

COL'S 2 BOB WORTH

After staging a massive Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival in 2014 (in what many pundits have described as the event's "break out year"), our volunteer committee have hit the ground running in 2015. Of course our Festival will take place from 5-8 November, but here's just a taste of what we're offering in the meantime:

The Old Church on the Hill (cnr Harkness & Russell Streets Quarry Hill) will host a series of concerts, showcasing some of the magnificent singer/songwriters involved in our Festival program. Feb 28 with see Jojo Smith and Lucy Thorne return for a double-header of soul-soothing music, supported by Aaron Wales. New Zealand ukulele sensation 'The Nukes' will hit the Old Church stage on March 11th for a Wednesday night of fun you won't soon forget. Brisbane's sublime songstress Hailey Calvert will return to headline a show on April 4th (Easter Saturday) with a line-up of supports making their Old Church debut.

The Blues Tram will continue to rattle along, bringing you: Monique Shelford + Luke Watt on March 13, Emilee South + Benjamin James Caldwell on May 2, Marissa Quigley + King Maxwell on May 30, Tony J King + Alawishus Jones on July 11, as well as a bunch of brilliant acts to be announced for August 22, September 25 (and possibly some more in between)!

We're staging 3 big **Showcase/Fundraiser** events this year, each featuring around a dozen acts (all donating their time and talents to help us pay for the festival itself in November). These Showcases will be held at the Rifle Brigade Hotel on Sun Feb 22, the Goldmines Hotel on Sun July 19 and a venue to be revealed later in the year [watch this space] on Sun Sept 20. These events are guaranteed to include a slew of new acts and fresh sounds and will pack a magnificent punch when it comes to value, with the low door price of only \$15 per adult.

We are delighted to be part of the promotional team bringing **Michael Franti & Spearhead** to the Ulumbarra Theatre on April 1. Get your tickets via The Capital, before they sell out! This will be just the beginning as we move forward with this exciting new partnership. Thanks again to all our valued sponsors, partners and supporters. Most importantly though, thank YOU for taking an interest in what's going on around you and supporting grass-roots music events - we hope to see you out amongst it soon!

Colin Thompson,
Festival Director/Founder.



EMILEE SOUTH

ARTIST PROFILE Emilee South

BY SIMON WOOLDRIDGE

Originally from Melbourne's outer suburbs *chanteuse* Emilee South now chases the summer between St Tropez in the south of France, Hawaii and Melbourne's inner city. She'll be back in Bendigo on 22 February to play at The Rifle Brigade in 2015's first Bendigo Blues and Roots Musical Festival showcase. And she's looking forward to it.

"The music scene in Bendigo is amazing! I was first in town for the Blues & Roots Festival last year, and again recently for a show with Alawishus Jones & the Outright Lies. The audiences are so attentive and supportive ... it all, so clearly, comes from a place of passion and love for music and community. And, damn, that clear blue sky is beeeeautiful away from the city!"

"How did you get into music?" I asked her. "I've been singing since I was a little girl, but was always overwhelmingly shy to do it in front of anyone. After a few unsuccessful attempts I picked up the guitar again when I was about 16, and it basically took over my whole life. Originally I wanted to be a shredding lead guitarist in a rock band, then a few years later I started singing and writing my own songs. Nothing makes me happier."

Emilee's debut EP *Aloha, Au Revoir* came out in April last year. She regularly plays *Down The Ala Wai* and *Wedding Bells* from the EP and has recently added a new song, *Howl* to her set as well as a Tom Waits cover, *Goin' Out West*.

I'm always interested in artists' favourite artists. Emilee's are a mix of what I kind of expected and a couple of surprises: "Tom Waits is one of my all-time faves! There's something about the grit and the beauty in his music that gets me low down in the belly. I also love Edith Piaf, Patsy Cline, Elvis, Roy Orbison. Old blues legends like Leadbelly, Robert Johnson, Lightnin' Hopkins and Howlin' Wolf as well. C.W. Stoneking, Tune-Yards and Beyoncé are on pretty high rotation for me right now, too."

I'm not sure if we can compete with Hawaii here in Bendigo but I hope Emilee gets that clear blue sky at The Rifle in February.

ARTIST PROFILE **Benny Walker**BY SIMON
WOOLDRIDGE

Echuca's Benny Walker has music in his blood: "My dad is a guitar player and his father, Archie was a guitar player and now plays pedal steel at the age of 86. My mum's dad, was a jazz saxophone player. I grew up with jazz, country and blues influences mainly. But as much as I love those and am deeply rooted in blues and country I think I somehow got my mum's taste in music. I raided her vinyl collection a few years ago and was blown away with what she was into. James Taylor, Neil Young, Ry Cooder! My parents put me into piano lessons at the age of eight. Two years later Dad showed me a couple of chords on his guitar and I was hooked."

Last November Bendigo saw Benny Walker play his third Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival. And he enjoys playing here, "I've played the Blues Tram, Billy Roy's Blues Bar, the Goldmines Hotel, the Exchange three or four times, the Newmarket Hotel, The Gold Dust Lounge, The Rifle Brigade Hotel..." he says. "The music scene has come such a long way. I think Colin Thompson, the festival and those around it have had so much to do with it. The people of Bendigo now know that there is going to be great gigs happening in their town week in, week out and they're really getting behind it."

Benny is building up quite a catalogue of



BENNY WALKER

material in his short-ish career to date: Two EPs, Two LPs – Benny Walker and Sinners and Saints with a third LP, Through the Forest, due later in 2015.

Perhaps surprisingly Benny cites Nirvana's Unplugged album as an early influence. "I learnt how to play pretty much every song off that album by ear and just played them over and over." Less surprisingly Eric Clapton looms large in the pantheon of Benny's influences. "Through Eric Clapton's music I delved further and further into the blues." I'd be interested if Benny ever thought about tackling something from that famous Nirvana Unplugged album. Track 14 Benny, I reckon you could put your stamp on that one!

ARTIST PROFILE **Bill Barber**BY SIMON
WOOLDRIDGE

I caught up with Bill Barber between sets with his new band the Blackwood Shakedown at the Golden Vine recently. The addition of a bassist and saxophonist has given Bill a meatier sound. What's also apparent having seen Bill seven or eight times since Big Hill Winery last year is how much more confident he is on stage. He will have a formidable stage presence in the future.

"How did you get into music Bill?"

"It was Dad's record collection. It might sound weird but when I was a young kid I couldn't get to sleep without listening to Chris Wilson. Then I moved onto Geoff Achison, Lloyd Spiegel, Son House, Muddy Walters, Rory Gallagher..."

Bill's set now includes originals such as Whatya Got To Say? along with perennials like Who Do You Love? and Oreo Cookie Blues. His first CD should be out in April or May.

He enjoys Bendigo. "It's a real regional centre for live music. The community embraces it. Every week several venues put on good acts."

In addition to his busy rehearse-play-rehearse-play schedule Bill Barber took "time out" last year to organise the youth stages at the Bendigo Blues & Roots Music Festival.

"I suggested it to Colin," he says, "and he said 'run with it' so I did." The result was 15 or 16 young Bendigo performers, with visiting acts mixed in, on two stages over two days in Lansell Gardens and at RockPride Music (RPM).

"It was good to organise and I got some really good help and advice from Skip and Andrew Watts. The best thing was to see the great audience reaction." With that our interview ended. Bill's drummer has come over; they're due back on stage. Busy young man indeed. And a very bright young talent.

A VERY PERSONAL REVIEW BY SIMON WOOLDRIDGE

There's a spot in Rosalind Park where I stopped briefly on a warm Saturday evening last November. It was day three of the festival. At that spot I could hear music from four venues: ROCKS on Rosalind, The Exchange, Lansell Gardens and Shamrock Hotel balcony. "This is music town," I thought to myself, absorbing the different sounds. 2014 was the year the festival came of age.

100s of artists, 30-odd venues... I reckon I caught 25-30 hours of music over the weekend, which included seeing Pete Cornelius three times, Alister Turrill twice (the intimate Gold Dust Lounge at night the perfect setting for him) and Benny Walker twice. There were many other highlights.

"Quirky" is one way to describe Lily and King. Any singer who introduces what you're about to hear with "this is a song about falling in love with someone you think is going to kill you" is always worth a listen. A couple of friends are big fans of Rattlin' Bones Blackwood but I'd never got around to seeing him before the Sunday night. I wasn't disappointed – that's a hell of a big, blistering sound from just one man!

Friday night at the Exchange was the Magic 8 Balls' launch gig followed by the Lachy Doley Group. Dukesy and the Hazzards (with Liz Violi guesting) at the Golden Vine were great fun later that Friday. Greg Dodd and the Hoodoo Men hadn't come up on my radar before, but I've given their 3am Blues Live album a good airing regularly since.

Genevieve Chadwick closed my festival on the Sunday night at ROCKS with a gutsy, energetic and positively 'Joplinesque' set.



BILL BARBER