

In poetry, in philosophy, in all literary creation,  
when one has only enough time to think and write, one is lost.

One must also have the time to dream.

*Alfred de Vigny* (1793–1863)

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## PREFACE

We squander our lives as if we were immortal.

*Guy de Maupassant (1850–93)*

This book has been an immense pleasure to write. It didn't start out that way though. When the publisher first asked me to send a little sample of the sort of things I intended to write about, I optimistically started a fresh page in the computer and wrote: *'I remember, it was in a little Victorian country town called ??? The gig was called the Green ??? and that night we were supporting the ???'*

Not a great beginning and one that filled me with foreboding. I wasn't going to remember very much at all. Certainly not enough!

Perhaps I might get down the broad strokes of it all, but how was I going to fill in the small details readers require in order to fully re-create the scenario and to revisit the times and events in their own lives that correspond to mine so we could share those days once again? After all, that's what it's all really about.

I shelved the whole idea for months, afraid that I would discover just how much damage 40 years on the road had truly done to my brain cells and my memory capacity. Then one night when we were out somewhere for dinner, I became immersed in a discussion with another musician about an event in our mutual past. I realised that (a) his recollections were quite different to mine and (b), as he talked, *my* true recollections came flooding back.

There was my clue! Perhaps other people talking about even just the time period and somewhat similar events would spark my own memory enough!

So I began what finished up being over 15 hours of interviews with people who were around as I lived my life. Not necessarily those directly involved, although most were, but people with similar histories who had had comparable adventures.

Then, in a weak moment, our dear friend Jo James offered to transcribe these interviews for me. She has continually regretted that decision every day since then I imagine and is now under psychiatric care for some mysterious mental illness called '60s overload'.

Jo is also the wife of my colleague and great mate Steve James, international music producer, engineer and bon vivant. He is a real down-to-earth, funny Londoner who looks very much like a long-haired hippie version of his father, the late British comedy star Sid James. My apologies to you, old mate, for tying your wife up (metaphorically) for so many days and nights.

Jo has been the model of tolerance, patience and encouragement. Often she would send me a transcript with a comment like 'God there's some funny stuff in here' or 'Oh dear, you *were* naughty boys!' And as these transcripts began to roll in and I read them through, somehow they unlocked my smouldering old memory banks and my own stuff came flooding out—people, places, events.

Sometimes they were memories of what was alluded to in the transcripts but many times they were simply *other stuff*, triggered by what was being discussed in the interviews.

I was off and running!

Since then, it has been a wonderful adventure to turn the electronic beast on most days and immerse myself in all the characters and events I have been involved with and in over the years. True, there were some difficult moments as I struggled to come to terms with sad or regrettable times, but I've tried to tell things honestly without knowingly hurting or damaging anyone unnecessarily. There will be collateral damage as people find out—for the first time after perhaps many years—exactly how something actually went down. But if I don't go there, it's rather pointless to even begin the book.

For better or for worse, and to steal from Popeye, 'I yam what I yam.' Furthermore, I can't change any of these things from my past. I *can* try to explain them or at least put them in some kind of perspective.

As I often say, I've lived several lives' worth. And as I've written about it all, I've realised how complex and crammed full of action and adventure my life has been. Not necessarily compared with anyone else's, but simply in terms of my getting through it all, relatively unscathed.

As Will Rogers said, 'I want people to know why I look this way. I've travelled a long way and some of the roads weren't paved.' Way to go, Will.

## INTRODUCTION

**M**y life has been a series of incredibly lucky timings. It has also harboured some amazingly naïve and misguided decisions. I'm sure this is true for many of us, but I seem to have achieved both of these fairly often.

I am constantly amazed, in my 60s, how full and happy my life is and, quite honestly, how very long I've been able to stay in this frequently contrary, always demanding and often disappointing music business.

When I began this musical odyssey it was at a time when we were *all* beginning the same journey. We were *all* making it up as we went along because there had been no real precedent for what we were attempting.

True, there had been popular music since presumably the first cavemen grunted in organised patterns and banged sticks and rocks in accompaniment. The music we refer to now as 'classical music' was the pop music of its day. Certainly, through 19th-century folk songs and into the early 20th century with orchestras, big bands and vocal groups, the blueprint for modern music as we now know it was partly formed and refined. Even aside from the great classical masters, there is some extremely progressive and complex music from early last century, like *Rhapsody in Blue*, for instance. Arguably, overall musicianship in the classical sense was far greater before the 1950s than it has become since, particularly among cutting-edge new musicians.

However, it wasn't really until the white music of country and skiffle combined with the earthiness and 'cool' of black R&B and blues that what has become the basis of all that we now know and play emerged. Many much wiser heads than mine continually debate the sources and evolution of contemporary music and I have no desire to discuss any of that here.

Enough to say that, in the first of my happy timings, I was born in 1946, which enabled me to grow up watching the evolution from Bill Haley, Little Richard, Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis (my earliest personal hero) through the early beat groups in England and eventually to arrive in 1966, at the age of 20 and hungry to succeed, at the coalface of the pop explosion in Australia and around the world.

Along the way, in those first 20 years, I learned to love lots of other music, and indeed to play many of them, before throwing it all in for a white skivvy, black stove-pipes and brothel-creepers.

As a child we had music in the house all the time and always had a piano.

I discovered that I could pick out tunes on the piano. Quite rudimentary at first but, as I listened more and watched others play, I began to develop the skills to play basic accompaniments. Eventually I must have built a little repertoire. Two of the ones I remember from the song list were 'In the Middle of an Island' and 'You'll Never Walk Alone', but apparently I ran the gamut of the current favourites.

I was born on 29 November 1946. This places me squarely in the 'oldest boomers' category!

It felt, until recently, that I had never been the oldest anything (apart from eldest child among my siblings). But lately I've been noticing that I'm almost always the 'oldest one here' at gatherings. Even some of those who I claim as contemporaries are at least several years younger than me. Some are way more than that. There are so many little hints: when the bill comes at a restaurant, they automatically hand it to me, the eldest. Strangers are calling me 'Sir' and 'Mister' for the first time in my life and I've even had young people offer to give up their seats for me.

And, to my consternation, around Christmas time young children insist on telling me that they've 'been good'! This, of course, has as much to do with my physical appearance as it does with my actual age, but it all contributes.

I have also noticed that at parties I seem to try and hang with people who are slightly older than I am because that makes me feel younger. This doesn't always work because often people who, in my eyes, look older turn out not to be or, worse, they are, and then point out that they assumed that I was considerably older than they are! And I love those audience members who, after the show, begin with 'I remember seeing you when I was just a little girl, with my mum.'

I often get the 'in your day' prefix to sentences from young musicians but I've always taken that as deference to my having lasted so long in an industry that is known to be brutally savage about what's 'in' and 'not in' and that systematically rids itself of those who have apparently outlived their usefulness or relevance. The music business is not as governed by age boundaries and their implications as many other industries (at least they don't seem to treat each other that way to their faces).

I was talking with my closest friend Murf on New Year's Day, 2010. (He is mercifully a few years older than me.) This day not only heralded in a new year but also a new decade. Our sixth.

For the first time it occurred to us that this might be our *final decade*. How can that be? Is there a chance that one or both of us could disappear before 2020? Maybe.

How did this all happen so quickly? Why did I go along happily for years, assuming that I wasn't really ageing? Rather, that I was simply maturing like the proverbial 'great wine'.

My 30s and 40s were still as full-on in terms of creativity and achievement as my 20s had been. My 50s saw a gradual transformation into Industry Veteran, then an upgrade to Music Legend. Then at 60, my induction into the ARIA Hall of Fame heralded a great new decade. And I still hadn't slowed down.

So there had never been an actual realisation that age was indeed not just catching up on me ... but that it *had caught up on me*.

The dilemma seems to be that many of the activities that dominated my earlier decades are still very much part of my life today. I still write songs. I still make recordings. I still tour much of each year. More importantly, I can still give great lunch, have drinks after the show and tell war stories all night along with the best of them.

But if I truly examine it all carefully, I can see the cracks in the armour. I now try to book later flights. I try to wheedle out of soundchecks. I arrive at gigs closer to showtime. I don't change players in my bands as readily as I would have, say, in the '70s because that would involve heavy rehearsals. And I *almost never* go out after the show!

My civilian friends (those not in the music industry) actually discuss retirement often. They try to decide where to retire to, what hobbies they will acquire or continue to pursue. They rejoice at the prospect of sleeping in and lounging around. Of travelling the world and seeing it all.

In the Qantas Club at 6.45AM, waiting for a flight from Sydney to Perth after a late show the night before, I think of retirement too. And often during the flight, the subsequent transfer to the hotel, soundcheck and then waiting endlessly to get onstage, I think of retirement then as well.

But once we hit the stage, it all goes out the window. That 90 minutes in front of an audience is the most magical time. A headache, a hangover, an argument with the old lady, all fade away once you're up there.

And I guess in that 90 minutes is some tenuous link to the amazing 'get you back next week' fluke tee shot you play at the end of an absolutely atrocious round of golf.

Despite the hassles with getting there, despite waiting around and then trying to come down afterwards in some hotel room, each show is enough to bring you back to play the next time.

When I started to scribble down some planning notes for this book, I began with sections, broken down into individual content and stories.

I found myself constantly adding to the list as I remembered 'stuff'. Each time I examined a little episode in my life, it lead off into more directions with more characters and stories. I began to feel that, even though I am eternally grateful for having lived so long already, I sometimes wished I hadn't done so much 'stuff'.

But gradually, as the book took shape, I realised that I had done many of those things for a reason. Or, rather, that by *life* dragging me all over the place for so long, it had presented me with so very many opportunities for wonderful experiences populated by amazing sets of characters. And those experiences so often lifted me to places and stages of development that I very much needed to get to, in order to progress and grow.

As you will see, there have been some times when things haven't gone so well. Times when it appeared as though there wasn't any light at the end of the tunnel ... or even a tunnel!

But I've never gotten to the point when I've actually thought about giving up. About stopping doing what I do.

Since my earliest musical days, I have harboured a belief that I am *supposed* to be doing all this. That, even if sometimes it all seems determined to defeat me, there *will* be a way forward, a path leading off somewhere else that will keep

the creativity flowing, keep me in the industry and keep me producing some sort of worthwhile musical outcome.

I have worked in and loved this music industry for over 40 years now. It has been my life. Sometimes it has led me into selfish, foolish or irrational scenarios and behaviours. I have hurt and disappointed far too many loved ones. I have made enemies and broken too many promises.

I also know that I have brought some happiness and music along the way.

I am blessed with a large and loving family and a dear group of friends, many of whom have been with me for much of the journey.

I consider myself in the mid-evening of my years, probably around the main course at dinner. I can't wait to see what the dessert, cheese plate and cocktails before bed might bring.

This book is divided into sections. Each begins with a narrative describing what happened in that part of my life. Then there is a section simply called 'Random'. This contains all the road stories, yarns and random stuff from the period—which, if they were inserted into the narrative, would slow it all down and confuse things. These were fun to write and, although not necessarily in chronological order, serve to provide some flavour and ambience to the narrative. They are the closest we can get to actually being around a table together and telling war stories!