

## The country music scene

... with young country artists  
has been undergoing  
considerable growth in  
country and mainstream pop/rock  
recent years...  
music audiences and the festival

rapidly expanding.

by ROSE PEARSE

**ALONGSIDE IT, THE INDIGENOUS COUNTRY MUSIC SCENE IS ALSO blossoming; and New South Wales claims a number of important Indigenous country artists.**

Grafton's **Troy Cassar-Daly** is one of the most recognizable and successful, having won many awards and an enormous domestic audience. Troy has proven himself to be an artist of substance and endurance: a skilled songwriter and engaging storyteller.

**Jimmy Little** has been a pioneer, an innovator and, more recently a comeback phenomenon. **Col Hardy** made history when he became the first Aboriginal artist to win a Golden Guitar in 1973.

**Vic Simms** drew comparisons with Johnny Cash when he recorded his first album *The Loner* behind bars and in 2001 he received long overdue recognition with a Deadly Award. Tamworth based **Roger Knox**, known as both the King of Koori Country and The Black Elvis, has written a number of classics including 'Koori Rose', 'The Streets of Tamworth' and 'Long Bay Gaol'. He has just released a new album *Still Going Strong*.

**Geoff Simpson** from Walgett/Wagga Wagga is known as one of the best country bass players around, playing regularly for **Adam Brand**, amongst others along with fronting the infamous **Foot Fulla Bindis** band. **Glenn Skuthorpe**, from Goodooga has also been making a name for himself on the folk/roots scene with his country influenced music. He will be launching his second album *Restless Souls* in July.

One of the most exciting young artists to emerge recently is **Todd Williams**, from Dubbo/Wellington. Todd was the first Indigenous winner of the prestigious Toyota Star Maker prize in 2003 and he went on to win Best Country Artist at the Deadly's - the national Indigenous Arts, Sport and Community Awards. Kicking off with MusicNSW's Indigenous artist development project, Whichway, in 2000, he moved quickly through the ranks to become one of the scene's great new talents. His first single 'Falling Down' spent over 20 weeks in the country airplay charts.

## July

28 - 29 July

🎭 *The Underpants* Zany Company B theatre production. Adapted to stage by Steve Martin. **ALBURY** Performing Arts Centre. Tel 02 6051 3051

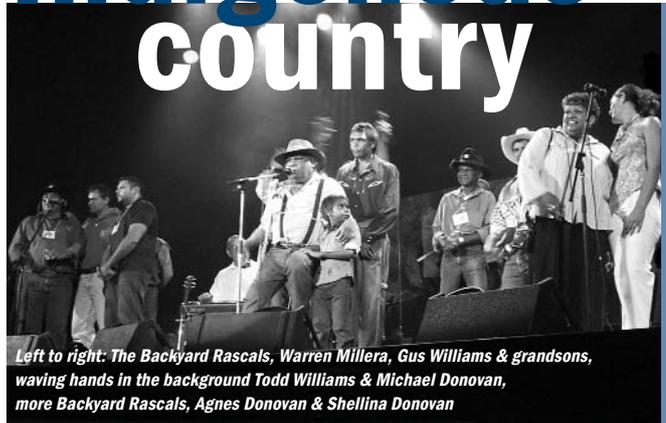
29 - 30 July

🎭 *Second Childhood* Play that looks at the life of a group of 'nobodies' who come to realise that they are in fact 'somebodies'. Presented by HotHouse Theatre Company. **WAGGA WAGGA** Civic Theatre. Tel 02 6926 9688

**Agnes Donovan**, from the **Aboriginal Country Music Association** has been a vital link in developing annual events in Tamworth and supporting new talent. She said, "I think we've come a long way with more and more people getting involved. There's loads of new talent. One of the big things that has been happening recently is that more and more Aboriginal women artists are coming forward. **Auriel Andrews** really paved the way here and now her daughter **Serena Andrews** is following through. There's also **Shani Fenwick** from Newcastle and **Tracey Grey** who sings with Roger Knox's band as well as the group she has with Roger's son **Buddy Knox**. The doors are open for women now."

Agnes and her group of dedicated volunteers have organised the Aboriginal Showcase and Cultural Concert along with the annual Aboriginal Talent Quest in Tamworth for many years, with her brother **Michael Donovan** and family band **The Donovans** backing many performers taking to the stage for the first time.

# Indigenous Country



Left to right: **The Backyard Rascals**, **Warren Millera**, **Gus Williams & grandsons**, waving hands in the background **Todd Williams & Michael Donovan**, more **Backyard Rascals**, **Agnes Donovan & Shellina Donovan**

Both the country music and the Aboriginal music scenes are known for their close knit family-like atmosphere. It's an atmosphere which has grown from struggle, isolation, relying on each other to see through the hard times and celebrating together when the good times roll around. It's an exciting time as the trailblazers continue on their path enabling the new talent to take a big step forward. ■

**MORE *Buried Country***, by Clinton Walker, explores the relationship between country music and contemporary Indigenous music. **Celebrity Vibe** online at [http://vibe.com.au/frame\\_CelebrityVibe.htm](http://vibe.com.au/frame_CelebrityVibe.htm)  
**Black culture** online at [www.abc.net.au/message/blackarts/music/](http://www.abc.net.au/message/blackarts/music/)

**ROSE PEARSE** has been working in Indigenous music since the early 90s. She currently runs **Secret Street** records and manages **Todd Williams & Glenn Skuthorpe** Website [www.secretstreet.com.au](http://www.secretstreet.com.au)

29 July

📊 *What do we reckon? Measuring the cultural, economic and social impacts of arts activities in Australia* A forum for researchers, arts and policy workers (see p. 3) **BYRON BAY** Contact Regional Arts NSW Tel 02 9247 8577 Website [www.regionalartsnsw.com.au](http://www.regionalartsnsw.com.au)

29 July - 1 August

🎪 *Byron Bay Writers Festival 2004* Including everything from dinners and lunches to interviews and panel discussions, all at the Byron Bay Beach Resort. Tel 02 6685 5115 Email [nrwc@nrwc.org.au](mailto:nrwc@nrwc.org.au) or [nswwc@nswwriterscentre.org.au](mailto:nswwc@nswwriterscentre.org.au) [www.byronbaywritersfestival.com.au](http://www.byronbaywritersfestival.com.au)