

## BLUESFEST DREAMS



ROBERT PLANT. HERE FOR BLUESFEST IN 2012?

It is that time of the year when thoughts start to turn to the line-up of next year's Bluesfest. The weather here in Melbourne teased us with a few warm days that had everyone talking about climate change before we were plunged back into winter.

So, as I glance out over a grey sky that is drizzling its moisture down, I am starting to think of Bluesfest, swimming in the morning and giggering all afternoon and evening. Although it has been four months since the last one, it now seems to have receded into the distant past. I am hoping the local Byron council do not completely stuff things up for festival

organisers (Bluesfest, Splendour, etc). (*Byron Council is proposing a highly restrictive events policy targeting only music festivals! For more information head to [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)*).

I am sure Bluesfest will continue next year but how will it possibly top the 2010 line-up? How do you top Bob Dylan as a headliner? Contrary to the belief of some people, the *Rhythms* editorial staff do not choose the Bluesfest bill. One reader was quite shocked when I apprised him of this fact. So what follows is pure speculation.

Of course, the rumour is that **The Rolling Stones** will be touring in 2012 but they just might be a little too expensive for Bluesfest. Yet, the event proved this year that it has the ability to book major names as a stop on their national tours so why not The Stones as well? If The Stones are not on tour then perhaps Ronnie Wood could come with **The Faces**. Even with Mick Hucknall singing they would still pull a crowd.

The other constant rumour is that **Robert Plant** will tour here and he would be the obvious choice. I have been lucky enough to see Plant perform several times with Alison Krauss and also more recently with his Band of Joy. But the best Plant show I saw was when he appeared at the Great American Music Hall in 2009 as a guest during the Richard DeLone Benefit concert with Boz Scaggs' band featuring James Cotton. Though Plant only performed a four-song blues bracket it was sensational.

The other obvious candidate is **Neil Young**, who has just been reunited with Stephen Stills and Richie Furay for a brief **Buffalo Springfield** tour. Furay hinted that there might be a longer tour later this year or next year so Bluesfest would be an obvious stop if they decided to visit Australia. In lieu of the Springfield, then Neil and **Crazy Horse** would do very nicely, thank you.

**Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers** is another 'mainstream' outfit who would create a lot of excitement and be perfect for a festival – or *A Day On The Green*. Petty's recent albums have been real quality releases, even though they failed to sell as well as they should have.

I think the last time he was here was with Dylan in 1987, so he is due back.

I was knocked out by **Tom Jones'** show at Jazz Fest this year – especially the songs from the Ethan Johns produced *Praise & Blame*. Jones really knows how to connect with an audience and he still sounds fantastic at the age of 70!

A suggestion out of left field would be **Tom Waits**, who will have a new album out very soon. Waits has not been to Australia since 1979 and is long overdue for a return. His recent live set, *Glitter & Doom*, was great. Unfortunately, Tom does not do very much touring these days so a visit here is a long shot; however, as a drawcard I think he would be every bit as powerful as The Stones, Neil Young or Bob Dylan.

Watching the Talking Heads chronology DVD reminded me of what a great live act **David Byrne** has and the fact that he has not appeared at a festival in Australia – yet.

**Gillian Welch** and **David Rawlings** are due to arrive here early next year on the heels of the excellent *The Harrow & The Harvest* but I wonder if that might be held off until Bluesfest. The problem here is that any promoter knows that the couple can easily sell out their own shows regardless of festival dates.

Another musical couple who were here this year but might return in 2012 are **Susan Tedeschi** and **Derek Trucks**, whose album was not released until after their visit during which they put on several sensational shows. I must say that I have been surprised that *Revelator* did not do better here, after all there were at least a couple of tracks perfect for wider airplay.

One act that has never made it down here is the **Allman Brothers Band**. I presume this is mainly due to the size of the outfit and its entourage. However, **Gregg Allman** has been playing some gigs with his own and (that sometimes includes his son Devon) and his *Low Country Blues* album is really impressive.

A younger US bluesman who should be considered is **Gary Clark Jr** who has a major label debut out. He appeared in the John Sayles film *Honeydripper* a few years ago and is a real star around the Austin scene.

The perennial rumour was that the **Reverend Al Green** would appear, but the fact that he has his own church in Memphis seems to mitigate against this. I thought his Concert Hall shows on his debut visit here early last year were magic. Now, if he appeared on Thursday and Friday he could get back to Memphis for Easter Sunday!

For country acts I would choose newcomer **Jamey Johnson** who was great at Jazz Fest and **Jeff 'The Dude' Bridges** who has a new album out. **Merle Haggard**, **Lucinda Williams**, **Emmylou Harris** and **Buddy Miller** would all be great choices.

**Drive By Truckers** and **Booker T Jones** should come again – together as they did last year – or separately.

It would be wonderful to see **Allen Toussaint**, **Dr John** and **The Meters** reprise the *Desitively Bonnaroo* album show that they did at Bonnaroo this year but that is unlikely to happen. Toussaint with **Elvis Costello** or **Joe Henry** would be a nice choice.

As for local acts you would have to think that **Cold Chisel** are being looked at. That would be a powerhouse show. Maybe **Jo Jo Zep & The Falcons** could be asked to do one more reunion show to celebrate 35 years in the business.

Anyway, it is time for more dreaming... let me know your picks at [brian@rhythms.com.au](mailto:brian@rhythms.com.au).

Until next month... enjoy the music. **B**