass says.

"I got it when I started school and began having free group lessons with a teacher. The second guitar was originally my Dad's but he never learnt to play so it had never been used."

Cass says the FReeZA experience not only amped up her confidence ("it gave me an opportunity as a young performer, who had never really played in front of a large crowd") but widened her music know how.

"It was also a great chance to meet people who were involved in Bendigo's entertainment for youth," she says.

"A few months after playing at Push Over, I joined Mic Up Productions and was involved in of the other side of the competition, organising and doing backstage work."

But it's out front where both Wards appear destined to shine, even though they go about things quite differently.

"I hate picks, Pat can't play without one," Cass says. "The way we play guitar is completely different."

"I hate playing lead and Pat loves it. My songs are quieter and I think I'm probably less coordinated in using a stomp or tambourine while playing. (But) I'm sure though as we get older, we will perform more together."

Drop us a line:
bendigoblues@gmail.com

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SKIP ANSWERS THE SIREN'S CALL

BEN CAMERON

One of Bendigo music's most popular performers has found his voice again after a long period of soul searching.

It's hard to fathom for an upbeat bloke known for his gregarious live shows, but Albert "Skip" Skipper admits he became a little lost after the band he fronted so memorably for a decade, Ethanol, called it a day in late 2010.

"After playing with the same guys for over ten years I did hit a low point in my life," he admits.

In the months after Skip wondered how he could contribute to the local scene again, before opting to foster the next generation of singers through his "own music school of rock" in RPM.

While immensely rewarding, it didn't quite fill the void Skip was desperate to fill.

"I love it but something was missing," he says. "I wanted to play again but I questioned myself: 'Can I do it without Ethanol? Did I rely on them to perform in public?' I had so many songs on paper I just needed to find something different."

Thankfully Skip found Bride Stripped Back cellist Lauren Jennings.

"I found Lozza (Jennings) and I thank her so much for bringing me back to life," Skip says. "My heart is alive and kicking. We just happened to cross paths one day, then something jolted my brain days after so I approached her again and asked if she would have a jam with me.

"I thought she would say no, only because we come from two different backgrounds in music. "She is classically trained and I'm a self taught muso whose watched and listened to friends who have inspired me from when I was a little tacker."

The pair would eventually form The Lost

Heart Sirens, purveyors of all things love, whether it be the heartache or the humour.

"This music is so different to what I'm used to, it's so laid back, but then it can surprise you with the most uplifting feelings," Skip says. "It's a war siren calling out to those who need to feel these emotions."

He admits the Sirens was a fair leap from his previous work.

"I'm the guy whose been doing the rock thing for so long, jumping around like a mad chook so it was easy to just relax and not be the front man," he says.

"The centrepiece of our sound is Lozza, her cello is so beautiful... it just makes you stop and listen and really affects your emotions."

Skip says they were both a bit jittery when they first sat down to play, but sensed they were onto something.

"We were both very nervous but it just worked and we both knew that this was something very special indeed," he says.

With Jennings on cello and Skip on guitar and foot drums, he admits there wasn't much to it initially, but their first gig at Goldmines hit the mark.

"It was amazing, I almost cried," he laughs. "I loved the simplicity of just the two of us being able to create a big sound."

The Sirens eventually welcomed Shaugh McIntosh on keys ("I didn't even know he could play keys until I saw him walk in to a music store and he started tinkering and my jaw dropped... I just had to ask him to join") and the versatile Josh DeAraugo on drums.

"(He's) one of my very close friends who I look up to," Skip says. "He is a brilliant muso and that's a fact.

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Dr J's say

JULIUS PORLAI

Now that the dust has settled on the highly successful Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival for 2012, we have been busily planning out the rest of 2013 (and beyond).

Things are already looking promising with Andrew Higgs and Dave Diprose having played to a packed Australia Day Blues Tram while music fans enjoyed a healthy supply of Two Birds craft beer, courtesy of our festival partner and social lubricant innovators Bendigo Beer. A great day was had by all that rode the rails for our first Blues Tram of 2013 and the next one will roll on Easter Saturday from 7pm (departing from Central Deborah Goldmine, 76 Violet Street, Bendigo) with Alawishus Jones and Damien Neil performing.

If you haven't been on board already then please avail yourself of the opportunity to do so; not only is it an important fundraiser for the festival, it's a truly unique experience that you'll be telling your friends about long after the ride is over.

Speaking of fundraisers, our first showcase event for 2013 was a resounding success in February at the Golden Vine Hotel, with around 400 people coming through on the day to sample the talents of the many musicians and bands (both local and visiting), who combined to put on a magnificent show.

Our two youngest performers 14-year-old Pat Ward and 15-year-old Ella Spizzica wowed the crowds, along with veterans of the Bendigo music scene Jimmy Williams, and Skip (with his band The Lost Heart Sirens) just to mention a few. Melbourne-based Josh Owen and Bones Blackwood again showed why they are festival favourites.

Festival director Colin Thompson has been busy at his now infamous whiteboard, already organising the line-up for the November festival and our hard working committee is planning many ways to make 2013's

another exceptional event. A huge thanks needs to go to our small but ever reliable team of volunteers who unselfishly give their time to make the festival and supporting events happen.

Our next Showcase is a family day at Big Hill Vineyard and will feature 11 sensational acts from 12pm on Sunday April 14th. There will be another Showcase event on May 26th at the Rifle Brigade Hotel, we'll be back at the Goldmines Hotel for our annual 'Ewes, Brews, Stews & Blues' event on Sunday July 21st. Our next couple of Blues Trams will feature none other than the mighty Lloyd Spiegel (Saturday May 25th) and then Austria's patron saint of the Blues: Geoff Achison, along with the incredible Josh Owen (Saturday June 29th). Tickets, as always, are available from Bendigo Visitor Centre or online at Bendigo Tourism's website.

Another new initiative for us this year is 'Friends of the Festival' and is an opportunity for you to become more involved, so jump onto our website (www.bendigoblues.com.au) for more details on how you can financially support our festival and get some genuine value for yourself at the same time. I must say it was fantastic to see the younger people (says I at the age of 66) attending both the Australia Day Blues Tram and our February showcase event. We are all about encouraging, and providing opportunities for, the talents of our local and upcoming musicians, and as evidenced by the performances and personalities of Pat and Cassie Ward, Ella Spizzica (and others), I believe our musical heritage is in very safe hands. Thank you for your ongoing support. Drop us a line, say G'day and tell us what you think. We value your feedback.

Julius "Dr J" Porlai is the Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival's treasurer and official Master of Ceremonies.

"A majority of my muso friends are so much younger than me which inspires me to be better."

Signature track Pirates and Lovers has allowed Skip to reflect on his past.

"I wanted to create something that really captured how strong love could be and that no boundaries could divide

true love," he says. "And that's why remembering how much mum and dad loved each other helped me write the song.

"Watching mum and dad sing with a beaten up old guitar in open tuning singing love songs to each other are some of my greatest and inspirational times."