

Greg Champion

Newsletter

Interviews with a Champ

At the beginning of October Champs answered a few questions from the editor.

Greg, to follow up the acclaim of both Shady Tree and North and South, where to from here? Musically will you be progressing further in that direction or will you branch out into other territory?

I now think that my songs have always been too diverse. I've always had a scattergun approach: write any sort of song that comes into your mind. My new policy is: be far more circumspect. Now I abandon song ideas that are not going to end up suiting me. I'm writing less, but far more homogeneously. I want the next CD to be 'unified' in style. The short answer to the question is: a bit the same, a bit different.

From your early country material, your lyrics have been able to capture the essence of what might be called "the Aussie spirit", in the mateship and humour and understated values that we hold. Is this a style that you enjoy writing in or is it a theme that has unconsciously unfolded through your albums?

More unconscious than conscious, maybe. Actually, you could call my style 'stream of unconsciousness'. However, there is some definite intent to be Aussie. Anything much more than that is accidental.

You seem to travel widely and to enjoy visiting far flung places and interacting with audiences. What keeps you going with the travel?

Gee, how many people wouldn't enjoy that job, if they had it. It's not hard to find it a pleasure, is it? I feel blessed - as if I have the best job in Australia.

You continue to enjoy a healthy career. For the benefit of young artists, what would you tell them about labels, independence, management and surviving in an industry that seems to only allow a few to have any significant profile?

My impression is that only a lucky 3-5% of musicians get to make a fair living. They usually have



On stage at the Longyard, Tamworth, Festival time with Gary Carruthers

some 'gimmick' or some edge that sets them apart - if they're not simply blessed with sheer overwhelming undeniable bloody talent! SOOO many good musos don't get past square one, career and income-wise, and it seems a waste and a shame. On the other hand, Vincent Van Gogh never sold a painting in his lifetime. Maybe the rewards come in other ways.

Greg you have performed on albums and live with a huge number of artists. Are there some musicians that you would like to collaborate with either on a tour or perhaps one of your forthcoming albums?

Colin Buchanan is one of the most gifted people I know. He's inspiring to work with any time. Jane Saunders has been a long-time collaborator and musical ally. Rod McCormack is a privilege to be produced by. I'm not sure who it should be next but I'll keep searching.

You have released many CDs - and of differing styles - do you have any personal favourites?

Shady Tree, all things considered, is the one I'm most proud of. North & South would be nearby, i.e. the most recent two. Actually, the one I'm going to release next will be my favourite.

How do you maintain your high level of creativity?

I've become obsessed with the process of songwriting over the years. I try to do a little bit every day, generally at night after 11pm. When we were living in Northern NSW recently I found creativity had never been so good. The lifestyle and environment must have helped. The Melbourne winter is not as inspiring, I've noticed. Travel in the bush always is. I'm sorta determined not to allow the output to slip away if I can help it. Books, poetry and listening to other music can help.

You have recently become a father. Has this been a big change? How do you now balance music and family?

Having a daughter, just turned two, is so fulfilling and rewarding. Of course there are adjustments, but it's something special to write about! The main difference is, that when you go away, which is usually only for short trips, you're even more motivated to get home quick!

Once you have written the songs, do you find that they change during the recording process? So do some songs end up to be quite different to what you imagined?

Not too much at recording, but the songs change heaps in the incubation process. The music may be evolving constantly with repeated examinations over a few weeks. Often i don't like the tune/music of any emerging song at all for a while, and then quite suddenly you strike on a better musical vehicle for your idea.

How do you decide on a song to be a single?

The Record Company and the Producer slug it out. In Country, you pick the best one, or the catchiest, 'uppest' one - if you can find one!

Have you ever played a set which is a complete album - a concept gig?

Just the once - at Port Fairy Folk Festival in 2002. We played *Shady Tree* from start to finish - leaving out the a capella one. We did it on Stage One, in front of 2-3,000 people, between Fairport Convention and The Proclaimers. It was one of my favourite gigs of my life!



Grace Elizabeth Champion
Aged 22 months

**Champs chats with Mick McGlone
Border Mail, Albury**

MM What is your favourite sport?

GC I like footy and cricket equally.

MM Who do you follow?

GC Adelaide Crows.

MM Who is your favourite sports person?

GC Nigel Smart Crows.

MM What are you reading at the moment?

GC Books about Tibetan Buddhism.

MM What sort of music do you listen to?

GC Renaissance choral music by composers like Tallis and Palestrina, blue grass western swing folk music in general. Bob Dylan is number one and I regard him as the musician who had the greatest impact of the century. He is so far ahead of who comes next. He is the Bradman of this caper and it is hard to see anyone getting close to him. He is the Mozart of our time. And I like musicians like James Taylor and Cole Porter.

MM What is your favourite movie?

GC I don't watch many movies. Probably Jeremiah Johnson and another one called Evil Roy Slade.

MM What inspires you?

GC Nature, a good story.

MM What makes you angry?

GC Being angry. It is always wrong to be angry. What does make me angry shouldn't and I should always be working to make sure it doesn't.

MM What has been the highlight of your life?

GC My daughters.

MM What has been the biggest challenge in your life?

GC I haven't had one.

MM What spins your wheels?

GC Travel on water.

MM How do you spend your Friday nights?

GC Preparing for the radio show and watching footy.

MM How do you chill?

GC My whole life is a chill.

MM What do you like about your life?

GC I think I have a charmed life and the best job in Australia.

MM What would you change in your life?

GC Nothing I can confess to here.

MM Who has been the most influential person in your life?

GC It might be John Williamson or Nigel Smart.

MM Where were you born?

GC Benalla Home, Melbourne in 1955.

MM Where did you go to school?

GC Hectorville Primary School and Pulteney Grammar, Adelaide.

MM You are now a singer, songwriter, radio announcer, corporate entertainer and author.

What was your previous job?

GC I was a clerk with International Harvester.

MM What would you do if you were not in your present job?

GC I would like to work with dogs.

MM What are your hobbies?

GC Gardening. Music is a hobby.

MM What is your favourite holiday destination?

GC Alice Springs.

MM What is your favourite meal?

GC Fried rice.

MM What is your favourite drink?

GC Peach tea.

MM What would you like your epitaph to read?

GC Walk on.

MM Have you been successful in life?

GC Beyond my wildest dreams.

MM What is your ultimate life goal?

GC To end life as a Buddhist.



The Mighty Champs Notes - October 2004

What can we expect from Tamworth this year? That's what we start thinking about at this time. The Festival's been turned on its head by the decision to shift the Awards to the first weekend.

However, my little group and I will be fronting up for the fifteenth straight time. We'll do our usual five lunch shows at the Longyard, and we'll have Gary Carruthers, Robyn Martin and maybe Michael Fix in the line-up. Gary's been touring with Kasey Chambers and is touring the USA with her in November, which is a highlight of his life, I know for sure.

Furthermore, it looks probable that the Coodabeens will be there to broadcast for the first time. This is quite momentous - to we Coodabeens, anyway.... Ideally, we'll do the show from the soundshell in the park which can hold 10,000 people.

Before then, the Maldon Folk Festival comes up on Oct. 29, in Central Victoria. This is one of the top Folk events in Oz now, to me. Jane Saunders, and sisters Jodi and Robyn Martin will be along for the ride.

Last week I was in Sydney to sing at a dinner raising funds for four orders of Catholic nuns. I met some fabulous Sisters of that faith, I found the night wholly uplifting, and my highlight was hearing Sir William Deane speak. To use a hip phrase I've learnt, "he's got it all going on"....!

One other thing: everybody needs an outback getaway. So recently I went to Whyalla [Spencer Gulf, SA] to see a close friend. He lives right on the edge of the Whyalla 'suburbs', so we were able to walk across the street and into the desert of Australia. That was inspiring. There's nothing like a stroll among the saltbush and spinifex to gladden the heart.

I hope your heart has been sufficiently gladdened lately too. My thanks go to the ever industrious couple from Fremantle, Andrew and Del, for compiling this newsletter. With the jobs they hold, they ought to know better than to tackle this! Good luck to them, and to all ye who read herein. If you keep the kettle boiling, I'll see you soon,
regards, greg

Gig Guide

October 29

Maldon Folk Festival
Victoria

November 8

RACV Club
Melbourne

November 10

Victoria Golf Club
Melbourne

November 11

Tradies Club
Southerland, Sydney

November 19

Montanna Restaurant
Lennox Head, NSW

November 23

Warrandyte Rotary Club
Melbourne

November 24

Goulburn
NSW

November 25

MCG
Melbourne

November 26

Botanic Gardens
Melbourne

November 28

Terminus Hotel
Clifton Hill, Melbourne TBC



Champs at Barwon Heads



Your Letters



FROM TOWNSVILLE:

I was listening to the ABC radio here in Townsville between 5 and 6am one morning last week and they played a song called "Moon Roof Flyer" (I think) sung by Greg Champion (Again I think). I really liked the song and I would like to obtain it. I would appreciate if you would let me know how I can go about it. Regards Darren Spina [the song is *Boomaroo Flyer*; don't ya love it when people have to take a wild shot at the title.]

FROM INMAN VALLEY, SA:

It was great to receive your newsletter. [Re your comments about your need to] homogenize yourself: I often go to shows and think to myself that while the performers are good at what they do they just do the same thing all night. In some cases they are good enough that you don't mind, but with others it gets a bit "ho hum." Anyway, one of the things I've always liked about what you do is your versatility, and I would hate to see you put yourself in too much of a box so to speak. All the best, Diane Lush. [Diane has been assured that despite his best attempts, Greg generally can't change himself much anyway]

FROM WOLLONGONG:

I've been listening to you and the other fellas for quite a while now on the radio and your mouth trumpet always seems to make me laugh! I've heard parts of your song 'See You Again Sometime' on Saturday Night Country at the end (near 2am!) on John Nutting's program. I was wondering if you could possibly mail the words back to me. Thanks for being you, mate! Cheers from Wollongong, Nick Jones

Hi Greg, love the simple clean sound of the *north and south* album. The Aussie themes are great. I think we as Australians are losing our heritage with all the American and eastern influences of today. Track 3 'banks of the Condamine' is a favourite. Stories played out musically are always a winner. Janes vocals are second to none and I would like to hear more from her. Does she have any albums? Good work on the sound, Regards, Damien Toll. [Jane has two CDs, *stranger to your heart*, and *poetic justice*]

Hi, My name is Emily Nye. I am 14 years old and i have been asked to perform *Santa never made it into Darwin*, for the Shoalhaven Carols in the park this year. It is an annual fundraiser that is held. They also wish my sister to sing Six white boomers. I have you cd and the backing tracks for all the other Aussie carols are there. Can you please advse me where i might apply to use the music for these two carols. Thankyou Emily Nye ps. I also write my own songs and I think you cd is cool! [permission happily granted, and not really required anyway....]

FROM WARRNAMBOOL: [re the Coodabeens' AFL radio show]:

Hope all of you realise juts how much of an influence you've all been to the evolution of our culture & language. Mate,I am normal! It's just that listening to you blokes is such a release from the many stresses that tend to pervade our lives as we get older....I've been through extremely tough times, Champs, and the Coodabeens have been around like a comfortable mate, encouraging many people to take a welcome diversion from our lives and try to put things back into perspective. Tony

More of Your Letters

FROM A KID:

My names Will Quinert and I'm 13. I listen to the couldabeens and love your music. I was wondering if you could look at this song. I wrote it myself, it's in TAB and a bit hard to understand but i just hope you could have look. It'd so awesome if you could play it sometime. Please,please get back to me. Yours Sincerely, Will Quinert

FROM A MUM:

My kids have both of you and Bucko's Christmas Albums and its about time to get them out again since they love it. This is good brainwashing particularly if the teacher plays it over and over to the really little ones. Anyway, is there another one coming up, or maybe one that we missed? Merry Christmas Louise Rooney. [I regret, no plans for subsequent Christmas CDs currently]

FROM A PERSON:

Champion Greg and the other Coodabeans, your programme is exactly what you are... no pretentiousness. it is rare to hear witty clever and wholesome discussions by a group. The second best programme on tv apart from landline (which is genuinely serious)my best regards your avid listener Vic

FROM MELBOURNE:

Wondering if u could email me the lyrics of "The Garden Song". I'm a teacher at Mont Albert Primary School. We're opening a new courtyard/garden and I thought "The Garden Song" would be great for the kids to sing on this occasion. The chords are easy to work out but the lyrics – too fast for me, but the kids are fascinated by it. Thanks Greg Tony Smith



Hilton Hotel, Grand Final week footy lunch