

SOUND & STAGE

LIVE MUSIC IS ALIVE AND WELL IN ADELAIDE ON A MONDAY NIGHT, AS WE DISCOVERED WHEN WE PAID THE GRACE EMILY HOTEL YET ANOTHER VISIT.

BILLY BOB'S BBQ JAM

BY ROBERT DUNSTAN

Monday nights are traditionally quiet ones all around the world with, perhaps, the exception of New York. But Adelaide's highly popular Grace Emily Hotel in downtown Waymouth Street enjoys one of its busiest nights of the week when it plays host Billy Bob's BBQ Jam every Monday evening.

The Grace Emily came into being some 10 years ago when a run-down West End pub, The Launceston Hotel, was taken over by Melbourne identity Greg 'Clanger' Kleynjans and quietly turned into an intimate haven for lovers of live music. International, national and local acts have graced its small stage since then, and a regular Monday night blues jam commenced not long after the Grace Emily opened its doors to a new and younger clientele. The blues jam, which was run by James Meston (of blues duo Sweet baby James) and the late John Hobson, went on to become legendary before it dwindled away, but just over five years ago it was re-established by

local guitar slinger Bill 'Billso' Rankine.

"I guess myself and Jeb 'Crazy Legs' Cardwell [who is now based in Melbourne] kinda took over the night by accident," Billso, who also plays in local bands Southpoor, The Satellites, Wintercherry and Proton Pill, remarked.

"Jeb and I used to go there on Monday nights to clean the beer lines," he added with a laugh, "and Billy Bob's BBQ Jam sorta developed from there."

Billy Bob's BBQ Jam boasts a house band known as The BBQ Boys which features Billso alongside Steve Salvi (of Salvi's Fine Guitars) on guitars and Steve Cluse on bass. For quite some time drummer Mark Meyer, who has played with almost every major Australian artist and is a former member of The Divinyls, could be found behind the kit as part of the house band but more recently it's been Mark Chewie of The Zep Boys. Once the house band has warmed thing up, usually around 9pm or so, the jam component begins for those who



PHOTOGRAPH TONY LEWIS

have registered their interest with Billso, who has duly noted them on his trusty running board. It has expanded to include other forms of music besides just blues. Thus you never know quite what to expect as a metal or blues band may be immediately followed by an earnest young singer songwriter. Each act is also limited to three songs so even if they don't match up to expectations, it's soon onto the next performers.

The free entry Billy Bob's BBQ Jam has also become very popular with backpackers but the audience on any given night may range from 18-year-olds through to those who could be considered to be slowly approaching their twilight years. Regular Monday night jam performers include reggae artist Mark Dread who many may recall as the singer with popular Adelaide reggae band The Radics. Of late, guitarist Russ Johnson, who enjoyed much national success in the '70s with country rock band Mississippi (who went on to become the internationally successful Little River Band), has shown he's still one of this country's best guitar players.

You never know who might be there on any given night. David Spelman, the New York-based guitar player and creative director of the upcoming Adelaide International Guitar Festival, dropped by when he last in town, while Rockin' Rob Riley, former guitarist with the hard rockin' Rose Tattoo, has used Billy Bob's BBQ Jam to hone his pedal steel skills. When award winning Australian singer songwriter Neil Murray (writer of My Island Home) was recently in town, he and his band also visited the jam night and treated the crowd to three songs. More recently, Texas-born guitar player Denny

Freeman (who has worked with Stevie Ray Vaughan and currently plays with Bob Dylan) dropped by when he was in town and cooked up quite a storm. Abbie Cardwell always gets up on a Monday night for a jam if she happens to be back in her hometown – such as when she was appearing in the stage musical *Everything's F**ked* which had its world premiere in Adelaide.

Some local bands have also used Billy Bob's BBQ Jam to reach a new audience or prepare for an upcoming CD launch. For example, The Fiddle Chicks, three female fiddle players with a number of CDs to their credit and are popular within the folk scene, can sometimes be found there. "Yeah, it's good to go to Billy Bob's BBQ Jam and play a bit of fiddle music amongst all the singer songwriters with guitars," The Fiddle Chicks' Kim Perry remarked. Snooks La Vie (of The Hiptones) and Brian Morrison (of Double Wammy) have also used the night to try out their Los Romaldo Groove project.

And those who grace Three D Radio's live music show, Hillbilly Hoot (itself another Monday night institution), earlier in the evening often find themselves at the Grace Emily later that night.

Around 11pm, the outside beer-garden becomes a BBQ area as sausages ("The best snags this side of Bunnings," Billso has been known to enthusiastically state) are cooked and then served on white bread with, of course, tomato sauce.

The Grace Emily Hotel, which also has possibly the cheapest pool tables in town, is located at 232 Waymouth St, Adelaide, and is open daily from 4pm until 3am with live music most nights of the week, from 9pm.

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