

Is Country Music Un-Australian?

Australian country music was recently in turmoil over claims that it's becoming too Americanised. Do you believe Country purists like John Williamson are right? Troy Cassar-Daley who holds four Golden Guitar awards which he won in January 2013 has also pulled out of next year's awards.

It seems that Country Music awards are as much about controversy as they are about celebration.

When CMAA's co-founder John Williamson quit as its President over concerns that the shortlist for the association's Golden Guitar awards had become too Americanised.

In a letter to CMAA's chair Jeff Chandler he said "it seems the industry is hell-bent on creating more Keith Urbans who was born in NZ, raised in Australia and became a star after moving to the US.

It seems the frustration for Williamson was also the nomination of **The Great Country Songbook** by Adam Harvey and Troy Cassar-Daley as album of the year. The album is a collection of old classic country songs 90% of which are American!

Williamson said, "We should be nurturing what Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson started."

Harvey and Cassar-Daley responded by withdrawing their album from the nominations.

Harvey said he had been "hurt by some of the comments ... John Williamson did ring me himself, so I'll give him that, and said he hoped he hadn't lost a friend over this but I had to tell him I was pretty disappointed."

Dobe Newton, of country legends the Bushwackers – has stepped in as president and wasted no time in issuing his own statement. It begins "I'm saddened by the very public debate inspired by comments from the past president," and makes the point that The Great Country Songbook is absolutely legitimate.

"It is important for fans of country music, as well as casual observers, to understand that it is not the organisation's place to dictate what can or cannot be recorded, nor what people like or want to listen to. A nomination and judging process took place strictly in line with the CMAA's published rules."

What do you our Gawler Country Music Club Members think?

Williamson might yearn for a Lawson-era past, but the CMAA have a responsibility to look to the genre's future. And that, it appears, is what they're doing.

An American decided to write a book about Famous Churches around the world.

So he bought a plane ticket and took a trip to Orlando, thinking that he would start by working his way across the USA from South to North.

On his first day he was inside a church taking photographs, when he noticed a golden telephone mounted on the wall with a sign that read '\$10,000 per call'.

The American, being intrigued, asked a priest who was strolling by, what the telephone was used for.

The priest replied that it was a direct line to heaven and that for \$10,000 you could talk to God.

The American thanked the priest and went along his way.

Next stop was in Atlanta. There, at a very large cathedral, he saw the same looking golden telephone with the same sign under it.

He wondered if this was the same kind of telephone he saw in Orlando and he asked a nearby nun what its purpose was.

She told him that it was a direct line to heaven and that for \$10,000 he could talk to God. 'O.K., thank you,' said the American.

He then travelled all across America, Europe, England, Japan, New Zealand. In every church he saw the same looking golden telephone, with the same '\$US10,000 per call' sign under it.

The American decided to travel to Australia to see if Australians had the same phone.

He arrived at Newcastle in Australia and again, in the first church he entered, there was the same looking golden telephone, but this time the sign under it read, '40 cents per call.'

The American was surprised, so he asked the priest about the sign. 'Father, I've travelled all over the world and I've seen this same golden telephone in many churches. I'm told that it is a direct line to Heaven, but in all of them, the price was \$10,000 per call.

Why is it so cheap here?' The priest smiled and answered, 'You're in Australia now, son - "This is Heaven," so it's a local call'.

IT'S WHAT YOU SCATTER

I was at the corner grocery store buying some early potatoes... I noticed a small boy, delicate of bone and feature, ragged but clean, hungrily appraising a basket of freshly picked green peas.

I paid for my potatoes but was also drawn to the display of fresh green peas. I am a pushover for creamed peas and new potatoes.

Pondering the peas, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation between Mr. Miller (the store owner) and the ragged boy next to me.

'Hello Barry, how are you today?'

'H'lo, Mr. Miller. Fine, thank ya. Jus' admirin' them peas. They sure look good'

'They are good, Barry. How's your Ma?'

'Fine. Gittin' stronger alla' time.'

'Good. Anything I can help you with?'

'No, Sir. Jus' admirin' them peas.'

'Would you like to take some home?' asked Mr. Miller.

'No, Sir. Got nuthin' to pay for 'em with.'

'Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?'

'All I got's my prize marble here.' 'Is that right? Let me see it', said Miller. 'Here 'tis. She's a dandy.'

'I can see that. Hmm mmm, only thing is this one is blue and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one like this at home?' the store owner asked.

'Not zackley but almost.'

'Tell you what. Take this sack of peas home with you and next trip this way let me look at that red marble'. Mr. Miller told the boy.

'Sure will. Thanks Mr. Miller.'

Mrs. Miller, who had been standing nearby, came over to help me.

With a smile she said, There are two other boys like him in our community, all three are in very poor circumstances. Jim just loves to bargain with them for peas, apples, tomatoes, or whatever.

When they come back with their red marbles, and they always do, he decides he doesn't like red after all and he sends them home with a bag of produce for a green marble or an orange one, when they come on their next trip to the store.'

I left the store smiling to myself, impressed with this man. A short time later I moved to Colorado, but I never forgot the story of this man, the boys, and their bartering for marbles.

Several years went by, each more rapid than the previous one. Just recently I had occasion to visit some old friends in that Idaho community and while I was there learned that Mr. Miller had died. They were having his visitation that evening and knowing my friends wanted to go, I agreed to accompany them. Upon arrival at the mortuary we fell into line to meet the relatives of the deceased and to offer whatever words of comfort we could.

Ahead of us in line were three young men. One was in an army uniform and the other two wore nice haircuts, dark suits and white shirts...all very professional looking. They approached Mrs. Miller, standing composed and smiling by her husband's casket. Each of the young men hugged her, kissed her on the cheek, spoke briefly with her and moved on to the casket. Her misty light blue eyes followed them as, one by one; each young man stopped briefly and placed his own warm hand over the cold pale hand in the casket. Each left the mortuary awkwardly, wiping his eyes.

Our turn came to meet Mrs. Miller. It told her who I was and reminded her of the story from those many years ago and what she had told me about her husband's bartering for marbles. With her eyes glistening, she took my hand and led me to the casket.

'Those three young men who just left were the boys I told you about. They just told me how they appreciated the things Jim 'traded' them. Now, at last, when Jim could not change his mind about color or size...they came to pay their debt.' 'We've never had a great deal of the wealth of this world,' she confided, 'but right now, Jim would consider himself the richest man in Idaho'

With loving gentleness she lifted the lifeless fingers of her deceased husband. Resting underneath were three exquisitely shined red marbles.

The Moral: Some people go through life without seeking fame or fortune. The reward is the happiness gained by providing assistance to others.

We will be remembered for a while for our kind deeds. And memories will gradually fade.