



INDUSTRY PROFILE :: GREG DODGE

We Built This City On Rock & Roll

“Whether it was pop or rock, Brisbane started to get a good energy – there was a “fuck, we could do it here!” vibe.”

GEARED has an engrossing chat with Brisbane music industry veteran and Q Music founder **GREG DODGE** – one of the people who built the local music scene practically from scratch.

GEARED: You’ve been in the Brisbane music biz from its very beginning, Greg – what was it like helping local music evolve?

GREG DODGE: A lot of it was political and industry-political – it’s still a challenge today. In the ‘80s, we were lobbying the government to start a contemporary music course about popular music, but we didn’t call it ‘popular music’ because people mix that up with pop music rather than the broader term. What happened when we said we wanted to develop music, they said “well, we already have the Conservatorium here.” There was no education for young, aspiring musicians – there was a definition between classical and broader music and understanding the business, but in the late ‘80s, there was a change nationally. There was a body called AusMusic which got federal funding from Victoria and was driven by Melbourne industry – the [Michael] Gudinski front. It all got killed in 1992 and that’s where we had to pick up the pieces; in 1993, we got Q Music off the ground, but behind the scenes, there was the political environment of Joh Bjelke-Peterson, who stifled any creativity in his actions. When you go back, that’s why punk and underground bands were leaving and doing well out of town – there was an oppression to anything that was new.

G: Yet the covers acts flourished before the original acts started forming in earnest...

GD: Brisbane had a very strong cover band scene. Everyone was imitating everyone, and it was fucking strong – I mean, Wickety Wak [notorious covers act that sold out a run of dates at the Boondall Arena in the early ‘90s – *Geared Ed.*]! The honest truth is, the underground stuff wasn’t taken seriously. There was a small group of people including Paul Pitocco, Leanne DeSouza and Darren Clark who believed we could do it from Brisbane and tried to encourage the artists to believe in that, too.

G: I’ve heard that Powderfinger’s Ian Haug bought his guitar amp from your old shop.

GD: That’s right – the guys from Powderfinger bought their first amps from me and were my resident clients when I had the music store in Barry Pde, where Allans/Billy Hyde is now. We were a little bit of a hub; there was a lot of good live music in the Valley back then, with a couple big rehearsal spaces like the old Target building in Chinatown. It had zillions of bands rehearsing all night long – it was a breeding ground for live music. Brisbane was only internationally recognised as a hotspot five years ago, but that hotspot really started in the ‘90s. Politically, with Joh leaving and the new government, there was this new energy. For me, it all started in ‘91, ‘92, ‘93 and five years later, bands like Powderfinger started getting national recognition. Whether it was pop or rock, Brisbane started to get a good energy – there was a “fuck, we could do it here!” vibe.

G: Initially, you’ve made the transition from a muso to music industry worker.

GD: I toured in a band in the late ‘70s, and that’s what got me to Queensland from the coldest place in the world – Tasmania. I came up in 1977 – unashamedly, with a covers band; we used to play four nights a week and we lived off it. It was better money than if you had a day job!

G: A far cry from today...

GD: We used to live in band houses – they were horrible dumps, but you’ve always had a roof over your head and there was always a party. I did it for a couple years and I used to play six nights a week. In 1982, I

stopped playing in bands and got into music business more – I got into retail and became a manager of a shop selling gear in the city, and then I started my own business in 1989. I’m a frustrated artist manager – in other words, I’ve been an artist, I was happy with what I achieved and to a degree, my life has been about supporting artists.

G: These days, the city and the state have a bustling music scene.

GD: I’m pleased we’ve got that going – it has made a difference and an impact. Now, I’ve found myself lecturing the popular music course at Griffith University and QUT and I’ve never had any academic training – I left school at 16 and started playing in a band.

I think the industry in Brisbane started to grow up in the ‘90s and Queensland music hit the stride during the ‘00s. In 2008, the Minister for Arts got up and said “I’m so proud Brisbane got noted internationally as one of the top live hubs”, and I said “where the fuck were you in ‘92?” [laughs] But you still had to go south to do anything good and there’s not many Powderfingers or Savage Gardens. There’s a lot more stories of people who never made it through that could or should have made it through – but again, there are only so many live venues and songs that can hit the market. Brisbane at least made a small dent – it made people sit up and listen. Love it or hate it, Q Music still drives Queensland music forward. I didn’t have anything to do with it for years, but I respect that the vision continued on from those early years when we struggled our arses off to get people to believe in us. I’m still in the industry, even though I step out of it every now and again – I take a breath and come back into it.

G: Which other ‘90s events in Brisbane particularly stood out for you?

GD: There was a music store in Spring Hill called the Australian Academy of Music – one of my competitors – but every year, they used to run a thing called the Queensland Rock Awards. It wasn’t until the late ‘90s when they started to put on high school rock, but every year in the early ‘90s there was a band that won, so all the bands would fight to win this grand final. The gig itself was at Festival Hall – a big stage with rows of Marshalls.

When I look back, they’ve been creating the competition between bands and pushing the standards – that’s been happening since the mid-‘70s and it started gathering ground. I was part of the change – I was working for [now-defunct record store] Palings in the mid-‘80s, and I actually set up a band competition that really supported original music: if you did originals, you’d get more points than anyone doing covers. When the Academy changed the rules into the originals and covers categories, it lifted the game because people started writing with some seriousness. The biggest thing I remember was when we put on a show in 1992 and a guy from Melbourne said “you’ve got to go to Melbourne and Sydney” – the room went really cold. Last year, he said to me “I felt really uncomfortable, because there was a wind of change.” We put Pangaea on after he’d said that, and they were so remotely different to anything anyone’s heard the room went quiet when they finished – it was stunned silence, a pregnant pause – and then people got up and stamped.

► **GREG DODGE’s** chronicles **BRISBANE MUSIC 1985-2010 (25 YEARS OF REFLECTION)** can be found on gregdodge.wordpress.com

Signal Noise

News, submissions and industry scuttlebutt for consideration in this column should be sent to celiezer@netspace.net.au no later than 5pm Fridays. Check www.ravemagazine.com.au for more **SIGNAL NOISE** Industry news.

FESTIVAL RUMBLINGS: VIBRATIONS, GLASTO, PLAYGROUND

Are there too many festivals? **Good Vibrations’** boss **Justin Hemmes** certainly thinks so. Spirited bidding pushes the fees of acts up, and consumer demand is down because they are spoiled for choice. After less than impressive sales this February, Hemmes told the InTheMix dance site that the next Good Vibrations has been pushed back to December 2012.

Michael Eavis, founder of the **Glastonbury Festival**, reckons that UK summer festivals are struggling and that some major events will fall by the wayside. “We’ve probably got another three or four years,” he said. “It is a very scary business. Womad and Latitude are not selling out. Partly it’s economics, but there is a feeling that that people have seen it all before.”

Playground Weekender is about to get new financial backers, promoter **Andy Rigby** revealed. Last week, **Architecture In Helsinki** sued the festival in the Federal Court, saying they are still owed \$24,200 from playing there this year. Rigby said they’d be paid within a fortnight.

MORE OFFICES OVERSEAS FOR VALLEYARM

Brisbane/Melbourne-based **Valleyarm Digital Music Distribution**, which has offices in Singapore to cover its Asia Pacific operations, has now set up offices in Berlin and New York City to oversee its expansion into the European and U.S. territories. Naja Detrekoy (ex Orchard Production Manager from Europe/UK) runs Berlin. Sarah Hamilton is currently running the New York office. Now that the US operations are up and running, Hamilton will be returning to Melbourne next month as Valleyarm’s Global Operations Manager. Valleyarm is also launching Valleyarm Records next month, with first signings Sydney singer songwriter **Hamish Gordon**, Melbourne hardcore outfit **Stick To The Shallows** and LA rappers **Jeffrey Ripper** and **Dirty P**.

SXSW SESSION

QPIX Studio (22 Warwick St., Annerley) will host a special night on Tuesday Jul 26 for those planning to attend the Southwest Music, Film & Interactive Festivals and Conferences in Texas next March. It is not open to the general public but to music, film and interactive professionals. Admission is by proof of working in the three creative industries, which may be a business card, letterhead or other reference. Space is limited and RSVPs can be made to Barry Bond on (07) 3848 8000 or barry@qpix.org.au. There’ll be a 90-minute screening of a documentary on the 25 years of SxSW called **Outside Industry**. Afterwards, there’ll be a panel discussion on how the event can further your careers internationally. Speakers include SxSW’s Aust, NZ and Hawaii long time rep **Phil Tripp**, local artist managers **Rick Chazan** (Boat People) and **Maggie Collins** (DZ Deathrays, John Steel Singers), plus **Barry Bond**, who is Marketing Manager of QPIX screen development centre.

AIR SURVEY: FOUR TIMES MORE MALES THAN FEMALES ON RADIO

A survey of the 2000 most played songs on Australian radio in June by independent record label association AIR has revealed that 81.7% of them featured male voices. 18.3% AIR based its survey on ‘spin’ reports from all the commercial networks, high profile community and regional stations, Triple J, ABC local radio and Radio National. Why the discrepancy? More males signed to labels? Listener preferences? A bias of radio decision makers?

THINGS WE HEAR

► As part of its late 2012 headline, is Star City in Sydney talking to **Prince** to reheadline?

► **Iron Maiden’s Bruce Dickinson** turned down being a judge in the UK version of The Voice. “That show sounds so crap and demeaning to everyone involved, I took great delight in turning the BBC down,” he said. “The X Factor is appalling enough.”

► At the packed funeral for Sony A&R **Jay Dee Springbett**, **Jessica Mauboy** and **Stan Walker** sang the duet Nu Flow, Mauboy did *Gone Too Soon* and Sony chief **Denis Handlin** gave him a tequila toast as part of his eulogy.

EMI SOLD IN TWO MONTHS?

Despite what **Citigroup** is spinning about looking at “various options” for **EMI**, it looks as though “selling the bloody thing – and soon” is at the top of the list. “Soon” as in two months. It seems there’ll be a mighty battle between two bidders. There’s v. rich person **Len Blavatnik** who bought Warner Music for US\$1.3 billion, and private-equity investor **Alec Gores** who’s still smarting after just missing out on getting his mitts on Warner. Selling to Gores would be easier, if truth be known, as Blavatnik comes with a whole mess o’ regulatory baggage. Also bidding: **Sony**, **BMG Rights Management** and **Universal**.

KIMBRA WINS VANDA & YOUNG COMP

One of the biggest Aussie buzz acts of the year, NZ-born Melbourne-based **Kimbra** won the **Vanda & Young Songwriting Competition** with *Cameo Lover*. The song is the second single from her September-debut album *Vows*, and calls on someone who’s becoming isolated to embrace love again. The \$50,000 prize package includes \$20,000 cash and songwriting and recording opportunities in Australia and Britain. Runner up was **Catherine Britt’s** *Sweet Emmylou* and third was **Goyte’s** *Somebody That I Used To Know*. The winners were chosen by an 18-person judging panel.

Organised by APRA|AMCOS, the competition drew over 4000 entries and raised \$200,000 for Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Australia.

CHANNEL [V]: 100,000 FANS ON FACEBOOK

Channel [V] Australia is about to nail its 100,000th fan on Facebook. So it’s giving one viewer the chance to win 100,000 seconds of live music experiences. From this week until Sunday Jul 31, music fans can go to vmusic.com.au to score chances to attend gigs and festivals.

LIFELINES

► Born: son Bingham, to **Matt Bellamy** of **Muse** and actress **Kate Hudson**. They’re in the process of buying a US\$5.2 million mansion in Malibu.

► Born: son Lucius to NSW hip hop artist **Dialectrix** and his partner Camilla.

► Born: son, Julian Roger, for **Duran Duran’s Roger Taylor**, his first with current partner Gisella. He has three grown-up kids from a previous marriage.

► Expecting: **Nova’s Merrick Watts** and wife Georgi, their second.

► Split: **Jennifer Lopez** and **Marc Anthony** after seven years and two children.

► Injured: rapper **Nicki Minaj** was struck in the face during an argument at a Dallas hotel during a screaming row with her male personal assistant.

► Injured: **Morrissey** fractured the tip of his index finger when he was attacked by a dog during an English tour. Meat isn’t murder, perhaps?

► Threatening: **John Lennon’s** widow **Yoko Ono** told the owner of a Beatles-themed venue in Dundee, Scotland called **Lennon’s** to drop the name or else.

► In Court: a US judge dismissed charges that rapper **Foxy Brown** violated a court order by exposing her ass to a neighbour.

► Extra jail: **DMX**, due to be released from jail on Jul 13, had his sentence extended by a week after authorities found drugs in his cell.

► Died: US renowned producer and songwriter **Alphonso “Fonce” Mizell**, 68. He was a member of Motown hit-makers **The Corporation** who wrote and produced the **Jackson 5’s** *I Want You Back* and *ABC*. After leaving Motown, they worked with **Donald Byrd**, **Bobbi Humphrey** and **A Taste Of Honey**.

► Died: **Rob Grill**, 67, singer, bassist and songwriter of the **Grass Roots** (*Midnight Confession*) after strokes following a fall at home.

► Died: US songwriter and producer **Jerry Ragovoy** (*Time Is On My Side*, *Piece Of My Heart*), of complications from a stroke.

SEA FM GETS REBRANDED

In the wake of the **Southern Cross Media** and **Austereo** merger, the Gold Coast’s **90.9 Sea FM** has a new logo and been rebranded to become part of the Today network. Paul Bartlett, general manager of the Gold Coast Media Centre said it would be “playing more pop music and including more celebrity content within our shows.” In the meantime, as a result of the merger, SCM put up its **Mix** and **Sea FM Sunshine Coast** stations on the market.

CROWDS DOUBLE FOR FESTIVAL

Tentative figures for the **Surfers Paradise Festival** (Jun 16 to Jul 9) suggest that crowd numbers doubled from last year to 90,000. Official figures will be released on Aug 26. Festival CEO **Mike Winlaw** estimates it pumped \$7 million into the local economy. A huge crowd turned out for **Pete Murray’s** first Australian show in three years, where he unveiled his new band and previewed numbers from his September-due *Blue Sky Blue* – many of them about his 2009 split from *Amanda Coutts* after three years of marriage. The Australian Street Entertainment championships drew 23,000 over three days.

BUNDABERG OFFERS \$5000 FOR ARTISTS

Creative Regions (www.creativerregions.com.au) is offering \$5000 for an emerging songwriter, composer or choreographer from the Bundaberg region to get a mentor of their choice (which includes living away from home expenses if need be) and boost their career prospects. Applicants must seek the approval of their chosen mentor before sending their proposal in and must answer three key questions and meet set criteria. If successful, the mentorship can occur anytime between Sep 1 to Feb 28, 2012. Applications close on Friday Jul 29 and can be emailed to jess@creativerregions.com.au or posted to PO Box 2372, Bundaberg QLD 4670. Further info from the website or email its Projects & Marketing Officer **Jess Hall** on the aforementioned address.

QMA PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARDS

Music fans are being given the chance to support their favourite Queensland artists as the Queensland Music Awards opens voting in the new People’s Choice Awards. With the finalists announced, it’s your chance to vote for the Most Popular Male, Most Popular Female, and Most Popular Group online at www.couriermail.com.au/qma. Those who cast their vote will go into the running to win double passes to upcoming festivals including Big Day Out and Soundwave 2012.

ADELAIDE FRINGE INFORMATION SESSION

The team from the Adelaide Fringe arts festival will be at Metro Arts on Thursday Aug 4 (5.15pm) holding an information session to give artists, presenters and producers information on taking part in the 2012 festival. Afterwards, a networking drinks session will be held at the Verve Cafe with arts industry representatives and previous Fringe Artists.