



**HIGHER
GROUND
AUSTRALIA**

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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – June 2019

Welcome

The year is half-over, and Aspen in October is looming fast. We have been busy here as well, as we finalised the venue for our annual John Denver Tribute weekend in October. This year, we are celebrating John's life and music here in my home state of Victoria. More on that later.

I am amazed that John's name is still very much in the forefront of any 'musical' conversation. The level of respect and love people in general have for his music is overwhelming, and I'm sure that if we keep playing his songs, the next generation will take note of the messages in them. I certainly hope so.

I'm taking a break in July, travelling to the United States and Canada for the entire month. I was meant to stay with my dear JD and Colorado friend, Pat Feldmeier for the first week. After her sudden death in February, I had to rethink my plans, especially for that first week, which includes the American National Holiday on July 4. I booked myself on a tour from San Francisco to Las Vegas, which includes visits to Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Shoshone Falls, Bryce Canyon, Grand Canyon, and more. I'm really looking forward to that and at this time next week, I'll be well on my way. On the 4th July, I'll be spending the evening with another (Kiwi) Aussie, Keith Urban, as our respective tours cross paths in Provo, Utah. The highlight of the end of the tour will be attending the Donny & Marie Osmond concert in Las Vegas. I then travel to Calgary in Canada to witness the world's greatest rodeo – the Calgary Stampede. After crossing Canada, I'll be returning to the musical capital of the world – Nashville, before spending the last days of my trip in New Mexico, where I will attend the Michael Martin Murphey concert. Travelling solo isn't for everyone, and I am blessed that I am able to travel through one of the most beautiful continents in the world to visit some of the most spectacular sights North America has to offer. I'll be updating my personal blog during my travels. It's tacked onto my recently revamped website.

<https://www.justgo-blog.com/blog>

Feel free to drop in from time to time to read about my travels. In the meantime, this is what is happening in the world of John Denver.

2019 Tribute Weekend

We have finalised the venue for our annual John Denver Tribute weekend from October 11-13, 2019.

We will be staying at Rosie's Cottage in Buninyong, Victoria, just a short distance from the central regional city of Ballarat. Thanks to Colin, who has visited many places in and around Ballarat to find the best possible place for our needs. Thanks also to Carolyn for your input. Finding a venue is not always easy, especially when the perfect place gets snatched from under you, as what happened to us last week. However, the advantage of Rosie's Cottage is that it's out in the country, far away from neighbours.

It's fairly reasonably-priced, and depending on our final numbers, will cost between \$50 and \$100 in accommodation per person, plus \$40 food kitty. Since I'll be away for the next month, I'll hold off taking deposits until August.

Annual Fundraiser

I'm still looking for ideas for a fundraiser that will raise mega-bucks for our annual donation to Higher Ground Raptors. Peggy's work with raptor rehabilitation is so very important for continued conservation of our raptor species. I can put together a mystery raffle prize, but I'm really looking for volunteers who are going to come up with something special. All ideas will be discussed. www.highergroundraptors.com and <https://www.facebook.com/HigherGroundRaptors>.

Higher Ground Australia Website

Our web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>.

I've started collating some photos and comments about our previous gatherings.

<https://www.hgavic.com/about-us> If anyone has photos from the first gatherings, please send them through to me. I seem to have a problem with locating some of the earlier files. The draft constitution has also been added to the page. I need our members to give it one last check and if it is all OK, I'll finalise it and re-post it on the website.

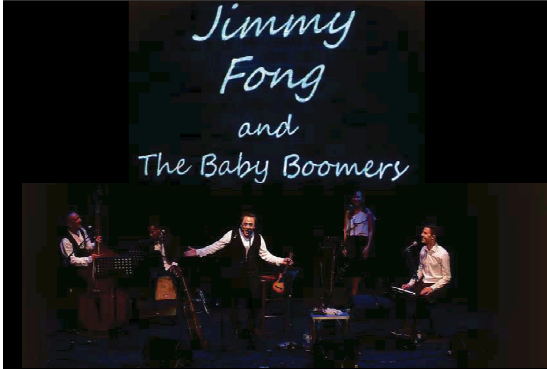
Please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com with your photos, comments, and feedback.

Timeless classics with Jimmy Fong

From singing with John Denver to having a song to promote Penang, the Melbourne-based Fong is still making waves, writes

New Straits Times, 23 Jun 2019

Subhadra Devan. mstent@nst.com.my



THE signature song of John Denver, *Take Me Home, Country Roads*, drew Penang-born Jimmy Fong into the music of this legendary folk singer. When he heard the US Billboard 1971 chart-topper playing on the radio, the budding musician learnt the tune first on his guitar, and then the lyrics.

Then in 1994, according to his website, Fong met Denver when he toured Malaysia. Denver performed *Country Roads* and requested Fong to perform with him. Decades later, the 59-year-old Fong remembers the Denver duet well.

Something he still can't get over is that "Denver was someone so famous and yet can be so humble", says Fong, who is now a singer, songwriter and artist based in Melbourne, Australia.

The 1970s was a time of more simplicity perhaps, and Denver's gentle, laidback sound fitted in well with the era.

Denver, who tragically died in a plane crash in 1997, wrote several unforgettable songs including *Leaving On A Jet Plane* in 1967, first sung by Peter, Paul and Mary, and *Rocky Mountain High*, in 1972 which became an official song of the US state of Colorado.

Obviously inspired by Denver, Fong also produced and starred in a musical show named *My Time With John Denver*, which saw sell-out shows in Australia and the United States.

In October 2015, Fong was invited to perform in Aspen, Colorado, for the John Denver annual festival. Later that month, he performed in New Mexico (Denver's birthplace), the United States, in a fundraising concert.

He was invited back to perform again at the annual John Denver Festival in October 2017 and was given the *Soaring Eagle Award* by the Rocky Mountain Foundation For The Performing Arts for

his outstanding musical talents and accomplishments.

"I like Denver's timeless classics. The sincerity in his lyrics. The passion, the humanity and compassion that drives his songs," says Fong. While residing Down Under, Penang is never far from Fong's mind, as he has been back to perform, time and again. He enjoyed sell-out shows with Down Memory Lane in both Penangpac and the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre in 2017 and last year.

He will perform *Memories Of Penang* at the Penang Performing Arts Centre come June 28 weekend.

That song is said to be in the running as the theme song for Experience Penang Year 2020 state tourism campaign.

For the Penangpac show, he says: "The audience can hear and watch *Memories*

Of Penang performed live by the original artist in the wonderful acoustic ambience of Penangpac.

"They can also hear the story firsthand of how I came to write the song. What inspired me to write and how it was recorded."

Fong will be performing with the Baby Boomers.

They comprise Bonnie Jeremiah on electric bass and double bass, with Rasyidi Bakar on percussion. Both will provide backing vocals.

"Richard Martin (who performed on the original recording) is on leave for this coming concert and is replaced by Michael Kay on keyboard," says Fong.

Fong has released four albums to date. These include *Just When You Thought*

(2013), *My Time With John Denver* (2015), *Down Memory Lane* (live album) and *Dancing Fireflies*.

Some of his popular original songs include

December Skies, *Dancing Fireflies*

(about Sarawak), *Balancing Act*, *Build That*

Bridge, *Jonker Street*, *Helang Langkawi* and *Just*

When You Thought.

Fong listens to young Malaysian artists like Zee Avi sometimes. "I am still catching up with the local music scene," he says.

The Miri-born Zee, also a folk singer, first made waves in Malaysia with *No Christmas For Me* back in 2008. In 2016, she won Best Original Film Song at the 53rd Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards for *Arena Cahaya*, the theme song she co-wrote for the movie, *Ola Bola*.

Fong treasures every step of his journey so far. "I wouldn't change a thing," he says.

Jimmy will be performing his Memories of Penang show on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th June in Penangpac (Penang, Malaysia). Tickets are available through

<https://proticket.com.my/penangpac-memories-of-penang/>



He will also be performing in Melbourne, Australia in September. More information will be available on his website www.jimmyfong.net. CDs are also available. Please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com or contact Jimmy through his website www.jimmyfong.net.

Burnin' Burton

Scott Jordan Apr 22, 2002 - 11:00 pm



'It's like being a great singer -- a solo is so important, and it's as important as the record.' -- Legendary guitarist and sideman James Burton. There's a roar coming from the other end of James Burton's phone on a recent Saturday morning, as he pulls his tractor into the barn at his Shreveport home. "I'm trying to get seven acres mowed before I leave for Los Angeles tomorrow," says Burton.

The scene is a microcosm of the storied career of legendary guitarist Burton, the humble Louisiana six-stringer who's played guitar for Ricky Nelson, Elvis Presley, Dale Hawkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Merle Haggard, Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris, not to mention countless other performers and recording sessions. The collective stardom of his numerous employers and associates is blinding, but Burton's navigated that rarified stratosphere with a combination of impeccable playing and selflessness.

"Communication is so important," says Burton. "Before you can be a player, you have to incorporate and associate yourself with the other players. You can't be the individual person, it doesn't work that way. You have to work together as a team. You listen to the other players, and then you add to it, or try not to take anything away from it. Even if it's just two notes, it's always a discipline."

His devotion to that credo has kept Burton's name in the shadows somewhat, largely known to fellow musicians and music aficionados. He's only recorded one solo album in his career, 1971's *The Guitar Sounds of James Burton* -- and that was a fortuitous accident. "We were in the studio to work with Elvis, and he got sick and cancelled the sessions," remembers Burton. "So the producer said, 'This is a great time to do some recording with you and take advantage of these great

players we already have here, like David Briggs and Charlie McCoy.' It worked out really good." More than three decades later, Burton's relentless touring and recording schedule as a sideman still leaves little time for projects that bring him closer to center stage. That's what makes his Jazz Fest appearance alongside pianist Kenny Bill Stinson & the LA/ARK Mystics such a highly anticipated set; Burton's schedule is open for a rare chance to play a festival in his home state, in a band with his friends and local peers.

"I don't sing, and I don't think doing a lot of instrumentals looks good, but people like exciting tunes with vocals and everything in the mix," says Burton. "We do a whole bunch of different stuff together, and I think it's going to be interesting. It doesn't matter who's fronting the group -- what's important is you're playing good music. It'll be a mixture of rock 'n' roll from the '50s and '60s, some blues, and probably some stuff from the '70s."

This live performance coincides with Burton's desire to finally record another solo album, which is already in the planning stages. "I'd like to include a bunch of friends as guests on the album, and I've worked with so many people, it'll probably come down to who's available," he says. "I've talked to Vince Gill, Marty Stuart, Jeff Beck, and I spoke to George Harrison shortly before he died," says Burton. "I'd like to get the Stones -- Keith (Richards) and Ron (Wood) and Charlie (Watts); I already mentioned it to Merle Haggard and he said he can't wait; Emmylou, of course. ... There's just so many wonderful entertainers I've worked with."

All those luminaries called on Burton for his signature blend of chicken-pickin', which he developed through using a combination of finger-picking and straight-picking. "Everybody tells me that they can tell it's me playing when they hear a few notes," says Burton. "Having that identity in my playing is so important, whether I'm playing behind Tom Jones or Merle Haggard or Travis Tritt. It's like being a great singer -- a solo is so important, and it's as important as the record." A list of Burton's most magical guitar moments -- like the riff for "Susie Q" -- could fill a book. When asked which songs he's most proud of playing on and being associated with, Burton pauses for a minute, then the memories start flowing. "'Hello Mary Lou,' 'Fools Rush In,' a lot of Elvis, like 'Mystery Train,' where we remade some of the stuff live ... Remember Gram Parsons? I like a lot of that, like 'Leaving Las Vegas,' and 'Until I Gain Control Again.' I did an album with Rodney Crowell, and I did some dobro stuff on there. And there was the Jimmie Rodgers album with Merle Haggard..." Burton's voice trails off. "I've just done so much stuff that I've forgotten some of it," he says apologetically, before getting ready to start

up his tractor again. "Every once in a while I'll go back and listen to some of the old stuff, and say, 'Is that me?' How did I do that?"

Our deepest condolences are extended to the Burton family on the death of James' son, Jeff on April 7, 2019. He died after a long illness.



Trevor Knight

Trevor has performed in Canada, USA, New Zealand and throughout the South Pacific. He has performed for the Queen at the opening of Darling Harbour, a concert on the main stage of the Sydney Opera House and working with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

No stranger to television he has had a 3 year stint on Channel Nine's "Super Flying Fun Show" followed by an 8 year association with Australia's highest rating variety programme "The Midday Show" and many other appearances on "The Today Show" and other top rated shows.

He has performed with his friend John Denver as well as Neil Sedaka, Forster and Allan, Paul Simon and Tom Paxton to name but a few.

He has had many songs in the country music charts including the album "High Country" which was in the top ten for 6 months and the single "The Days of Old Khancoben" that went platinum as well as winning two Golden Guitars, the most coveted award in Australian Country Music, and received 8 other nominations.

Instruments played on stage are: Guitar, Ukulele, Banjo..

When Trevor is not performing he lives with his wife, Maya, on a beautiful property in the middle of the Great Lakes National Park, which they share with their many animals, donkeys, whippets, chooks, cows, a goat and their beloved Arabian horses.

Trevor is a horseman of note and over the years has bred many champions.

In his chosen sport of Endurance Riding, Trevor has achieved much, five Tom Quilty 100 mile buckles and three 400km Shahzada completions to his credit.

In 1998 he and his horse were chosen for the Australian National Team that went to the United Arab Emirates to contest the World Championship

100 mile Endurance Race where the team won a bronze medal.

Trevor has competed all over Australia and the world in his chosen sport even achieving a creditable 4 th place in the rugged "Rocky Mountain Challenge" at Ghost River, Alberta in the Canadian Rockies.

Trevor's latest CD "Favourable Winds " is his finest work yet, produced, arranged and recorded at his own studio on his farm in Bulahdelah, with 12 brand new songs most of them written with his good friend and co-writer Allan Caswell and one that he and Smoky wrote in 1989.

There something for everyone in this album, a bounce of banjos, tongue in cheek Jazz, a touch of Country and some fine ballads about daughters, weddings and Patterson's Curse!



Susan Leaver's Memorial – Aspen, 2019

A memorial has been planned to honour the life of Susan Leaver in Aspen on October 9, 2019 following the Meet and Greet event at the John Denver Sanctuary.

As many of you know, when Susan attended the Aspen in October event in 2018, she was terminally ill. She used this opportunity to say goodbye to her friends with whom she had shared many special memories. Susan spent her last days in the gentle and loving care of the superb staff of the Aspen Hospital. She was cremated and her ashes will be scattered at the memorial service on October 9. Flowers may be purchased from the recommended local florist, *Mountain Flowers of Aspen*

<https://www.mountainflowersofaspen.com/>. If you would like to order flowers, but cannot attend the memorial yourself, Laurie Stowers has kindly offered to collect them and take them to the service. Please advise the florist when you place your order that they will be collected by Laurie. Alternately, should you wish to make a donation in lieu of flowers, I suggest a monetary donation to the Aspen Hospital may be appropriate.

Susan's passing was sad, but given the severity of her illness when she arrived in Aspen, she showed huge determination to attend AIO one last time, amongst the people she loved. Susan had a big heart and will be missed by all.

Higher Ground Raptors

Higher Ground Raptors is a not-for-profit organisation that is very close to our heart. Peggy McDonald has researched and worked tirelessly for the rehabilitation of raptors for many years. She has a long history and love of Australian raptors, and she has studied the methodology and practices of bird rehabilitation from some of the best-known experts in the world. Her innovations in enclosure design to house birds during their healing and rehabilitation are world class and she has proven many times over that her methods are far superior to others in Australia. Higher Ground Australia has always raised money to contribute to raptor rehabilitation, and more recently, we have exclusively donated to Peggy's Higher Ground Raptors. You can see the extent of her work through her web pages and her Facebook page. www.highergroundraptors.com and <https://www.facebook.com/HigherGroundRaptors>. In 2017, Peggy won the Churchill Fellowship to advance and exchange our knowledge of Australian raptor rehabilitation and release, and last year fulfilled the terms of the prize by attending several rehabilitation facilities overseas to work with and to study practices and to share her experiences and knowledge. Her report has now been published and is available to read on her Facebook page.

https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/media/fellows/McDonald_P_2017_Australian_raptor_rehabilitation_and_release_techniques.pdf

John Denver's love of eagles especially led to his work with Morley Nelson, a leading visionary in raptor rehabilitation in Idaho, USA. John often said that he would love his spirit to return as an eagle, and I'm sure that that spirit is present in all people who work with these magnificent birds. We will be raising money again this year to donate to Peggy's work. Our contributions, although small, are always put to good use, either through education and equipment purchased. If you would like to donate to this most worthy cause, you may do so through Peggy's website

<https://www.highergroundraptors.com/donate>

Our new logo includes the eagle as a symbol of our close association with raptor rehabilitation and our support for those selfless people who work hard to ensure our unique Australian wildlife is cared for in the best possible way.

TRIBUTE ARTISTS

Check out your favourite tribute artists to see where and when they are performing:

Brad Fitch

The 16th Annual Estes Park John Denver Tribute Concert will be held on August 31, 2019 at **YMCA of the Rockies, 2515 Tunnel Road, Estes Park Co. 80517**. Tickets are available from

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-john-denver-tribute-concert-estes-park-lions-club-tickets-63434781138?fbclid=IwAR3yUoLbnCZ7a-O6AcjMAWbi-z6aM-EiAUzzbVYVB1Wln6oJyEUFiCoFNIM>

Mark Cormican

Mark Cormican has released his 2019 concert schedule. Check his website for more information. <http://markcormican.com/schedule/>

Jim Curry

Jim and Anne Curry have released their 2019 concert schedule. Check out their website for their concert schedule:

<https://www.jimcurrymusic.com/future-concerts/>

Back Home Again

A tribute to John Denver.

Tom Becker is a former member of the Legendary Folk Group, The New Christy Minstrels, and has gone on to appear with Grammy Winners and Music Legends including Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Gregg Allman and Jerry Jeff Walker.

Tom Becker has released his 2019 concert schedule, which can be accessed by clicking the link below.

<http://www.johndenvertribute.net/schedule.htm>

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon have released their 2019/2020 concert schedule. All concert information can be found on their website;

<https://bouldercanyonband.com/concert-schedule>

Chris Westfall

Chris Westfall has released his event listings for his forthcoming concerts in the Northern Spring and Summer. To check out whether he is playing at a venue near you, please click the link to his website.

<http://www.chriswestfall.com/inConcert.php>

John Adams

John Adams is currently touring in the Netherlands. Please check his website for information about his concerts and for tickets.

<https://www.johnadamsband.com/calendar>

Rick Worrall

Canadian artist, Rick Worrall, together with Lee Holdridge and local symphony orchestras present *Rocky Mountain High: An Evening of John Denver*.

Concerts will be held in Victoria BC, Nanaimo BC, in May and Hamilton ON, and Toronto ON in June. Click the link for information about tickets.

<http://rockymountainhighconcert.com/concerts/>

For more information about tribute artists around the globe, check out our website;

www.hgavic.com



ASPEN IN OCTOBER 2019

The plans for the 2019 Aspen in October tribute are well underway. Listed below are some of the concerts and activities announced to date. Ticket prices have been included when known. This will be updated during the year as more information comes to hand.

Tuesday October 8

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Wednesday October 9

12pm

Meet and Greet
John Denver Sanctuary
470 Rio Grande Pl, Aspen, Colorado 81611
A memorial service for Susan Leaver will be conducted after the Meet and Greet. All welcome.

4:00-6:00pm

Aspen Meadow Band
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Thursday October 10

1-3pm

David Stratford
Mountain Chalet

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Friday October 11

11:30am

Jim Horn's Adventures with John Denver
Mountain Chalet, Aspen (5th Floor)
Tickets at the door

7:00-9:00pm

Ron Matthews
Mountain Chalet, Aspen

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Saturday October 12

12pm

4th Annual Singer/Songwriter Event
Mountain Chalet, Aspen

4:00-6:00pm

Aspen Meadow Band
Limelight Lodge, 228 E Cooper Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

7:30pm

22nd Anniversary Musical Tribute to John Denver
Wheeler Opera House
320 E Hyman Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611
Tickets \$50-\$70

<https://aspenshowtix.com/Online/default.asp>

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Sunday October 13

11:00-2:30pm

Pine Creek Cookhouse lunch & Concert with
Chris Collins & Friends
12500 Castle Creek Road, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Tickets \$85. Contact Suzanne at
mountainsrose312@gmail.com

4:00-6:00pm

Jam at the Chapel with Mack Bailey and Chris Nole

Aspen Chapel, 77 Meadowood Dr., Aspen, CO 81611

Tickets \$25

<https://chrisnole.com/event/2693683/496930126/jam-at-the-chapel>

8pm till late

Singalong
Mountain Chalet, Aspen
333 E Durant Ave, Aspen, Colorado 81611

Monday October 14

10am

Goodbye Again
Wagner Park
300 S Monarch St, Aspen

This month, I've selected the lyrics *The Eagle and the Hawk* to honour the work that Peggy McDonald does with raptor rehabilitation in Australia.

Some material included in this newsletter has been derived from the public domain, such as the internet and printed media. Articles and reviews are the opinion of the individual writer and as long as the content is of a reasonable nature and it is appropriate, it will be included. Organisations mentioned or featured in this newsletter are included to educate and inform people of their role and purpose. HGA does not profit from including the names of any organisation in this newsletter.

This newsletter is only emailed to those people who have individually contacted HGA and expressed a wish to receive it. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you no longer wish to receive the HGA newsletter.



The Eagle and the Hawk

(John Denver)

*I am the eagle,
I live in high country
In rocky cathedrals that reach to the sky*

*I am the hawk and
there's blood on my feathers
But time is still turning they soon will be dry*

*And all of those who see me,
all who believe in me
Share in the freedom
I feel when I fly*

*Come dance with the west wind and
touch on the mountain tops
Sail over the canyons
and up to the stars
And reach for the heavens
and hope for the future
And all that we can be
and not what we are*

