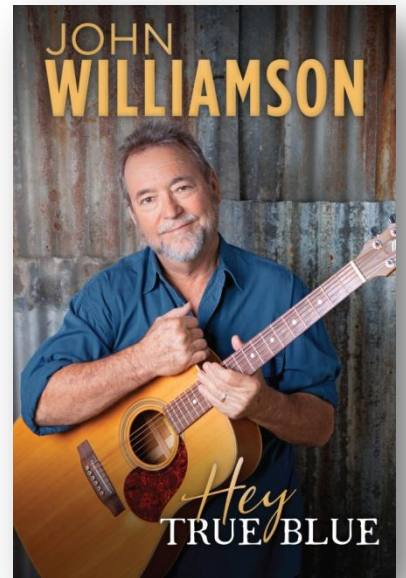


# Hey True Blue

AUTHOR: JOHN WILLIAMSON



## John Williamson Q & A

### John, what was it like growing up in the Mallee?

Growing up in the Mallee in Quambatook, Victoria, was a stroke of luck for a boy like me. I had it all. I had a river to swim, fish and yabby in, plus lots of mates in town. I loved Aussie Rules football and played tennis. And I learnt to drive an old ute and tractors on the weekend on my dad's farm.

### What does it mean to you be 'True Blue'?

'True Blue' mainly speaks of a genuine soul; a person you can trust. His or her word is his or her bond. In that sense it means 'fair dinkum'. But 'True Blue' has also become another way of saying 'uniquely Australian and proud of it'.

### You've said that you always carry a guitar with you in case the need to write a song strikes you. Do you still find the songwriting process easy?

I doubt that I will ever find it hard to write a song. It is a craft that you keep improving on. The magic is when one line or a good idea turns up. Finding new chord progressions and inversions on the guitar often inspires me to write as well. I have to be careful not to be too clever and complicate my music. Simplicity usually works best.

### Where do you prefer to play concerts – in small regional towns or large cities?

It is often suggested that my best audiences are in the bush. Actually, real bush people are too shy to inspire me as a performer. I know they're enjoying it but they're a little inhibited, perhaps because they know everyone around them in the audience. A city audience can be terrific for two reasons. Firstly, they've learned that every good response gets a better performance. Secondly, I enjoy taking city people out of their urban lives and into the magic of the outback in their minds.

### Your version of *Waltzing Matilda* has been described as an unofficial national anthem. If you could choose the national anthem, which song would you choose?

At the moment, our national anthem is okay. I certainly wouldn't agree to choose *Waltzing Matilda* or *We Are Australian*. Eric Bogle's *Shelter* would be a beautiful anthem. My song *Island of Oceans* is my final effort at an alternative. I have a new song on my new album called *Girt By Sea* which could be called a 'larrikin anthem'.

### If you could sing only one of your songs for the rest of your career, which one would it be?

A bit of a silly question because I would go around the twist if I could sing only one song. One song can never cover all things. I enjoy dealing with all the emotions, all the iconic natural wonders and disasters of being Australian.

### If you could only play one guitar for the rest of time, what would it be?

If I could have one guitar only it would be my stage guitar, a Maton BG808, made in 1991.

### You have worked with many musicians from Adam Harvey to Shannon Noll. What are your thoughts on the current country music scene?

There is nothing wrong with the Australian country music scene other than the fact that many people involved compare our songs to the USA. I believe we are beginning to develop songs, melodies and sounds that can be recognised as our own genre.

We don't need many young ones to carry that flag to keep it going. I have no problem with artists who can't break away from the Nashville or Texan sound, as long as our own Australian awards do not encourage it.

**You are stuck on a desert island. Name four people you'd like to be stuck there with...**

If I were stuck on a desert island with four people I would choose my wife Meg, to love (and she's a great cook). The others would be boat builders.

**What is next for John Williamson?**

All I need from now on in my career is to keep developing my concert to avoid it becoming stale. If I can keep up the energy, I reckon it will become more theatrical. Twice I have hinted to David Williamson, the playwright, that I would love him to write a play around my songs. Williamson and Williamson has a ring to it, eh?