

28/April/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Back in the UK

Back in 'old blighty' after a couple of hectic weeks Downunda. It seems that our high-tech communications systems let us down this time and my previous weeks' articles have disappeared into Cyber-hyperspace. However I'm now back with a modest tan and more of an insight into the Australian folk/roots music scene and some of the acts that are 'hot' down there on the other side of the world.



As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago the reason I was over there was to launch our new album (WoodworX - Two Short PlanX) at the National Folk festival in Canberra. This festival takes over the capital's show ground for the four day Easter break and is an intense music and dance packed experience spread over 15 venues at the show ground and a number of other venues spread around the town. The venues range in size from a large concert hall with high-tech repeater screens to small marquee 'blackboard' venues that are programmed on the day so that acts, either not booked at the festival or made up on the spot, get a chance to play to an audience. The music seems to be much more eclectic than you'd find at your typical British festival with a heavy 'world' influence, no doubt due to the wide ethnic mix of Australia's European settlers. The bands range from seriously ethnic ensembles to more mainstream bands like '**Women in Docs**' who produce a rootsie sound that would still be at home on a mainstream radio programme.

One of the highlights of the festival was an American 'new grass' band called **The Waybacks** who play a wild, energetic and unpredictable eclectic mix that ranges from western swing to jug band and jazz, from folk and fiddle music with improvisational excursions that draw on a musical heritage that includes Spike Jones and Jimi Hendrix. They also have a very 'dry' sense of humour which is demonstrated in both their self-penned material and the links between their numbers. The line-up of the band is Wayne 'Chojo' Jacques (fiddle, mandolin, Humanatone, vocals), Stevie Coyle (rhythm & finger-style guitar, vocals), James Nash (lead guitar, mandolin, vocals), Chuck Hamilton (drums & percussion) and Joe Kyle Jr (standup bass, vocals). Definitely worth checking out - see www.waybacks.com for more information.

Anyway, back on home turf, if you want to tap into the acoustic scene then there are a number of local opportunities such as the busker's night at Dunstable's Downtown Café tomorrow night (Thursday) or you can head south to St Albans for the "The Spotlight" at The British Legion Club in Verulam Road (£3 entry) or go north where there's the Wolverton Acoustic Club at the Madcap centre in Church Street (doors open 7:30pm).

Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 or info@lutonscene.com.