

# MY FAVOURITE BENDIGO WEEKEND OF THE YEAR

By Simon Woolldridge



GREG DODD & THE HOODOO MEN

Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival is the weekend I most look forward to. Since 2014's "breakthrough year" BB&RMF really feels like a major event. Interesting to remember then that we're only approaching BB&RMF edition 6.

A few days before Festival weekend there will be an hour or so one evening when I look through the program very seriously. I'll have a highlight pen in one hand. Then I'll temporarily fret over a clash of artists I want to see. Then a big grin will spread across my face - so much to see and listen to over that weekend. And most of it free, though I'll have some 'folding' in my pocket to purchase artist CDs.

Ok, some numbers. Something like 450 artists applied for 160-odd Festival 'slots'. These artists will be playing

in 40-odd venues over Festival weekend in front of 15,000+ people. Around 60 of those artists have never played a BB&RMF before. We're going to see some great stuff.

There's a great mix of acts and genres to enjoy in November - local, national and international. Many I've seen a number of times and look forward to seeing again as they introduce new numbers to their sets, or re-version an old favourite.

The list is a long one. Greg Dodd and the Hoodoo Men - who played to a packed Bridge Hotel crowd last year. Highway 79 - Rattlin' Bones Blackwood and Colin Thompson in their new two-man outfit, the talented Alister Turrill. Festival favourite Benny Walker, local young guns Bill Barber, Bleach, Frank Bell and Steph Bitter, Cameron Holmes and the Blues Dudes, the inimitable Doc White, chanteuse Emilee South, Four Lions, blues legend Geoff Achison, John-Luke Shelley,

the ridiculously entertaining Lily & King, The Magic 8 Balls taking us back to the 1950s, Midweek Blues, The Mockbells, The Mojo Corner, the haunting melancholia of Sleepy West, and the Swamp Monsters.

Then of course the acts I'll be seeing for the first time: Travis Bowlin and Eugene Hideaway Bridges - both over from the US, Catfish Voodoo, Claude Hay, The Blue Darts - reforming especially for the Festival, the blues, soul and reggae tunes of Geoffrey Williams, Mildura rockers Jackson Firebird, Justin Bernasconi, Lazy Eye, The New Savages, Skip's new outfit - Skip & The Lost & Found Dept, The Yearlings and, er, the Twelve Inch Clocks. Of course.

It's a mouth-watering line-up. Start inviting those weekend house guests. Start thinking about the acts you're going to see. I am. Another great Bendigo Spring weekend beckons.

## ARTIST SNAPSHOT ANDREW WATTS & SEED

By Simon Woolldridge

An estimated 250 people packed the courtyard at Bendigo's iconic Goldmines Hotel on a cool late August evening for the launch of Andrew Watts and Seed's debut album.

Joining well-known local musician Andrew Watts (guitar and vocals) in the outfit are sons Kane and Sam on drums and bass respectively, and Hamish Davidson on fiddle. Brett Garsed played guitar on three tracks on the album.

The Watts family will be familiar faces to Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival-goers, having been involved since the Festival's early days. Andrew has been active supporting young talent and working with entrants to the Lazenby Young Blues Guitarist Award.

The album's twenty-five year gestation period finally came to fruition. "Procrastination," confirmed Andrew Watts, "but it's been fun to record it."

It's not an easy album to pigeonhole. Blues runs through it but there are obvious funk and country elements also evident. Much of the creative juice that flowed into the album came through their jamming at gigs.

The Watts family recently relocated to Melbourne so that Sam and Kane could attend the Victorian College of the Arts. The Seed album however, is very much Bendigo-influenced. "The supportive environment in Bendigo is producing some of Australia's best young talent," Watts says.

Seed features seven original compositions and a couple of covers including a ripper of the Charlie Daniels hit *The Devil Went Down To Georgia*. *Simple Days* and *Money* are two other stand-outs, but it's an album that mixes styles effortlessly,



ANDREW WATTS & SEED

**"My favourite weekend of the year? Simple - that weekend in November - Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival. Four exquisitely explosive days filled with the colour and flavour that is music and the fragrance of sheer delight in discovering new talent and celebrating the familiar. Food, wine and melody fill the air and the streets of Bendigo with an unsurpassed euphonic atmosphere."**

- Terri Mackay, California Gully, VIC

# SPRING

13<sup>TH</sup> EDITION  
SPRING 2016

# THE BLUESLETTER



SEE YOU AT THE FESTIVAL  
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## ARTIST SNAPSHOT TRAVIS BOWLIN

By Simon Woolldridge



TRAVIS BOWLIN

Nashville-based Travis Bowlin will be visiting Australia for the first time when he plays at the sixth Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival in November.

He's looking forward to it. "This is my first international tour so I'm really excited to be heading that way. It's about a 24 hour flight from here, so this is going to be one for the books for sure!"

He's a keen student of blues history. "The first time we played the Mississippi Delta - that was a really interesting experience. To go down there and see all the history in the museums, go to the crossroads and just *be down there* where the music I perform basically comes from..."

Originally from Cincinnati, it was the move to Nashville that, perhaps unsurprisingly, really kick-started things. "I was hosting a regular open mic show in Nashville. Some guys came out to jam. The next thing I know we're getting together and working on some of my music. I've been lucky enough for the last four years to be able to travel and play with the same great guys on a regular basis."

Bowlin has released three singles *Bad Bad Man*, *Got the Goods*, and *See You Again*. "The first two had a bit of a splash with some independent radio, but it wasn't until I hired a publicist and we worked together to release

*See You Again* that I really started seeing some charting. It debuted at number three on the Roots Music Report for Blues Rock and number five for iTunes New Blues. That really helped push my career and open up opportunities for me."

The Travis Bowlin sound captures what many people love about the blues - thumping, driving guitar, hard-assed rhythm section, a harmonica that sounds like it's trying to get out of jail and that classic 'lived-in' vocal. It's moody, late-night music.

He cites a range of influences. "Would have to be Elvis, Ray Charles, Little Richard, Led Zeppelin, the Doors, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf just to name a few. I could go on and on."

Travis Bowlin's talents aren't confined to just playing music though. He also makes instruments. "I love to build instruments out of recycled things and old broken instruments. Over about 18 months I've built almost 100 instruments. Some are cigar box guitars, some regular guitars, bass guitars, percussion instruments. I just really love building."

"This will be my first time to Australia," Bowlin says. "I'm looking forward to experiencing it and meeting a bunch of new people and trying a bunch of new things, playing some music and bringing some joy to people."

## ARTIST SNAPSHOT GRACIANA HOLLAND

By Simon Woolldridge

**"There is a great sense of community here. All the musicians and listeners have been incredibly hospitable,"** says Graciana Holland. **"The music scene has a really good vibe, everyone is family."**

Originally from the US, Graciana spent five years touring solidly with her Indie-folk family band The Hollands! before settling in Bendigo. She's now played over 20 gigs here.

"Both my parents are musicians. We always had a record playing in our house, as well as instruments lying around. I grew up singing with

my mom and my grandma in church. When my parents started to play music together as a band, I joined in."

Her early listening was diverse. "I grew up with an interesting mix of techno, hardcore, and gospel music. The first artist I remember enjoying on my own was probably Norah Jones. And I've always been a Beyonce fan."

She's found her feet in Bendigo since going out on her own. "I really just wanted people to play with and connected with Will Louis, Pete Gavin, and Colin Thompson. They are all so amazing. I wouldn't be where I am without them."

Two singles, *Caged Bird* and *Banjo Man*, were



GRACIANA HOLLAND

released in 2015. Graciana also has an electronic project under the name Dutchy Gazelle.

She looks like becoming something of a fixture on the Bendigo music scene. "I feel very at home here and thankful to be welcomed in and a part of it."



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ARTIST SNAPSHOT **THE MOJO CORNER**

By Simon Wooldridge

Close your eyes a little while listening to The Mojo Corner's Rory Millar play harmonica late into an evening and you feel you could be in Chicago blues club. This, despite the band once being described "as Australian as meat pies".

The Mojo Corner's set list is all original material – unusual for a blues band with so much history to draw from. And theirs can be a more up-tempo sound in comparison to many blues outfits.

Geelong's Mojo Corner are now seasoned Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival regulars. And they've notched-up a few other big festivals as well, including Echuca, Queenscliff and Woodford.

Bendigo is a favourite though. "A great music scene has developed over the last five years," says guitarist-vocalist Johnny Hawken, "which has in turn been supported by some fantastic venues." Two mid-2016 appearances at The Golden Vine had crowds lapping-up the distinctive Mojo Corner sound.

Hawken shares vocal duties with Rory Millar. Will Darker (drums) and Shaun Hilton (bass) make-up the rhythm section.

The band's influences are broad, "anything from Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Hendrix and Led Zeppelin to legends like Muddy Waters and BB King," says Johnny Hawken.

The Mojo Corner have a new album, as yet untitled, planned for later in 2016 to follow *Whole Lotta Woman* and *Trouble*.



THE MOJO CORNER

November in Bendigo might be a relatively easy gig for The Mojo Corner considering the varied venues on their CV. "We've played anywhere. Street sidewalks, back porches, backyards, house roofs, beach lookouts. Anywhere!"

ARTIST SNAPSHOT **FOUR LIONS**

By Simon Wooldridge

Four Lions are very much of Bendigo. If albums *Charing Cross* (2015) and the recent *Vahland* aren't suggestion enough, their mid-2016 EP *Golden Triangle* featured four songs – all about Bendigo.

Four Lions' songwriter-front man Shann Lions is a regular feature around the Bendigo music scene. Four Lions play solo sets, as a duo and as a 'full' four piece with Shann Lions joined by Keith MacQueen (guitar), Gav Moncrieff (drums) and Greg Perry (bass).

Four Lions have something even bigger planned for Festival weekend. They're playing one gig only, at the Handle Bar, as an eight-piece.

They'll be joined by Dave Moore on pedal steel, Steph Bitter on backing vocals, Rowan Blackmore on percussion and accordion, and Stephen Briggs on Hammond organ.

Shann Lions' writing is very much of the heart-worn-on-sleeve, introspective variety. *Me or the Drugs?* and *Tangled Heart* from *Charing Cross* more than hint at the themes. *Misery Loves Company*, *Never Giving Up* and



FOUR LIONS

*You've Ruined All My Favourite Songs* revisit those themes on second album *Vahland*.

"You introduce songs to someone in a relationship but then you can't listen to them when it's over," says Shann Lions.

*Never Giving Up*, which closes *Vahland* is about "grief and loss. About how people process things differently".

Four Lions' sound has evolved since debut album *Charing Cross* with its clear alt-country / Americana sound. The four tracks on *Golden Triangle* – written, recorded, released and played in four venues in a Bolt-esque (Usain, not Andrew) nine days – come in at a collective eight minutes 41 seconds with an Indie-ish Replacements-like feel to them. *Vahland* visits both sounds.

*Misery Loves Company* was inspired by a recurring dream. "I was standing on top of a building, then jumping off and flying. I wanted to break free."

Shann Lions explains how Four Lions recorded the recent album: "We recorded *Vahland* live with no headphones or click tracks just four blokes standing in a room unrehearsed with a few old microphones. The sound of the recording is two or three microphones on the drums, one on the bass cabinet and two ribbon mics on respective guitar amps. *Vahland* was recorded live onto 1/2 inch tape on an 8-track reel-to-reel machine with lead vocals and other instrument overdubs completed post basic live tracking. It was mixed live using an all analog custom built desk onto a 1/4 inch tape which was skipping along a 1968 built 2-track reel-to-reel machine."

ARTIST SNAPSHOT **SHERRI PARRY**

By Simon Wooldridge

Sherri Parry has a traditional take on the creative process. "Everything I write gets hand-written into a small book. It makes the song feel more authentic to me. I can't stand leaving any written words or melodies of mine in digital form."

Family, unsurprisingly, and a particular singing teacher set Bendigo born and bred Sherri on course at a young age. "My mother was a performer and singer when she was younger, so I was brought up around constant singing. My love for music began at a young age. I first picked up at guitar when I was 9, and started singing lessons with Jacqui Priest at 12. Jacqui influenced me to push for a career in music, and the support and love from my family made me continue."

Sherri has been honing her expanding set-list, with *12 Degrees*, *Iris* and *Sublime*

becoming regulars. But recording is a way off just yet. "Currently a work in progress. I'm searching for either the right producer, or the right equipment to create an EP independently. I've worked with many producers in the past but am yet to find one that I meld well with. I like the freedom of working independently, in my own time, my own way, and on my own terms. That's what I need to create the music and sound I'm looking for."

Sherri loves playing in her home town. "When you're lucky enough to play in a venue like The Old Church on The Hill, the people who come to listen come solely for the music. It is the most incredible feeling to play to a full, tightly-packed building that is deathly silent. To have their full attention and to know they're listening to every note. It's both terrifying and brilliantly flattering. The people here is what I like most about playing in this town. When you get a good crowd, my god it's good."



SHERRI PARRY

"Planning our schedule for the Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival is as exciting as attending the events. When seven year olds start making demands to see acts you know you've brought them up well and you've a quality festival ahead."

– Ann Lansberry, Bendigo, VIC

"The Festival is a time for us to listen to an awesome variety of music with our friends and soak up all that this fine city has to offer."

– Darryn Mawby, Strathdale, VIC

"One of our favourite festivals. The chance to see World-class international, national and local artists in a variety of venues, ranging from open spaces to intimate café experiences is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. It's a showcase of musical talent, fantastic hospitality, and the chance to meet amazing people."

– David and Tamara Grey, Burnie, TAS

"As a family we visited the Festival last year. It is a fabulous opportunity for musicians and public to enjoy the sunshine, the outdoors and be part of the community. Music is food for the soul. Looking forward to it."

– Georgina Davis, Ironbark, VIC

**COL'S 2 BOB WORTH**

By Colin Thompson, Festival Director

Bendigo has hosted a plethora of great gigs and events this year and I'm pleased to confirm this will not be slowing down anytime soon! Certainly not with the number of events happening at a grass-roots level and certainly not with local venues hosting more and more great live music.

With over 170 acts performing at this year's Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival, I'm not able to list everyone I'm excited about, but I'd like to touch on some key additions this year that you should be across: Australia's 'Queen of Soul' Kylie Auld will perform at Ulumbarra Theatre, as part of her national tour. Support comes from New Zealand's Aaradnha and Melbourne's Dreamboogie. We have two acts direct from the USA in Eugene Hideaway Bridges from New Orleans and Nashville's Travis Bowlin. These guys are guaranteed to deliver the goods, along with Australia's 'Voice of the Blues' Ian Collard, as part of our Saturday night main event at MacGillivray Hall (limited tickets at \$49 via our website). Kenta Hayashi from

Japan is also joining our line-up this year along with around 60 other acts who've never played our festival before.

We've got some new venues on board as well, including some on the outskirts of town – all worth checking out! The Bendigo Beer crew are staging not one but TWO Pop-up Laneway Parties this year (on the Friday and Saturday nights) with Jackson Firebird and Claude Hay featuring respectively.

We're also featuring a series of singer-songwriter shows at the Engine Room and La Trobe University's Visual Arts Centre. With a couple of pop-up stages along the way, the View Street Arts Precinct will be abuzz with music this year, as will Bendigo's CBD.

Of course we want to thank and recognise our sponsors and volunteers, and I really would like to send a big hearty 'THANK YOU' to all our participating venues, for hosting all our magnificent artists and doing such a great job of welcoming all our happy punters – not just during our festival, but every week of the year. See you out on the tunes!