

# THE EMPRESS

## ZINE APRIL



**FLASHBACK  
TO 21 YEARS AGO.**  
WHEN MUSIC BEGAN AT  
THE EMPRESS HOTEL

**1987  
-  
2008**

**WHAT'S CHANGED?**

**WHAT'S STAYED THE SAME?**

**AND WHAT'S JUST  
MORE EXPENSIVE?**

**READER SURVEY  
- LIFE IN 1987**

**1987 MUSIC  
CROSSWORD**

GEORGE BYRNE  
-----Interview

DAVE ROBERTSON  
-----Interview

HAMISH AT THE BAR  
MIKE NOGA

-----Gig Review

LOCAL COMICS

GIG LISTINGS

(See Back Cover)

# The Empress Zine - April/May 2008

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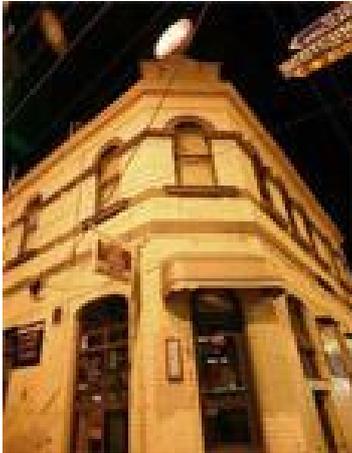
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# Nicci's Spiel

Seasonal Info brought to you by your Empress insider!



1987 winks.

I was a wee tacker in '87. *I Want Your Sex*, *Lady In Red* and *Hip To Be Square* hadn't even entered my realm of understanding; I was only a few years old. I can't remember much of my musical taste from back then. There were the Play School records, 'there's always so much cleaning to be done by everyooooone – cleaning!' Of course there was family dance time to The Beatles, Peter Paul and Mary, Status Quo, driving The Great Ocean Road to mix tapes of Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix and David Bowie. My Dad would sing *Rebel Rebel* whenever we were cranky, or had messy hair for that matter. What I do remember of the Apollo Bay farming days circa '87 was my imaginary friend, Icky the red fox. Can you remember something that didn't exist? Ooh, the mischief we'd get into, eating Dudley the Basset Hound's dinner, discovering red back spiders in the sheep drinking troughs, getting lost in the shearing sheds. I'm trying to think of a song about a red fox... Foxy lady? Maybe not red, but ties in the Hendrix thing twice in one paragraph...

Lots of exciting things coming up in the next month, Mojo Juju's gracing our stage again, who we love dearly. Firekites, another Newcastle supergroup (with members of The Instant and The Herd!) and there's even talk of more karaoke in the coming months... More you say? Yes, I just did.

Stay warm tigers.

Nicci



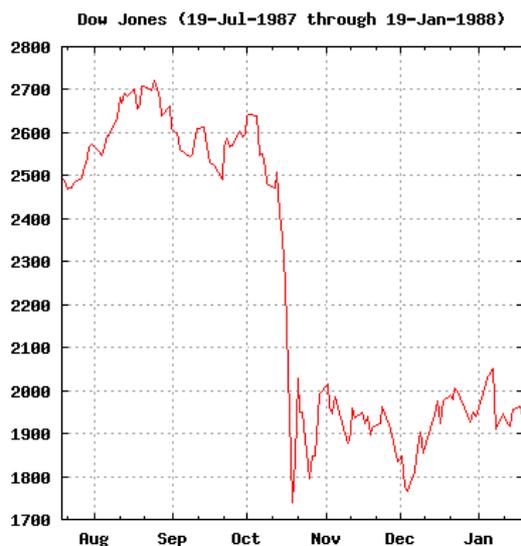
Thanks to Raewyn Haughton for the cover art and Tim Molloy for Impy and doodles.

# 1987- Hits Out!

**Q: Why has this seemingly random year been dredged up for this month's edition of the Empress Zine?**

**A: Because the Empress came into its present ownership, and started doing live music, 21 years ago in 1987.**

Yes, 1987. When the cover of Rolling Stone was graced by John Bon (Jovi). When car phones were a controversial new novelty reserved for politicians and yuppies (a term that, incidentally, was only coined two years prior). And with the stock market crash of October 19th 1987 looming in the pipelines (see pic below), also a year that could be termed "high 80s". The pride before the fall. After this point, chastened by economics, the 80s became a bit more 90s, so to speak, and Grunge crept closer to the stage.



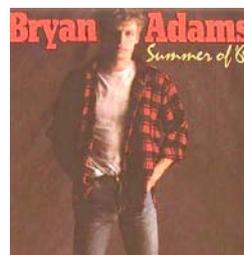
An interesting year indeed. And a long time for a pub to be around. Maybe there was an Empress Zine in 1987 too? If so, it may well have featured flashbacks to 1966...

In this feature we present some facts and fashions from 1987, and also ponder on the general themes presented by the passage of time. In particular, the concepts of 'retro' and 'flashback'. One of our reporters even did some research not on the internet. They went to the library and read a copy of The Age, from March 23rd, 1987. This allowed a quick insight into a "day in the life" for a

Melbournian, perhaps one like yourself, in the olden days of March, 1987.

Fancy a smoke at the bar? Prefer Ronald Reagan as president? Or perhaps you'd be interested in an entire two bedroom terrace house in Carlton for \$95 a week? Well, 1987 might be for you.

But remember, the Good Old Days are never lived, only rendered in hindsight. By the time you can give something a name, it basically means it's gone. Like: "your childhood", "the best years of my life", "when we talked face to face instead of always emailing", or "when there were real pubs", etc. That summer when you brought your first six string wasn't so sepia toned at the time. It was just "today". And your fingers were bleeding, too.



On the other hand, you can't avoid being caught on camera - like a Xeroxed bum from an office christmas party - being a reflection of times in which you live. In old photos even the deliberately fashion resistant people look like they belong perfectly at that moment. There's no faster way of changing than attempting to stay the same - or worse, by thinking of yourself, or your current time, as 'timeless' or 'classic'.

Our own time, like this zine, will date as mercilessly as everything else. Or to put it another way, time waits for no one. And no one can evade her ravaging hangovers and incriminating polaroids.

Even 'flashbacks' in themselves are risky business. The curious danger of many flashback presentations, particularly of the *Bert Newton Presents* or the Herald Sun lift-out variety, is that they for the most part rely upon reproducing themselves. That is, mass media products. Such that you're, in effect, 'looking back' on all the TV shows you've watched and newspapers you've read. Fondly remembering your consumption of information about yourself. Which all gets a bit spooky if you think about it too long.



Reading Cat - interested in things

## Retro - in Theory

As part of our step back to 1987, the Empress Zine now presents a few theories regarding how, what, and when we are likely to 'flashback' to 'retro' stuff.

The idea of 'retro' (according to Wikipedia, anyway), for example, refers to:

*"Aspects of modern culture which are consciously derivative or imitative of those trends, modes, fashions, or attitudes of the recent past which have or had come to be seen as unfashionable."*

Retro can apply to things like technologies, arts, objects, design, attitudes, films, music, and so on. Not just clothes, although this is a more obvious manifestation. Unlike nostalgia - which tends to refer to a period further in the past - retro is part sentiment and part mockery. It is "unsentimental nostalgia". Nostalgic items are more clearly viewed with esteem. They are most commonly dated to The Good Old Days, and often predate one's own birth or adulthood.

Roughly, as at 2008, you could surmise that the 1980s are 'retro', whereas eras like the 1960s and early 1970s are increasingly likely to be presented in terms of 'nostalgia'.

Retro value can translate to big dollars, or at least big laughs. But it is not a simple function of time - if it were, then we'd be able to tell mum exactly when we'll be cracking open that box of old crap in the garage. It's complicated stuff, like any market speculation, and often takes us by surprise even though we are active participants in it.

The Empress Zine speculates that what actually qualifies as 'retro' at a given time is a function of, in no particular order:

1. The age of the object;
2. The age of the viewer;
3. The amount of pop culture crap produced in source period;
4. The extent to which the viewer consumed pop culture initially;
5. The position of the viewer within the social hierarchy...are they a bogan?;
6. The size and expense of the object; and
7. The age and interests of those in the business of creating pop culture.

Such that, when/if all factors are optimal for a particular item, then its overall retro value will soar, providing an optimum window for re-wearing and re-marketing.

While we flesh out these possible factors, we ask readers to remember a couple of illustrative examples (one, a human, one, a type of robot), which have ridden the waves of retro value more than most.

- a) David Hasselhoff; and
- b) 'Transformers'.

David Hasselhoff starred in 'Knight Rider' from 1982-1986. His style comprised masculine posturing and 80s detailing - e.g. permed hair and leather jackets. From 1989 to 2000 he starred in and produced 'Baywatch', during and after which his star value sank due to his unflinching cheesiness. In spite of this he enjoyed some success in the German pop charts.

In the early 2000s, 'The Hoff' was rediscovered and parodies of him, and of his curious market appeal to Germans, became an internet phenomenon. Eventually this spilled over into self-parody and, ultimately, into re-marketing. Hasselhoff starred in several movies and advertisements as himself in an 'ironic' fashion (including 'The SpongeBob Squarepants Movie', 'Dodgeball', and 'Eurotrip'). He cameoed in the 2008 movie remake of 'Knight Rider' as well as releasing a single ('Jump in My Car').

Hasselhoff's retro value peaked around 2006, when he proclaimed himself "king of the internet" for a tongue in cheek ISP advertisement. By 2008, arguably, his irony value has been somewhat tainted by overexposure and his un-ironic alcoholism.



*David Hasselhoff reflecting on his retro credibility*

The Transformers were a brand of toy, with a concurrent cartoon show, centred on a team of high-tech anthropomorphic robots led by arch rivals 'Optimus Prime' and 'Megatron'. The first series screened from 1984 to 1991. In the early 2000s, posters and T-shirts were being marketed with the Transformer logo, and internet discussion forums of the 'robots in disguise' blossomed. A major Hollywood film version of Transformers was released in 2007, and a Nike shoe in the same year. The franchise has thus thrived on retro value almost as long as, and probably more profitably than, its first, non-ironic, existence in the 80s.



*In 2007 Nike released the Transformer sneaker. No, we're not sure how it works either.*

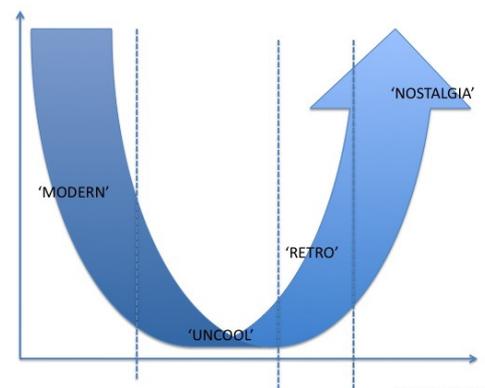
## Retro Factor 1: The age of the object



*Reading Cat says: "Items follow distinct curves of popularity, abandonment, and re-discovery."*

- The perceived value of items through time follows a distinct decay and recovery curve.
- An item will begin as new, 'modern', and exciting. It then becomes more widely marketed, after which it stays commonplace and unnoticed for a time.
- At some point the item starts to get a creeping 'old' feeling and falls out of favour. It is avoided and discarded to such a point that it can seem embarrassing or inexplicable.
- Eventually a 'front line' of retro consumers will rediscover the item and reinterpret it, perhaps with t-shirts.
- It may then become re-marketed and re-consumed in 'ironic' terms, perhaps resulting in a similar or greater value to when it originally emerged.
- The reconsumption of the item then risks tipping over into 'kitsch' and commencing its descent again. However, in the longer term, even the most repugnant of crap attains esteem and 'nostalgia' status through sheer agedness. E.g. Gold 104.3 touring acts.

CULTURAL VALUE

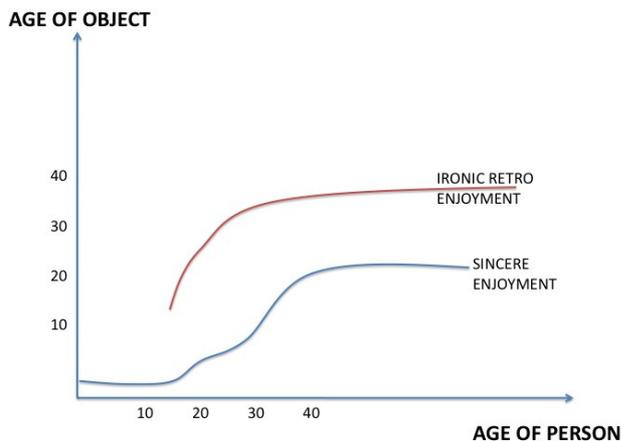


### Retro Factor 2: The age of the viewer



*Reading Cat says: "Childhood provides the core period of ironic rediscovery, and interest in retro tapers off when the 'retro' bandwidth crosses into adult experience, thence risking retro-retroneess."*

- The front line of retro generally refers to a point about 15-20 years in the past. Demographics play a part in this.
- Retro consumers tend to grow up, hit about 18 years of age, and begin ironically re-consuming things from around the time they were born and were enthusiastically consuming things in a non-ironic fashion.
- At some point, however, the sources from which the retro material was mined begin to catch up to a point in the past about which the consumer has much clearer memories. The consumer sees the risk of being retro about a period of their life when they were being retro (rero-retroneess).
- Fascination with retro will then tend to taper off, particularly with the sight of subsequent age groups enjoying retro items which the consumer never took any notice of in the first place. Dredged up crap may begin to seem as crap as always was, without the glow of recollection.

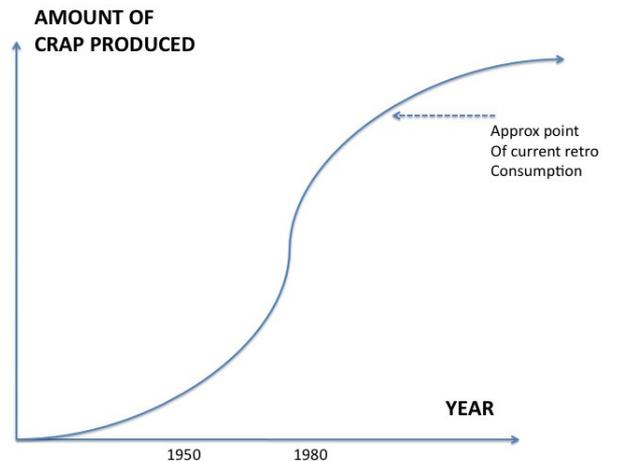


### Retro Factor 3: The amount of pop culture crap produced in source period



*Reading Cat says: "More consumer material in the source period provides more material to dredge up next time around."*

- Crap, and thus retro-crap, is exponential. The scale of our 'flashbacks' and 'retro' indulgences has increased in proportion to the retro period being referenced.
- A huge volume of television shows, brand names, gadgets, pop stars, and miscellaneous plastic crap were produced, consumed, and discarded in the 1980s. It is regarded as a period of excess, and for good reason.
- With the current retro date sitting around 1987, the 1980s are being mined for all they're worth. The pool of potential retro revival stock is almost as excessive as the 80s themselves, and retro marketing is particularly easy. However, it is hard to predict what will happen when the retro date moves past the '87 stock market crash and into the 1990s.
- For further reading, please refer to the the seminal *Onion* Article: "U.S Dept. Of Retro Warns: 'We May Be Running Out Of Past!'"

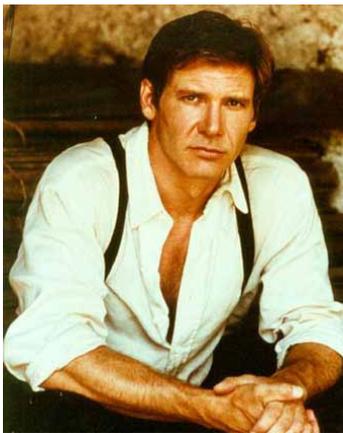


### Retro Factor 4: The extent to which the viewer consumed pop culture initially



*Reading Cat says: "Pop culture has more resonance to children and teenagers. Also, much of the retro experience is lost on those with hippy parents".*

- Your memories are influenced and prioritised by age. And you are usually more susceptible to television and Top 40 music as a child and teenager, than you as an adult.
- The more that your life, or a point in your life, was linked to the non-ironic consumption of pop culture, the more easily you will be able to re-consume it. Hence toys, cartoons and pop stars are quicker to be rediscovered.
- However, if you were shielded from or otherwise disinterested in mainstream media, and/or your parents were hippies, retro will have less resonance.
- For example, someone who encounters pop culture after spending the 1990s in an Amish community, thus having never un-ironically seen 'Baywatch', would likely find a Hasselhoff cameo decidedly less funny.



*Harrison Ford in 'Witness' -not getting the Amish in-jokes.*

### Retro Factor 5: The position of the viewer within the social hierarchy

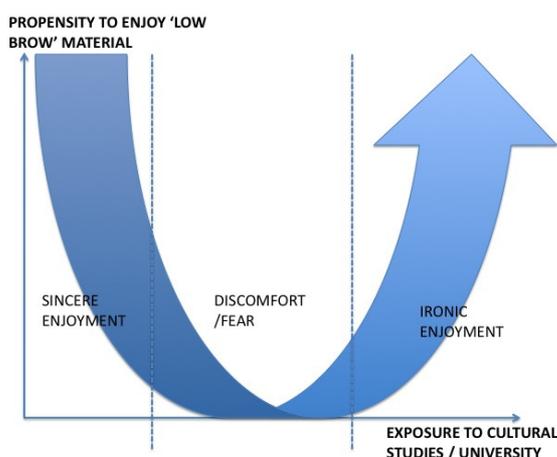


*Reading Cat says: "Retro/irony implies self-awareness and consumer confidence, and some conscious subversion of the current popular aesthetic. Bogans typically have items with the lowest retro value."*

- It all but goes without saying that only people of a certain background, and with a certain amount of leisure time for self reflection, will 'do retro'. Euphemistically speaking, you pretty much have to 'be middle class' and to have 'done well in school'.
- More disadvantaged people are usually stuck with stuff from the bottom of the 'decay curve' (after it's been discarded, and before it's rediscovered). So that bogans are always around 10-15 years behind the times anyway.
- As a side note, the term 'Bogan' became widely known in 1988 when it was used by the schoolgirl character Kylie Mole (the 80s equivalent of Ja'mie King) on the Channel 10 program 'The Comedy Company'. Outside of Victoria the term is interchangeable with Westies, Bevans, Chavs (UK) and White Trash (US), etc. The same theories apply though.
- Boganicity is not static. The current date in the bogan calendar moves with the times to be perpetually 10-15 years ago. That is, **always just a little too old to be new, and a little too new to be old.** As discussed earlier, the prime retro period is approximately 15-20 years ago. The popular cliché of bogans wearing skin tight black jeans, flannel and moccasins does not really apply now, as many of these items (especially the 'skinny' black jeans) are cool again.
- The relationship of retro and irony to education or quote-unquote high culture is strong, but not linear. A certain amount of education will often see someone turn away from the dangers of mainstream culture. This fear later inverts with the

more confident (and isolated) that continued education will most likely leave them feeling.

- Nerds are more likely to derive enjoyment from the past. Partly because it allows them to make fun of more popular groups from a safe distance; and also because it allows them to imagine they might have been cooler then.
- A sense of exclusion and subversion may also be why retro often overlaps with the sensibilities of 'camp', and gay subculture. "Camp is an ironic attitude, an explicit re-introduction of non-dominant forms".



### Retro Factor 5: The size and expense of the object.



*Reading Cat says: "Very expensive items, like houses, take longer to become retro than cheaper items like clothes."*

- The turnaround time for cheap items like clothes, toys, pop stars and the like is shorter. The standard 15 and 20 years.
- Whereas it takes longer for larger consumables like cars to re enter the market with retro status and value (probably more like 30 years). And houses run almost on a life cycle (60-80 years).
- As with clothes and cars, bogans will be left to inhabit the houses and suburbs that are a little too old to be new, and a little new to be old. Currently, around the late 70s.

### Retro Factor 6: The age and interests of those in the business of creating culture.



*Reading Cat says: "Some people make money in the culture industry, but it's a risky business. Reviving and re-releasing products that were successful first time around is relatively easy money."*

- It is often a 'flashback' film or TV show that introduces younger people to things of retro value.
- For example, 'Reality Bites' was a 1994 film, with Generation X sensibilities. It featured the 1979 The Knack hit, 'My Sharona', in a prominent scene and on the soundtrack. At 15 years of age, the song then re entered the playlists of teenage parties, where no one had gotten sick of it first time around.
- Similarly, the 2001 film 'Donnie Darko', featured a cover by Michael Andrews of the 1982 Tears For Fears hit, 'Mad World'. At 19 years of age, the song was again successful
- Retro, cover songs, re-releases, re-makes, and so on all offer good value to marketers because you basically just sell the same thing as before.
- 'Nostalgia' is most prominent in those aged 40 years and over. As these baby boomers are the people currently most likely to be top level executives in mainstream media companies, our risk of exposure to superlative "if you remembered the 60s, you weren't there" nostalgic gruel remains high for the next decade or so.
- On a happier note, though: with time, creative output that was unappreciated in the maelstrom of its own time can later be discovered, polished of its temporal burdens, and realised for the great thing it always was. Think of the quality albums released in 1987 which are now - and without the need for irony - just as good. See the listings in the next article...there are some gems in there that don't rely solely on their retro stock value.



# Selected everyday changes, 1987-2008

## Tonight on telly: "Alf gets a job...selling beauty supplies"

Some things change, some things stay the same. And many things just get more expensive. In the following pages we list some day-to-day things which, in the lifestyle of the typical Empress reader, might have changed between 1987 and 2008. As mentioned, some of this information was sourced **not from the internet**: one of our reporters went to the library and read a copy of *The Age*, from March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1987.

At a glance...In 1987 you could buy a house on Pigdon Street for \$85,000; smoke a \$2 pack of (heavily advertised) smokes in the pub; and get through an entire working day without seeing a computer. In fact, you might only have ever heard the word 'email' with reference to a brand of home appliances.

And you may (or may not) have been planning on seeing "Meatballs III: Summer Job". Check the synopsis...it sounds like a great film! Perhaps you could travel back in time, and check it out after a hard week of sending faxes. But don't forget to head to the bank beforehand...there's no EFTPOS, and hardly everyone has an "ATM machine" card. Which is just as well, since nothing's open on Sunday anyway...

*Most information below has been sourced from The Age, week of March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1987.*

Item	Status as at March-April 1987
Average earnings	Men: \$25,913 pa Women: \$20,438 pa (Full time adult wage, gross)  <i>In 2008: The figures are \$65,018 pa and \$52,609 pa.</i>
The Empress Hotel	Has just changed ownership. Live music begins.  <i>In 2008: It's now been doing live music for 21 years.</i>
Public transport	The "MET" is a publicly owned entity. You buy your tram tickets off a conductor, who uses a hole-puncher.  <i>In 2008: You now use electronic ticket and validation machines (or else</i>

	<i>sit nervously and hope for the best). The trams and trains are run by a perplexing array of semi-public transport companies.</i>
A day in the office	Your office may have a computer - even two - but you probably don't have your own. You may use a typewriter (perhaps one with electronic memory). Faxes are very important to businesses. Many businesses are in the process of getting their heads around this 'computer' stuff.  <i>In 2008: Offices are now largely defined by computers, communication is by email, and many idle office hours are wiled away on the internet. Perhaps looking at stuff from the 1980s.</i>
At the shops	Two litres of milk costs \$1.80. You do your grocery shopping with cash, and all the supermarkets close at 6pm. The only shops open on a Sunday are milk bars.  A chocolate bar, like a Snickers, costs 50 cents. A pack of 25 cigarettes costs about \$2.  <i>In 2008: The milk costs \$5, the chocolate bar \$1.80, the cigarettes are \$10-\$13, and supermarkets are open every day until at least midnight. There are, seemingly, about 5,000 24-hour convenience stores on every block.</i>
Making a date	To arrange in advance to meet someone you'd have to call them on their land line phone. Only politicians and celebrities have car phones, and even cordless phones (or phones with long cords) are a novelty. There is only one, government owned, phone company - 'Telecom'.  The newspapers this week report that Jeff Kennett was busted swearing on his car phone. The scandalous detail

	<p>is the car phone, more so than the swearing. One editorial ponders where this is all heading, and whether it will be possible in the future to “lose your phone”.</p> <p>If your friends aren’t at home talking about Jeff Kennett, then you’ll have to leave a message on their answering machine or with their flatmates. It’s pretty hard to communicate a change of plan - you might have to use a pay phone, leave a written note, or just wait around until they show up.</p> <p>And if you have a bone to pick with your ex or a declaration of love to make to someone inappropriate, then you’ll need to either physically show up, reeking of alcohol, to their doorstep at the end of the night, or leave a string of messages with their flatmate, who may or may not be bothered to convey them accurately.</p> <p><i>In 2008: Pretty much everyone has a mobile phone and most social arrangements are made either by text message, mobile calls, email, or ‘social networking’ websites. To change plans on the night you call or text randomly. ‘Drink and dial’ is a huge risk for contacting exes or inappropriate love interests. Many celebrities have been busted sending embarrassing text messages.</i></p>
At the pub	<p>A pot of beer costs about \$1 - \$1.40. Smoking is legal in most places, including in the pub.</p> <p><i>In 2008: A beer is now about \$3.40, and smoking was phased out of pubs last year.</i></p>
Renting a house	<p>The local vacancy rate is high, with an ad in this week’s paper reading: “Carlton North: houses galore. Ring or call at our office for a wide selection of properties”.</p>

	<p>Rental ads include:</p> <p>“Brunswick - Barkly Street \$65pw. Large well maintained 1 bedroom unit with sep Inge, kitchenette, bathroom, close to transport and shops.”</p> <p>“Carlton – 2 bedroom flat, freshly painted, new carpets, BIR’s sep kit and bathroom \$95pw.”</p> <p>“Fitzroy North - Brunswick Street Modern 2nd floor flat compr 1br, Inge ensuite bathroom ww carpets, osp good locn, \$72pw.”</p> <p>“Carlton 543 Station Street Open today 11 victorian brick tce, 2 bedrooms, Ing with htg, ceramic tiled kitchen, paved courtyard, \$135 lease negot.”</p> <p>“Fitzroy North King St \$120 pw 2 bedrooms with living area, sep kit and laundry small backyard.”</p> <p>“Fitzroy North 11 Rowe St delightful 3 bedroom home close to Edinburgh gardens \$130 pw.”</p> <p><i>In 2008: Currently the local rental vacancy rate is less than 1%. You have to queue up for rental inspections and there are widespread rumours of rental “auctioning”. A 1 bedroom flat in Carlton costs approx \$240, a 2 bedroom flat in Brunswick approx \$320, and a 3 bedroom house in Fitzroy North approx \$450.</i></p>
Buying a house	<p>Auction results this week include:</p> <p>Thornbury - 41 Keon Street, \$66,000.</p> <p>Brunswick - 16 Leithead Street, \$85,000.</p> <p>Carlton North - 309 Canning Street, sold for \$152,000.</p>





	<p>Carlton - 58 Barkly Street, \$92,500.</p> <p>Fitzroy North - 121 Miller Street, \$95,000.</p> <p>Fitzroy North - 356 Rae Street - \$130,000.</p> <p>Fitzroy North - 4 Falconer Street - \$123,500.</p> <p>Fitzroy North - 50 Best Street - \$99,990.</p> <p>And house sale ads include: "Carlton North - 80 Pigdon Street. Renovated and beautifully presented Victorian brick cottage providing living area opening to brick paved courtyard, 2 bedrooms, modern kitchen and bathroom, includes quality carpets, reverse cycle air con and gas heading. Ideal investment or 1<sup>st</sup> home located close to Canning Street. Suit \$80s buyers."</p> <p>"Fitzroy North - 106 Clausen Street. Potential here. Attractive semi detached Victorian single fronted brick terrace, compr. 4 rooms, internal bathroom, toilet and laundry, GHWS, gas stove, carps, ideal renovator or first home buyer, investor. Quite liveable. Deep rear garden. Excellent position handy tram, shops etc. Real value at \$75,000."</p> <p><i>In 2008: "Suit first home buyer" ads not seen in Empress vicinity for approx. 8 years. Would be lucky to find any house for less than \$500,000 - an "uncut gem" costs \$575,000 - and most of the homes listed above would now go for more than \$650,000.</i></p>
Renting in a share house	<p>Share house ads in the paper include:</p> <p>"Girl prof 25 plus non smoker to shr beaut 2 dble br vic terrace Fitzroy with 1 guy, 2</p>

	<p>cats \$55. Ph Rick 419 8819."</p> <p>"Girl to share 3 br vic terrace in nth carlton. 1 min to public tport and shops \$195pcm phone Steve 347 1304."</p>
Driving	<p>Popular new cars are the Mitsubishi Magna and VK Commodore.</p> <p>The typical bogan car is a Torana or Datsun. The sign of vehicular high status is a sports car.</p> <p>Drink driving is not legal, but is not particularly taboo.</p> <p><i>In 2008: A typical bogan car is a VK Commodore. The sign of vehicular high status is a four-wheel drive or hybrid. Drink driving successfully de-normalised in the early 90s.</i></p>
Banking	<p>People are just getting used to the idea of ATMs and PINs.</p> <p>There is no such thing as EFTPOS. And sometimes you just plain 'run out of cash'. You probably buy most things with cash - perhaps even with personal cheques.</p> <p><i>In 2008: EFTPOS is pretty much ubiquitous and a supply of extra cash is easily accessed anywhere, sometimes at 2:30am near a kebab store.</i></p>
Music technology	<p>New releases are available on cassette, compact disc (CDs - new and exciting), or boring old vinyl.</p> <p>Walkmen (which play cassette tapes) are popular gadgets. If you can't afford to buy music in the stores, you have to tape it off the radio. JJJ only exists in Sydney.</p> <p><i>In 2008: Now it's all about Ipods and Mp3s, but there's also a return to vinyls. .</i></p>
Political	<p>The prime minister is Bob Hawke. The opposition leader is John Howard. Joh-Bjelke</p>





	<p>Peterson is expanding his Queensland operations and campaigning for federal parliament.</p> <p>The UK prime minister is Margaret Thatcher. The President of the United States is Ronald Reagan.</p> <p>The cold war is still going. The Berlin Wall is still standing. The US is planning on invading Central America - "Nicaraguan president accuses Reagan of planning invasion". Environmental awareness is only just entering the world consciousness, following a UN World Commission on the Environment report.</p> <p>The equal opportunities bill is currently being debated in Parliament. The Coalition is opposing it - saying "this bill is typical of the wimpish, trendy nonsense that is pervading Western society generally, and this country in particular in recent years".</p> <p><i>In 2008: The more things change, the more things stay the same. At least certain conservative politicians are either dead, or out of office.</i></p>
Economics	<p>Interest rates have just been capped at 13.5% for existing mortgage holders. Standard rates speeding off toward 16%.</p> <p>Bank lending is still heavily regulated. Inflation is on the rise. The stock market is set to crash spectacularly later this year (in October). But you don't know this yet.</p>
Live bands	<p>Door charges are usually \$2. To get gigs and punters, bands drop demo tapes at venues and distribute newsletters via mailing lists and the postal system.</p> <p><i>In 2008: Bands use Myspace, and inundate/panhandle friends with emails and texts.</i></p>

	<p>Your options for live entertainment this week include:</p> <p>The Dumps, at the Edinburgh Castle Hotel, Brunswick        Brent Parlane and the Next Big Thing, at Bensons Tavern Richmond        Blackburn, at the Users Club, 229 Queensberry Street Carlton        Chantoozies, at Box Hill TAFE        Dirty Pool, at the Victoria Hotel, Brunswick        87 Fat Girls, at The Palace High Street Housewreckers, at the Royal Derby Hotel, Fitzroy        Human Remains, at Madigans, 400 Sydney Road Brunswick        Jam Tarts, at The Club, Collingwood        Mark Seymour and Friends, at Razor, Queen Street        Olympic Sideburns, at the Corner Hotel Richmond        Painters and Dockers, at the Hampton Hotel        Relax with Max, at the East Brunswick Club Hotel        Rhythmic Hearts, at The Tote, Ivanhoe Hotel, Collingwood        Special School, at the Esplanade Hotel        StickyFingers, at the Seaview Ballroom, St Kilda        Tinsley Waterhouse Band, at the Great Britain Hotel        Two's a Crowd, at the Great Northern Hotel, Carlton</p>
At the cinema	<p>Films showing this week include (and you can catch them at the Carlton Cinema House on Faraday Street!):</p> <p>Peggy Sue Got Married        In the Name of the Rose        Crimes of the Heart        No Mercy        Tough Guys        The Mosquito Coast        Aliens        The Fly        The Gods Must be Crazy        Stand by Me        Blue Velvet        Jumpin' Jack Flash        Crocodile Dundee        Little Shop of Horrors</p>





	<p>Children of a Lesser God          The Colour of Money          Platoon          Three Amigos          Soul Man          The Golden Child; and</p> <p>Meatballs III: Summer Job.          "Rudy" finally scored his first job. Now he just wants to score...again and again and again! A living angel turns a proper nerd into a real stud!"</p>
Top 40 Music	<p>Hit Singles of 1987 include:</p> <p>Funky Town (Pseudo Echo)          You Keep Me Hangin' On (Kim Wilde)          Walk Like an Egyptian (The Bangles)          I Wanna Wake up with you (Boris Gardiner)          I knew you were waiting for me (Aretha Franklin and George Michael)          Boom Boom Let's Go Back to my Room (Paul Kekakis)          Slice of Heaven (Dave Dobbyn)          I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me) (Whitney Houston)          Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now (Starship)          C'est La Vie (Robbie Nevil)          Here I Go Again (Whitesnake)          Livin' On A Prayer (Bon Jovi)          La Bamba, (Los Lobos)          Everybody Have Fun Tonight (Wang Chung)          Don't Dream It's Over (Crowded House)          With Or Without You (U2)</p> <p><i>In 2008: Current ARIA chart topping singles are "Low" by Flo. Rida Feat. T-Pain, and "Bleeding Love" by Leana Lewis, a UK Idol winner.</i></p>
Quality music	<p>To varying degrees of fanfare at the time, 1987 sees the release of some quality albums that still rate today. For example:</p> <p>Kiss me, Kiss me, Kiss me (The Cure)          The Joshua Tree (U2)          Kick (INXS)          The World Won't Listen (The Smiths)</p>

	<p>Yo! Bum Rush the Show (Public Enemy)          Diesel and Dust (Midnight Oil)          Appetite for Destruction (Guns n Roses)          And many more.</p>
TV	<p>Seven's 'ALF', is a new, off-centre US comedy starring a stranded cat eating alien who cannot phone home because his whole planet was destroyed in a freak boating accident. Tonight: To help pay the family bills, Alf gets a job - selling beauty supplies.</p> <p>Also tonight:</p> <p>6.00: Charles in Charge</p> <p>7:30: Family Ties</p> <p>8:30: Moonlighting. "David and Maddie set out to track down their client's not-so harmless secret admirer. Meanwhile, Ms Dipesto imposes amorous intentions of her own on Herbert, the Agency's temporary clerk".</p> <p><i>And remember - there's no Simpsons yet, and no South Park.</i></p>

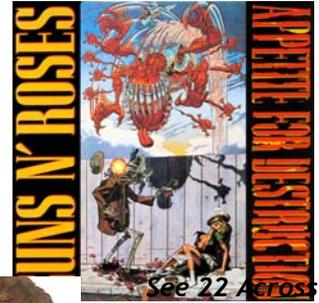
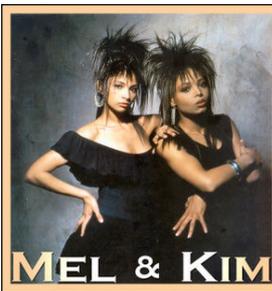
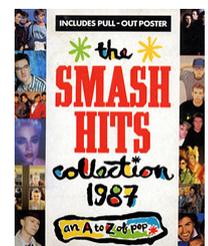
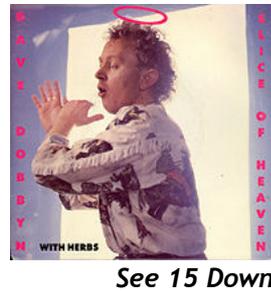
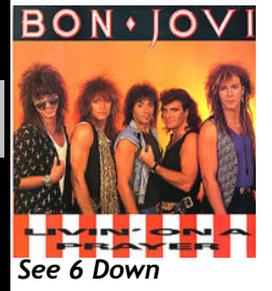
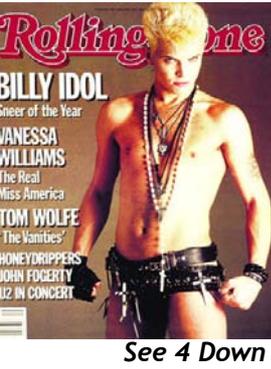
## Have You Seen This ...Man?



If you have seen this man in the beer garden lately...you shouldn't have! He is some sort of Irishman that holds the dubious honour of being the only person banned for life from the Empress.

# 1987 MUSIC CROSSWORD

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See 8 Across



See 3 Down



## 1987 Music Crossword Clues

### ACROSS

1. In 1987, Rick \_\_\_\_\_ (6) just wanted to tell you how he was feeling. He was never gonna give you up, never gonna let you down, etc.
4. "That's just the way it \_\_\_" (2) - lyrics from 1987 Bruce Hornsby and the Range Song.
5. Michael Jackson's second biggest selling album, "\_\_\_\_" (3), was released in 1987. It featured the single "Smooth Criminal".
6. One of the big Australian songs of 1987 was "Funky Town" by \_\_\_\_\_ Echo (6).
7. A Billy Idol 1987 song was "Rebel \_\_\_" (4).
8. Hirsute girl band, "The \_\_\_\_\_(7)" had a chart topping hit in 1987 with "Walk Like an Egyptian".
11. An early mainstream hip hop act was \_\_\_ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince (2), of "Parents Just Don't Understand".
14. "Notorious" was a 1987 single for white-jacket-pop band \_\_\_\_\_ (5,5), named for a character in the sci-fi film "Barbarella".
16. "Icehouse" was a big Australian band in 1987. Their lead singer, with heavily mulletted hair, was \_\_\_ Davis (3).
17. Twins \_\_\_ and Kim (3) had a hit in 1987 with "(We Ain't Never Gonna be) Respectable". One of the twins died in 1990 of complications from cancer treatment.
18. "Everybody have Fun Tonight" was a 1987 song by the band "\_\_\_\_ Chung" (4).
19. A song from U2's "Joshua Tree" album was "Where the Streets have No \_\_\_\_\_" (4).
22. Hard partying LA cock rock band "Guns n \_\_\_\_\_" released one of their few studio albums, "Appetite for Destruction", in 1987.
23. "\_\_\_\_ on baby, do the locomotion" - from Kylie's debut single in 1987.

**BONUS: Unscramble the shaded squares to reveal the name of The Cure's critically acclaimed single (voted "seventh most critically acclaimed song of 1987").**

\_\_\_\_\_ (4, 4, 6)

### DOWN

1. "I Just Died in Your \_\_\_\_\_ Tonight" - 1987 song by Cutting Crew.
2. Mexican band "\_\_\_\_ Lobos" (3) - meaning the wolves - released "La Bamba" in 1987.
3. U2 song lyric - "I can't live, with or without \_\_\_\_\_" (3).
4. Billy \_\_\_ (4), he of the peroxide crew cut and snarl, was in the charts in 1987.
5. Hip-hop act the "Beastie \_\_\_\_\_" (4) were censored on "American Bandstand" in 1987.
6. Bon Jovi had a 1987 song with the lyric: "w-oh we're halfway there, w-oh we're livin' on a \_\_\_\_\_" (6).
9. Apparently some guy called Robbie Nevil had a song, "C'est \_\_ Vie" (2) in 1987.
10. Schmaltzy crooner Chris De Burgh sang about rediscovering how hot his wife was, in the song "\_\_\_\_ in Red" (4).
11. The song "(I've Had) The Time of My Life" was on the soundtrack to an oft-quoted film, 1987's "Dirty \_\_\_\_\_" (7).
12. In 1987 UK anarchist group, the "Justified \_\_\_\_\_ of MuMu"(later KLF) released the aptly titled album "1987 (What the Fuck is Going on?)".
13. The 1987 Susan Vega song "\_\_\_\_" (4), starts with the line "my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I live on the second floor".
15. New Zealander Dave Dobbyn's song "Slice of Heaven" was the soundtrack song to a film made about a cartoon strip, "Footrot \_\_\_\_\_" (5).
17. Influential guitarist for the "Smiths", Johnny \_\_\_\_\_ (4), left the band in 1987 (they subsequently disbanded).
18. "\_\_\_\_ built this city on rock n roll" (2) - Starship lyric.
20. "Tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies" - lyrics from a 1987 "Fleetwood \_\_\_\_\_" (3) song.
21. Initials of English band who released "Squirrel and G-Man Twenty Four Hour Party People Plastic Face Carnt Smile (White Out)" in 1987 - the \_appy \_ondays (2).

Crossword answers are towards back of the zine...



# 1987 Reader Survey

As well as **going to the library to read a newspaper**, reporters from the Empress Zine called on a few **real people not just the on internet** (friends, colleagues, and the like) to assist with demystifying...that year again, 1987. Not everyone, after all, was partying with Bon Jovi on Hamilton Island.

Either by email or in the pub, the respondents enlightened us with brief windows into their respective 1987 lives. A degree of homogeneity was noted in the answers, attributable to the demographics of the sample pool (the age range is just 26-40, with nearly half of them aged 29 or 30; and all but two are Australian). BUT the quotes give some great insights. For example, into the typical workings of the 1980s family unit - working dad, permed mum, pine furniture and bunk beds. And into the almost mystical significance of things like tracksuit pants, Walkmen, and FM radio programming, on impressionable young 80s minds.

A note about the format - we presented a standardised set of questions questions, and the answers to each are presented below in **random order** under each question and **anonymously** (not that anyone says anything that juicy, damn). And where many people said the same thing, this is noted at the top of the list and the individual quotes are not printed separately

Also - you can find answers to the same questions in this month's musician interviews (with George and Dave).



A survey respondent: Grade 3, 1987.

## Q1. In 1987 - what was your job?

MOST COMMON ANSWER: 'At school'. Reflecting the demographics of the sample pool, many of the respondents said that in 1987 they were in grade 3 or 4 of Primary School. Schools included Doncaster Park, St John the Baptist, and MLC.

"Primary school student (I didn't became an altar boy or paper delivery boy until 1989)."

"I was in Grade 4 at primary school. I remember going on school camp to Sovereign Hill and buying \$1 worth of mixed lollies - it only lasted a couple of minutes. The other kids got \$10 bags".

"I was 13 years old and in eighth grade at Don Diego [ed. Note - of something, too long to write down in time] junior high school. I was working on the yearbook at the time".

"First year of high school!"

"Waitress - Alfio's Bistro South Yarra."

"Being a moody year 11 student and working at the walnut cake shop in Gardenvale. This explains to me why I was a fatty boomba in 1988".

"I was unemployed, looking for work, I used to travel from Shepparton to Melbourne for job interviews frequently without success".

"I was at uni - of a Saturday I worked on the tote windows at the races/trots - always an interesting experience".

## Q2. Where did you live in 1987, and how much did it cost?

MOST COMMON ANSWER: 'With my parents'. Presumably, at no cost. Suburbs included Montmorency, Frankston, Kew, Carnegie, and East St Kilda. Two respondents had recently moved house - one from Alice Springs.

"With my parents in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I've no idea what it cost".

"I lived with my mum and dad in Shepparton".

"With mum and my sister. Food was free. This also makes the above [my weight] more clear".

"Lived in Mount Clear in the family home. Could not believe that my parents built an extension and thought that I would think it was cool to share with my little sisters who were in early primary school! (ha ha!)"

"Lived in sunny Doncaster in middle class north eastern Melbourne suburbia (as opposed to industrial, working class, unsunny Doncaster in northern England)".

"Langwarrin, it was free for me! But I recall we had to have no-name margarine because money was always short. (That was the excuse, I think my parents just kept the brand-name stuff for themselves)".

"Pahran - can't remember cost. Definitely less than \$65 a week, cause I was paying that years later".

## Q3. How was your room/house decorated in 1987?

"I had a bunk bed with stickers of Jason Donovan, Kylie, and other 'Neighbours' stars: I basically had a 'Neighbours wall'".

"Room was done is classic 80s-kid style. My brother and I had a bunk bed. There was a cigarette hole in the carpet (from the previous owners) which I always thought was



kind of cool because it had MELTED the carpet at that point leaving a kind of glassy/plasticity residue”.

“Totally into Madonna (think desperately seeking susan poster), Tears for fears (‘cos everybody wants to rule the world), and Marilyn Monroe (got my poster laminated to protect it). Plus blue-tacked pictures on the wardrobe from Dolly and Video Hits magazine”.

“With the same stuff I still have. Hat boxes, 2<sup>nd</sup> hand furniture. I was kicked out of home so I had to start from scratch”.

“My room was covered in various rock and roll posters and other miscellaneous nonsense. From memory my music posters featured Lou Reed, The Doors and The Sunnyboys. I also recall a map of the Shire of Lilydale that I was quite fond of”.

“Boho/Arty/messy with touches of 70’s girly. The house in general was unfinished and 70’s”.

“We had lots of pine furnishings. And I had Care Bears and Cabbage Patch Kids on my bed”.

“The house was built in 1984. My Mom had decorated it all in the “desert south west” motif. The carpet colour was called ‘dusty rose’”.

“We’d just moved into the Montmorency house. My room had blue piped bunk beds, with cricket stickers all over them”.

“I had a bunk bed and a mauve and white painted bedroom”.

“Just a basic bedroom, with an old lounge room chair in it, and my Sanyo ghetto blaster (which I still have) in the bedroom”.

“With plenty of Masters of the Universe, the odd Transformer and possibly Carlton Football Club random paraphernalia”.

#### ***Q4. In 1987, what was your favourite or most expensive object?***

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**MOST COMMON ANSWER:** Many (about five) respondents just said their Walkman. Walkmen were evidently prized objects at the time.

“Definitely my cricket bat. Also, LEGO, and maybe a yo-yo. I really wanted a BMX”.

“In the 1980s? LEGO”.

“An old tape player/ radio that my parents had imported from South Africa, and quite likely the 70’s, which didn’t tune very well and tended to break down. What better way to listen to Fox FM?”

“I must be more materialistic now cause I can’t think of any one object from back then - but I could mention a zillion now. Probably my bed cause I shared it with so many”.

“I used to have a TV with a Commodore 64 attached. Also, a ‘My Little Pony’”.

“Easily the most expensive object was my 1976 Ford Escort Coupe which I still owed money on - can’t remember having a favourite”.

“A mysteriously expensive crystal animal (an owl) that my Dad had bought for me at the airport”.

“My ghetto blaster”.

“My vintage vinyl jazz records”.

“Babysitter’s Club books”.

“My calculator and my atlas. Or I think my Atari, or the Sega master system if it was out then”.

#### ***Q5. In 1987, what was your favourite or most expensive item of clothing?***

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“The hip thing at the time was torn faded jeans. The more nonchalantly torn and worn - the better”.

“Both most expensive and favourite would have been my black Levis denim jacket - It was my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday present from my folks and I believe it cosy \$69.95 at Chaddy”.

“A floral vest and knee length denim shorts”.

“Rah rah skirt (from Miss Shop - super cool) and bubble skirt (made by mother!). Also had some super cool bright t-shirts and dangly colourful earrings that were the fashion at the time”.

“I had an orange stack-hat which I thought was cool”.

“Those white socks with the lines that you rolled over your tracksuit pants. And Sweathog jackets”.

“Tracksuit pants with fluoro lines, parachute pants. ‘Silkies’. And a really big Sweathog jacket with a hood”.

“A ‘united colours of Bennetton’ rugby shirt, which was considered cool at the time [ed note: in America]”.

“I think I had a long grey men’s trench coat and an old men’s Hounds-tooth jacket. Some brown winklepickers with a flat teardrop shaped heel (when you looked underneath). Whatever happened to those?”

“I remember you wanted to have the tracksuit pants with three stripes down the side, because they were the brand name ones. The two striped ones weren’t desirable. But I only ever had the two striped tracksuit pants. I also remember a brand of surf clothes, possibly from K-Mart called ‘Catchit’”.

“Rip Curl tank tops - I had one in turquoise”.

“Black parachute tracksuit pants”.

“Cut off jeans, but otherwise I just wore whatever I was given. I envied people with rah rah skirts”.

“My ‘Cosby Sweaters’”.

“T-bar shoes with scratch n sniff stickers”.

#### ***Q6. How did you do your hair in 1987?***

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“Choir-boy bouffant”.

“Top knot - I looked soooo good. Usually up with a scrunchie”.

"Unfortunately that was the year for the second time my mother convinced me to cut all my hair off in summer. Hated it the first time several years earlier and it was even worse the second time because I was starting high school. My hair got cut and then decided to go curly! Like I'd had a perm. So, so bad and embarrassing".

"Spiked fringe with a bob. My Mum made me do it - I hated it".

"Pretty much how I do it now - tied up. Other girls had these kind of elevated fringes".

"Long. Boring. Headband? Bow in hair".

"Longish and curly - see pic":

"May have been a bit before the Stephen Kernahan inspired mullet. Probably short back and sides".

"I actually had hair at the time! It was parted on one side, and growing back from being half shaved".



A survey respondent (right) in 1987: curly haired, Kit-Kat in hand.

"It was growing out from a severe haircut inflicted by my mother. I wore it either in ponytails or in plaits - it wasn't until Grad 5 that I busted out into the single ponytail look".

"Pretty much the same as I do it now, except it was parted at the side".

**Q7. What songs or bands do you remember linking in 1987?**

"John Farnham - all of "Whispering Jack". Also, Europe - "Final Countdown". I had the tape".

"Probably anything that was on the pop charts. Later on I was into INXS and Rick Astley, and that Icehouse song 'Electric Blue'. I guess I hadn't developed a musical consciousness yet".

"Bros. "10 out of 10" or "When will I be famous". And Bon Jovi - "Livin' on a Prayer".

"I had a cassette called Hits 87 which I distinctly remember was not as good as Choose 1985 (which had the Ghostbusters' Theme). But Hits 87 did have a few "good" songs like "Sunglasses at Night" and "We built this city (on rock n' roll)".

"It was the year I saved up for and bought my first 'serious' cassette of music (my Karen Knowles cassette a few years earlier didn't count!). I bought the first Crowded House cassette from Kmart for something like \$13.90. Still a great album, but haven't listened to it on cassette for many years. This was also the era of literally taping mixed tapes off the radio - hovering with your finger over the pause button so you could start recording when a cool song came on - and so annoying when they talked over the start and end of a song!"

"Disco music, Janet Jackson, Pet Shop Boys, anything produced by Stock Aitken Waterman".

"The Residents / Adrian Belew / King Crimson / Godley and Cream (I had cool friends who got me onto these groups/musicians)".

"Bros. "It's a Jungle out there". And "Take the Pressure Down" - I liked the robot voice".

"Had a big Doors phase in 86-87, others from memory include The Cult, The Saints, The Church and Hunters & Collectors".

"I rejected the mainstream and was totally into the local jazz and cabaret scene. Vince Jones, Mistaken Identity, The Great Big Opera Company - going to The Hot House, Limerick and Jazz after Dark at the Arts centre. I remember wearing a long black skirt and top, long cack green coloured socks with orange spots and a cack green coloured bow in my hair. I was drinking a miduri (how do you spell that disgusting drink?) and lemonade and thought I was SO SOPHISTICATED. This was mainly to differentiate myself from my younger sister who loved RICK ASTLEY, the BANGLES and MADONNA".

"Bananarama - "I'm Your Venus" and "Love in the First Degree".

"I was really into INXS. Also, New Order, U2, and the Violent Femmes".

"The Beach Boys, Bananarama. The Icehouse song 'Electric Blue' inspired me to take music lessons".

"Eternal Flame" by the Bangles, and "Love in the First Degree" by Bananarama".

"Icehouse, the Choir Boys. I recall not being averse to a bit of Mel and Kim either (we ain't never gonna be respectable). Whatever other gems the aforementioned Fox FM where inflicting on my impressionable mind".

**Q8. What movies or TV shows do you remember liking in 1987?**

"I liked this cartoon show that I can't remember the name of and that no-one else can remember either. It was about five good guys that combined to become one good robot. It was like Transformers, but not. They had their own ships, except megaships. Also I used to watch 'Hey, Hey, it's Saturday' - I used to turn it on at 7:30 for the Red Faces part".

"Monty Python movies, Flying High, Get Smart".

"Was Degross on then? Was A country practice still on? I was pretty into Miniseries back then - you know of the



great Australian drama type. Also the Anne of Green Gables mini-series. With peers was watching anything with the 'two Coreys' in it, and also I was pretending to watch horror films (which I still don't like)".

"Punky Brewster would be from around that time? ALF was a big favourite. Of course nowadays, we have Desperate Housewives, so frankly television has clearly gone down in quality".

"Didn't watch much TV... it was uncool but I secretly liked St Elmo's Fire".

"I remember going to the Melbourne film festival at the Astor Cinema and feeling SO SOPHISTICATED. Dogs in Space. Remember that. Very shocking for a convent educated lass. I remember seeing a picture of the director Richard Lowenstien and thinking he was a real hottie. Maybe that's why I was at the film festival trying to look sophisticated. I remember the icecreams at the Astor were amazing and huge. I think I ate a lot of them. 1988....."

"Neighbours, Full House, Growing Pains".

"Had Northern Exposure started yet? I remember liking Oliver Stone's Doors movie; Dirty Rotten Scoundrels; and Planes, Trains, and Automobiles".

"It's a Knock Out" and The Muppets".

"Neighbours, and cartoons on Saturday morning, and the Early Bird show".

"The Cosby Show, Countdown, Moonlighting, Neighbours (when Kylie and Jason were in it)".

"Dr Who, probably Hey Hey it's Saturday. Masters of the universe cartoons on Saturday morning, and Scooby Doo".

"The Indiana Jones movies - for our [my and my twin brother's] communion we both specifically orchestrated to wear white jackets like in the Shanghai scene from the Temple of Doom".

**Q9. In 1987, how would you, in a couple of words, have described your parents?**

"Dad was always at work".

"Daggy and embarrassing".

"Stressed with a bad perm and incommunicative with a moustache".

"Mum was a school teacher ... Dad was ... why is it that you never learn exactly what job your Dad had when you were a child? A salesman of some kind..."

"Poor starving refugees from the dark continent, desperately trying to come to terms with a new and foreign culture?"

"Father - embarrassing but important and smart, mostly in the office. Mother - unfair in many respects because she wouldn't buy me a spicer jacket, track'n'field tracksuit pants, doc martins, or a lumber jacket (etc). Actually I think the lumber jacket craze was 1988. In any case in hindsight she did me a huge favour of course, but it didn't feel like it at the time. Eventually I got a spicer

jacket because somehow it became part of the school uniform. She also confiscated the first Dolly magazine I ever bought because it had some article about s-x in it - so totally unfair! I can still remember the front cover - a freckled wind-swept model with a blue healer dog".

"Idiotic, mad, deluded".

"They were always going out and getting a babysitter for us, as they were very sociable. Also, they were always smoking - inside, even".

"Same as today".

"Absent father, tyrannical mother".

"Very tolerant".

"Scary".

"At odds". (In retrospect, they should have gotten divorced)".

**Q10. Do you have any photos of yourself in 1987?**

MOST COMMON ANSWER: "Not on a computer". The Empress zine did acquire a couple though - see elsewhere in article.

**Q11. Could you 'define irony' now, or in 1987?**

"Yes - No".

"Possibly then but not now".

"I couldn't define irony until I saw that film and bought the CD in 1994 (2<sup>nd</sup> year uni)".

"It's like too many spoons when all you need is a knife".

"I would have known what it meant in a pop culture sense. I think it means "an outcome opposite to what was expected"".

"What was ironic in 1987? I was only 8 at the time, so perhaps my ability to think critically had not yet developed fully. I do remember finding it hilarious that the only person who would ever step in dog poo was Dad, who couldn't seem to avoid the stuff. Actually, I still find that hilarious. Ironic? I work fairly hard to be green these days but as a child I did like to stand next to the incinerator, throw lots of plastic on it and stick my head in the resulting blue toxic smoke..."

"Irony in that I was unemployed then but now working for over ten years today".

"Firstly when something is ironic it makes you laugh, or smile at the great concurrence of two unexpected events. Methinks it usually involves trying to control your situation only to have the situation control you in an unexpected and unforeseen way. i.e. I plan to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge only to be run over by a car on the way to the bridge. Clearly - I cannot define it".

"That I had no idea back then that by the time I was in my mid thirties I would be into mainstream teen fashion and pop music - it's because I didn't really do the 80's properly the first time round, so it's all new to me too".



**Q12. Can you remember having any particular political views or responses to political issues at the time?**

"I was a member of the ALP and was elected to the Student Union of RMIT in the late 1987".

"No - but my Dad always made us watch the news and 'A Current Affair'".

"Yeah - same as now - I've gone greener though".

"The bicentenary was huge in 1987 (yes, I know it happened in 1988). I think the big political issue of the times were whether the school library would be open during lunchtime every day".

"I only thought about cricket at the time. And Pat Cash - he'd just won Wimbledon".

"Not really. It was all about the lead up to the bicentenary that year wasn't it? I remember issues with guns and the grand prix but I think that was a year or two later".

"Was the first George Bush in office yet? No, it was the end of the Reagan era. I remember Michael Dukakis, the Democratic candidate, being made a fool of riding around in a tank".

"Entirely formed by 'How Green Was Your Cactus' on the Fox Morning Crew - most of who are now the Gold 104 morning DJ's".

"I remember it felt like Bob Hawke and Ronald Regan had been in power forever. So that it felt really weird when that changed, like they'd been gods or something".

"I was a budding feminist. I remember realising that the Beatniks (whom I had totally idolised) all treated women like crap. I really wanted to kiss a boy though. Ohmygod I think it may have been NYE of this year I had my first kiss! It was a boy with an oversized denim jacket (cuts in at the waist) with big white stars printed on it. Don't remember anything else. Do you think I was objectifying him if all I can remember is what he was wearing?"



## Email Interview: Dave Robertson (WA)

**"So...Soy Bomb is what I think art should be"**



Dave Robertson tells philosophical stories through indie-folk-pop songs, with witty tracks like 'Other Body Parts' proving a hit on radio stations around the country including Triple J. Though most often seen and heard around the sun bleached dives of Fremantle, WA, Dave is on a tour of the little states this April. He's checking out Tasmania, and doing a few Melbourne shows including the Empress this Saturday arvo April 12<sup>th</sup>, with local ladies The Taylor Project.

Here's Dave's email interview from a desk somewhere across the Nullarbor, including answers to the 1987 Survey.

*Empress Email:*

*Have you played in Tasmania before? If not, what are you anticipating?*

Dave:

No. I'm anticipating narrow roads, quaint English gardens, farmers guarding pot plantations with rifles, white stuff (snow), cosy pubs and great music.

*Empress Email:*

*Name your three favourite years, from a personal perspective. And why.*

Dave:

1997 –  
 Bob Dylan's album "Time Out of Mind" beat Radiohead's "Ok Computer" for Grammy album of the year. This I saw as a travesty. I have nothing against Bob, but I considered "Ok Computer" to be the album of the decade, summing up end-of-the-millennium angst. However, the Grammy award ceremony in early 1998 turned out to be highly entertaining due to the Soy Bomb incident. During Bob Dylan's performance of "Love Sick", performance artist Michael Portnoy ran up and danced wildly on stage next to Bob with the words Soy Bomb written on his bare chest.

It took security a while to realize it wasn't meant to be part of the act and escort him off. Portnoy later said that "Soy...represents dense nutritional life. Bomb is, obviously, an explosive destructive force. So, soy bomb is what I think art should be: dense, transformational, explosive life" and that "he meant Soy Bomb as a 'spontaneous explosion of the self' to re-invigorate the currently bland music scene that exists."

1999 –  
 I went overseas for the first time and discovered some things and lost some things.

2007 –  
 Tim Flannery was named Australian of the Year, helping to bring the climate change issue to the fore where it belongs, and Australia finally signed the Kyoto Protocol with the welcome departure of the Howard government.

*Empress Email:*  
*What is your earliest memory of the Empress?*

Dave:  
 My first visit to the Empress was May 8th 2005 to see The Wintership. This band consisted of multiple guitarists playing layered parts and Cat Kohn completing their awesome atmospheric sound by switching between viola, keyboards and accordion.

Cat is playing with me on this tour, but unfortunately can't make the Empress show. However, I will be accompanied by cellist Mel Robinson. She is a little bit good on that instrument (her playing credits include the bands of Tim Rogers and Missy Higgins), so expect to see more of her around Melbourne (she has just moved across from Fremantle via the worm tunnel that exists between these two cities).

That Sunday arvo back in 2005 was also the first time I tasted Mountain Goat beer, which caused some synergistic reaction with the music that put me in a very happy place.

*Empress Email:*  
*Name your three favourite (relatively) Bon Jovi songs, in order. And the same for Gunners.*

- a) "Just Like Heaven", "Why Can't I Be You?", "The Kiss"
- b) "How Soon is Now", "The Draize Train", "Cemetery Gates"

[Ed. Note: So...I guess he just couldn't decide...]

*Empress Email:*  
*Which do you reckon are the WA equivalents of the following: The Empress; Frankston; Melton; Fitzroy North; Toorak; Balwyn?*

Dave:  
 Frankston = Mandurah  
 Melton = Ellenbrook  
 Fitzroy North = Mount Lawley  
 Toorak = Claremont  
 Balywn = Balywn?

[Ed. Note ...agree totally with the Frankston/Mandurah answer. And Balwyn clearly retains its bland anonymity from the time of the Skyhooks: "A brick veneer prison is waiting for you...get off the phone and get out of Balwyn!"]

## Dave's 1987 Survey Answers

### ***In 1987, what was your job?***

Listening to my year 6 teacher.

### ***Where did you live, and how much did it cost?***

Scarborough. I got paid for living there - 50 cents a week.

### ***How was your room/house decorated in 1987?***

60s take on art deco with swirling patterns in the ceiling and wallpaper.

### ***What was your favourite or most expensive item of clothing?***

My friend Fairy says to answer hypercolour t-shirt, but I can't remember to be honest.

### ***How did you do your hair back then?***

Hair is too distant a memory.

### ***What songs or bands do you remember liking?***

"Living on a Prayer" Bon Jovi and "The Final Countdown" Europe were favourites and other top 40 stuff. In later years I would discover the truly amazing albums that came out that year - "Kiss Me Kiss Me Kiss Me" The Cure, "The Joshua Tree" U2, "Document" REM, "Graceland" Paul Simon...

### ***What movies or tv shows do you remember liking?***

Star Wars, Dr Who, had Degrassi started then?

### ***How would you, in a couple of words, have described your parents?***

Mum, Dad.

### ***Could you 'define irony' now, or in 1987?***

It's when reality bites.

### ***Can you remember having any particular political views or responses to political issues at the time?***

I had the beginnings of my broadly green-left political views. It was the year that the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development published the landmark report "Our Common Future".

It is often cited for its definition of sustainable development : "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

On the local front, 1987 was at the height of the corrupt WA Inc years that saw Fremantle (where I live now) changed dramatically with the Americas Cup (the long term locals I know say it was for the worst) and one ugly building (Observation City) erected on Scarborough beach (where I grew up).

That sentence had far too many brackets (didn't it?).

## Some Party Pics

The Basics Do The Beatles  
29<sup>th</sup> March 2008



# Interview: George Byrne

## “A guy with a wheelbarrow, and a shot of the sky...”

On a recent autumnal Sunday afternoon, perched in front of the front bar’s cigarette machine, the *Empress Zine* reporters are catching up with singer-songwriter George Byrne. Some initial minutes are spent discussing how beer used to cost \$2 a pot – Sydney-born George recalls “midis” costing even less – and everyone at the table reveals their age by marvelling at how those treat-dispensers at supermarkets are now called “2 dollar machines” (instead of “20 cent machines” like in the 1980s – a 200% inflation rate!) Meanwhile, a recording gadget that George thinks looks suspiciously like a pregnancy test blips away on the table.

From George’s quite noteworthy bio, as available on his Myspace page<sup>1</sup>, the *Empress* reporters have already gleaned a few useful background facts, including that:

- George released his first EP, ‘Iron Skies’ in 2004, and his first album, ‘Foreign Water’, in 2006;
- ‘Foreign Water’ met with considerable critical acclaim and was widely played on radio stations such as JJJ;
- George has toured with The Church, Missy Higgins, Lior, Dan Brodie, and more. He was also “hand picked” as support for Tori Amos, and played in Ben Lee’s band on a recent tour.
- He was showcased last year at the prestigious South by South West festival in Austin.

The bio also sketches out roughly how George’s interest, and career, in music began. However, through the course of the interview, and with the reporters frequently referring back to the official bio for questions, it emerges that George himself wasn’t the one responsible for writing it. Actually his manager wrote it and although all of it’s true, some of the more compelling narrative angles seem to come as a pleasant insight to George, too – as in, “oh, that’s right!” and “yeah, I hadn’t thought of it that way!”

A few more interesting facts also come out of the interview - it’s not in his bio, for example, that for many years George actually successfully followed the photography path (see

[www.georgebyrnephotography.com](http://www.georgebyrnephotography.com)), and only definitively decided to start writing songs after his camera – ominously – spontaneously broke whilst travelling. For the full story of how George’s road forked off into music, read on. Despite the fact that, as George reckons, “sometimes these things totally meld into each other, so it can be a bit of a mess as to exactly what happened”, it’s true that the fog of day-to-day can often clear, with reflection, into a pretty good story of how a person has gotten to where they are (like the Spanish gibberish of a gypsy fortune teller – see ‘Granada’, below).



***Empress Zine:*** Do you ever get any comments on your name? [George Burns was a cigar-smoking comedian, quite famous until the 1990s]

George: “I’d say once a year. And usually in RSL clubs – so it’s determined by demographics. They’re pretty much limited to the over 90s set”.

***Empress Zine:*** We know from your bio that you grew up in Balmain [an inner city, former working class Dockside suburb of Sydney]. So we already know where you grew up (we normally ask interviewees this)... but could you tell us more about Balmain, and say how or if you think it influenced your interest in music?

George: “Yep – I’m a Balmain boy. Balmain is sort of like the Collingwood of Sydney, it’s a place that used to be very working class – it’s a former dock town, and has actually got the most pubs of any suburb in Australia – but over the years it’s gentrified to the point now where it’s more like Toorak. I was born there in 1976 and stayed there until I was in my early 20s, so I pretty much saw the place change. My parents bought their place for like a hundred grand and sold it for over a million. But I guess it’s definitely shaped who I am, living there. It’s kind of like a small town in the middle of the city. It’s on a peninsula with no main roads running through it - sort of like Manhattan – so it was quite cut off. Everyone knew each other, walking down the street. Which was an

<sup>1</sup> [www.myspace.com/georgebyrne](http://www.myspace.com/georgebyrne)

interesting contradiction being in the middle of the city. But as to how it influenced me musically... it was a sort of musical town in a way - my first gig was at the 'Cat n Fiddle', in Balmain - but I grew up more in the pubs, listening to pub jukebox music, the Aussie rock. I loved pub rock, like 'Khe Sanh'".

**Empress Zine:** *So with all those pubs, it would have been a messy sort of area in the 6 o'clock swill days?*

George: "We actually grew up next to a pub that did use to have the 6 o'clock swill, and my old babysitter used to be one of the 'swill barmaids'. She used to tell me about it - she said she'd just pour like three hundred schooners and lay them all out on the bar at 3:30, and at 4 o'clock all the dock workers would come in, and just fill the whole bar".

**Empress Zine:** *It says in your bio that you grew up with some well known Sydney musicians, like Josh Pyke. Did you go to school with them, and did you get into music at school?*

"They were just local people - they were all at my primary school. I also went to High School with Josh, but musically, he [Josh] and I followed different paths, for lack of a better word. I was really into music from when I was like 12 to 17, it was all I did, but then I had a bit of a meltdown because the band I was in got so heavy that I lost interest. I was the lead guitar player, and the music started getting so loud, we completely imploded. We got so heavy, I just -aaagghh - burnt out, I had smoke coming out of my ears".

**Empress Zine:** *Did you write songs back then?*

George: "No. Although I was into death metal at high school, I didn't start writing my own songs or discover 'alt country' until much later really. I guess my tastes did get mellower. It's interesting, I totally don't get it - heavy music - anymore. I still can appreciate it for what it is, but it can't be the soundtrack of my life, not anymore".

**So you like pub rock stuff, you used to like metal - did you, or do you, like Gunners [Guns n Roses]?**

George: "I absolutely loved Guns n Roses. I listened to 'Patience' - and that side, the one that had 'I Used to Love Her', 'You Gotta Be Crazy' and 'One in a Million' - I listened to those four or five songs every night for twelve months".

**[Empress Zine Reporter1 proceeds to go on and on, as per usual, about Guns n Roses. Reporter2 attempts to placate the situation and get back to the earlier question about getting into music]**



*A photo of Balmain, as taken by George Byrne in his photography days.*

George: "...And so then I got into photography via my sister, who lent me her old little Cannon and I loved it. I still enjoyed music, I played it for fun, but I wasn't like 'I want to be a musician'. My dreams of being a musician were completely shelved. And then I went and just did photography and went to Uni. I did an arts degree first, because I just wanted to learn about stuff. I think they [arts degrees] are great [Empress Reporters agree, in conspiratorial tones]. Then I did a fine arts degree, in photography. So there was about a five year chunk, from 20-25, where pretty much all I was doing was art. And I started having proper exhibitions.<sup>2</sup>"

**Empress Zine:** *We read that you first really got into music - and bought your first guitar - while travelling in Spain. What was it about Spain that sparked your interest in song writing?*

George: "The first song I wrote was 'I'm Alone Again'. It was a blues song. But was it in Spain? No - I can't remember why...I can't put my finger on what it was [that made me start writing songs]. Sometimes these things totally meld into each other, and it's a bit of a mess as to what exactly happened. But basically, I had my last photography exhibition on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. It really took the edge off - it didn't happen until after the show, and it's not that that had any impact on whether I was going to keep shooting, but it was very, very strange timing. After that show I went to Spain, Europe, Morocco - to do some more shooting. It was intended as a photography trip and I'd booked in another exhibition for these when I got back. It was around that time that I'd started writing a lot of songs. And I had people around me

<sup>2</sup> See again: [www.georgebyrnephotography.com](http://www.georgebyrnephotography.com)

starting to notice what I was doing, and asking if they could help. This momentum starts, you know, and then suddenly I had all these demos that I was really enjoying doing. But at the same time I was getting ready to go to Spain and putting things in place for the exhibition when I got back. So there were these two things starting to sort of come to heads. Music was coming up like, looming, and it was weird - I could feel this thing happening. And then I got to Spain, and I just travelled, travelled. And then my camera broke”.

***Empress Zine: Your camera broke? More like - the universe broke your camera?***

George: “Yeah - it just stopped working. I had this image, the last one I took – where the film was winding on itself in a really contorted image. It’s a shot of a building, and a guy with a wheelbarrow, and a shot of the sky, and they’re all on top of each other in this long, weird, mutated strip. And I just thought, alright – that’s a sign. I was so...it was such a strange time in my life. I basically had an epiphany, and decided to stop taking photos. I rang the gallery and cancelled the show and put the camera under the bed at my friend’s apartment”.

***[Note: George’s photography website is still in 2001 land, and refers, spookily, to the then-upcoming exhibition and trip to Spain]***

***Empress Zine: So you bought a guitar?***

George: “I went to... that Southern town, with that big old Muslim temple...Gr -”

***Empress Zine: You mean Granada? [The reporters have also been to the same place. They seem to have stayed in the same hostel, up in the hills near the Alhambra].***

George: “Yeah, I stayed in a guest house in the hills. It amazing”.

***[George gets another drink...The Empress Zine reporters discuss the Spanish city of Granada, as visited by them last year and by George back when his camera broke. Here, the reporters had had their fortunes involuntary told by a palm (actually, mitten) reading old Gypsy lady who thrust a sprig of rosemary on them, outside the Alhambra. Her hurried dialogue didn’t make a lot of sense at the time but it seemed, roughly, that one reporter could expect an important surprise or telephone call, and the other could look forward to a life of love. The gypsy woman had extracted 5 Euro from one reporter’s purse, leaving them a) wishing they’d had a tape recorder to refer back to the fortune telling spiel in future, and b) feeling a bit cheated at being fleeced, but apparently it happens all the time...George returns to the table]***

George: “So I got there and I bought a guitar - I decided to buy a guitar and write a few more songs. I’d had some songs in my head. And yeah I approached this desperate looking busker, asked if he wanted to sell the guitar from off his back. And he sold it to me for 30 Euro. I was quite shocked, because I thought he’d just say no. I’ve got this great photo of me walking, down the street in Granada with this guitar I bought on my back”.

***Empress Zine: Do you still have the guitar?***

George: “That particular guitar is lost. It was actually just a crappy guitar, a nylon string. As soon as I got back I saved up some money and recorded an EP. Instead of doing the exhibition, I did the EP. The EP (‘Iron Skies’) took a while, but it was a riveting experience. I was working with someone who was really good, he really lifted everything to a different level”.

***What are you currently working on?***

“I’ve got an acoustic record, which has been renamed to ‘Beat in Time’, that’s coming out in April. It’s eight songs, very low-fi acoustic songs recorded and produced with [respected singer songwriter] Toby Burke [of Horse Stories] in Fitzroy. The artwork was shot by Warwick Baker, a local photographer. We went to Adelaide Airport a few weeks back, driving for 11 hours during the tail end of the heat wave, to shoot some photos. So it’s sort of a collaboration, as well, a creative collaboration. And it’s the best of three breakup albums”.

***Empress Zine: We were going to ask, would you call it a breakup or a break-out album?***

George: “Yeah, a breakup album. I mean there’s a few breakup-ee songs, but it’s also just about transition, loss, absence, rejuvenation – it’s all these things”.

***Empress Zine: Would you say it sums up about a year for you, or two years?***

George: “Probably about eighteen months”.

***Empress Zine: With lots of minor chords?***

George: “There’s actually not many minor chords in my records. There’s a few in this one, about four. I’ve got one song in a minor key, and minor chords splattered around, but I’m really much more of a major key writer”.

***Empress Zine: So what makes a song more for you – is it a riff, or a chord progression?***

George: “I’m very into melodically driven music – it’s usually a melody that defines the song for me. And there’s usually some sort of repeating motif. Although, some people write very successfully – such as Joni Mitchell – without recurring riffs.

This [the new album] is an interesting record for me because I have quite a pop sensibility, which comes from I guess growing up in the 1980s and having my older

sisters feed me all the hits – you know, ‘Hits out 82’, ‘Hits out 83’ - and I’ve got all that stuff sort of tattooed on my head. So it’s a mixture of that side of my writing, but with songs that don’t necessarily have the three verses and a chorus structure. My reference point was ‘Silver and Gold’ – the Neil Young record – the sort of record that you can just leave on to listen to, not just for one song”.

**What has been your recording philosophy?**

George: “I’m very much involved in production – in fact I’m pretty obsessive about it. I pretty much produced or co-produced my other albums. For this new album I let Toby take over, which is sort of the first time I haven’t been involved. I’m not that interested in the technical side, like the engineering and where the mics are placed. But I’m really interested in the layering of sounds, what sounds to use, and the instrumentation”.

**Empress Zine: Are you familiar with the phrase ‘you can’t polish a turd’?**

George: “Yep, I’m really fond of it. I reckon if the base doesn’t work, you should throw it out. I recently spent a whole day recording a song then threw it away, because I decided it was all just too fast”.

**George’s Answers to the 1987 Survey**

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**In 1987, what was your job?**

“I was in school...does that count? I was in grade 5 at primary school”.

**Where were you living?**

“With my parents in Balmain”.

**How was your house or room decorated?**

“I lived in the same room as my sister Alice. We had two single beds on either side of the room. My side was full of posters of tigers – I was a ‘big cat’ fan, in fact I was absolutely obsessed with them, and especially tigers. And bands were starting to creep in. I had a poster of the guy who played guitar keys in Psuedo Echo [note: the Empress Zine mishears George several times and somehow writes first Def Lepard, then Van Halen, by mistake], and Bon Jovi”.

**What clothes or things were you particularly fond of at the time?**

“My pocket knife – I was obsessed with it. And ‘Okinuis’ – those flower-patterned pants. I also liked geared bikes. And I liked soccer, guitar, and was maybe developing a mild interest in girls. Possibly Kylie Minogue – she was starting to look ‘interesting’ to me...you know, I couldn’t quite put my finger on it, but there was definitely something ‘interesting’ about her...”.

**What songs or bands do you remember liking?**

“John Farnham – I think I really did like him. The Beatles, too, at that age. This was just before Led Zeppelin – that was in year 6. We tried to a cover of ‘Black Dog’ for a Year 6 performance class. This is how naïve we were, this bloke had never played the drums before and he just had a snare drum - and there he was trying to do a John Bonham, one of the hardest drum beats of all time. I also just liked mainstream 1980s hits, like ‘Come on Eileen’ and ‘Train from Africa’”.

**What TV shows or films do you remember liking?**

“I think I unfortunately liked Neighbours. I was also obsessed with nature documentaries, like things with tigers [see answer above] but with anything really. But I wasn’t a huge TV fan, really”.

**How would you have described your parents?**

“Enjoying the riches of the roaring 1980s. They weren’t working in advertising, but they were just young, they had a healthy young family, they were in the prime of their life - in their 40s. [With reference to Empress reporters’ theories about irony and retro] - my parents were oblivious to what you’re talking about, they were completely on their own wavelength. I think it’s astounding how quickly things looked dated, though”.

[George then inspects, with doubtful facial expression, a package of ‘Friends’ postcards that the Reporters have bought along to make fun of].



**George Byrne (and his band) will play at the Empress on April 17<sup>th</sup>, with Black Pony Express, and Lilith Lang. He hopes to have some preview stock of “Beat in Time” available by then.**

## Staff Interview: Hamish

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Nicci bailed Hamish up at the bar and while he was setting up for an interview, he was happy to talk between cleaning the lines, stocking the fridges, laying out the mats. Oh! The things that must be done!

**NR:** Hi Hamish

**HG:** Hi

**NR:** Could you please describe yourself in three words?

**HG:** Happy to be...here. Oh s\*\*\* that's four. Umm, next question.

**NR:** Where were you in 1987?

**HG:** 97? Oh 87. Western Victoria doing nothing.

**NR:** What do you mean?

**HG:** Well, I was 7, I can't remember, too many good nights since then.

**NR:** Come on Hamish. You gotta give me something to work with here.

**HG:** I was at school.

**NR:** What do you remember from the school days?

**HG:** Ummm, are these set questions?

**NR:** I ask the questions here boy. Ha, no I'm making it up as I go along.

**HG:** It was hot. No air con and I had to walk so so far to school. Ha.

**NR:** Come on, tell me about your memories from '87.

**HG:** It was hot and cold. No heating and no air con. Getting a burnt bum from the hot vinyl seats on the

school bus. Red skins. Like the slaps, not the lollies.

**[Silence]**

**HG:** When you're on the school bus and all bare legged 'cos it's so hot and somebody comes up and slaps you on the leg 'cos it's hot and your skin goes red.

**NR:** What have the last twenty one years meant to you Hamish? Would you consider them an era of anything in particular?

**HG:** They're lost, too many good times in Melbourne.

**NR:** How long have you worked here at TheEmpress?

**HG:** Two years.

**NR:** That's a while yeah, you dig it?

**HG:** Umm, ha ha. All the people I work with, I love them.

**NR:** Who's your favourite?

**HG:** Anna.

**NR:** Why? More importantly, why not me?

**HG:** Cos I see Anna everyday. She's my favourite girl.

On that note Hamish left the room on some random notion of 'work'.



## Gig Review: Mike Noga

### CD Preview nights, March 2008

On stage at the Empress for two nights previewing material for his forthcoming album, the elusive [see previous *Empress Zine* edition] yet endearing Mike Noga is accompanied by a three piece band who are all (like him) cred-card carrying musos from well known Australian bands.

Specifically, there's Dan Luscombe (The Drones), Pat Bourke (Dallas Crane), and Pete Luscombe (Paul Kelly). Together, they are The Gentlemen Of Fortune. They radiate professionalism and confidence, getting the sound check to perfection within minutes and without breaking a sweat or looking anything other than cheerfully hung over. All are wearing shirts with the top button undone. Mike's outfit appears to be pilfered directly from Andrew Keese<sup>3</sup>, or perhaps Echo And The Bunnymen via Bruce Springsteen circa 1984.

Tim Rogers, or a man looking an awful lot like him, is spotted and noted at the front bar earlier in the night. During the show he stands tall and calm at the back of the sizeable crowd, framed in light from the kitchen. Someone comments that he is "much better looking in person". Perhaps, in fact, this is because it isn't actually Tim Rogers. Either way it's certainly not unfeasible. There's a sort of old-school local football club air to the proceedings, and to the world Mike inhabits generally: supportive, local, and destined for sepia toned pub mantelpiece glory. But sometimes also just an awful lot like the AFL.

Happily, Mike's music and stage presence are not drowning in football club overtones or scenester-ness. Having heard only snippets of his previous solo material, and not seen the man on stage outside a drumkit before, this was something of a blind date for the *Empress* reviewer, with modest expectations. But it turned out to be very easy and enjoyable to spend an hour listening to Mike and the Gentlemen, and not too conflicting to write a review – he's a communicative performer, hard working, and a great song writer.

At its best, the cred-convention accompanying him on stage comes together for an enjoyable barroom sound; an urban cowboy type of thing, with world weary lyrics dancing around honky tonk keys or perfectly toned slide, smart chord progressions, and a compelling but unhurried

rhythm section. It's comparable to *Nashville Skyline* or *Desire* era Dylan. Also Wilco, The Band, and, at more of stretch, Pavement and Granddaddy. They'd no doubt appreciate a Bad-Seeds-meet-Weddings-Parties-Anything comparison too.

So...yep, the sound is comparable to Bad-Seeds-meet-Weddings-Parties-Anything.



"They tell me that I'm smokin' too much"

And while not necessarily confident as a front man, you get the impression that Mike is certainly being himself up there. He successfully dodges the earnestness and/or whininess traps that a self professed "breakup album" would be at grave risk of. But on the other hand, he also doesn't always progress from endearing into engaging – one feels that he's still hiding his light under a bushel. Or a drumkit, as it were. It's a work in progress. Or, I reckon, an egg slowly hatching on stage under the warm glow of muso camaraderie.

Notably, Mike has a definite knack for succinctly heartbreaking lyrics. Some lines are given due credit by being promoted to choruses, while many others coyly waft in to your ears and are registered and appreciated a few seconds afterward, so that you end up saying "that was a great line!" to the person next to you, and then inadvertently end up missing the next bit of the song.

Some favourites include:

*"My first day here was a week long nightmare"*

<sup>3</sup> See: [www.myspace.com/andrewkeese](http://www.myspace.com/andrewkeese)

*"I pretended I didn't see you for the one hundred millionth time"*

*"She's got everything men like me need"*

*"She's a woman and me, I'm just like a child"*

*"In two weeks time you will notice I've been gone for fourteen days"*

*"I'd trade in my family for a decent night's sleep"*

*"You looked sacred and I was stoned, for a change"*

Sensual, self depreciating and witty. At its best, this lyrical knack anchors the songs.

And in the last song before the encore, the chorus line initially sounded like "I made you come but I never made you cry", but on closer listen was actually "I made you cry but I never made you laugh". Admittedly, both options sort of work.

In lesser moments the lyrics veer dangerously toward Nickleback territory, with stuff about sadly beautiful ladies and hair flying in one's face. And the habit of breaking words in two in order to artfully fit around the melody - "clou-ouds", "cur-ursed", "awa-ay", "thre-ead", etc - can undermine a song when used to excess. A little like that guy in *Encino Man* ("no wa-ay").

Also, I agree with Mike's self depreciatory comment in an earlier interview, that he "plays guitar like a drummer". As in, he plays in time (which is a good thing), but this can also mean being too much on the beat, too straightforward and strummy. Whereas the use of some more finger picking styles would probably do really well in combination with his songwriting. Same too with the voice range. It'd be a matter of finding time within an already hectic touring schedule though.

All bands have 'A' and 'B' material. My interpretation of what constituted the 'B' material for Mike was at times oddly conflicting with the rest of the audience - I reckon once you've discovered the joys of combining minor chords, reverb and a big drumkit, there's not much point dwelling on it. But the audience went nuts for this stuff! This MCRBDK business is certainly important to the overall experience of the show, giving a bit of a more rock n roll tinge and some wild west menace, but my personal picks for the standout 'A' tracks for the night were (with titles guessed from choruses):

Track 2 -

"She's a woman, and me, I was just like a child"

Track 4 -

"Turn your light on me again"

Track 6 -

"In two weeks time, you will notice I've been gone for fourteen days"

(This was Mike's quieter solo song in the middle of the set...like playing "Patience" or "Every Rose Has Its Thorn" mid set)

Track 7 -

"Turn all my greys in to reds"

(This one is very catchy, and is "a little more jaunty", to use Mike's words. Honky tonk keys blaze and the whole thing swings along. Unfortunately it sounds too much like Pavement's "Range Life" to be a single, but it's a great pub number.)

For the first night of the CD preview, Mike and the band played ten tracks and a heartily welcomed encore. The crowd was large and very appreciative. I still have bits of some songs replaying in my head weeks later, and have every intention of buying the forthcoming album - or at least trying to scab a copy.

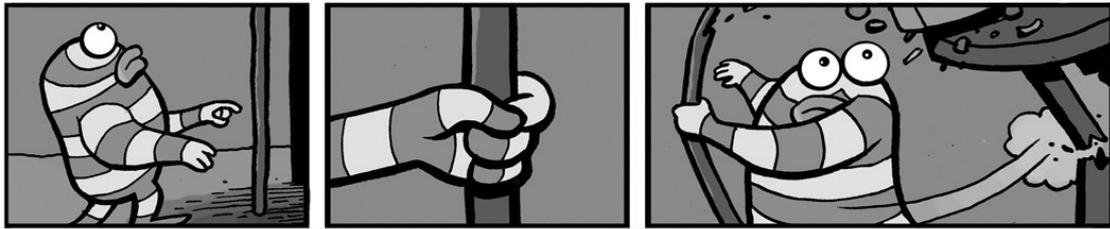
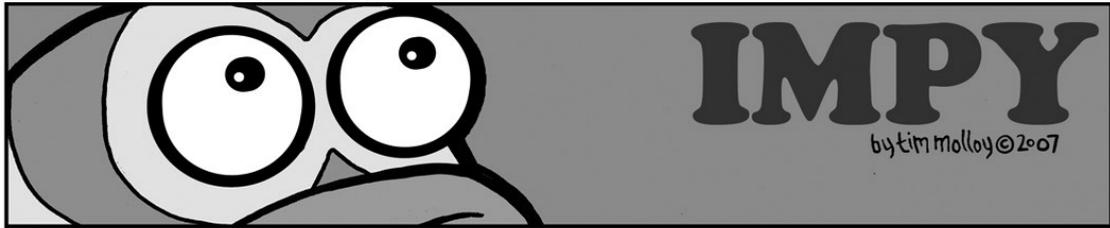
- -The end by Sarah

## Crossword Answers

A	S	T	L	E	Y					I	S
R			O		O		B	A	D		
M		P	S	E	U	D	O		O		
S		R					Y	E	L	L	
	B	A	N	G	L	E	S				
L		Y			A				D	J	
A		E		A		L			A		
D	U	R	A	N	D	U	R	A	N		
Y				C		K			C		
		F		I	V	A			I		
M	E	L		E			W	A	N	G	
A		A		N	A	M	E		G		
R		T	T			A		H			
R	O	S	E	S		C	O	M	E		

Cure Song = "JUST LIKE HEAVEN"







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[www.theempresshotel.com.au](http://www.theempresshotel.com.au)

# EMPRESS GIG GUIDE

## April 2008

714 Nicholson Street Fitzroy North Vic 3068

MON 31	TUE 1	WED 2	THUR 3	FRI 4	SAT 5	SUN 6
BUZZ TRIVIA	OPEN MIC	AN AIR CONDITIONER + ROOM 4.09	HAZELMON BROTHERS + JAYNE MAYA	GIFTHORSE EP LAUNCH + UNDERWATER- MAN	GASLIGHT ORCHESTRA + SOARING EAGLE + HOSHI IN THE CLOUDS	<b>ARVO:</b> THE GLASS ROAD + YELKA  <b>PM:</b> GLOOMY SUNDAY
MON 7	TUE 8	WED 9	THUR 10	FRI 11	SAT 12	SUN 13
SPLODGE! CULT FILM NIGHT	OPEN MIC	HOULETTE + TASH PARKER	AMBERDANCE + THE ADVENTURE SPIRIT	PROJECT 321 EXPLOSION + THE GOOD TIME PARTY BAND	<b>ARVO:</b> DAVE ROBERTSON + THE TAYLOR PROJECT  <b>PM:</b> THE HEAVY CASES + THE PAPERNECKS + KENNY CORNFLAKES	MAX SCHLOSSER QUARTET CAMILLE DEANE
MON 14	TUE 15	WED 16	THUR 17	FRI 18	SAT 19	SUN 20
DAVE'S LAST BUZZ TRIVIA BYE DAVE	OPEN MIC	BRENDAN WELCH	GEORGE BYRNE EP LAUNCH	CHRIS CAVILL + ROMBUS + TOM WEST (SYD)	MOJO JUJU + THE CROOKED FIDDLE BAND + THE BEDROOM PHILOSOPHER	POPOLICE + CHERRY GEMSTONES (NZ)
MON 21	TUE 22	WED 23	THUR 24	FRI 25	SAT 26	SUN 27
	OPEN MIC		16 MM ALBUM LAUNCH	FIREKITES + NED COLLETTE	SHHHHHH....	ALBERT'S BASEMENT ALL DAY VINYL FUNDRAISER
MON 28	TUE 29	WED 30	THURS 1	FRI 2	SAT 3	SUN 4
	OPEN MIC		HELEN + MEGAN WASHINGTON	ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS + THE HELLO MORNING		GLOOMY SUNDAY

*The Empress Zine is written and compiled by Liz and Sarah, with input and assistance from Nicci and other Empress Staff.  
 If you would like to contribute, contact the Empress' myspace page.  
 If you'd like a beer – go to the Empress bar!  
 Mmmm, cold beer!  
 If you're feeling peckish – you know what you could do!  
 (Eat a meal at the Empress)*