

# Greg Champion Newsletter

## A Chat with Champs

*Dear readers and lovers of grouse music, welcome to the second newsletter compiled by the outstanding Western Australians, Andrew and Del McGuinness.*

*May I tell you about them. They're music fans - and they still like me! - whom I've met only once, in Perth airport last October. However we'd been corresponding for quite a while before that and well before I'd met them they'd volunteered to publish this newsletter. So I said you betcha!*

*They're involved in professional life in the West, and I know they, as well as I, would love to wish you a cheery holiday season and the best possible luck for the New Year.*

*The new record will be released on Jan. 19, titled North & South. Like my last CD, Rod McCormack produced it. I'm in even more awe of Rod the second time round. He's not*

*only outstandingly gifted but a very special person. Here's how it was made.....*

*Rod and brother Jeff, have always lived on the Central Coast. They would be solely responsible for the 'Country Music Mafia' having now moved into that area. First, Rod and*

*ond CD to be done there, straight after Brendan Walmsley's. It's an inspiring place to record. Surrounded by tall bush, peaceful and relaxed, you can sleep in the free-standing studio while Rod and family live in the house down the hill. Rod has some of Australia's finest acoustic guitars*

*the fence of folk and country. About half of the songs have an Australiana bent, something absent on Shady Tree. Again there's no electric guitar and keyboard on only one track, but unlike the drums-free Shady Tree, there's some gentle drumming.*

*Are you traveling to Tamworth?? If not - drop everything and get there! This will be our fourteenth straight Festival.*

*Our baby Grace is 15 months, and a total angel package to a totally biased Dad, and her Mum, Teresa.*



*See you along the track, stay cheerful, best wishes,*

*greg.*

***Merry everything,  
Happy everything else,  
And jolly good luck for the rest of it.....***

*Gina Jeffries married, bringing her there too. Mick Albeck had come there, courtesy of his bluegrass friendship with Rod. In the past 5 years Kasey Chambers and her family, Beccy Cole, Adam Harvey, Tamara Stewart, Karen O'Shea, and now Felicity and Glenn Hanna have moved close by too.*

*I digress.....*

*Rod and Jeff have just built a state-of-the-art studio in Erina Valley. Mine was about the sec-*

*ond CD to be done there, straight after Brendan Walmsley's. It's an inspiring place to record. Surrounded by tall bush, peaceful and relaxed, you can sleep in the free-standing studio while Rod and family live in the house down the hill. Rod has some of Australia's finest acoustic guitars*

*The new record is coming out on ABC Music, and I'm delighted, as anyone would be, to be back on that label as I was in the nineties. The one duet is with my long time friend, Jane Saunders. Whereas Shady Tree could have been labeled 'Country & Theosophical', to me this CD, and virtually every song, sits squarely on*

## GIGS

**February 6**

Vic Country Music Awards  
Whittlesea

**February 7**

Mortlake Buskers' Festival  
Victoria

**February 18**

Mornington Racecourse  
Victoria

**February 25**

Crown Casino  
Melbourne Victoria

**February 28**

Marlin Fishing Fest  
Merimbula New South Wales

**March 20**

Frankston Guitar Festival  
Victoria

**April 9 – 12**

National Folk Festival  
Canberra

**April 17**

Launceston Casino  
Tasmania

**April 22 – 25**

Mt Beauty Music Muster  
Victoria

**May 15**

Coleraine Community Hall  
Victoria (TBC)

## From the Fans:

### FROM NEW ZEALAND

Hi Greg,

*[your song] When I Kick the Bucket is proving a real hit. I played it again on yesterdays show and straight away we had a full board of calls. I am going to add another page to my website promoting artists like yourself. Anyway, take care and keep writing those songs.*

Joy Adams

### FROM A YOUNGSTER

Hello Champs,

*My name is Angus Judd. And I have got to be your biggest fan.*

*When I was 5, I got totally addicted to your songs with Bucko (Aussie Christmas). We played it from Christmas to next July. My whole family knows the words back to front and inside out. These days I'm 11 and I play your songs everyday and every night. I love singing the songs of one of Australia's brilliant singer/songwriters such as yourself. I hope this email finds you in good health. Yours sincerely*

Angus Judd

### FROM THE USA

Hi Greg,

*During my recent trip to Kakadu, my tour guide was playing the Kakadu song that you wrote many times, and I really enjoyed that song. I was wondering how I could obtain that song. Thanks very much for your help with my finding this song.*

Landon Fraser

### FROM CANBERRA

Dear Greg,

*Our music duo has been playing your song I'll see you again sometime for a couple of months now, at the end of the night at our gigs, just like John Nutting does, and its been going well. We mainly play central and south coast clubs. I've heard your radio show a few times traveling*

*back to Canberra, I like listening to it, its different to most other ABC programs. Kind regards*

Laurie Stephenson

### FROM DENMARK

Dear Greg,

*I am from Denmark and you could make me very glad if you would send me your autograph. I am sure that you are getting many inquiries of this kind but I do hope that you will take your time and send a letter to Denmark. I wish you good luck for the future. Thanks and kind regards*

Ingolf Clausen

*LATER: Thanks very much for your autograph. You've made me very glad. Warm wishes from Denmark.*

Ingolf

### FROM TORQUAY

Hello Greg,

*I asked my primary school class at Torquay P.S. what they wanted to perform at our school's carols day. They overwhelmingly voted for Santa Claus Has Got a New Truck. (It was not quite unanimous - Frosty the Yobbo got a few votes). Also, did you ever record a song you used to sing on the Coodabeens on Sunday nights, informally called The Possum Song? It was one of my favourites. (The chorus had the line 'and there's a cloud on the moon' in it).*

Michael Linde

*[Cloud on the Moon is on the Best of Greg Champion CD - many people have called it The Possum Song]*

### WEB WISE

to e-mail Champs,  
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# NORTH&SOUTH

Track by track

## 1. too many bridges

when you approach middle life, or more candidly, spot it disappearing over the hill in the distance, a poor soul's mind turns to the mistakes, regrets and transgressions of the past. You ponder whether you've let a lot of things slip through your fingers....

## 2. isn't that something

this one is the surprise packet for me. Producer Rod always fancied this one, whereas I saw it as slightly out of step with the rest of the collection. It's the closest one to the Shady Tree direction. It's the only 'cosmic'-style lyric on the CD. While I liked it plenty enough, it wouldn't have been in my first twenty due to its differentness. Rod had a passion for it and I entirely let him have his head with it, arranging and mixing it just as he wanted. As he cooked it up, he said dreamily: this song is moving further and further up the final track list for me.....

## 3. banks of the Condamine

I heard it on a folk festival compilation CD, sung by a Brisbane folk trio. Beautiful rendition. I snooped it out on the net, printed out 3-4 versions and wrote my own hybrid. It has an interesting history. The words are evidently adapted from **Banks of the Nile**, a traditional English folk song. I gather that Trevor Lucas from Fairport Convention may be responsible for the marriage of the old tune to what I think is a traditional Aussie bush poem, in the '70s. The melody varies widely too, in its various incarnations. There are shearing and horse breaking versions...

## 4. back this way again

It has the vague setting of the River Murray and the paddle steamers that once operated out of Echuca and Mildura. I feel Gordon Lightfoot sneaking into this one – but I haven't asked him whether he wanted to be there! There's also vagueness about the nature of the relationship alluded to....

## 5. Waukaringa

In about 1999 I went on a Pro Hart Charity Car Rally from Broken Hill to Blinman in the Flinders. We did 300-400k of unsealed through inspiring country, and we passed Waukaringa, an abandoned crumbling impressive stone hotel ruin, on an isolated dirt track. It became the backdrop for this yarn...

## 6. love you anyway

it arose from a discussion with my partner about hair going grey.....

## 7. he's a big man

My partner's Uncle Wal was a true treasure: sweet, funny, warm, big-hearted....

He was a four-year P.O.W., and was a fit 72 year old from Kyabram, when cancer ended his life quite quickly in 1993. His wife Jan is still fighting fit. A better bloke would be hard to find.....

## 8. think of me

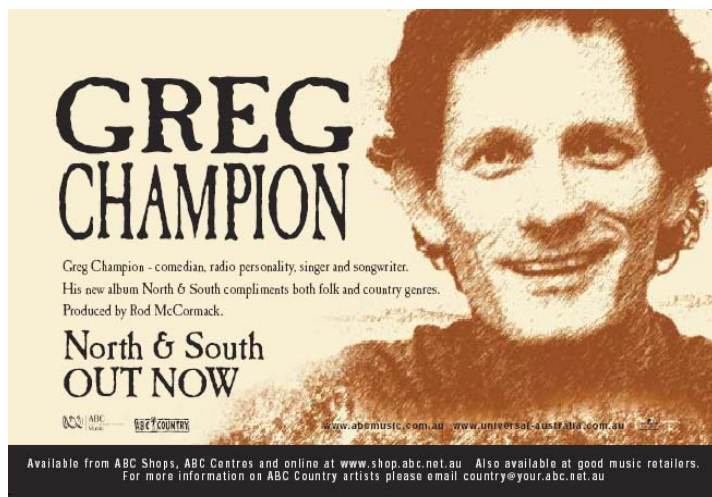
a bit like *too many bridges*: you start to find yourself looking back. Everyone has one, or more, that got away. A lot of people have a skeleton in the closet. A long time friend did reveal that my long time ex had been back in town, and I had been discussed. You cannot go back, but it may be nice to know that they still have the occasional warm thought for you...

## 9. another day another town

it's the title of a Slim Dusty book, and a Slim song, and it suggested another song to me. It was gonna be about Slim's life, but it drifted in its destination. I could see the influence of both Merle Haggard and Nanci Griffith, but I'm sure no-one else ever will!

## 10. dunno how to live that clean

just as it says: you're pondering your bad habits, you'd like to clean up, but you just wouldn't know quite where to start....



## NORTH&SOUTH

### Track by track

#### 11. under an Australian sun

We had an exciting trip to a French country music Festival in 2002. In an Aussie's Paris Embassy apartment, he had a photo of his two children on the sideboard. Unlike the light of a European summer, you could see that the picture was from the Old Country, and might've been taken outdoors on Christmas Day....

#### 12. 'cos we're old friends

there is one friend who has been a best friend for 27 years. It's an acknowledgement to him. It's taken me about that long to begin to appreciate how much I/we need great friends like him....

#### 13. not dead and not in jail

I met a beaut friend I'd seen once in twenty years. We discussed another long-time pal who'd done time inside, and 'done' everything. I said: well, at least he's not dead and not in jail. I wrote it down, for later....



Champs talks to a fan about his new CD North and South



**TAMWORTH** is over again for another year - my 14<sup>th</sup> straight Festival - and it's still the highlight of the year. It was coloured by rain - plenty of it - but had the same great buzz.

This year the lineup changed to include 'a superb band of middleweights!' - with the greatest of respect to **Jane Saunders**, the Nicole Kidman of Country, and guitarist **Michael Fix**, the Michael Fix of Country. The lineup was completed by **Robyn Martin**, for her third year with us, on bass and vocals, and Rotten Ronnie Romance (**Ron Mahony**) on drums.

The heavy rain of the first few days peaked with four inches across the Friday night and during the opening concert in the park, which I was compering. The usual 10,000 people turned into 2-3 thousand diehard souls who refused to leave as the rain intensified. The PA failed just as **John Williamson** was starting his final song, having survived nearly three hours.

The **Longyard Hotel** is still the best venue in town, with its vine-covered courtyard where you can watch the show while enjoying fresh air and the great atmosphere under the new management. Three thousand people who were camped by the river were moved to paddocks on the edge of town, until the coast was clear to return. The floodwaters peaked half a metre below the bridge, rising about six metres. Any higher and the town would have been cut in two until the level subsided. It's happened before.....

The **Slim Dusty** tribute show drew 5,000, even more than the Awards Concert on the last Saturday. I had my annual short chat with **John Williamson**, and went to watch the perennial musicians' favourite act, **The Flood**. A further highlight was having **Rod McCormack**, the guru of the whole caper, join us on stage twice during the week, *and* his wife **Gina Jeffries** made a surprise guest appearance on our big Friday show as well.

I launched my new CD **North & South** during the Festival. It's on ABC Music, which I've joyfully rejoined after having been on the label for some years in the nineties. Some industry observers think it's my best CD. I think they're right, but you can't take my word for it....

There was more heavy rain to wind up the Festival, about two inches of rain and some spectacular electrical storms kept me company as I drove away down the Newell Highway....

People drive from as far as WA for this event, some annually. If you were fortunate to be there, see ya next time; if not, please come - you'll be smitten for good. Happy travels, see you down the track,

**greg**