

## Crosscurrents

In 1969 two New York musicians, rock/blues electric guitarist Danny Kalb and acoustic finger picker Stefan Grossman teamed up to produce an eclectic “crossover” album entitled Crosscurrents. Six years later in Ballarat, Ian Noyce, luthier and member of folk/country outfit the Loose Scratch String Band, and Don Kerby of rock/blues band Once, had the idea of musicians who played different but related styles getting together to play a wider range of music with a wider range of people than their usual genres. Noyce proposed the name Crosscurrents, and so began a musical enterprise that spanned a quarter of a century.

The first show took place in the then recently opened “Nerrina Space” community performing arts venue, in the old church on the corner of Hillcrest Road and Church Street in Nerrina (still standing but unused today). It was put together in one Sunday afternoon and put on that night. It involved about a dozen performers playing and singing in various combinations, two spotlights, a couple of amps and an audience of about three dozen people and a few dogs. It wasn't smooth, it didn't have high production values, but it had a good feeling, so we persevered.

Through the next two shows, at intervals of a couple of months, performers, equipment and audience all proliferated rapidly. When we reached the stage of 20-odd performers and their gear taking up half the space and an audience of 70 crammed into the other half, it was time to move on. And so we did, in December 1975, to St Pauls Hall in Victoria Street, Bakery Hill – now (2017) occupied by Anglicare. Crosscurrents continued at St Pauls Hall for the next 25 years.

The first phase was the most intensive, with 15 concerts in the period from early 1975 to late 1978. In this period, the composition of each show reflected the diversity of talent, backgrounds and interests of the core group dubbed by someone as the “Crosscurrents family” and their guests. The material ranged through Australian bush ballads, Texan new country, folk/country ballads, a capella vocal harmonies, acoustic & electric blues, maybe a jig, a 1930s Fats Waller song, a Baptist hymn, a newly penned original, and probably a couple of 1950s rock 'n' rollers. Combos ranged from solos, duos, trios up to the centrepiece of the enterprise – the Crosscurrents Band, which could range on occasion up to an eight-piece plus vocal group.

Preparation for a concert began a couple of weeks before with a meeting of the core “family”, a general swapping of tapes and organising who would do what and with whom. Rehearsals large and small were arranged, and culminated in several hours of chaos “on the day” when the hall was set up and serious last minute arrangements and rehearsals went on apace in back rooms and back lanes, and the clipboards of the organisers ran hot. After a quick dinner break, somehow it all came together by show time at 8pm. While the show went on (and Noyce is still proud of the fact that it always ran on schedule), fine tuning (along with regular tuning – in the days before electronic tuners) often continued backstage right up to the moment of performance – this was live music at its liveliest! After the show, we all packed up and the “family” and partners mucked in to clear and clean up the hall.

Crosscurrents was never a “closed shop”, but nor did it have an “open mic” philosophy. There were no formal auditions, but unknown aspiring newcomers were required to present their credentials well in advance so that the show always had good balance and at least reasonable musical quality.

Since many of the performers and audience were of child-rearing age, the vibe was always family oriented and child-friendly, and the venue was alcohol-free. The entry price was always very affordable – initially pitched to cover hall hire, minimal advertising and coffee, tea and biscuits. As audience sizes increased, we made a profit margin which was donated to various deserving causes over the years. There were also at least two larger Crosscurrents events – a cabaret at the Civic Hall and a concert in the then Memorial Theatre (Her Majesty's) associated with the Ballarat Children's Home annual appeal in August 1977.

Memories of why Crosscurrents ceased at the end of 1978 are vague. Perhaps the momentum and enthusiasm was fading anyway. But the absence from Ballarat in the first half of 1979 of Jack Harvey, frequent Crosscurrents Band lead singer and chief clipboard wielder, and the subsequent launching of a new band - Electric Fence - by Noyce and Harvey on his return, were crucial contributing factors.

After a 4-year break, the second phase of Crosscurrents began in 1983, with the inception of 3BBB community radio. Dave Dahlenberg, drummer in Electric Fence and 3BBB instigator and manager, was the driving force behind the revival of Crosscurrents. During this second phase, concerts under the Crosscurrents banner occurred less frequently or regularly, but over a much longer period – until at least 2000. New waves of organisers and performers carried on the tradition, but versions of the original Crosscurrents Band re-formed from time to time for special occasions.

**The following lists refer to the first phase of Crosscurrents (1975-1978).**

**Key members of the Crosscurrents Band were:**

Ian Noyce – guitars, harp, sax, vocals  
Don Kerby – drums, vocals  
Jack Harvey – acoustic guitar, vocals  
Adrian Lillis – guitars, vocals  
John Ducardus – guitars, vocals  
Dave Newton – bass guitar, piano  
Rolf Wojciechowski – bass guitar  
Kim Sumner – electric guitar, vocals  
Dave Rogerson – electric guitar, pedal steel guitar  
Dave McCall – piano  
Ian (Moses) Morrison – acoustic guitar, vocals  
Sally Moore – vocals

**Other local performers (bands and individuals) included:**

Sideroads (Daryl Eastcott, Brenton Woods, Kim Sumner, Shane Strachan, Rolf Wojciechowski, Mick Hillman)  
Jacaranda Jumbuks (Ian Clift, Gary Bunn, Ian (Moses) Morrison, Bruce Schmidt)  
The Green Fry Band (Ken and Ronald Green, Tim and Roy Fry)  
Dave Abbey  
Alex Burger  
Paula Green  
Dan Carroll  
Graeme (Jim) Dyson  
Roz Bazzani  
Barry Tibbles  
Ross Young  
Pete Lehmann  
Glenn Miller  
Kevin Zibell

**Notable out-of-town visiting performers included:**

Pete Howell  
Louis McManus  
Dutch Tilders  
Greg O'Leary  
Peter Macdonald  
Dave Isom  
Glen Tucker

**Performers who went on to forge professional musical careers on bigger stages included:**

Neil Murray  
David Hirschfelder  
Jeremy Allsop

An early visiting audience member who went away impressed by the concept was Jamie McKew, who was then running Geelong Folk Club, and who went on to establish the Port Fairy Folk Festival.

*Jack Harvey, May 2017*