



Steph Bitter

ARTIST
SNAPSHOT

STEPH BITTER

BY SIMON
WOOLDRIDGE

"Just me, my guitar and sometimes a foot tambourine..." is how Steph Bitter describes herself. The young Bendigonian is getting to be a familiar face around Central Victoria, having played over 30 gigs now. You'll also catch her busking from time to time.

For Steph, it's about story-telling. "I didn't pick up a guitar until I was 14. I loved reading. I wanted to create books of my own, and that is where I found my passion for story writing. When music became a big part of my life, I decided I wanted to create my own music as well. That's when I began writing songs."

Josh Pyke remains a big influence for Steph – which goes back to being taken to see him for her first gig at the tender age of 14. John Butler also looms large.

Steph Bitter won't be releasing her first ep until later in 2016. In the meantime though her live show is peppered with audience favourites like *Your Revolution*, *Twisted Places* and *Omega*. She also covers the much-loved *Hallelujah*.

"I am often known as a 'Hippie'. While my songs try to inspire people to make a change, either as individuals or as a society. Even though I may seem serious on the outside, I'm essentially just a child at heart." Hers is a refreshing take on music and life.

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GRIM FAWKNER

BY SIMON
WOOLDRIDGE

*"I made up my performing name Grim Fawkner when I worked in a factory in Melbourne. I'd catch the 6am train every morning and pass through Fawkner. The station at Fawkner was right next to the cemetery. Every morning I'd see tired and depressed-looking people getting on the train and I just sat there thinking 'grim f**king Fawkner...'"*

Great story.

The journey to Bendigo, where he's lived for three years now, has been a colourful one for Grim Fawkner - from Moree in NSW to the north west of Tasmania via Melbourne. In addition to the hundreds of Bendigo gigs he has under his belt he's played some very interesting venues over the years. "Places like hairdressers and pie shops, but the most unusual music venue I've played in is

Wunderbar in Christchurch, NZ, just because of all the mannequin legs and strange bric-à-brac around the room." It doesn't stop there. He recorded a live album at Melbourne's Abbotsford Convent and a live ep in a bar in London's Camden Town.

The influence of his father ("artists like Paul Weller, Elvis Costello and Patti Smith – my dad's taste in music") and wanting to impress girls at school originally drew Grim Fawkner to music. "Also my sister motivated me by telling me she thought I was talented, even when I was terrible!"

It's easy to understand why he chose to move to Bendigo. "There are a hell of a lot of music lovers in Bendigo and they are the only people who make playing anywhere in the world worthwhile. The support I've had has been unreal over the past few years, and a lot of people who came to see me back in the day I'd now consider to be good mates."



Grim Fawkner

11TH EDITION
FEB. 2016

THE BLUESLETTER



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DOC WHITE

BY SIMON
WOOLDRIDGE

Doc White makes a (mutually) welcome return to Bendigo for the year's first Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival showcase in late February, "the Blues & Roots Festival is astonishing and the best town festival I've played. The vibe of the city is amazing."

He's played in Bendigo over 20 times now.

Expect to hear some Doc White favourites, like *Come Here Katy*, *The Lord Ain't Helping Me Yet*, and *Baby Please Don't Go* when he takes the stage as well as tracks from his forthcoming release *Muddy Mando Mojo*.

The Adelaide-born writer-performer is a dead-set blues aficionado whose list of influences and inspirations could fill a medium-sized address book. Jazz, though, is a developing interest: "I spend a bit more time on jazz now because there are techniques and vocabulary there that can be applied to blues to make it a bit more interesting."

Doc White is also one of a very select group of blues mandolinists. There are reportedly five in the world. It's a bit like welcoming a living ex-US President to Bendigo.



Doc White

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ANDY PHILLIPS AND THE CADILLAC WALK

BY SIMON
WOOLDRIDGE

"I love the Blues scene in Bendigo. The punters know good music and once you win them over they are the best supporters you could ever have."

Andy Phillips picked-up a guitar when he was 13, "and haven't put it down since," he says. A journey that's taken him from New Zealand to Australia to England to New Zealand and back to Australia led to him forming Andy Phillips and the Cadillac Walk in 2013. They have now played extensively across Victoria at numerous festivals and in New Zealand at the Rotorua and Bay of Islands blues festivals as well as the

Blues Society Stage in Austin, Texas.

"I lean toward blues-based rock," Phillips says. "I like the wildness and unpredictability of it. I am not a note-for-note player myself, so when I do cover other artists' songs I create a lot of my own stuff in there. I never play a song the same way twice which is why a lot of people tell me they like our show; it's a bit different each time."

Phillips' life philosophy echoes Steph Bitter to a degree: "I don't watch TV ever, I like simple things really and I very rarely buy new things, nearly everything I own is second hand or recycled. I build a lot of my own guitars, speakers and other equipment too."



Andy Phillips

"Bendigo has become a special place for us to come and play and visit, and we really look forward to each and every opportunity to get here."

COL'S 2 BOB WORTH

Thanks for picking up The Bluesletter, our first issue of a busy 2016. I'm a little staggered to think that 2016 will see the 6th annual Bendigo Blues & Roots Musical Festival!

It's been a lot of fun along the way with literally hundreds of people putting in a lot of hard work to make it happen – not just over that weekend in early November, but all year round. There are too many to mention by name, however a big thank you goes out to our sponsors, volunteers, committees, artists, local community and of course our festival and gig-goers.

Bendigo locals may have seen an article in *The Advertiser* a few weeks ago detailing the need for a date change for this year's festival. We are now scheduled for 3-6 November. We were going to clash with the Bendigo Swap Meet which also draws in 1000s of visitors, which would have been a nightmare for people from out of town looking for accommodation that same weekend. It meant juggling a few things but we will again be hosting performances from well over 100 artists in many different venues across Bendigo. And Ulumbarra Theatre have already approached us about putting together a special show for the Sunday afternoon of our program - watch this space.

28th February at the Rifle Brigade Hotel in View Street sees our first Showcase fundraiser event of 2016. The Winter edition will be held at the Golden Vine Hotel on

July 17th and we will have a special surprise event between then and November with thanks to our valued partners at Capital Venues and Events - again: watch this space.

Quality live music is on in Bendigo every week of the year. If you stand under the Marilyn statue in Rosalind Park you're actually within walking distance of about 10 venues that host live music every week. We don't push people to 'support local live music' as much as we remind people to 'enjoy local live music'. Taking advantage of local events and enjoying art and music made by the people in your community is its own reward.

Thanks again for supporting live music at in Bendigo. You're not just an audience member, you're a participant.

Colin Thompson - Festival Director

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