



Damian Howard

"Damian and his band are a great band to watch. They seem to have a crowd of instant fans - like fish in the desert after rain, they magically appear - attracted by a swaggering and cheeky Aussie gregarious presence that raises the stakes with real passion. Quite simply they are a great band, an ideal "festival band" which will always excel and exceed expectations"(Jamie McKew, Port Fairy Folk Festival Artistic Director)

Back in 1994 Damian Howard and a collection of like-minded musicians first graced the stage at the Maldon Folk Festival in Central Victoria, North of Melbourne, Australia.

Although not Victoria's biggest Music Festival, the Maldon Folk Festival is one of the most iconic folk festivals in Victoria. Throughout this time Maldon have given many local acts a start, an opportunity and have always been supportive of original Australian music.

Mike Ruggles, the Artistic Director of the Maldon Festival, saw something special and unique on that night in 1994. As the brother of Shane and Marcia Howard, Mike took a punt on booking the youngest of the Howard siblings on the main stage. The crowd went mad and the musical journey for Damian Howard had begun.

"There will be some who will remember when on a hazy Guinness night, when Damian Howard first played Maldon; in fact first played anywhere! We have been responsible for a few 'firsts' over the years, have seen births, marriages, reunions

and the odd reincarnation, but none have continued to inspire like this fine musician. Damian has lifted the crowds and the canvas, has united the kids and the oldies, has kicked goals in the dust, in the sun and with the rain on the horizon. This is a musician for all seasons, for all occasions, with a formula that has reaped success at home and abroad. They come back to the heart, as potent as poteen!!" (Mike Ruggles, Maldon Festival Director)

Since 1994 whether it be as the lead singer/ songwriter of one of Australia's iconic Celtic festival bands, 'The Ploughboys', or with a successful roots style solo career with 'The Gentle Souls' & 'The Still Water Sound', Damian has continued to strive and grow in all things musical.

Over the past 16 years, Damian has toured extensively throughout Australia, performing at many well-known venues and music festivals. Amongst the many performances highlights include a pre-match performance at the International Rules games between Australia and Ireland at the MCG in 2001 and Docklands Stadium in 2007 in front of 50 000 people and broadcast live on television throughout Australia and Europe to an estimated audience of over 5 million people.

'In a fair and just world the outstanding Mercy should be rated as one of the Australia songs of the year' (David Connolly, Geelong Advertiser)

Damian has just released solo album number two - "Out of My Hands" - his first studio album in some 6 years.

"..Howard's songs blend acoustic, country and rock to give a feel similar to Tim and Neil Finn's critically acclaimed everyone is Here.." (Julia Irwin, Leader Newspapers)

The title track "Out of My Hands", "All I Ever Wanted" and "One Step Forward" have all been featured on ABC TV's Rage and the Country Music Channel.

Songwriting

"His latest album, Out Of My Hands, is a stellar offering, showcasing not only Damian's ability to write good songs, but his knack for quality story-telling. The new CD has already picked up six awards at the Federation Songwriting Awards in Canberra and earned him a grand final spot at the prestigious Toyota Starmaker Awards at the 2011 Tamworth Country Music Festival. Out of My Hands is extremely easy on the ears. Howard's take on contemporary country borrows heavily from the traditional – meaning that for every electric guitar solo there is more than enough acoustic sounds to compensate. As a result the record sounds extremely fresh while not overlooking the very fundamentals which attract so many to the genre. The material ranges from takes on love and loss to snapshots of Australian history. Tracks like Love Will Always Lead You Home and All I Ever Wanted are prime examples – carefully woven tales of life over instrumentation that flows and ebbs in all the right ways. Showing his versatility as a writer, Howard offers takes on Australian history with both Buckley's Chance, about convict William Buckley, and Raise the Glass, about the Kelly gang. Far from being bland narratives, each boast a vibrance not normally associated with a great deal of "heritage" styled material. Definitely worthy of many a repeat listen." (Matt Lawrence, Capital News)

Damian's songs and song writing skills have been sought by a number of local and national artists and were recently recognised by Irish singer, Mary Black, on her new release *Full Tide*. *St Kilda Again*, a co-written song with his older brother Shane Howard. As the principal songwriter for *The Ploughboys* Damian's songs have been released on three independent CDs and have received airplay throughout Australia and have additionally been featured on a number of compilation CDs.

In March 2006 Damian was asked to be the Musical Director of an acclaimed Showcase concert at the 30th Anniversary Port Fairy Folk Festival.

"A special memory was a concert staged on Sunday night to mark the 30th anniversary of the festival organised by Damian Howard...." (Andra Jackson, *The Age*) Showing his versatility as a Director Damian produced the first ever documentary on the history of the renowned Port Fairy Folk Festival. This documentary was featured many times on ABC TV.

Touring

In 2008, with the assistance of an Arts Victoria grant, Damian and the band toured extensively throughout Europe, Ireland and the UK during Australia's winter months and were invited back and self-funded a tour throughout Europe in July/ August 2009. The last two years Damian has been promoting his new album at national festivals throughout the country.

The two years in Europe have allowed him to experience some great crowds, venues and festivals through Denmark, Germany, France, England, Ireland and Scotland culminating in a performance at the 2009 Hebridean Festival on the Isle of Lewis, one of Scotland's most prestigious festivals. This



performance was the first by any Australian Band and their performance on the main stage, and filmed by the BBC, was warmly received by the 10 000 strong crowd.

"Coming all the way from Australia they get the crowd singing along to their original-penned song 'Out of My Hands' like it's some time honoured classic" (2009 Hebridean Festival, Isle of Scotland review)

"Next up were a band I'd never heard of before – The Ploughboys from Melbourne, featuring the melodic vocals of Damian Howard. At the beginning of their Celtic-Rock/Nu-Folk/Country-tinged set, I was unsure of what the audience reaction would be – that was until about three songs in when a solo section by the drummer stirred the audience into a bopping frenzy. Festival favourites in Australia, they were clearly comfortable with and suited the big stage setting. Mary Black fans in the audience learned that her critically acclaimed release "Full Tide" features a song co-written by Damian and his brother Shane Howard – St Kilda Again....."

2009 was the first year that the festival had allowed the BBC to film a documentary of the iconic festival.

"For the first time ever the BBC filmed a 2 hour documentary of our festival, which has been broadcast on several occasions now and from the feedback received, will be repeated many times again. The film actually featured more of Damian and his band than any of the more higher profile European acts, so I would suggest that probably speaks for itself!" (Caroline MacLennan, Hebridean Festival Director)

After performances in 2008 and 2009 Damian Howard made a successful return to Europe in 2012 to perform at the Skagen Music Festival. In September Damian and Jason King attended the Americana Music Festival and Conference in Nashville, Tennessee as part of the Sounds Australia delegation. Their performances at the legendary Bluebird Cafe and The Basement were very well received and they look forward to returning in 2013.

