

Greg Champion

Newsletter

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Cheers from Champs

HELLO ME HEARTIES

Hello you fine-feathered Aussie battlers, and welcome to newsletter No. XVCIIIDFKH ... just mucking around. I trust your lives and your health are in good order, and may the leaves of winter not clog your gully trap.

It's been four months since we spoke. May I tell you about my virtually completed new album - but not before saying Come On The Crows, who at the time of writing take on West Coast in the Preliminary this weekend - and well done England, who were the better cricket side and rightly pulled our pants down. I might not feel so kindly if the Crows weren't doing so well.

For my new CD I was keen on a new approach: set up a temporary studio in a remote beach shack in Venus Bay Sth. Gippsland and make the album there. Rod McCormack, due to his immeasurable generosity agreed to come and supervise and lend his class. Gary Carruthers, my 'right arm' as far as musical support goes, was the third member and 'Rotter' Ron Engelhardt, the maestro engineer completed our team.

Boy did we have a good time - oh, and yes, boy did it work out well as far as the sound of the new CD goes. Four days, four fellas, thirteen songs, twelve hour working days, and from 10pm-3am each night: the Gordon Lightfoot Appreciation Society reigned, with Rod and Gary trading favourite Gordon songs. They're two of the finest Gordon exponents in Oz.

I got the result I was hoping for: a more back to basics sound, a little raw, not too smooth. Each song was recorded live with Gary and I duetting on acoustic guitars and a live vocal. Although some songs remain quite raw, harmonies, bass by Jeff McCormack, and sparing drums were added back at Rod's studio on the Central Coast.

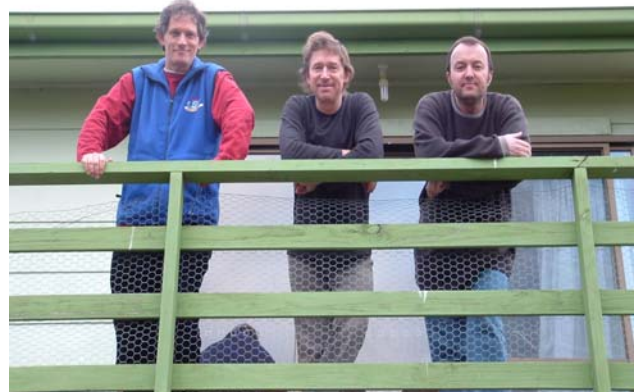
The album may be called *The Shack Tapes*, but that could change. It was mixed by Ted Howard at Garth Porter's studio in Sydney, and you can't do much better than that. A number of the songs are loosely about travel in Victoria, as well as other places. I felt I could improve on my last CD, and I would hope this one is more focused and a better record. As always, you'll be the judge of that.

This winter I've had the pleasure of singing in Stratford, Yarram and Rupanyup in the Victorian bush. Driving to Yarram takes you past the ethereal-looking Loy Yang Power Plant and over the Tara Ranges - in pea soup fog. Stratford had us there during their Shakespeare Festival, and Rupanyup is a classic Mallee/Wimmera town with a charming main street.

Festivals and events heat up in October-November. I hope to meet up with you if you live around Naracoorte, Renmark, Burnie, Warrnambool, Canberra, Hobart, Goulburn or Port Augusta. And of course, all roads lead to Tamworth in January - and if there are any roads that don't, they're heading the wrong way....

Be seeing you along the track, happy travels, warmest regards, keep the chops on the stove, go you good thing,

yours cheerfully, greg



*The 3 amigos on the verandah of the Venus Bay shack, in late May during the making of the CD.
L to R: Champs, Gary Carruthers, Rod McCormack*

Tennessee Tom Pierson's Story

We asked Champs fanatic Tom of Tennessee to tell us how he became acquainted with Greg.....

I was surfing the internet just a few years ago when I stumbled across a site called bluegrass-country.org...the program playing just happened to be an Australian bluegrass show called "music from foggy hollow" with Mike Kear. well...the image of crocodiles and kangaroos stomping their feet to Bill Monroe kept me listening for longer than i probably should have...i was multi-tasking (playing freecell) so i missed the artists name when a song came on about dying a slow and mournful death...it caught my attention but alas and alack it ended so quickly that i barely got the drift of the song...i heard Mike Kear say something about "champions" as the next song was coming on...

i immediately started backtracking until i found a website for Hawkesbury radio and Mike Kear's program where i was happy to find an email address for contact with Mike. i wrote right away and asked

***"requests for Champs songs
have made him one of the most
played artists on the play list"***

him what that song was and the name of the band...champions or something...to my surprise he answered that same day and gave me the particulars of "slow and mournful" and one Greg Champion..he even gave me Greg's email address and urged me to write him...i figured i was on a roll and what the heck...why not...

lo and behold...Champs replied almost immediately as well. we seemed to click from the beginning...i ordered a copy of Shady Tree and was blown away with it when it finally arrived two weeks later...

i knew i had to share this with my friends so i sent Greg a boat load of cash and he arranged the shipment of millions of copies of Shady Tree which i have distributed around the world at no charge to anyone...i have mailed them all over the USA and even to South Africa and England...everyone wanted a copy but nobody knew where to get it...to speed things up i just mailed them a copy myself...and met a lot of interesting people in the process....soon Greg started sending me complimentary copies of shady tree which i continued to hand out to anyone interested...i have yet to meet anyone who didn't just love it...

well..to make a long story even longer...Greg and i have become good friends, exchanging emails on a regular basis and even talking on the phone several times. we keep threatening each other with extended visits but i doubt if that will ever materialize...until they build that bridge to Australia at least...i've also gotten to know Mike Kear quite well as a result of this chance encounter...he is one of Greg's biggest promoters through his foggy hollow show... requests for Champs songs on the program have made him one of the most played artists on the playlist...Mike usually mentions my connection to Greg whenever he talks about him...i hope the two of them can sit down together some day and have a chat...

The Champs Family
at the Longyard Hotel Tamworth 2005
Teresa, Greg, Grace



Letters

FROM ADELAIDE:

Champs, I've just been listening to your song which starts "when I was a growin' up, I went to Ironbank" I think its from your "Champs" album. I'm assuming you know the area? Can you let me know what the background to the song is and its title? Its a great song! I lived in Ironbank, in the Adelaide Hills, in 1984-88 - along Upper Sturt Rd. Is the song anything to do with this Ironbank? Lance Lloyd

[Answer: Yes it is, the very one]



Champs with a Coodabeens ABC listener Georgia, from Foster in Gippsland, snapped at the MCG

FROM THE COOEE MOTEL, GILGANDRA:

Hi Greg, are you the one that recorded the song about the Cooee Motel.

My wife & I now own the Motel and would like to get the record. Can you help?

Peter & Helen Brooks

[Yes, it was on Australian Music, and was dispatched]

FROM JESSICA'S MUM:

Dear Greg, my 13 year old daughter is in year 8 at Gloucester High School and as part of their English Assessment they have to write about an Australian poet or song writer. Jessica would like to do her report on you. Her dad John has long been a fan of yours and The Coodabeens (he likes to have a bath and listen each Sunday night) so Jessica has grown up with your music. She and her dad often share one very special song that you wrote "That Look in your Eye". Kind regards Val Redman

THE FOLLOW UP:

i must thank you for talking to us by phone a few weeks ago. My (look in your eye girl) jessica did well in her assignment. I revisited *shady tree* and *north and south* and realised that i and family (val, jess & jacob 13 & 11 respectively) can all listen to you at once and all enjoy your way of making us smile and even sing along. cheers greg! (redmans) family of gloucester, (just inland from foster).

To email Champs
champs@gregchampion.com.au

To keep your finger on the pulse
www.gregchampion.com.au
www.coodabeens.com.au

FROM JO'S NECK OF THE WOODS:

i would like to hear again a song you played on the coodabeens about a month ago

it was a father singing to his child something like:
I'd like the pleasure to walk with you

excuse the vagueness is it on a cd? Jo

[it's called walk alongside of you and will be on the almost finished CD]

Letters

FROM SYDNEY:

Hi Greg, I found your albums in JB HiFi at Norton Street, Leichardt, NSW. They were filed under C in the "Blues" section of all places. & to think that I was looking in the Country/Folk/Bluegrass section. Silly me. I hope your 'art' album period continues for a while. Will be tracking down Shady Tree, & your Best Of albums next, although my local ABC shop seems to be a bit too heavy on the Yvonne Kenny side, & a little light on in other areas. Hope these are from your 'art' period as well. Best of wishes. Sean.

FROM ADELAIDE:

Greg, I seem to recall hearing you singing a song about Innisfail on the Coodabeens one night in the early nineties? "It's a long way to drive just to sleep in a car". Are the lyrics available? p.s Did I see you playing in a band called Bank of France in Adelaide in the late 70's. Tony [*Yes, Greg was in that band - and lyrics supplied*]

FROM SYDNEY:

Hi Greg, Last weekend I was introduced to the CD single "We want a wicket", which was owned by a friend. We were driving around the Blue Mountains singing very loudly. Anyway, I'd love to get my hands on a copy (or three). Do you know anywhere I might be able to find it? It seems very apt for the current ashes campaign.. Hope you can help, Sarah Browne

[*Sarah was sent the CD*]

FROM
SOMEWHERE:

I used to own a solo album of yours with a tune called "Three Crows" on it - I lost it in a custody battle in the early nineties. I was wondering if you could tell me what the album was called and how I could get another copy. Cheers, Steven

[*the album was Greg's first, self-titled, and was supplied*]

ALSO FROM SOMEWHERE:

Hi Greg, heard your song 'That Look in Your Eye' last Sunday night as we were driving back from the mountains & I absolutely loved it. Have you recorded it & if so on what album? Look forward to your reply. Regards, Alinta

[*it was on Australian Music, and was supplied*]

FROM NSW:

I rang your show on 10/7/05. I mentioned that I have never been able to get a replacement for my "Cricket Songs" tape from the mid 80's. You told me to email you and you would forward me a copy. That would be tremendous!!!! Since I called you I asked my wife and kids about it and they can remember most of the songs as well. I think we go pretty close to remembering all of them. It would be great to hear all those songs again. (It will probably make me feel 20 years old again. WHOO-HOO!!!!) Peter Krisenthal Thornleigh NSW

FROM KEVIN'S PLACE:

I'm not one to polish your ego just for the attention but I love "Shady Tree" and I have put in a request for "When I kick the bucket" at my passing. Kevin James

[*Thanks Kev, and I too suspect that when I kick the bucket will be played at my funeral also*]

travel dates

September 23
City Square
Melbourne

October 5
Clifton Hill Hotel
Melbourne

October 7
Warrnambool Racing Club
Victoria

October 11
Bendigo, Herald Sun Tour
Victoria

October 14
Adelaide Folk Centre
South Adelaide

October 15
Naracoorte Comedy Festival
South Australia

October 22
Renmark Agricultural Show
South Australia

October 28
Burnie, Elliott Community Hall
Tasmania

November 3
Mt Buller
Victoria

November 12
Southern Cross Club
Canberra

November 18
Tasmanian Tourism Awards
Hobart

November 21
Flemington Racecourse
Melbourne

November 23
Goulburn Sports Awards
New South Wales



*Country Music Dreamteam, or a police crime line-up?
L to R: Gary Carruthers, Rod McCormack, Jane Saunders, Champs, Michael Fix and Robyn Martin
on stage at The Longyard Hotel Tamworth,
before the police led them away.....*