

17 March 2008

EASTER IS FESTIVAL TIME throughout Australia! And this weekend more than 30 000 people - mainly from Queensland's South East - will travel to Toowoomba for **Easterfest**.

On the bill are newsboys, Jars Of Clay, Alabaster Box, MXPX, Project 86 and more.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the event previously known as the Australian Gospel Music Festival (AGMF).

Newsboys' Peter Furler says he's expecting big things this year.

"I'm expecting it to be a really great show," he says.

More details: www.easterfest.com.au

POINT COOK HOMESTEAD near Werribee in Melbourne's West is expected to fill to the brim this Sunday and Monday as people come to listen to their favorite Christian acts.

REZFEST 08 (dubbed Melbourne's Christian Big Day Out) is expecting thousands of people wanting to celebrate Easter with worship themed rock, pop, jazz and folk music.

Festival Coordinator Lesley Rogan says the inaugural two day festival presents some of the best Christian-pop acts from around the world

Artists include Nashville based Aussie headliners newsboys and US mainstream chart breakers Jars Of Clay, plus leading Aussie performers Planetshakers, Alabaster Box, Compliments Of Gus, Roma Waterman, and the Melbourne Gospel Choir.

Newsboys' Peter Furler says the last time the band played in Melbourne they had a great time.

"I'm expecting a huge crowd at RezFest this year," Furler says.

"Melbourne has always been really welcoming to us. The boys are talking backstage every night saying we can't wait to get back to Melbourne," he adds.

Tickets for RezFest 08 are available from Word, lightfm.com.au, and local churches.

REZFEST 08 is a joint venture between Wyndham City Council and church groups.

*** See interview below with newsboys' lead singer as heard on Woodland's Media daily radio series *Behind The Music*

OPENING ARTISTS for the Paul Colman *One Voice One Guitar* show in Melbourne on 28 March are newcomer Emily Hanscamp and UK stalwart Sammy Horner (The Electrics). Horner is probably the maddest performer on stage in Contemporary Christian Music. Look out for his side project, Dark Country.

IT'S A LONG WAY TO THE TOP – STILL

They have played some of the biggest music festivals in the world, but for Newsboys (an Aussie band now based in America that has become one of the world's most successful Christian pop-rock acts) they like nothing more than returning to the Aussie crowd which will go wild for them at REZFEST 08 in Melbourne on Sunday night.

IT'S a long way to the top when you want to rock'n'roll - and sometimes when you get there it's not quite what it seems.

That's been the experience of Newsboys frontman Peter Furler who this week told of how he had many times battled thoughts of wanting to do something else, despite achieving fame and fortune.

The Newsboys are in Melbourne to launch Victoria's biggest Christian music festival, REZFEST 08, at the Point Cook Homestead this Sunday and Monday.

It seems an eternity from the days when Furler was working on construction sites to make a buck - and buy musical equipment.

Furler remembers all too well the days of scrounging through the leftover bins of Hungry Jacks or Burger King or living on \$1 meals in the US when they were trying to find their way.

And even now after selling almost seven million albums, there are days when, after travelling 900 miles to a festival they have played 20 times before, they wonder why they are doing it.

"I think for us it is for the love of it - and the fact that we have got nowhere else to go," Furler said frankly of his lack of 'back-up' employment options.

"Many times we have had thoughts of wanting to give up," he said.

There have been plenty of low points along the way, including the tragic death of a former band member in a motorbike crash and the sickness of the daughter of one of their most popular guitarists.

There's also been times when Newsboys have been hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt as they tried to put on big shows in the aftermath of 9/11 when far less people were venturing out, given the climate of fear.

Furler credits his early days in Australia spending hours in a church practicing the drums for helping to build the tenacity and discipline to get him through the tough times.

THE ROCK ACROSS AUSTRALIA

He remembers only too well eating the communion bread and wine as he practiced in the locked church after the morning service until when people arrived for the evening service.

The lessons from his days as a lifesaver also helped build character.

"I really think that instilled in me something - that discipline of getting up at 4.30am in the morning," he said.

"It taught me that what you put into something is what you get out of it," he said.

By all accounts, Furler is one of the real work horses of the US music scene, writing many of the band's 25 number one hits as well as producing for other artists.

He's passionate about his Christian faith but says like everyone it has been a journey for him with plenty of mistakes along the way.

Despite his success, he says he's battled his own thought life with fears that he's not achieving what he's meant to be or bringing to life the songs that are still in his head.

And he admits there have been times when he's strayed from the gospel he sings about.

"Many times we have lost our way and in those times it's really a desert-like existence."

He says he's greatest satisfaction comes not from success but doing what he's meant to be doing, using the skills he has been given.

Apart from his faith, he says one of the real foundations of his life has been his 17-year marriage to wife Summer.

Summer, the daughter of musician and speaker Mylon Le Fevre, who wrote his first song at 17, Without Him, which was recorded by Elvis Presley, is no stranger to the pressures of the touring life.

"Outside of your faith, that's the most important relationship. If your marriage is where it can be you can take on the world," Furler says.

"If your marriage is not right, does not matter how much money you have got or how famous you are, your life is going to be hurting."

Despite being in the industry for more than two decades, Furler says he believes the band's best is still yet to come.

"We are the best we have ever been without a doubt," he says of the current line-up and music.

"To be still here 20 years later that is a big part of it - not being satisfied..."

"We are just going into something new."

He said the band's most recent addition, Melbourne musician Paul Colman, was a good reminder to them of how good things were for the Newsboys as they played sold-out shows.

"For us we have got really spoilt. You can really get used to that," he says of stadiums crowded with screaming fans.

THE ROCK ACROSS AUSTRALIA

"Paul reminds us of how good we have got it."

He says the band are more like brothers with many of the management and road crew having been with the band for years, many Australians and Kiwis.

"That's been a big part of sticking with it. If one of us is feeling like we can't do it any more, there are mates there to help us through."

While the band has toured the world, including the US, China, Israel, Morocco, Europe and Uganda, Furler says it still considers itself very much an Aussie band.

"It's something we are proud of (being Australian).".

"Aussies have done some fantastic things and from such a small nation there have been so many achievements," he said.

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