



by Johnny Allen

Katie Cawcutt and Benny Zable of the Aquarius Foundation have organised a full year of events to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Nimbin Aquarius Festival.

A highlight event, timed to mark the dates of the original festival, was Aquarius and Beyond, a two-day confest created by Rob Garbutt and his team from Southern Cross University, which re-appraised the achievements and legacy of the festival.

With Lismore Mayor Jenny Dowell and festival co-directors Graeme Dunstan and Johnny Allen, many of the original Aquarians reflected on the festival's impact on their lives. Among those present were musician Paul Joseph, Bauxhau Stone, Althea Scantlebury, Katie Cawcutt, Benny Zable, Vernon Treweeke, Neville Jennings, Mareid Sullivan and John Jiggins, who read from his novel based on the festival, *Rehearsals For The Apocalypse*.

Original locals Daisy Stewart and Rollie Couch reflected, with many in the audience remembering fondly the milkshakes, hamburgers and toasted sandwiches dispersed from Daisy's Café.

Mandie Hale reflected on the challenge of creating a viable counterculture, and convened a panel of young Aquarians to reflect on growing up in the community. Michael Balderstone detailed the local legacy of the festival, Christopher Dean the shift of planetary consciousness, while Natalie Meyer outlined the achievements of the Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre.

In 40 sessions, speakers examined the historic event from its many facets, with presentations by academics from various universities brought depth and rigour to topics ranging from activism to the festival's impacts on intentional



John Allen speaking at the conference

communities, land use and Aquarian ideas of property.

Despite the stated goodwill and support of the Bundjalung people, there were no black faces in the hall. We still have much to do and a long way to go to fulfil the potential so bravely and energetically begun by Bauxhau Stone in 1973.

The climax was a Masquerade Ball in the Nimbin Hall, with musicians including Paul Joseph, Mic Conway, who played at the first festival, and a 35-year reunion of the Blue Skies Orchestra fronted by Ruth Miller.

Catering was done with style and elan by the Radical Fairies, a local gay commune, and the hall was an explosion of colour, music and joy.

But – as ever with Nimbin – the true festival was outside in the street. How vibrant and successful Nimbin has become, with every space in the main street renovated, decorated and buzzing with life. The old RSL Hall that served as the Media Centre for the Festival is now the headquarters of Birth and Beyond, the old Tomato Sauce Building that served as our food co-op is now the thriving Hemp Embassy, and the hall has echoes of past performances and celebrations dating back to the festival.

The event was reported in the Northern Star and the Byron Bay Echo, and picked up local television, and eventually ABC Radio National, ABC Television and The Sydney Morning Herald.

All good publicity, but more importantly, a repositioning of Nimbin in the eyes of the media.

Nimbin has become a rite of passage for many young people from all over Australia and overseas, who come in their droves in search of the idealism, values and inspiration. Many have devoted their lives to manifesting that vision, and in the process have created a unique and very special place.

Nimbin, like anywhere else, has its ongoing challenges but Aquarian values have nourished and sustained the grand dreams and visions of the community.

support from local farmers and existing residents, (g) from Nimbin the counter-culture revolution reached out locally so that the Far Northern regions of New South Wales have become known for their innovative and sustainable technologies, ideas and models of community living, and (h) the Aquarians and those who were inspired to the area have made diverse contributions including:

- initiating ecological protection of old growth forests and North Coast biodiversity,
- developing alternative energy systems,
- establishing sustainable food production practices and promoting healthy lifestyles,
- promoting innovative architecture in intentional communities,
- encouraging cultural diversity including music, craft and arts,
- engaging in political activism, and the production of community media including newspapers and radio,
- supporting alternative economic models, including Local Economic Trading Systems (LETS) and community markets.

2. That this House congratulates the Aquarians and those who have contributed to and maintained a unique and vibrant cultural community in northern New South Wales for the past 40 years.



The Aged of Aquarius

by Nathan Koenig

After reading *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes' horrific account of Australia's founding, I began to perceive Nimbin as the opposite social experiment, one that approaches life as a journey in creative freedom and opportunity rather than one of suppression, depression and cruelty.

To quote Aquarian troubadour Paul Joseph, "We wanted to change the world. This was our destiny." Let's take a look at some of the Nimbin settlers featured in my film series *Woodstock Downunder*.

Johnny Allen, the young, long-haired, theatrically-minded entrepreneur of theatre and rock concerts, was hired by the AUS, Australian Union of Students, to co-ordinate the 1973 Aquarius Festival. He got Graeme Dunstan, an engineering student in Sydney, to help pull things together. Graeme went on to be a prominent Australian cultural and political activist.

A third part of the young Aquarian team was found meditating in a cave near Mullumbimby: Paul Joseph. He became the festival herald and troubadour, and recently wrote and created a music video called *Wot the Frack!* and had Lismore's name officially changed to Lovemore for the month

of May, by proclamation of Mayor Jenny Dowell.

Paul promoted *Aquarius in Lovemore*, a four-day event at the Starcourt Theatre on 9th –12th May.

John Seed is an environmentalist who successfully campaigned to save the sub-tropical rainforest of NSW and was a founder of Bodhi Farm, one of Nimbin's first communities. He is now in Sydney, co-ordinating Rainforest Information Centre and deep ecology programs.

And there are those who are no longer among us, like the beloved Colin James, who saw a chance to build an alternative society in Nimbin. His recent funeral in Sydney was attended by at least a thousand friends.

Isabel Coe was a brave, intelligent woman who stood up for her people and appealed to the world at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy when the Sydney Olympics was in town.

She granted our first interview when we landed in Sydney in 2003. Soon after, we were surprised to see her in Nimbin, heading up the MardiGrass parade.

And then there was Black Al, an elder Aborigine who made us laugh while tuning us on to aborigine music and culture. He found a comfort zone among his fellow social outcasts, the hippies.



Vernon, Mic and Sri Richard

And let's not forget the gravelly, bluesy, soulful voice of George Scott, who must be partying on in the great beyond after many years of balladeering in the streets of Nimbin.

Lisa Yeates began as folk music singer in the 1960s, and became the Hempress of Gaia at MardiGrass, declaring that men should be banned from politics for five years while the women straightened things out. She now lives in Tasmania with family. We miss her.

Carol Perry is a Dharmananda pioneer and mediation professional who can put men and women in their place while offering advice and counsel in the form of mediation, tactfully solving deadlocks.

Our first hostess in Nimbin was Robyn Francis at Djanbung Gardens, Nimbin's Permaculture Centre, now an accredited institution with a constant flow of students.

Aquarian pioneer Katie Cawcutt is one of the early

dreamers who kept it going and passes it on to the young people through the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, whose President this year is Nimbin's iconic Benny Zable, known around the world as a performance artist for peace.

There are many more, like Christopher Dean, formerly the hippie who became CEO of Thursdays Plantation; Richard Neville, editor of radical *Oz Magazine* who became an author and futurist; Juno Gemes, celebrated photographer, author and activist for Aboriginal rights; Michael Balderstone, who manages the Nimbin Museum and MardiGrass; Peter Pedals, founder of Rainbow Power Company and provider of sustainable energy systems; Ray Thorpe, the savvy proprietor of the Happy High Herb stores worldwide, and my wise wife and partner, Shelli Lipton.

Read an extended version of this article at: www.aquarius2013.nimbin.nsw.au

Nimbin Aquarius 2013 acknowledgements

by Benny Zable, President, Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc.



I wish to first acknowledge the Bundjalung nation and Wia-Bal people, whose land we are on.

Secondly I wish to thank the many people who organised the different aspects of the 40th anniversary of Aquarius in May to be the great success it has been, as follows:

The Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc. team, most of all Katie Cawcutt who managed the finance, complexity of meetings, website, and ongoing planning. Paris Naday for creating our website: www.aquarius2013@nimbin.nsw.au and for designing Aquarius 2013 posters. David Hallett for organising the Aquarius folk concert, Harsha Prabhu and Graeme Batterbury for exhibiting and publishing a 40th anniversary book edition of *Rainbow Dreaming: Tales from the Age of Aquarius*.

A special thanks to Daniel and Belinda for keeping open the Nimbin Bush Theatre for the *Woodstock Downunder* screenings and IMAGINE, and a special thanks to Nathan Koenig and Shelli Lipton Woodstock Museum founders/directors, for coming over as Woodstock, New York ambassadors and screening their epic 10 hours work in progress, *Woodstock Downunder*. Bee and Harsha for developing and managing the program of IMAGINE: An Aquarian Arts Happening.

Rob Garbutt for organising from the Southern Cross University and bringing *Aquarius and Beyond: 40 years on market of ideas forum* to the Nimbin Hall. Graham Irvine, Southern

Cross University together with Nimbin Information Centre, bringing the *Nimbinovations: Living the Dream* 18-panel Aquarian Archives display to Nimbin shopfronts.

Also to Mic Conway and Fantuzzi for going out of their way to perform for us in Nimbin.

Which leads me to a most spectacular grand finale for the Aquarius 40th anniversary program in May, the Aquarius Masquerade Ball, which Ruth Miller worked so tirelessly on, together with Katie Cawcutt. And to all original 1973 organisers and participants especially Johnny Allen, Graeme Dunstan and Paul Joseph coming to Nimbin for this, our most stimulating Aquarius reunion.

FOOTNOTE

Excerpt from Rob Garbutt's acknowledgements: Thanks everyone – it was a lot of fun, it was informative, we learnt a lot, it was a communiversity.

80 Cullen Street 6689-0199

NIMBIN CAFE
the OASIS of NIMBIN
COFFEE SHOP

Nimbin Apothecary
Established 1990
The Herbal Dispensary
friendly over-the-counter advice
supplements, oils, crystals, herb teas and more

Colds, coughs, the flu?
Drop by to be taken care of

54 Cullen St Nimbin (02) 6689 1529 www.nimbinapothecary.com

YOUR ONE-STOP HAT & PARTY SHOP

Wigs
Masks
Boas
Hosiery
Corsets
Costumes

Unisex hats
Top Hats
Trilbys
Bowlers
Fascinators
Hatinators

See Jan "The Hat Lady" for all your special requirements

Shop 5, 46 Cullen Street, Nimbin 6689-1550

Nim-FM
102.3
NIMBIN
COMMUNITY RADIO

Daisy NIMBIN

GO CRAZY IN DAIZY

Jewellery, incense, stickers, postcards, beanies, hats, sarongs, bedcovers, wallhangings, cushions, thongs, CDs trance & local, slips, beads, sunnies, chimes, etc...

• OPEN FROM NOON DAILY •

60 Cullen Street Nimbin – ph 6689-0146

Grey Gum Lodge
2 High Street Nimbin

www.greygumlodge.com
stay@greygumlodge.com
02 6689 1713 – 0408 663 475

Mini Excavator & Tipper Hire

Bobcat • 3.8T Excavator •
300mm - 400mm Auger •
Tipper Hire 5T •

Laurie Turner
0427 891 708