

Key Grip Hits The Road, Jack...Again!

So, there we were in March 2016, driving back to Canberra after our very successful little mini-tour to Wagga and then on to Adelaide where we played the coveted Sunday afternoon spot at the Semaphore Workers Club, surely one of the coolest blues music venues in Australia. Conversation in the car somewhere on the Hay Plains inevitably turned to the upcoming Semaphore Music Festival in Adelaide in October. Fired with enthusiasm after our recent gig, the band encouraged me to apply for the festival. I duly did so and after a few months, blow me down, Deb Thorsen the festival organizer who had seen us in March, decided to give us a run.

Meanwhile in April, I was down in Melbourne and went along to the weekly jam run by our sister group, MBAS. A conversation there with Rob Dillon from Dreamboogie led to an invitation to bring Key Grip to the Docklands Blues Festival on October 16. After a few phone calls in the later weeks that too was soon all set. So, it was on. A return trip to the Semaphore Workers Club was set for October 2 and then we'd be flying the flag for the Canberra blues community at Docklands a few weeks later on October 16.

First things first. You gotta get a band like Key Grip warmed-up gigs for outings like this so to get the band firing and with the support of Gaye Reid, Bucky and Nigel McRae, we were set to play three gigs at the Press Club, Harmonie German Club and Smith's. And may I just add that we also did a set at the August CBS jam from which a video clip of us doing Hard Times and taken by our Marketing Manager Tammy Wolffs went absolutely bacterial on Facebook and got us into the heady range of more than 2K views! Whoa!!

Sadly, James Luke couldn't make the Adelaide gig but Alec Coulson agreed to step into the breach for bass duties for that gig and for some of the warm ups and he did a fantastic job. Also, we needed to fill in Tom Fell's spot in the Gripping Stuff Horn Section as Tom had some other musical projects he was keen to get to. Happily, James "Gimme" LeFevre an original Gripping Stuff member and now living in Melbourne was able to help and join Joe Taylor in the horn section. So, we were set.

This time we decided to do things in a little more style as we didn't have to take so much of our own gear. Long story short, we were all able to fly to Adelaide this time. So we all got there on the Friday night and went to see our friends, Lazy Eye, help open the Festival that night down at the Semaphore Workers Club.



Semaphore Workers Club

On the Saturday, we assembled for an entertaining brunch with the ever musically interesting Rodger Jessup and my brother Harold. Then it was on to work for a rehearsal at Derringer's Music in suburban Adelaide that afternoon. After some fine hospitality again from Harold for those who were game that night in Adelaide, we were ready for the Sunday gig. Lara Mutu and the Organics featuring Jessie Deane-Freeman on Hammond and Mario Marino on drums opened the proceedings for us and warmed up the crowd. We gotta get them in Canberra for a gig sometime soon, lemme tell ya. They cook! And they ever so kindly helped us out with a lot of gear. A lot of gear! Big thanks to them.



Mitch enjoying Adelaide hospitality

Downbeat for the first set arrived and when Dave counted the killer opening riff of the opening tune, the BB King gem "Whole Lotta Love" with his foot on that stage, I knew we were in for a great ride and it was gonna get serious. I don't remember stopping much until the end of the second of the two sets we were to play. The whole band was firing. Angela, I am sure, has made many new friends at the Adelaide gigs and tells me punters there just want her to move to Adelaide and sing for them permanently! Mitch and Alec held the set down as the fine rhythm section they are, Dave was firing on all cylinders - you had to be there, and Joe and James nailed the horns. Great fun to play with Gimme LeFevre again! I just tried to stay out of the way of the train and do what I had to do! Great show. And thanks again to Deb Thorsen and Comrade Dave Pearce at the Semaphore Workers Club (did I mention what a great venue it is?) for having us.

On to Melbourne. We drove down from Canberra but again didn't have to take too much gear. We got to play the Spiegelent at Docklands and what a hoot that is. Something very special about that and thanks to Rob Dillon for making it happen.

For both these gigs, we worked up the Percy Mayfield gem Hit The Road, Jack as a finale and it worked a treat. A great song to send people away humming a tune with.

And now it is on to Goulburn where we will play the Astor Hotel on the Friday night of the 2017 Australian Blues Music Festival on February 10. I am getting to like playing these gigs!!!

Thanks to all who made this happen including, most of all, the band and all the characters names in the story above! We can't do it without you. And thanks to K2 for not giving up on me to write this!

- Leo Joseph



James, Dave, Angela & Joe doing a bit of op-shopping in Adelaide



Key Grip performing in the Spiegelent