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The acoustic sound that's bringing new life to the beaches music scene
Page 22

Picture: ANNIEKA ENDERBORG

OUT OF AFRICA ONTO STATE THEATRE: PAGE 26

Giving folk new sounds



Folk singers
Wayne
Richmond,
Steve Eliot,
Zoe Eliot,
Paul Hogan,
Kathleen
and Trevor
Swadling.
Picture: ANNIEKA
ENDERBORG
-EP141813

Rod Bennett

THE threat to live music has been evident since the 1990s and, not surprisingly, it's at an all-time high at the moment.

Or is it?

The rock players would have us believe this, and for them it's true enough.

But the rise of new acoustic and semi-acoustic venues on the peninsula doesn't just suggest a shift in the paradigm of live music appreciation – it says it's already here.

Hugely successful events are now being staged on the peninsula, usually about once a month, at Fairlight Folk, The Shack at Narrabeen Tramshed, The Barrenjoey Music Room, The Manly Fig, Gospel Live and Allambie's Humph Hall.

On the commercial side, Lizotte's has been running in Dee Why for the past few weeks offering acoustic-ish music.

And Avalon locals Angus and Julia Stone have been nominated for six ARIAs with their laid back, acoustic style.

"We've had five years of success at Fairlight Folk," one of its co-ordinators, Paul Hogan, said.

"People come to Fairlight and they know what to expect. But within that framework we are still trying to offer them something different.

"I think people are seeking authenticity (with their music) and substance they can't find on radio."

Humph Hall's Wayne Richmond put the popularity of these rooms chiefly down to the fact they were listening venues.

"I don't go to pubs very often but I have seen performers who have something to say, playing to people who are clearly not listening. It's soul destroying."

Manly Fig has gone from strength to strength since it opened in the last year. It is not strictly a folk venue – they've even

done a hip-hop night and there are plans for an opera night.

"We've found that people's musical experience is immature," Fig co-ordinator Steve Elliot said. "People are there to experience a range of styles and they're often going out for the first time in years.

"We have an 80-year-old supporter who recently came to our hip-hop night. He said he couldn't really understand it (the music) but he wouldn't even think about missing out on a concert."

The Shack's Kathleen and Trevor Swadling said the sense of community being driven by these concerts was inspiring.

"There is a culture here where people feel like they are supporting local musicians," Kathleen said.

"As well as pointing our regulars to the venues represented by the people here today, we also refer artists to one another."