

**It's a wild and whacky concept but it
The Nymagee Outback
is definitely coming to fruition.
Music Festival is a unique
outback festival held over
the October long weekend
it's really pushing boundaries in the
bush. And it's working!**

by JAY DUNNE



of the community members support it in some way, whether it's volunteering on-set, lending equipment, fund-raising, spreading the word or providing accommodation for artists. Nymagee has grown consistently for the three events with increasing numbers of visitors, improved facilities, activities and widespread regional support.

With the festival heading well along the track of sustainability, the cultural and economic benefits to the community are now clear. After our third event, we're starting climbing out of the red, with visions of one day laughing all the way to the bank (that's



It's wild, it's whacky, it WORKED!

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THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL WAS A SENSATIONAL SUCCESS. PEOPLE travelled in mobile homes, vans, planes, utes and on foot from as far as Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Texas, Japan, Vanuatu, Winton, the Netherlands and Samoa to get to the Nymagee hills. Despite the drought conditions, artists were inspired and audiences enchanted. A feast of culture and entertainment were on offer for three days, with camping at the ideal amphitheatre site on the outskirts of the remote Nymagee Village in the heart of NSW.

For 2002, Nymagee reverberated to the diverse sounds of over 100 musicians on four stages providing over 60 hours of live concert performance and workshops for a thirsty crowd determined to forget for a short while the devastation of the drought. Artists bringing the period of relief to the district included Felicity, The Remains, the Bushwackers, Tonchi McIntosh, Handpicked, Club Diana (from Europe), The Rovers and Drivers Outback Show and a swag of local talent. It was a truly grass roots 'Year of the Outback' event, an arts extravaganza shaped, created and augmented by local and visiting volunteers.

The Festival started back in 1999, with the seeds sown somewhere in the Nymagee collective consciousness the year before. The Festival is run by The Mallee Hen Cooperation, which was founded in 1999 to promote art/culture, tourism and community services for Nymagee and the Western region beyond. The Nymagee Outback Music festival is doing just that. Almost all

100kms away now ... by then maybe 320kms away). Local skills in an array of festival aspects are improving, including design, marketing, arts, finances, risk management, hospitality, construction, brainstorming, networking and administration. The event now attracts artists who travel long distances to the village to perform. Tonchi McIntosh, a brilliant contemporary performer whose music reflects the core substance of the festival's artistic direction is making plans for his family to settle in the village. At this rate Nymagee could well become a year-long arts hub of the outback!

Relating their skills and knowledge to up-and-coming artists, many talented and dedicated musicians contributed this year to the 'Emergence' aspect of the festival, which is gaining momentum. The Remains performed this year, providing an invaluable part of the festival experience, thanks to Year of the Outback and the Country Arts Support Program.

The Nymagee Outback Music Festival may not have broken the drought but at least those who made it for 2002 were able to face the realities of life in the bush with a smile on their faces. Here's hoping that the cultural benefits and new friendships made will continue to blossom until the time next comes to recharge community spirit. ■

Visit the website at www.geocities.com/nymageefestival/

Photos: The RE-MAINS on stage; Jodie and Nell on the ute.

December – January

Till 11 January

👁 ArtExpress, 2001 travelling exhibition features students' bodies of work, an innovation in the HSC Visual Art syllabus.

COFFS HARBOUR Regional Gallery.
Tel 02 6648 4860

Till 12 January

👁 *Turning the Clock Back 30 Years*, The Unseen Collection, photographic images of Australian cultural life. **COWRA** Art Gallery

Tel 02 6340 2190

Till 19 January

👁 *Reflections*, exhibition presenting the achievements of Tafe students in Drawing, Printmaking, Painting, Ceramics and Digital Arts during 2002. **DUBBO** Regional Art Gallery Tel 02 6881 4342.

Till 12 January

👁 *The Unseen Collection*, photographic images of Australian cultural life. **COWRA** Art Gallery Tel 02 6340 2190.