

Keeping Tamworth rock alive

BY SHAN
GOODWIN

YOU'D have to wonder what it is that entices a Sydney rock band to a country music festival out west.

As a one-off maybe, they'd give it a go in the name of trying something different, but Eric Grothe and the Gurus keep coming back time and time again, to play The Longyard at Tamworth in January.

And they pull a big crowd.

"We love it up here – everybody at Tamworth in January is in love with music, you don't get that anywhere else," said the band's drummer Pat Hopkins.

"And there's never any argy bargy or fighting going on – that's something we really like."

Pat and the other three members of the covers band – bass player Bas Khoury, guitarist Ted Brennan and frontman Eric Grothe Snr – are the first to admit they never thought their outfit and Tamworth would make any sort of fit when they first decided to come up and play four years ago.

"But the crowd was really open to us," Eric said.

"Everybody here is friendly, laid back and cool."

There's no room to scratch yourself on the dance floor at a Gurus gig at Tamworth and if you ask any of the punters why they're headbanging to songs by Mondo Rock and Dragon at a festival better known for its balladeers and Golden Guitar winners, they say: "We did that last night; tonight we're rockin' with the Gurus." The Tamworth Country Music Festival in 2012 is nothing if not diverse.

"It's evolved a lot in the just the short time we've been coming," Ted said.

"You'd be surprised by just how many styles of music you can find here."



Eric Grothe Snr (left) and The Gurus, drummer Pat Hopkins, guitarist Ted Brennan, and bass player Bas Khoury.

His personal favourite – The Viper Creek Band.

"If you're going to do country rock, that's the way it should be done," he said.

While the name Gurus is likely in reference to Eric's days on the rugby league field, the band has its origins from former Sydney bands Three Day Grothe, Dave Gleeson and the Stilsons, and The Booze Brothers.

Indeed, more than once they've had the likes of Dave Gleeson of

Screaming Jets fame, Jon Stevens of Noiseworks, US blues legend Wolf Mail and Mike Vee of Australia's Got Talent as guest vocalists.

Eric was legendary for the Parramatta Eels in the 1980s – he was their winger in four premierships and also a Kangaroo.

He said the good thing about what he does now is he can walk off stage and not be sore the next day.

"I've been into music all my life. I took guitar lessons as a kid and

have loved it since, but football and music are two different things," he said.

According to the other band members, he does, however, give out Man of the Match points at the end of each gig and sometimes he gives them to himself.

Eric's two sons Eric Jnr, also a former top-class winger for Parramatta, and Daniel have at times played in the band too.

For the Gurus, music is a passion, a hobby, rather than a career.

They all have other "day jobs" and while they have written their own material, they concentrate on covers and have no plans to release an album.

"Sometimes we play a gig every week, sometimes it runs more sparse than that – this week we have three," Bas said.

They've travelled as far as Albury and Coffs Harbour but mostly it's Sydney.

Along with their now-entrenched Tamworth gigs, of course.

Clippings

Third time lucky

Carrathool Jockey Club is gearing up for something bigger and better, as the past two years have seen the popular annual Carrathool Races washed out.

Club president Mick Armstrong, said organisers were hoping for "third time lucky" for the races, which will be held on Saturday.

Racegoers can enjoy the popular fashions on the field and entertainment will be provided by band, 30 Mile.

Gates open at 11am and the day will feature a six-race program.

■ Visit www.carrathoolraces.com.au

Committee at Condo

The Condobolin Picnic Races will be held Saturday, February 25.

The marques are back, along with fashions on the field, a tug-o-war competition and a band booked for the evening entertainment.

Entry to the races is \$20 and includes race book and stubby holder.

■ Email condopicnics@hotmail.com

Country Calendar

FEBRUARY

4: Bingara Cup. Contact Bingara District Jockey Club. (02) 6723 6622.

4: Carrathool Cup. The epitomy of the "bush race", organised by the Carrathool Jockey Club. The day features a six-race program with \$35,000 in prize money, licensed bar facilities and barbecue. Fashions on the field, as well as the famous Jackaroo Dash and Jillaroo Sprint. Camping facilities overnight and breakfast available on Sunday morning. Visit carrathoolraces.com.au.

4: Guerie Picnic Races. Contact Geurie and District Racing Club. (02) 6887 1302.

5: Bega Cup. Features the running of the \$27,000 Bega Cup 1600m, the \$18,000 Bega Town Plate 1200m and the Sapphire Coast Cup, an \$18,000 race for stayers

over 2200m. Other highlights include fashions on the field. Gates open from 11.30am with 1pm start for first local race. \$15 Admission with children under 16 free, and free jumping castle. Visit sapphirecoastturflclub.com.au.

10-11: Walcha Cup Carnival. Features the Wacha Cup TAB meeting on the Friday.

17: Wagga Wagga Antiques Society meeting, ARCC Hall, Tarcutta Steet, Wagga, from 8pm. Silver expert Jolyon Warwick James will talk about fakes in the silver trade. Contact (02) 6926 3555 or 0429 125 752.

18: Bedgerabong Picnic Races. Hosted by Bedgerabong Picnic Race Club. Gates open at 10am with first race about 1pm. Full tote and sky channel available on course, along

with a selection of local and metropolitan bookmakers. Foot races for men, women and the kids follow the horses, with live evening entertainment. Visit bedgerabongraces.com.au

18: Braidwood Cup. Features full TAB and betting facilities. Contact (02) 4842 2623.

24-26: Albury Wodonga Caravan, Camping, 4WD and Fishing Show, Albury Showground. Open 9am to 5pm on Friday and Saturday, 9am to 4pm on Sunday. Visit www.ruralscene.com.au (02)67 694 132.

■ To have your event listed in the Country Calendar, email details, including contact numbers, to emma.downey@ruralpress.com or post it to: Country Calendar, c/- The Land, PO Box 999, North Richmond, NSW 2754.

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