

Whether it was in a grand colonial ball in the city, a celebratory end of sheep shearing season woolshed dance, or just a gathering of friends and family in a kitchen, the songs, dances, poems and music of the 'pioneers' reflect their hopes, humour and disappointments in a distinctive Australian manner.

by DAVID DE SANTI

The 'folk-catchers' were interested in the social aspect and sharing worth of these items for future use. Much of their work has been preserved in books or archived in the National Library of Australia. The current challenge is to convert this material into useable repertoire for current performers. Ireland has a recognisable musical tradition which, even in its pop music, is the result of having undergone a similar process. It can happen here and is already happening.

Folk festivals developed as a next step in sharing this knowledge of folklore. The first Australian Folklore Festival was held in 1955 in Sydney and the first National Folk Festival was held in 1967 in Melbourne. Since then many festivals have come and gone including, in regional NSW, at Wollombi, Bungendore, Cobargo, Lismore, Dorrigo, Gulgong, Majors Creek (Braidwood), Wombat, Narrandera, Bellingen and Glen Innes. The largest folk festival in NSW is in the historic and picturesque village of Jamberoo, 10km inland from the seaside town of Kiama. It was established in 1985

A state of folk music



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WHAT IS FOLK MUSIC? SOMETIMES IT IS EASIER TO SAY WHAT IT'S NOT. At any of the 70 folk festivals around Australia a year you'll find an amazing cross-section of music styles and other forms of entertainment styles: young and old performers, traditional and contemporary folk songs, ballads, bush and folk dancing, poetry and yarnspinning, as well as workshops on instruments like fiddles, accordions, banjos, whistles, guitars, harps and all sorts of weird and wonderful sweet noise making implements. Influences from jazz, country and classical music are seen in many performers.

Folk festivals as a specific organised event have existed in Australia since the 1950s when there was a resurgence of interest in Australian folklore, with field collectors – or 'folk-catchers' – travelling around the country recording the song, tunes, dances and stories of older performers. In New South Wales they found them in both well known and obscure places such as Boxer's Creek, Crookwell, Hillston, Sofala, Wingham, Tumbarumba, Moonan Flat, Holbrook, Lithgow, Bega, Cookamidgera, Parkes, Forbes, and Bingara ... to name a few.

and now hosts over 400 international, national and local performers, 130 events, and 8,000 visitors over 5 days every year. Folk Alliance Australia has been established to present folk arts performance and has presented National Folk Week and a national convention since its inception.

Also just on the horizon is the re-establishment of a glossy national folk magazine, *Trad&Now*, featuring news, articles, events, songs, tunes reflecting the ever growing folk music scene in Australia. The aim of the magazine is to help the folk revolution and Australia's cultural identity grow. ■

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Left to right: 1. 'Hard Drive' at the Illawarra Folk Festival Jamberoo, 2001; 2. US folksinger John McCutcheon practising with members of Jigzag for the Major Festival Concert, Illawarra, 2001; 3. 'Wongawilly' at the Australian Folk Festival Kiama 2000; 4. Betty Little at the Illawarra Folk Festival, 2001; photos by Bob Bolton. 5. Session at Jamberoo Pub, 2001; photo by Jan Crombie-Brown.

October

23 October - 17 November

👁️ **Tafe Show. TWEED RIVER** Regional Art Gallery hosts exhibition of work from final year Tafe students from Kingscliff and Murwillumbah institutes including work by the teachers. Also on display are Portraits from the Collection. Tel 02 6670 2790

23 October

🎹 **Piano Recital with Alexei Volodin**, prize winner of the Sydney International Piano Competition, 2000 the Chapel Theatre, **TAMWORTH** Regional Conservatorium of Music Tel 02 6766 6911.

23 October - 8 December

👁️ **2002 Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award Exhibition** at **GRAFTON** Regional Gallery. Promoting excellence and innovation in drawing. Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday 10am-4pm Tel 02 6642 3177.

25 October

🎵 **TAMWORTH** Arts Council will present a concert by Tamworth Jazz Band in the Calrossy Auditorium, 8pm. Contact Rob Hurcum, Arts Council President Tel 02 6766 7507