



THE DNA OF AUSTRALIAN MUSIC

Together, these ten tracks form a musical map of Australia.
— its swagger, its heartache, its optimism, and its unmistakable voice

Australia's musical history isn't written in textbooks. It's sung in pubs, blasted from car stereos on long coastal drives, and carried in the collective memory of generations who grew up with these songs as part of everyday life. The tracks below, drawn from authoritative sources like the Triple J Hottest 100 of Australian Songs and the APRA Top 30, form a kind of unofficial national playlist. They're woven straight into the country's DNA, each one capturing a moment, a mood, or a shift in the culture that still resonates today.

Take INXS's "Never Tear Us Apart," a song that has lost none of its cinematic sweep since 1987. Michael Hutchence delivers romance with a dangerous edge, the kind that feels both intimate and larger than life. It's the sort of track that reminds you Australia didn't just produce great rock bands. It produced global icons who shaped the sound of an era.

Jump forward to 2003 and Hilltop Hoods' "The Nosebleed Section," a turning point for Australian hip-hop. Before this track, local rap was still fighting for legitimacy. After it, the Hoods became the voice of a generation who recognised themselves in the cheap seats, shouting back with pride. It's a song that made Australian hip-hop feel not just possible, but essential.

The Veronicas' "Untouched" arrived in 2007 like a bolt of electricity. Few Australian pop songs have travelled as far or hit as hard. Its frantic strings, pulsing beat, and breathless vocals captured the chaos of young love with pinpoint accuracy. Even now, it's impossible to hear that opening riff without feeling a jolt of adrenaline.

Missy Higgins brought things back to earth with "Scar," a song built on honesty rather than spectacle. Released in 2004, it showcased her ability to turn vulnerability into strength. Higgins didn't need bombast; she just needed a piano, a melody, and the courage to tell the truth. The result was one of the most defining Australian singer-songwriter moments of the 2000s.

Crowded House's "Don't Dream It's Over" remains one of the country's most enduring exports. Neil Finn's songwriting has a way of sounding both hopeful and melancholy, and this track walks that line perfectly. It's the kind of song Australians return to during quiet moments, when reflection feels more important than noise.

Then there's John Farnham's "You're the Voice," a song that has become a cultural rallying cry. Whether it's blasting at a footy final or sung loudly in a pub, it carries a sense of unity that few tracks can match. Farnham's vocal performance is nothing short of monumental, and the message still lands with force.

Long before these modern classics, The Easybeats were already shaping the national sound with "Friday on My Mind." Released in 1966, it captured the working-week grind with a burst of pure optimism. It's gritty, joyful, and still one of the great Australian rock songs.

Powderfinger's "My Happiness" brought a gentler touch in 2000. Bernard Fanning's warm, aching vocal turned a simple melody into something deeply nostalgic. It's a song about longing that somehow feels comforting, like a familiar postcard from a different time.

Cold Chisel's "Flame Trees" remains one of the most emotionally charged Australian songs ever recorded. Jimmy Barnes delivers a vocal that feels lived-in, bruised, and honest. It's a portrait of small-town Australia painted with affection and regret in equal measure.

Finally, Gotye's "Somebody That I Used to Know" proved that Australian indie could dominate the world. Built from minimalist production and a haunting duet with Kimbra, it became a global phenomenon without losing its handmade charm.

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Hang On! Help Is On The Way!

Little River Band have one of those stories that musicians love because it's built on craft, persistence, and a band learning how to sound like themselves. By the mid-70s, they were already carving out a reputation as Australia's most polished export, but "Help Is On The Way" was the moment everything clicked. It wasn't just a hit — it became a kind of musical pep-talk that still lands beautifully with audiences today.

Released in 1977 as the lead single from Diamantina Cocktail, the track arrived at a time when the band were sharpening their identity. They weren't chasing trends; they were building a sound that blended West Coast smoothness with Australian storytelling. The result was a song that felt warm, reassuring, and quietly confident. It's no surprise that fans still treat it as one of the band's defining moments.

"Help Is On The Way" opens with that unmistakable LRB groove — steady, bright, and full of forward motion. Glenn Shorrock's vocal sits right in the pocket, delivering a message that's simple but timeless: life gets messy, but you're not alone. The chorus, with its layered harmonies, is one of the band's most uplifting arrangements. Even today, musicians talk about how clean and balanced those vocals are, a reminder of just how meticulous LRB were in the studio.



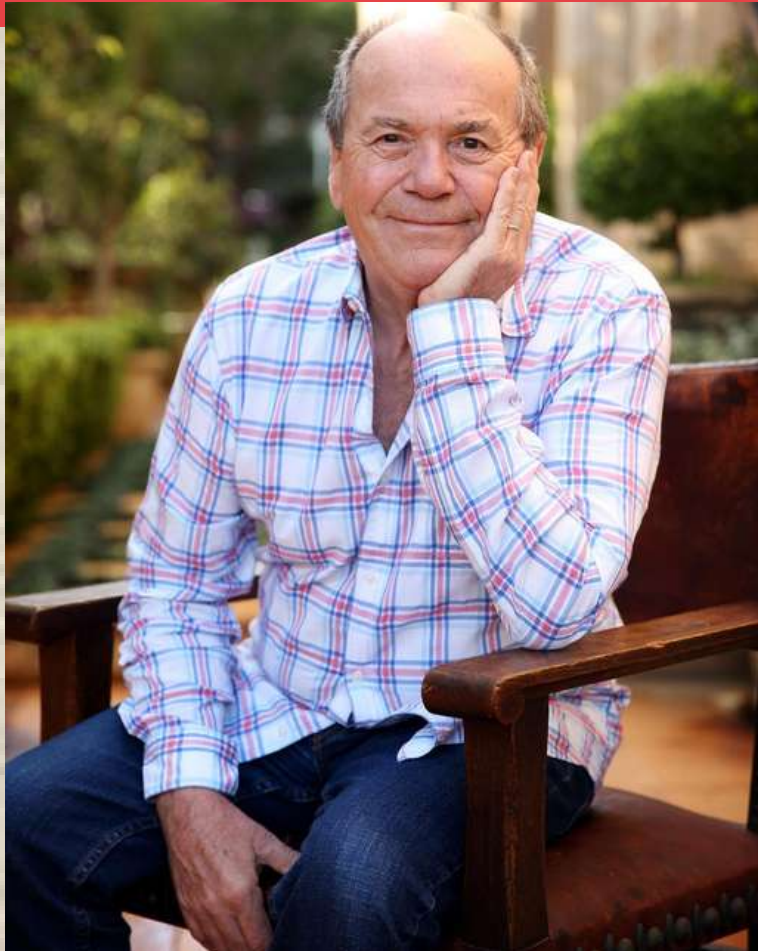
What makes the song special is its tone. It's not preachy, not dramatic, not trying to be profound. It's friendly. It's the musical equivalent of a mate saying, "Hang in there — you'll get through this." That tone helped the track resonate across Australia, the US, and Europe, becoming one of the band's early international successes. It also set the stage for the run of hits that followed, from "Happy Anniversary" to "Reminiscing."

The band themselves were in a period of transition and ambition. They were touring heavily, refining their harmonies, and pushing to break into the American market. "Help Is On The Way" became a calling card — a showcase of their tight musicianship and their ability to write songs that felt both personal and universal. It's no accident that musicians still study the track's arrangement. The blend of acoustic guitar, electric textures, and vocal layering is a masterclass in making something sound effortless.

For fans, the song has become more than a classic. It's a reminder of a time when Australian bands were proving they could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the world's best. And for musicians, it's a lesson in how sincerity, craft, and clarity can create something that lasts decades.

Little River Band have plenty of hits, but "Help Is On The Way" remains one of their most enduring because it captures what made them great: warmth, precision, and a genuine connection with listeners. Nearly fifty years later, it still feels like a friend tapping you on the shoulder, reminding you to keep going.

SHORROCK



Glenn Shorrock's voice has been part of Australia's musical landscape for so long that it's easy to forget just how unusual his journey has been. Born in Kent in 1944, he arrived in Adelaide as a Ten Pound Pom in 1954, one of thousands of post-war migrants who helped reshape the country.

What set Shorrock apart was how quickly he found his footing in the emerging local music scene, and how naturally he became one of its defining voices. Glenn is the GoSet guest for September.

His first major band, The Twilights, formed in 1964 and quickly earned a reputation as one of Australia's most polished pop groups. They weren't just popular; they were ambitious. Winning the 1966 Hoadley's Battle of the Sounds put them at the top of the national circuit and sent them to London to record, a rare opportunity for an Australian band at the time. Tracks like "What's Wrong with the Way I Live" showed a group pushing beyond the usual beat-band formula, and Shorrock's vocals were central to that sound, confident, radio-ready, and unmistakably his.

When The Twilights ended, Shorrock didn't slow down. In 1969 he co-founded Axiom with Brian Cadd, Don Mudie, Chris Stockley, and Doug Lavery. Axiom aimed higher than most Australian bands of the era, blending country-rock influences with strong songwriting. Their single "A Little Ray of Sunshine" became a national hit and remains one of the most recognisable Australian songs of the early 1970s. The band relocated to the UK in 1970 and signed with Warner Bros., but industry pressures and internal changes led to their breakup in 1971.

Shorrock stayed in London, working in management and joining the country-rock outfit Esperanto. It was a period of steady work rather than headlines, but it kept him connected to the industry and sharpened his skills. When he returned to Australia in 1974, he was ready for the next chapter — and it turned out to be the one that made him internationally known.



Little River Band formed in 1975, and Shorrock's voice became the centrepiece of their sound. The band's success in the United States was unprecedented for an Australian act. Between 1976 and 1983, LRB scored multiple Billboard Top 10 hits, including "Reminiscing," "Lady," "Lonesome Loser," and "The Night Owls." "Reminiscing" became one of the most-played songs in American radio history. Shorrock's smooth, conversational delivery set the band apart from the era's more theatrical rock acts, giving LRB a sound that travelled well across markets.

He left the band in 1982, returned in 1987, and departed again in 1996. His solo career included the 1982 album "Villain of the Peace," which produced the single "Rock 'n' Roll Soldier." He appeared in major televised events, including "Australia Live" during the 1988 Bicentennial, and in 1991 he was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame as a member of Little River Band.

Shorrock has remained active ever since, performing across Australia, releasing solo work, and appearing in stage productions such as "Grease" and "The Rocky Horror Show." His autobiography, "Now, Where Was I?" published in 2018, offers a straightforward account of his career, band politics, and the realities of international touring.

In recent years, his partnership with Brian Cadd has become one of the most enjoyable fixtures on the Australian live circuit. Their shows blend hits from Axiom and LRB with stories from decades on the road. It's a collaboration built on genuine history: two musicians who came up through the same era, wrote songs that became part of the national soundtrack, and never lost their connection to audiences.

What makes Glenn Shorrock's career stand out is its consistency. He has moved through multiple eras of Australian music — beat groups, country-rock, international soft-rock, nostalgia tours — without losing credibility or relevance. His voice remains instantly recognisable, and his place in Australian music is secure not because of mythmaking, but because of the work itself.

THEN AND NOW

The Final Episode of Countdown (1987)



The last episode of Countdown aired on the ABC in July 1987, marking the end of a 13-year run that had shaped Australian popular music more than any other television program of its era. The final broadcast closed a chapter that began in 1974, when the show first went to air under the stewardship of Ian “Molly” Meldrum. Over its lifespan, Countdown became the country’s most influential music program, launching careers, shaping national taste and providing a weekly focal point for Australian families.

The final episode was filmed at the ABC’s Rippon Lea studios in Melbourne. It featured interviews with singer Carol Hitchcock and Jim Keays of Masters Apprentices, reflecting the show’s long-standing commitment to both emerging artists and established Australian acts. The broadcast carried a sense of closure: Countdown had been central to the development of the local music industry, and its final night acknowledged that legacy without theatrics or reinvention.

By 1987, the music landscape had changed significantly. The rise of music videos, shifts in radio programming and the growing influence of international formats meant that Countdown was no longer the singular force it had been in the 1970s and early 1980s. Yet its impact remained clear. The show had provided early national exposure for Skyhooks, Sherbet, AC/DC, Men At Work, Marcia Hines, Mark Holden and many others. It also played a crucial role in the careers of artists who later became global names, including John Farnham, Olivia Newton-John, INXS and Kylie Minogue.

The night after the final episode, Channel Nine’s Willesee aired a tribute featuring a reflective Molly Meldrum, acknowledging the program’s achievements and cultural significance. This companion broadcast underscored how deeply Countdown had become woven into Australian music identity.

The final episode didn’t just mark the end of a television show; it marked the end of an era in which a single national program could define the sound of Australian youth. Its legacy continues through the artists it launched and the cultural memory it shaped.

Unlikely Rise To The Top



There’s something wonderfully old-school about a breakout hit arriving from a producer who was, by his own admission, on the verge of giving up. Brisbane’s Josh Fawaz has spent years quietly working away, posting tracks, refining his sound, and hoping one of them might finally catch. Then, in April, he uploaded a two-minute house remake of Madonna’s Like A Prayer, went to bed, and woke up to a completely different life. The track didn’t just perform well; it took off with the kind of momentum most artists only dream about.

Within weeks, Fawaz’s version became the most-played song on Australian commercial radio, holding the top spot for more than three months. More than 8000 spins across 54 stations, 38 million streams on Spotify, 16 million on YouTube. These are numbers usually reserved for major-label pop stars, not independent producers working from a home studio in Brisbane’s suburbs.

But success rarely arrives without a bit of noise around it. Fellow producer Mitch Thomas, known as Needs No Sleep, questioned whether the track’s robotic Madonna-style vocal was generated using artificial intelligence. The debate simmered for weeks, fuelled by the fact that no vocalist was credited on the track. Fawaz responded with classic Australian bluntness, telling Thomas to stop having a sook and insisting AI was simply a tool, not the entire creative engine.

This week, the credits changed. Spotify now lists generative AI for both vocals and drums, confirming what many listeners suspected and placing Fawaz’s hit squarely in the centre of the global conversation about AI-assisted music. It is a conversation the industry can no longer avoid. Spotify has removed tens of millions of low-quality AI tracks, ARIA has endorsed a new global labelling system, and fans increasingly want transparency about how their favourite songs are made.

Yet for all the debate, the heart of the story remains unchanged. Fawaz made something people wanted to hear. Nostalgia, dance-floor energy, and modern production collided at exactly the right moment. The track feels familiar yet fresh, retro yet current, and it slips easily into radio playlists and weekend playlists alike.

For Fawaz, this chapter reads like a well-earned turning point. After years of near misses, he gave himself one last try, and it paid off in a way few artists ever experience. And for the rest of us, it is a reminder that the next big Australian hit might come from anywhere, even from a producer who almost walked away.

Boomers and the Changing Shape of Their Audience



Australian legacy acts sit at the centre of a demographic shift that is reshaping the country's music economy. Artists such as John Farnham, Jimmy Barnes, Midnight Oil, Cold Chisel, INXS (post-Hutchence), Daryl Braithwaite and Paul Kelly built their careers during a period when album sales, radio rotation and national touring circuits defined commercial success.

Their core audience of Baby Boomers and early Gen-X supported these artists for decades through consistent ticket buying, physical media purchases and long-term loyalty. As those audiences age, the industry is adjusting to new patterns in demand, attendance and catalogue consumption.

Boomers were historically the most reliable supporters of Australian heritage acts. Through the 1990s and 2000s, Farnham's arena tours, Barnes' annual national circuits and Kelly's steady touring schedule were sustained by fans who regularly attended shows and purchased CDs, DVDs and box sets. Industry reporting from ARIA and Pollstar across those decades consistently showed strong touring revenue for these artists, driven by older audiences with stable purchasing habits.

As Boomers move into their 70s and 80s, promoters have reduced the length and frequency of national tours, favouring shorter runs, festival appearances and co-headlining formats that consolidate demand into fewer dates.

The festival model has become a cornerstone of the legacy-act economy. Events such as Red Hot Summer Tour, A Day on the Green and By the C have built their business around heritage performers, offering daytime, outdoor, multi-artist bills that suit older audiences.

These festivals provide a practical solution: they allow legacy acts to reach large crowds without the physical strain of extended touring, and they attract younger attendees who may not seek out a standalone heritage-act concert but will attend a multi-artist event. This format has become one of the most stable platforms for Australian legacy artists.

Catalogue visibility is another major factor. Streaming reshaped how younger listeners encounter Australian classics. Songs like "Beds Are Burning," "Working Class Man," "The Horses" and "Great Southern Land" continue to appear in film, television, advertising and sports broadcasts, providing ongoing exposure. While streaming revenue is lower per listener than physical sales, it keeps catalogues active and discoverable.

Younger audiences often encounter these songs through playlists, algorithmic recommendations or cultural moments—such as Midnight Oil's political relevance or Farnham's "You're the Voice" being used in national events. This creates a slow but steady pipeline of new listeners who engage with legacy material without having lived through its original release era.

The industry's marketing strategies have adapted accordingly. Labels once targeted Boomers with box sets, remastered editions and archival releases. As that market contracts, labels focus more on digital engagement, short-form content and cross-generational collaborations. For example, Barnes' collaborations with younger artists, Kelly's presence on streaming playlists and INXS' catalogue campaigns demonstrate how legacy acts maintain visibility in a digital-first environment. These approaches aim to introduce established artists to younger listeners who may not have grown up with album-era music but still engage with classic material when it appears in contemporary contexts.

Touring economics are also evolving. Heritage acts increasingly rely on residencies, festival circuits and limited-run tours rather than the extensive national schedules that defined earlier decades. This mirrors global patterns: fewer large-scale tours, greater reliance on curated events and increased importance of catalogue relevance. The shift is practical rather than symbolic—artists adapt to the realities of ageing audiences, physical demands and changing revenue streams.

Despite these changes, Australian legacy acts retain a strong cultural presence. Their music remains embedded in national identity, from Farnham's anthemic ballads to Midnight Oil's political commentary and Cold Chisel's pub-rock storytelling. The commercial model that sustained them for decades is evolving, but their cultural relevance persists through continued catalogue engagement, festival appearances and media usage.

The long-term trajectory suggests a stable, if transformed, future. Legacy acts will continue to perform, but in formats suited to contemporary demand. Their catalogues will remain active through streaming and cultural reuse. And younger audiences will keep discovering Australian classics through digital platforms, ensuring that the country's musical heritage remains part of its ongoing cultural landscape.

MAKING NEWS



Thanks to member Melissa Burrows' connections, Channel Nine News turned out for a pre-event gathering for fellow musicians and for the day of the lunch itself. Freddie was generous in sharing his talent with Nine.

It was a great opportunity to let more people know about the GoSet Club and the work it is doing fundraising for charities like Love Your Sister and Stage Act. GoSet also supports members who are facing hard times or illness.



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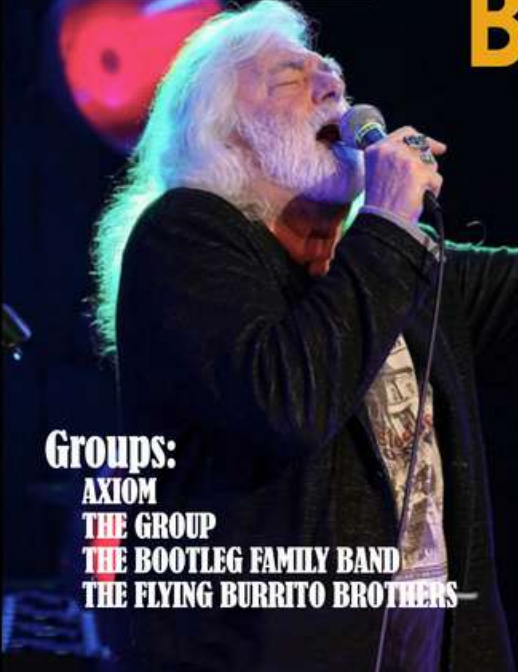


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