



# The Bluegrass Truth

with Hamish & Lachlan Davidson



Bluegrass music is not showing any sign of disappearing from the Australian musical landscape any time soon. Many great new bands are popping up all over the country. Festivals are showcasing more bluegrass and it is being received very positively. Before the end of 2012, you can expect to see a number of international bluegrass and bluegrass-influenced artists in Australia.



Before we go too far, we should tip our hat to the Perth based band **Bluegrass Parkway** for celebrating 25 years as a band. Originally, the band was formed by Ross Coole, Ted Critchfield, Maria Duff and Paul Duff. Although there have been a total of fifteen band members over the years, Maria and Paul have been constant stalwarts. Paul Duff also builds mandolins and has built a very strong name for himself around the world as one of the best in the business. Melbourne has always been well known for producing some of the finest musicians and bands in Australia. In recent times, we have seen the emergence of a new generation of bluegrassers, and dare we say it, alt-



bluegrassers. Of particular note are the **Quarry Mountain Dead Rats**, **Mustered Courage**, and the **Big Bug Trio**. The QMDR's started out as a casual jam session in Melbourne's outer East, literally in an old quarry, and have since established a presence on the Roots music scene. Mustered Courage turned a few heads when they attended the Tamworth Country Music Festival for the first time. Their high energy music and Nick Keeling's powerhouse vocals are the reason they were the deserving winners of the Coca-Cola Battle of the Bands contest. The newly formed Big Bug Trio are both traditional and progressive, featuring Dan Watkins on guitar, Kat Mear on fiddle and Pete Fidler on dobro. They will be touring with Peter over the coming months. **George Jackson** is the 2012 recipient of the Davidson Brothers' Australian Youth Bluegrass Scholarship. Originally from New Zealand and currently a Queensland resident, 22 year old Jackson was the most deserving applicant. He received a \$1500



cash grant which he will be putting towards a trip to America where he will have the opportunity to hone his musicianship skills. He also won a recording package provided by Pacific International Music. We wish him all the best! Applications for the 2013

scholarship will be available soon at [www.davidsonbrothersband.com](http://www.davidsonbrothersband.com) The Tamworth Country Music Festival hosted an outdoor bluegrass concert in Bicentennial Park this year. It wasn't well publicised, but the concert featured the **Davidson Brothers**, the **Greencards**, and **The Roys** (USA). This year's winner of the prestigious Star Maker talent quest was a proud bluegrass, **Bob Corbett**. Make sure you keep an eye out for his band, the **Roo Grass Band**. **Kristy Cox** also launched her new album, *Miles & Timezones*, at the Tamworth festival. Her record producer **Jerry Salley** was present to sing harmonies and be a part of the release. The Bluegrass Breakfast shows at the Wests Leagues Club were a roaring success once again! The Davidson



Brothers were able to feature their record producer **Mark Thornton** in their shows as well. Thornton produced many of the pickin' on albums on the CMH label and toured as a guitarist with **Jerry Reed** for twelve years. Sadly, the Australian Bluegrass Championships were not held in Tamworth this year. However, on a more positive note, the Country Music Association of Australia will be introducing a new Golden Guitar

category in 2013 for 'Alternative Country Album of the Year'. Alternative country is a loosely defined sub-genre of country music that includes acts whose influences range from roots rock, bluegrass, rockabilly, honky-tonk, alternative rock and folk rock. The Australia Day Awards recognise and honour many Australians for their outstanding contributions to their communities. The Yinnar (Vic) based **Strezlecki Stringbusters** picked up two awards this year for their service. The group received the Exceptional Citizenship Award, for their unique contribution to the welfare and community spirit of Yinnar & District. The Latrobe City Australia Day 2012 Award was also presented to the Strezlecki Stringbusters, in recognition of the group's outstanding contribution and dedicated service to the Community of Latrobe City. As always, the **Port Fairy Folk Festival** will be featuring some great bluegrass acts, all of which will go on to tour our beautiful country. Keep an eye out for **Abigail Washburn** with **Kai Welch** (USA), the **April Verch Band** (Canada), **Chris Hillman & Herb Pedersen** (USA), the **Peter Rowan**

**Bluegrass Band** (USA), **The Pigs** and of course us, the **Davidson Brothers**. If American old-time music is about taking earlier, simpler ways of life and music-making as one's model, Abigail Washburn has proven herself to be a bracing revelation to that tradition. She is a singing, songwriting, Illinois-born, Nashville-based clawhammer banjo player. Abigail is also well known for her work with **Uncle Earl** and the **Sparrow Quartet**. April Verch seems to get to Australia just about every year and delights audiences with her charm, her incredible fiddle playing and her spectacular dance moves. Californians, **Chris Hillman** and **Herb Pedersen**, are two of the most revered figures in the genre of American music now known as Americana, covering country, rock, folk, blues, bluegrass and everything in between. Featured with Peter Rowan will be **Michael Witcher** on dobro, **Mike Munford** on banjo and **Paul Knight** on bass. By the time this issue of Country Update is printed, the winners of the 54th Annual Grammy Awards will have been announced, but for now, the nominees for Best Bluegrass Album include Paper Airplane (**Alison Krauss**



& **Union Station**), Reason and Rhyme (**Jim Lauderdale**), Rare Bird Alert (**Steve Martin** and **The Steep Canyon Rangers**), Old Memories - The Songs Of Bill Monroe (**Del McCoury Band**), A Mother's Prayer (**Ralph Stanley**) and Sleep With One Eye Open (**Chris Thiele & Michael Daves**). The International Bluegrass Music Association is launching a new web community and social network in 2012 called **Bluegrass Nation**. It will be a nerve centre connecting bluegrass fans, artists and businesses to each other and existing bluegrass media. Bluegrassers will have the ability to share content and comments across a variety of platforms including Facebook and Twitter.



PS: Without rabbiting on too much about ourselves, the Davidson Brothers won their third Golden Guitar for our 180 beats per minute banjo tune titled OMFG. We now have the same number of trophies in this section as Keith Urban and Tommy Emmanuel. Bluegrass rules!