



A History of Australia's International Spur Award

There must have been something in the air during the Spring of 1997 when I first approached The Rotary Club of Galston, New South Wales, Australia, with the ambitious idea of organising what since has become Sydney's most highly successful 'Galston Country Music Festival'. As the designated Patron of the Festival, my fellow Rotarians agreed to support me in a new scheme; the presentation of a special annual award. The prize was initially envisaged to be an encouragement award, with carte blanche to present it to whomsoever I chose as the best new Independent Australian Country Music performer of that year.

The criteria for selection was simply based on the strength of a recording that I considered to be of high standard and indicative of further potential.

At first, in 1998, it was simply known as the Frank Ifield Award and was presented to singer/songwriter Colin Greatorix. As a result, this drew a lot of attention to Colin's work here in Australia and led to the doubling up of awards for 1999 for "Best Female" won by Melinda Schneider and "Best Male" to Michael Carr, who both are now highly established Country-Music stars in Australia.

Then came the year 2000, and to celebrate the special event of the new century, I presented a one-off Millennium award to Wayne Horsburgh in recognition of his furtherance of Australian Country Music, particularly in the USA. However, the excitement of entering the 21st century found me restless and wanting to extend the boundaries beyond Australian shores. The focus now became centred on the

potential International appeal of the recording with more emphasis on an artist's uniqueness and professionalism of performance; both on and off the stage. A Global appeal became critical, as a significant component of the award, is the exposure to International airplay (particularly the UK & Europe) and would carry my personal endorsement and be reliant upon my knowledge and experience to promote relatively unknown Australian talent overseas. The Award now had a name-change to the "Frank Ifield International Spur Award", and was won in 2001 by the outstanding talent of Karen O'Shea, who went on to enjoy no fewer than three top ten placements in the British and European radio play lists charts.

Now we were off with flying colours, and in 2002, Wayne Law took the award and his success ensured him of touring the Continent each year since.

2003 was a year of another challenge. My new winner was Donna Boyd who notched up so many top 10 entries that I decided to bite the bullet and try for a Country tour of the UK for her. I contacted my friend; former drummer Clive "Cozy" Dixon, from the days of my own touring with the British band "Barbary Coast" and he organised the marathon tour, which I was reliably informed, ended as the being longest tour mounted for a visiting country music artist. Meanwhile, Donna's popularity zoomed on her return to Australia, where she has established herself as one of Australia's foremost stars.

On my own return, I set out to find new talent, and the winner in 2004 was the melodic voice

of Graham G Toole, followed in 2005 by the sultry emotional talent of Stacey Morris; both these artists found themselves high on the chart list. Yet, I resolved that 2006 was to be the year of something even more special and I scouted around to find it. And; find it I did in Travis Collins! An incredible talent with all the sex appeal of a young Presley, Travis works the stage as if born to it...His guitar playing ranks with the finest pickers known, and his vocals are full of energy and emotion. Fortunately, he manages to convey his uniqueness in the recording studio as evidenced by his amount of acceptance in the USA, Australia and by the UK and European radio, where he has notched up many successful top honours. In June, Travis heads for the USA. Then he will be touring the UK in July and August.

My award is presented annually in March. This year's choice goes to the remarkable talent of Karen Lynne. I have been impressed for many years by Karen's bell like quality of voice, reminiscent of Judith Durham, I find her an extremely versatile artist with a unique style, ranging through Country; Folk; and her Blue Grass Music is a delight. Having already made some inroads in the UK where she has done some major Festivals, I believe she will prove the right choice.

In closing, I wish to thank the many Disc Jockeys and Radio stations for playing our Australian artistes, and all my friends of the music industry for their unselfish support and advice to me and my wild endeavours to discover new talent and to raise the quality of good music for the future.

www.frankifield.com

Frank Ifield.



With his music on the airwaves and near the top of the charts on three continents, Travis Collins is rapidly becoming an international sensation.

Announcing Travis's Golden Spur Award win in March this year, legendary crooner and music industry figure Frank Ifield said of this talented young singer: "When

Travis hits the stage, the whole world erupts". It seems that Frank's words are prophetic, because the world is fast discovering Travis, and can't get enough of his talents.

Since winning the prestigious Golden Spur Award, Travis has seen his songs top the charts in France, go Top 5 in Denmark and Germany, and debut in the top 10 of the European HotDisk charts, where he's stayed for no less than five weeks - with no sign of moving downwards in the immediate future. In the United Kingdom, he's sitting in the number 8 spot on the country charts with the cool and sexy "Slow Train Coming"