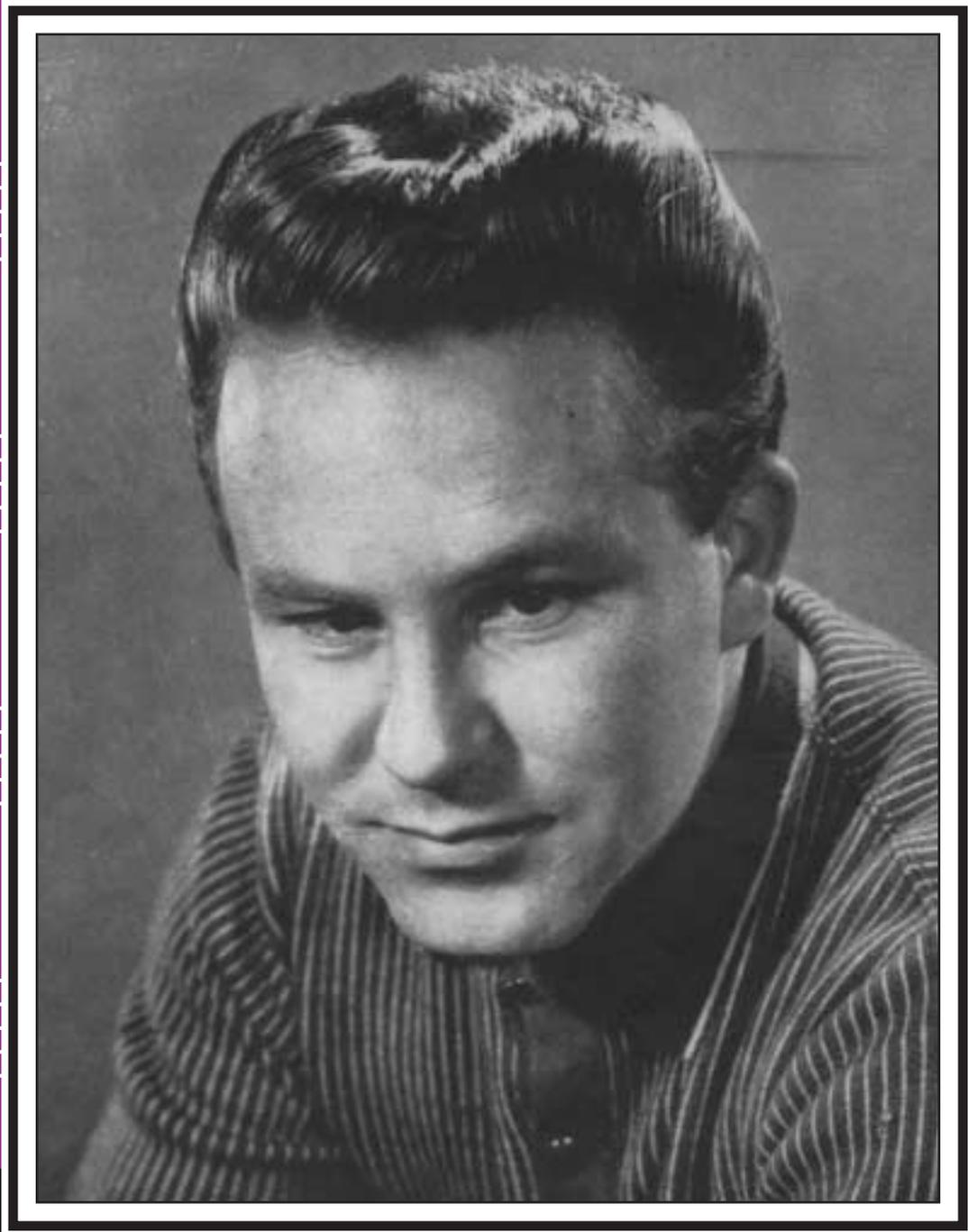


BIG BEAT of the '50s

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**Johnny O'Keefe, Pat Cupp, GreazeFest,
That'll be the Day at the Bay, Rock Around Aust,
Heaps of reviews and lots, lots more**

J.O'K: Life after Death

by Brendan Hancock

After a massive heart attack took the life of the king of Australian rock. Almost 23 years on, the Wild One legacy is still going strong and is still rocking our socks off.

The following article is an overview of my personal thoughts and opinions. Keep in mind this is from a person who was born in 1978. Enjoy what you are about to read, Good old classic rock is not only enjoyed by the 'oldies', but a lot of us youngsters too. Don't worry, this won't be another typical Johnny O'Keefe Biography; instead I will take you on a personal journey on how the magic and music of J.O'K has carried on long after his death and is continuing to grow.

They say when Buddy Holly, Rich Valens and the Big Bopper died in the plane crash in Iowa in 1959 that it was the day the music died. The loss of three young and gifted rockers shook the foundations of the early rock establishment and left the music world stunned. Although the loss of these three great American performers was felt by many loyal fans here in Australia, it could be said that the real feeling of emotional loss and emptiness within the rock community wouldn't be felt until 6 October 1978, when our own king of Rock, Johnny O'Keefe died from a massive heart attack.

After J.O'K's death and during the years of 1979-1980 there wasn't anything major released that featured J.O'K. The drought was broken in October 1981 when well-known Australian rock historian Glenn A. Baker teamed up with Festival Records to compile a double 10" LP set titled *Real Wild Child*. This release not only started the ball rolling as being the first major release after O'Keefe's death, it also rewarded fans with a handful of rarities such as the original version of *Shake Baby Shake*, *Money Honey*, *I'm Movin' On*, *Rock Time*, and *Let's Have A Party*. The bright

pink front cover echoed the current style and colours that were the early 80s but also kept in the classic style that was O'Keefe. As an added bonus the fans were also rewarded with an open gate LP cover that featured a great collection of images of J.O'K throughout his career.

The success of this album created the foundation for new material to follow. The first major product was released exactly one year later.

With the blessing of the O'Keefe family, John Bryden-Brown wrote and released *J.O'K: The Official Johnny O'Keefe Story* in 1982. At 184 pages the book featured a basic version of the Johnny O'Keefe story but featured a great collection of J.O'K pictures and a simple but up to date discography.

The book, like its featured discography, only scraped the surface of J.O'K's story. It wasn't hard to see that this early biography was sugar coated in order to make the O'Keefe's happy and to keep their support, so that the Bryden-Brown book could retain the treasured "official" tag. It would be another 20 years before fans were able to read a better alternative version of the O'Keefe story,

In true marketing style, Festival Records released a *Greatest Hits 2 LP* set to coincide with the release of the biography. The album, also known as *J.O'K: The OFFICIAL Johnny O'Keefe Story* with the same cover art as featured on the book, was broken up into the four parts 'The Early Singles', 'The Hits', 'Rock & Roll' and 'The Ballads'. Once again like the early festival offering, all of J.O'K's well-known hits were featured, with the exception of the classic *SHOUT* part 2. None the less, for any new fan at the time this was a great starting point for a potential J.O'K record collection.

For the original Johnny O'Keefe fan the set featured songs not regularly available on previous album collections such as *Whole Lotta*





Shakin' Going On, Let's Twist Again, Ready Teddy and You'll Never Walk Alone.

From the biography came a documentary called *the Wild One*, aired in 1983 and marked the 5th anniversary since J.O'K's death and was also given the Glenn A. Baker touch. Although a bit outdated by today's standards, this 45 minute production featured some rare clips of Johnny O'Keefe in action as well as a collection of interviews with O'Keefe's family and friends.

After 1986 with the release of *SHOUT! The Mini Series*, this documentary became a sought after commodity. As the new wave of O'Keefe fans did their best to seek out whatever material was available, the footage that was available in the documentary was the proverbial goldmine. Unfortunately, without pirated copies, most fans would have to wait until around 1995 when Festival released this original made for television documentary on Sell-Through Video Release for \$29.95.

With the release of the John Bryden-Brown biography, the two festival albums and the Glenn A. Baker driven *Wild One* Television documentary, recognition of what Johnny O'Keefe had done for Australian Music and the entertainment industry was finally starting to be realised. Although it has never been written, It can be said that Robert Caswell borrowed a lot from this biography when he wrote his screenplay *Shout The Story Of Johnny O'Keefe* which would become the Network Seven produced Mini series of the same name.

8 April 1986 should be regarded as the date that re-invented the magic of Johnny O'Keefe to a whole new generation of fans. For many people Network Seven's 2.2 Million dollar, 2 _ hour mini series *SHOUT! The Story Of Johnny O'Keefe* was to be their first experience to the music of Johnny O'Keefe. For everyone else already accustomed, the mini series was the hook and solidified the wild one as an undisputed rock legend, although regarded as a disappointment by many die-hard fans and close friends of J.O'K.

The fact that the storyline like the Bryden-Brown biography only

skimmed the surface to the wild one's story, this provoked the makers to also take liberties with the story and the characters within for added dramatic effect.

Leon Isackson, former Dig Richards and The Rjays and Rajahs drummer said in my www.johnnyokeefe.net interview that although "Terry (Serio who played J.O'K) was pretty good as O'Keefe, but I thought that they played the mad part a bit over the top. He (O'Keefe) was a different sort of mad, not maniac mad, good fun mad". Leon also went on to say that "They made O'Keefe look too stupid, when in fact he was as cunning as a shithouse rat and most of the time he was sending people up. Some of the facts were a bit out of whack like the car smash was wrong. In the series they said he was alone. We (The Mighty Guys) actually did most of the music soundtrack and the Maori in the series was actually lip synching to my voice, also the Lee Gordon portrayed in the series was nothing like the Lee Gordon I remember".

The differences, mistakes, errors etc found within the mini series are many. But from a cinematic point of view screenplay writer Robert Caswell obviously had to make some choices when putting the story together. Once again, like the Bryden Brown biography the makers made sure they kept the story running at a particular level in order to get the blessing from Thelma O'Keefe and the rest of the O'Keefe Family.

We can knock how bad it was on so many levels, but we also have to look at how good it was in regards to the major benefits this 1986 television mini series has long since spawned. I personally didn't know who Johnny O'Keefe was until I heard the music that was coming out of my parents lounge room when they were watching it. I thought it was a gangster flick because of the zebra skinned patterns on the video cover at the time. *Shout!* the mini series can be said to indirectly get these new J.O'K fans like myself into the sounds of other early Australian rockers such as Col Joye, Dig Richards, The Delltones etc...And of course Terry Serio did do an amazing job, and wow couldn't he move!





Because of the new found fan base for Johnny O'Keefe, the new fans not content with Festival Records' 2LP mini series soundtrack and the book version of the original Caswell screenplay started hunting record stores' back catalogues. Collector and record trading fairs were attacked and slowly classic J.O'K records became instant collector items and were increasingly harder to find. It was now time that festival needed to work out something to combat this demand and it wouldn't be long until these new fans' prayers would be answered.

Although by 1988 most J.O'K fans had *SHOUT! The story of Johnny O'Keefe* on video to hire from their local video shop, or illegally taped from the few re-runs on television, it was this year that the fans were given the ultimate reward for their patience.

The Australian Rock'n'Roll Appreciation Society published *The A-Z of J.O'K: A Pictorial Discography of Johnny O'Keefe*. Compiled by Don Hudson and Bill Ross this 64 page book featured in both graphical and text form the most complete (at the time) listing of J.O'K releases ever made. Unlike previous discography attempts, the A-Z book also printed the listings of alternative versions of albums as well as international J.O'K releases. The book was simple but effective and became the benchmark for future J.O'K discography listings.



The tribute to the 10th anniversary since J.O'K's death was in the form of an 8 LP/CD box-set entitled *J.O'K So Tough*. Once again it took the partnership of Glenn A. Baker and Festival Records to put this amazing collection together. The set consisted of 158 original recordings, 21 of which were previously unissued tracks and interview segments at the end of each collection of songs. The 24-paged scrapbook was also included, and featured some awesome and rare images of O'Keefe and also contained a more detailed discography than the one previously featured in the 1982 biography.

As a whole, festival records really outdid themselves, but unfortunately for the everyday person the \$120 price tag was a little too much, but worth it to the J.O'K collector. It would seem that all future releases from festival would be second rate due to 95% of all Johnny O'Keefe material being put into the box-set. So any further releases would be only recycling material.

It was 1989 when the last significant Johnny O'Keefe LP record was released, and ironically it had nothing to do with Festival Records. This, I feel, has left them a little bitter ever since. When independent record label Canetoad records released *Johnny O'Keefe: The Last Concert* it was during a time when people, like



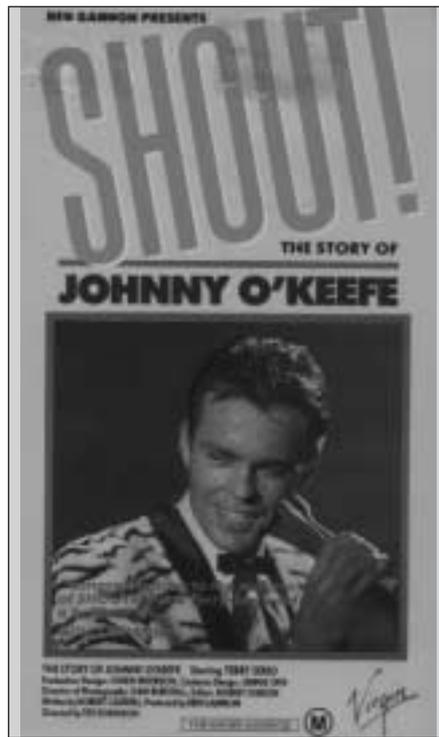
myself were still trying to collect everything and anything that featured J.O'K. and the only decent product available at the time was Festival's expensive box set.

The concert wasn't the best sounding record in the world, due to the fact it was recorded on a mono cassette recorder and that it was recorded one month before J.O'K's death. It was not only the added bonus to any die-hard collector but also a chance for some to get an idea as to how much of a showman Johnny O'Keefe really was.

It was up to budget distributor RAINBOW in 1990 to license some of J.O'K's well-known hits from festival to release *The Best of Johnny O'Keefe*. Due to its budget price it was a success. rainbow then added a few extra songs including *Shout!* and *Shake baby Shake* and re-released it in 1992 as *The Very Best of Johnny O'Keefe*. Both originally released on cassette then re-released onto CD,

Due to both Canetoad Records and Rainbow's success, Festival got back into the game and released their first J.O'K single CD releases since the box-set.

First off the press was the CD re-release of *Real Wild Child* in 1990 and an original CD release *Johnny O'Keefe Teletracks 1962 -1964* in 1992. This release was an expanded version of the teletracks CD that was



featured in the *So Tough* box-set. The main difference was the inclusion of a further 6 songs.

By 1993 Festival covered all their bases CD wise by re-releasing *A Tribute to Johnny O'Keefe: 22 Golden Greats* which was originally a greatest hits LP release not long after J.O'K's death. The CD was also at the reasonable price of \$19.95 and was the first time all his classic hits were available on one CD.

Most of the J.O'K catalogue also fell into oblivion with the exception of Festival's *A Tribute to Johnny O'Keefe* CD that found its way into super-market bargain bins for around \$9.95.

During 1994 and 1995, there wasn't anything new regarding Johnny O'Keefe. But the internet provided a new resource for J O'K fans. *The Unofficial Johnny O'Keefe* page was created. The page was not only the first Johnny O'Keefe page on the net, but one of the first Australian sites dedicated to an Australian artist. Over the next few years, small tribute sites and J.O'K related articles would find their place on the net.

By 1996 technology had advanced even more and computers and digital technology were being incorporated into every facet of our lives. Because it was cheap to manufacture, the compact disc not only became a media to store audio but also "the"

media to store large amounts of, text, video and other forms of multi-media.

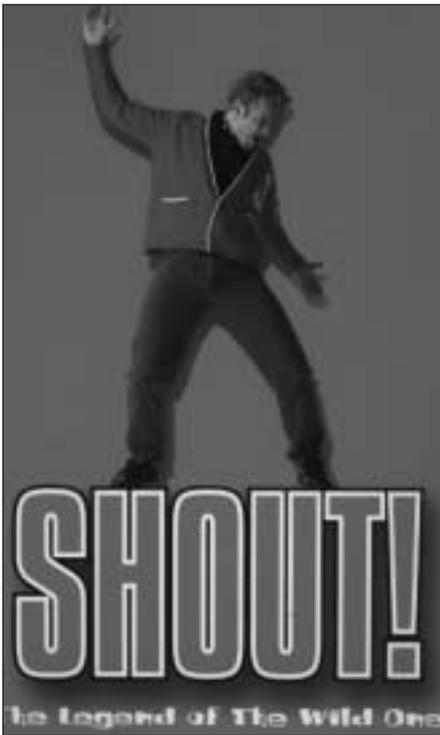
By 1996, most of the world's classic albums had already been re-released onto the compact disc format, most of the time no effort had been made to draw the full benefit out of this digital medium and were basically straight copies from the original master tapes. But because of this advancement in mastering technology, some of these classic albums were being re-released again on CD after being digitally "cleaned up" and "remastered", thus creating the best sounding versions of the recordings to date. In some cases record companies would get the original elements that went into each recording and recomposed them to create either stereo sounding elements from an original mono recording or re-mix these elements to create a better sounding stereo version.

In Australia, one of the most popular remastered releases of 1996 was Festival Records *Johnny O'Keefe: The Birth of Australian Rock 'n' Roll*, a 3-CD, 75-track-set broken up into 'The Hits', 'The Ballads' and 'Rarities' collections. The tracks do sound a lot better than anything previously released which is evident in the song *Ain't A Gonna Do It*. The release of the set marked a new beginning in the legend of J.O'K., as the stylish

packaging, the artwork and the silver lettering on the cover echoed the fact that this was indeed an EVENT. As well as being a quality product at \$39.95 the price was good, the sound was good and the small enclosed booklet gave us a run down as to what efforts had been made in order to create this CD masterpiece. This set became the cheaper alternative for the average fan that couldn't afford or even track down a copy of the complicated to order *So Tough* 8-CD box-set.

Due to its success, it seemed that festival received the wake up call and realised that J.O'K was still a bankable commodity even though the customers were slowly becoming a minority. Once again the proverbial floodgates were opened, and Johnny O'Keefe and classic Australian rock became profitable again.

Within the space of 18 months Festival records released *Johnny O'Keefe's Greatest Hits*. The CD, which was basically a cut-down version of the *Birth of Australian Rock* set featured 22 songs, and I feel it wasn't as popular as festival hoped. Within a few months Sanity Music and Festival teamed up and released a re-packaged version of the *Birth of Australian Rock* 3-CD set for \$19.95. Do to this re-packaged success; this same set was re-released in other stores for around \$29.95



It was at this time, 1998 that Festival, now known as Festival Mushroom Records re-created its famous Spin label. The new Spin label was FMR's way of re-releasing classic re-mastered hits and collections from some of Australia's most loved artists such as Col Joye, Johnny Devlin, The Delltones, Judy Stone and obviously the Wild One.

The first Johnny O'Keefe release on the newly created Spin Label was *Love Songs and Ballads* which was basically a revamped version of J.O'K's *Let True Love Begin* LP of 1973 but included an extra 8 songs. For the newer J.O'K fans it was a chance to have the love songs of J.O'K on the best media possible.

But it wasn't only FMR records getting into the Australian rock'n'roll/Johnny O'Keefe revival. Although FMR was still pumping out a variety of classic rock artists on the Spin label, Australia Post released their *Australian rock'n'roll: The Early Years Stamp Campaign* on the 28 May 1998 and the Wild One was used as their major promotional tool. The stamp campaign was the first outside recognition for J.O'K and other classic artists within the music industry. The set of 45-cent-stamps paid tribute to 12 of the most popular and influential songs from 1958-1978 of which J.O'K's *the Wild One* was featured. An important aspect of the collection was the fact

that out of the surreal pop art-like artworks, the J.O'K stamp, the first stamp in the collection, was the only stamp to feature a proper image of the artist whereas metaphoric objects, characters or logos were used to reflect the artist or song featured. The other artists included in the set, were Col Joye, Little Pattie, Normie Rowe, The Easybeats, Russell Morris, Masters Apprentices, Daddy Cool, Billy Thorpe & The Aztecs, Skyhooks, AC/DC and Sherbet.

J.O'K was the star again. His face and image were no longer restricted to CD covers, but in and on every Australian post office' wall, window, or as a huge life-size cardboard cutout. After his face had been licked by thousands of Australians via the 45-cent-stamp, Australia Post treated the customer to a compilation CD produced with the help of FMR, which was also called *Australian Rock & Roll: The Early Years*.

It was at this time that Marianne Renate, Johnny O'Keefe's first wife, decided to release her autobiography entitled *Off The Record: life with and without Johnny O'Keefe*. At 258 pages the book was indeed an easy read. Due to the lack of substance the book felt more like an afternoon chat than a great tale to be told. In regards to life with J.O'K, only key points got a mention, and it was usually situations and facts that had already been

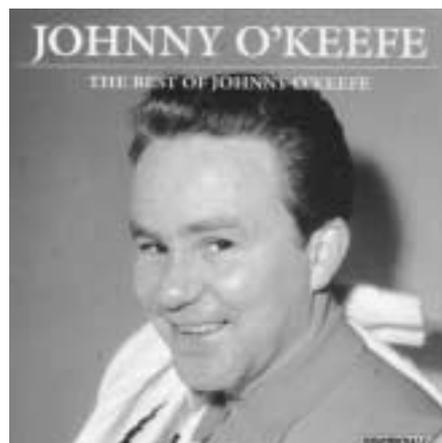
written. The only original issues that were tackled with Marianne's book was how they met and the truth about his bouts of depression, his mental illness and the violent outbursts.

After reading Leon Isackson and Jon Hayton's book *Behind The Rock* and in particular the part about their famous 'board meetings' of which J.O'K was a frequent member of, it was obvious that poor old Marianne, the good natured caring mother and wife of the Wild One, had no idea of the other life Johnny O'Keefe lived outside their house. The book originally retailed for around \$40 but sadly, within 12 months ended up in discount stores for around seven dollars.

Because 1998 marked the 20th anniversary of the death of the Wild One, thoughts as to what would be done to mark this occasion were a growing concern. Many fans expressed their opinion on the lack of real recognition for the late great J.O'K. An example of this concern can be seen in Mr Michael Cartwright's letter to the editor of the *Newcastle Herald* in 1998, Michael has written basically this very same letter to the editor to the very same newspaper almost every year since:

"WHY is there no park, garden or reserve, street, avenue or road named after the late great Johnny O'Keefe?"

To make matters worse J.O'K died



almost penniless, after giving so much pleasure and time for all Australians to enjoy. He laid the foundation on which we have built Australian rock to the World"

Michael Cartwright, Gosford, 4 August.

The above is a great example of how just one typical fan felt about the absence of true recognition for one of Australia's pioneering fathers of Australian Rock Music.

But the fan's thoughts didn't go unanswered, as it is believed that around this time sculptor Dr. Alex Sandor Kolozsy was commissioned by

Barry O'Keefe to start work on a monument to mark the 20th anniversary of J.O'K's death. Rumour has it Barry O'Keefe got impatient because the work was taking longer than expected, and in the end pulled out of and distanced himself from the project. This left Dr. Kolozsy looking for funding as well as a site, to complete the 3 metre high monument.

Within the following year, FMR's Spin label continued to release further artists collections and classic compilations such as *Spin Back in Time* which featured J.O'K's *Lollipops and Roses*, 'Brian Henderson's

Bandstand' which featured *Why Do They Doubt Our Love* and *So Tough* and just in time for Christmas 1999 *A Vintage Christmas Album* which featured the rare but classic J.O'K hit *Pretty Paper* which had been featured on the *So Tough* box-set back in 1988.

But the best of Johnny O'Keefe and FMR's Spin label was yet to come.

The year 2000 should be regarded as the year of the Wild One. Because of the Olympics and the centennial of federation coming up, all things Australian were seen in a different light. Legends, heroes and pioneers were being recognised and finally

Johnny O'Keefe received recognition in the form of a stage musical. The problem was by March of 2000 there were two musicals planned to be released, one produced with the assistance of the O'Keefe estate with J.O'K's brother Barry in full control and the other ironically being produced by Col Joye and his brother Kevin Jacobson once said to be J.O'K's greatest rivals. The musical situation became nasty, coarse language and dirty tricks were exchanged and negative comments splattered all over the press.

Around this time, FMR released *Rockin' with Johnny O'Keefe and The Dee Jays* on the Spin label, with the inclusion of 10 tracks by the Dee Jays which in itself was a rarity and the first time ever released on CD. The 2-CD-set also featured rare J.O'K tracks such as *Am I Blue, Have I Told You Lately, That I Love You, By The Light of The Silvery Moon* and *When The Saint's Go Marching In*. Like FMR's previous efforts all tracks were digitally re-mastered. The fans were also rewarded with a CD booklet outlining the short career of Johnny O'Keefe and The Dee Jays as well as a short description and history about each featured track.

By July of 2000, *Jacobsen Entertainment* became the dominant player in the musical war by seeking exclusive use of assorted O'Keefe hits from within the music-publishing sector of at least four major publishing houses. Of these four, the Central Coast based *Jewel Music* was one of these houses and holds the publishing rights to the song *Shout*, J.O'K's highly regarded trademark hit. *Jewel Music* had given *Jacobsen* exclusive permission to use it, and several other songs J.O'K had made popular in Australia. This was a highly specific deal that precludes performance of the songs in other musicals based on the life of Johnny O'Keefe.

The only song *Jacobsen* wanted but never got was (*You Hit The Wrong Note*) *Billy Goat* of which publishing rights, along with a few other J.O'K hits, are still owned by Barry O'Keefe. In saying that however, *Peermusic*, which owns the publishing rights for the song *Wild One*, appears to be one of the few music-publishing houses that have chosen not to go into any

exclusive deals with *Jacobsen Entertainment*. It seemed that *Jacobsen Entertainment* had the upper hand in regards to music rights. They pushed ahead at a super fast pace in order to be the first musical, with the world premiere pencilled in for 1 March 2001 at Sydney's Capitol theatre.

It was around this time that *Sports and Entertainment's* James Erskine, producer of the Barry O'Keefe blessed musical tried to contact *Jacobsen Entertainment* with the possibility of pooling resources and working on a joint venture. In a 15 December Article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* entitled *Two rivals just wild about JO'K* James Erskine said that He (*Jacobsen*) sent a message back via a third party, and that message was, 'Get fucked'. Kevin *Jacobsen* is known to be a very tough but good businessman and, like most of his endeavours, had planned out his attack with military precision and his greatest accomplishment was yet to come.

After being the chairman of the establishment, it was no secret that the chances of *Jacobsen Entertainment* using Sydney's Capitol theatre as the home for his musical would be unquestionable. This is something Barry O'Keefe had to find out the hard-way.

By August, Barry O'Keefe announced that the O'Keefe family was indeed working on a musical based on his brother's life with company *Sports and Entertainment Limited* and producer James Erskine. Within hours of Barry O'Keefe making the public statement Kevin *Jacobsen* issued a counter-release stating that his production of *Shout* was still going ahead, only it would now open earlier and in Melbourne.

It has been written that the *Jacobsen's* decision to open earlier in Melbourne instead of Sydney was most likely a tactical manoeuvre designed to rule out any chance of the James Erskine produced/Barry O'Keefe blessed musical being play in either city. These tactics from the *Jacobsen* camp not only solidified its production as the major Johnny O'Keefe Musical, but also reaped the rewards of being the first. It would also become the benchmark for any future attempts in making a musical

or stage show based on the life of Johnny O'Keefe.

Because of this, the Barry O'Keefe/James Erskine musical took a back seat and had been shelved for possible release at a future date.

The *Jacobsen* musical had its world premiere at the Victorian Arts Centre on 4 January 2001. The part of Johnny O'Keefe was played by David Campbell, already a star on the American and Australian musical scene due to past performances in *Les Miserables* and *Guys and Dolls*, but at the end of the day more likely known as the son of Australian rocker *Jimmy Barnes*.

Not surprisingly the musical became a success. Like the 1986 Mini Series, *Shout The story of Johnny O'Keefe*, the musical was not only responsible for rejuvenating the memory of the Wild One but also brought the music of J.O'K to a whole new generation of fans. With the success of the musical, the merchandise accompanying it also started to flow. The baseball caps, key-rings, tee-shirts, teddy bears and coffee mugs could be purchased at the theatre or via credit card from the souvenir program guide. It wasn't long thereafter that *Jacobsen* entertainment and Sony Music released an original cast recorded soundtrack featuring 28 songs from the production.

Although the critics agree that David Campbell did do an amazing job as O'Keefe (in some cases a little too good voice wise), Campbell's understudy for the role of Johnny, Peter Murphy, had done an equally if not better job at capturing the actual raw energy that was- the Wild One.

Hot on the heels of the huge success of the musical, *Festival Mushroom Records* released another 2-CD-set entitled *The Wild One: His Greatest Hits (and other classics from the era)*. This was perhaps seen as FMR's attempt to cash in on the musical's success. It is also common knowledge that *Festival* regards the name Johnny O'Keefe as strictly THEIR property. *Festival* has been known to be bitter and look down upon other people, especially rival record companies benefiting from the O'Keefe name without their involvement or blessing. There were



The Wild One on stage with Dave Owens on Sax around 1958.

29 tracks on Festival's latest offering and this was a mix of J.O'K hits and other artists and their songs that had been featured in the musical. As an added bonus, the second disc featured the first 'Hidden Track' ever to be featured on a J.O'K CD.

To rub salt into FMR's wounds an old rival, the independent label *Canetoad Records*, struck back with *The Explosive Johnny O'Keefe*. This was a collection of 35 unreleased rock'n'roll songs taken straight from both private amateur recordings and original studio recorded acetates of old Johnny O'Keefe show performances. Most of the songs have never existed on any previous 'official' Johnny O'Keefe recordings. This made the collection worth-its-weight-in-gold as it was a chance to hear the wild one sing some classic rock tunes such as *School Day*, *Stagger Lee*, *Good Golly Miss Molly*, *You Never Can Tell*, *Money* and *Do Wah Diddy Diddy* as well as other contemporary classics

such as *Blue Bayou*, *The Game Of Love*, *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*, *Hit The Road Jack* and my personal favourite of the whole CD is *Wake Up My Mind* as it sounds good and the lyrics are wonderful. This release from the independent *Canetoad label*, its second J.O'K release and its 27th CD at the time stacked up quality-wise against, if not better than, some of the other major companies' releases, namely Festival's Spin label.

One of the most anticipated J.O'K biographies, Damian Johnstone's *The Wild One: The life and Times Of Johnny O'Keefe* was finally released to the public on the 1st February. For all the fans disappointed with previous efforts in the telling of the Johnny O'Keefe story their wait was finally over. Damian's book was an easy read, but never lacked in the detail department. He also never tried to waste our time in repeating everything that we already knew. Damian with the help of J.O'K's family, close

friends and associates painted the most honest, non biased version of the life of Johnny O'Keefe and as Maureen O'Keefe put it, "the story had to be told warts and all".

Although the book was originally due to be released in March, one would think that the rescheduling release to February was to cash in on the new growing interest of *The Wild One* brought on by the musical. Besides the amount of quality research that went into making the book, Damian with the help of J.O'K collector Jason Inmon also included a more detailed and expanded discography than any previous efforts.

It is obvious that Damian Johnstone covered all his bases when he set out to retell the Johnny O'Keefe story and in doing so he helped fill the void that was still remaining many years after J.O'K's death. With this book, we were finally presented with a better understanding as to who Johnny O'Keefe was, what he was like



Vicky O'Keefe continuing the tradition.



behind the scenes told by people who where there, who experienced the good, the bad, and the totally twisted side of The Wild One.

It was around this time that *The Unofficial Johnny O'Keefe web page* accumulated the finances to break away from a typical fan site and become a major J.O'K resource on the internet by becoming www.johnnyokeefe.net and in the process JOKweb was developed, which was a small internet based group determined to preserve the memory of early Australian rock.

In May of 2001, JOKweb had a meeting with FMR with some proposals and new concepts regarding future J.O'K related material. Of all the new material discussed, JOKweb came up with a concept that would use the latest DVD technology (Digital Video Disc or Digital Versatile Disc). Although still only in its early stages of development, the Johnny O'Keefe DVD would be Festival Mushroom Records' first major DVD release and would become the benchmark for future DVD releases. Because of JOKweb's involvement in the development of the highly secretive release it is sure to become the ultimate Johnny O'Keefe collectable.

One aspect to look at is that depending on the material available there could be two DVD releases of which J.O'K's performance at Brisbane's Festival Hall in 1962 could be a possible inclusion. This performance is rumoured to be the most complete concert ever filmed of The Wild One, and the last performance of *Johnny O'Keefe and the Dee Jays*.

At the very same meeting, the idea of a tribute album was discussed and with it, a special duet of Johnny O'Keefe and his daughter Vicky singing *Mockingbird* in the style of the Nat King Cole/Natalie Cole 'Unforgettable' duet. It was soon realised that Festival Mushroom and Vicky O'Keefe had already been in talks about doing such a thing. But the problem was because of technical difficulties due to the recording techniques used to record the original version featuring J.O'K, the 'Mockingbird' duet was temporarily scrapped. But it didn't rule out the

possibility of doing a duet using another song. And it just so happens there was a particular song laid in the festival vaults which still had all the original separated track elements needed to include Vicky's new vocals to create a new 'duet' version.

Although everybody showed support with the project, including the likes of *John Laws, Pee Wee Wilson, Alan Jones, Alan Dale*, and even J.O'K's ex-wife and children, every attempt to find a site for the Johnny O'Keefe monument had come up with rejection after rejection. Everyone involved in the project, including the sculptor Dr Kolozsy, was shocked when Waverley council (the town of J.O'K's birth) rejected the proposal for a site to put the monument even after Kolozsy offered to donate it. This unbelievable decision from this council and other relevant Sydney councils have lead some people to believe that an unhappy Barry O'Keefe is playing a part in these councils decisions.

By mid-2001, Things were starting to slow down for the year. The Johnny O'Keefe DVD project was put on hold until 2002. This was mostly due to Festival Mushroom's involvement in a 50th Anniversary exhibition with the Powerhouse museum, which is currently set for a December 2001 opening.

In the August edition of *Woman's Day*, Vicky O'Keefe talked about the death of her mother Marianne who not long before died after a long battle with cancer. She also officially stated that there was indeed a duet with her father in the works although no word as to what song it would be. After my meeting with festival in May, it looks like the song chosen for the duet is a JOK hit that he recorded twice in his career. No more hints now.

It was also around this time that budget distributor Red X entertainment licensed material from FMR to release the 3-CD-set *The Great Johnny O'Keefe*. For the \$19.95 price it was a bargain due to the inclusion of the rarities *Where the Action Is, My Lady By The River, Soulshake, Sunday Morning Coming Down, and Taste The Wine*, all of which were only previously available in the So Tough box-set.

It seems that 2002-2005 will be big years for not only all things Johnny

O'Keefe but for Australian rock'n'roll in general. We have already been exposed to the ABC's six-part documentary *A Long Way To The Top* and I have been told there are a few Australian biographical movies also in the works. Of these, rumour has it that the Leon Isackson/Jon Hayton book *Behind The Rock* is going to be turned into a big budget Australian production and made by the makers of the film *Chopper*. I have been told that the old Sydney stadium will be re-created for the production. But we'll have to see how this all comes together.

The controversial Johnny O'Keefe Monument looks set to live in Queensland as part of the *Wintersun Festival*. J.O'K's ex manager John Hansen and Vicky O'Keefe are said to have been working on the funding for the completion of the monument and for finding the site.

In regards to future J.O'K releases, I have been told that FMR are planing to release another 3-CD box-set, although the DVD project will be the eye opener. If JOKweb is involved it will become the benchmark that FMR is hoping it will be. I would also like to see re-releases of all of J.O'K's live material, like the previously released LPs *Live In Concert*, *At The Waltzing Matilda*, *Live On The Gold Coast* and if available his live performance at Sunbury in 1973. I would also like to see *Canetoad Records* release some more rare and unexpected JOK releases. Oh well, we can only hope.

Ed. Check-out page 43 for more info on J.O'K.



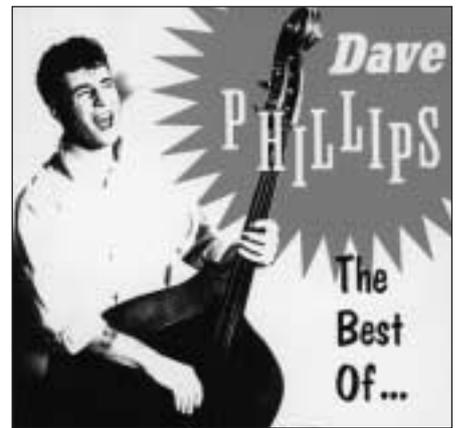
The adventures of an Antipodean abroad

There has been a wave of excellent tours through England recently. *Jumpin' Jack Neal*, the original bass player from *The Bluecaps*, rocked the night away at the *Tennessee Club* in August. Despite not having performed in public for a number of years, Jack did not disappoint the legions of Gene Vincent fans present. Aply assisted by some great local musicians, including *Graham Fenton* on vocals, the club rocked to classic after classic Bluecaps style.

Another set of recent visitors were *The Comets*. I caught up with these rockin' legends at *Bletchley* in an old time dance hall that has seen the likes of *Eddie Cochran* and *Gene Vincent* in days of yore. This was the original *Rock Around The Clock* hit-making combo. The band's current line up comprises *Dick Richards* drums, *Joey Ambrose* sax, *Marshall Lytle* bass, *Johnny Grande* on piano and *Franny Beecher* lead guitar. Guest comet *Jacko Buddin* (formerly of UK band *Flying Saucers*) has been on vocals with the band for a decade now.

Unfortunately *Joey Ambrose* had to cut his visit short due to some health problems. The sax man from support group, *The Alabama Slammers*, took his place onstage. *The Alabama Slammers*, who looked resplendent in their matching outfits, are a seven piece band incorporating a solid brass section which plays straight up drivin' rockin' music.

However, the highlight of the evening was, of course, *Bill Hayley's* good ol' boys, *The Comets* themselves. This was the third time I'd seen *The Comets* and each time I've been blown away. There were a number of tongue in cheek references to their ages – the tour was called the *Viagra*



2001 tour, their new song (to be released on *Rollin' Rock* in 2002), *We're Not Dead Yet*, pokes gentle fun at their own longevity. Of course, their repertoire includes not only those fabulous *Comets* classics and their newer recordings, but also songs such as *Now Dig This* and *Eat Your Heart Out Annie* that *Joey, Dick, and Marshall* recorded as *The Jodimars*.

England seems to be in the grip of an 80s revival over recent years with tours from *The Polecats*, *The Rockats*, *Brian Setzer* and, more recently, *Dave Phillips & The Hot Rod Gang*. I managed to catch *Dave Phillips* twice, at *Tennessee Club* in North London and at the *Chicken Shack* in Milton Keynes. His show is the wildest, full of energy and power. His version of *Gene Vincent's Teenage Partner* has to be seen to be believed as he breaks down in sobs during the verses and then screams out the chorus. Of course the song everyone was yelling for was *Tainted Love*. At the *Chicken Shack* the band performed that one as an encore after pretending to forget how it went. *The Hot Rod Gang* perform brilliantly, *Mark Harman* sporting a sticker proclaiming *Elvis Is God* on his guitar and *Rob Tyler* providing a solid beat on drums, the three piece combo rock.

Dave Phillips & The Hot Rod Gang are looking for an Australian tour, so if there are any serious offers, get in touch and I'll help you make contact.

Bob Hume.
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Bob Hume, living in England for the past 3 years, presented the 6RTR FM Rock Rattle'n'Roll show for 17 years.

Ed.