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JIMMY BARNES

As the elder statesman of Oz Rock, Jimmy Barnes has carved out the most successful solo career of any performer in Australian rock history (with the possible exceptions of Johnny O'Keefe and John Farnham). Popularly known as 'Barnsey', the gravel-voiced blues belter has been feted by prominent Australians of all persuasions and was the first local musician to be interviewed on 60 Minutes (March 1988). He retained his popularity due to a down-to-earth 'just one of the boys' charm.

Barnes was born James Swan in Glasgow, Scotland during 1956. His family immigrated to Australia when he was four years old. The Swan family (including his brother John, aka Swanee) settles in the tough migrant working-class suburb of Elizabeth in Adelaide, South Australia. His mother remarried and Jim Swan adopted his stepfather's surname of Barnes. Barnes's first band was called Tarkus, but he rose to national prominence as front man for Cold Chisel, one of Australia's best-loved bands. Driven by a voracious will to succeed, he launched his solo career immediately after Cold Chisel broke up in late 1983.

His #1 album *Bodyswerve* (September 1984) was basically a reworking of the Cold Chisel 'barnstorming' pub-rock approach. Barnes wrote all the tracks on the album's three singles 'No Second Prize'/'I've Got News For You' (#11 in August), 'Promise Me You'll Call'/'Boys Cry Out For Way' (November) and 'Daylight'/'Paradise' (#14 in February 1985). His backing band on the album comprised Malcolm Eastick (guitar; ex-Stars, Broderick Smith's Big Combo), Chris Stokley (guitar, mandolin; ex-Cam-Pact, Axiom, Dingoes, Stockley See Mason Band), Bruce Howe (bass; ex-Fraternity) and Ray Arnott (drums; ex-Spectrum, Dingoes). With the addition of backing vocalists Maggie McKinney and Shauna Jenson, the Jimmy Barnes Band took to the road. Robin Riley (ex-Redhouse, Rose Tattoo, Party Boys, Beast) later replaced Stockley, and keyboard player Peter Kekel (ex-Gillian Eastoe and King Dog, Swanee, Beast) joined at the end of 1985.

The December 1985 album *For The Working Class Man* was a double 12-inch EP set featuring five new songs recorded in New York and Los Angeles, plus a bonus disc containing seven remixed from *Bodyswerve*. The new songs utilised the services of many top American session players (Waddy Wachtel, Billy Burnette, Charlie Sexton, Mick Fleetwood, Randy Jackson, Jonathan Caine and members of Little Feat). Although aimed at the vast American market, the album was a huge success locally.

It reached #1 on the national chart in February, and went on to sell over 350 000 copies. The album's string of anthem singles, 'I'd Die To Be With You Tonight'/'Vision' (#4 in October 1985), 'Working Class Man'/'No Second Prize' (#7 in February 1986) and 'Ride The Night Away'/'Paradise' (Top 40 in April 1986), were chart successes. The Jonathan Caine-penned 'Working Class Man' was used as the theme song to Ron Howard's feature film of the same name (called *Gung-Ho* in the USA).

By that stage, Barnes was dividing his time equally between Australia and America (where he had signed to Geffen Records). He formed a song-writing partnership with Jim Vallance (also Bryan Adam's song writing partner) and was using Jonathan Caine as his producer. On the jingoistic Australian Made tour of January/February 1987, Barnes's backing band comprised Canadian musicians (with the sole exception of Australian Peter Kekel). The Barnes/INXS joint recording of 'The Easybeats' rocker 'Good Times' was adopted as the unofficial anthem of the tour. The single crashed in at #1 first week on the national chart during January 1987. It also appeared on the soundtrack to the movie *The Lost Boys*.

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The Freight Train Heart album (December 1987) and the double live LP Barnestorming (November 1988) continued the US-styled stadium rock tradition. Freight Train Heart made its debut at #1 on the national chart, and went on to sell 200 000 copies in Australia. It yielded five singles, 'Too Much Ain't Enough'/'Do Or Die' (#1 in November 1987), 'Driving Wheels'/'Different Lives' (#4 in February 1988), 'I'm Still On Your Side'/'Going To Mexico' (March), 'Waiting For The Heartache'/'Seven Days' (July) and 'When A Man Loves A Woman'/'I'd Die To Be With You Tonight' (#2 in December 1988). Likewise, Barnestorming made its debut at #1 on the Australian chart, while the single 'Last Frontier' (live)/'Many Rivers To Cross' peaked at #31 in February 1989.

The Don Gehman-produced Two Fires (July 1990) was another #1 album which contained five hit singles: 'Lay Down Your Guns'/'Broken Hearts' (#4 in August 1990), 'Let's Make It Last All Night'/'Bad News' (#12 in November 1990), 'Little Darling' (#39 in February 1991), 'When Your Love Is Gone' (#11 in May) and 'Love Is Enough' (#48 in August). Two Fires became the fourth biggest selling album in Australia for 1990 and the fifth biggest selling for 1991 (over 400 000 copies sold all up). It came out on Atlantic in the USA.

Barnes's sixth #1 album Soul Deep (October 1991), was the singer's tribute to his favourite soul/R&B performers of the 1960s. It produced the singles Joe Tex's 'I Gotcha' (#6 in October 1991) and Marvin Gaye/Ashford/Simpson's 'Ain't No Mountain High Enough' (#28, February 1992).

The Barnsey and Farnsey (John Farnham) duet on the Hayes/Porter song 'When Something Is Wrong With My Baby' was also a #3 hit (November 1991), despite being considered an overwrought example of two grown men screaming their lungs out at each other! Nevertheless, Soul Deep went on to become the biggest selling Australian album issued on Mushroom (more than 600 000 copies sold). Barnes won Best Male Artist and Highest Selling Album at the 1991 Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) Awards.

Members of Barnes's recording and touring bands circa 1989-92 included Australian guitarists Kevin Borich, Johnny Diesel and Mick King; American guitarists Charlie Sexton, Todd Sharp and Jeff Neill; American keyboard players Jonathan Caine (ex-Babys, Journey), Tom Lang and Michael Mani; English keyboard player Allan Mansfield (from Dragon); Australian keyboard players Peter Kekel and Mal Logan (ex-Renee Geyer Band); Australian bass players Chris Bailey (ex-Angels) and Michael Hegerty (ex-Richard Clapton Band); American drummers Tony Brock (ex-Babys) and Walfredo Reyes; Australian drummers Buzz Bidstrup (ex-Angels, GANGgajang) and Angus Burchill (from John Farnham Band); and backing vocalists Deni Hines, Debbie Harwood, Marcie Levy and Sharon O'Neill.

Heat (#2 in April 1993) produced the hits 'Sweat It Out' (#11 in January), 'Stand Up' (#41 in March) and 'Stone Cold' (#4 in June). Once again produced by Gehman (best known for his work with R.E.M. and John Cougar Mellencamp), Heat featured writing contributions from Ross Wilson and Saint Chris Bailey. Barnsey's 1993 touring band comprised Jeff Neill (guitar), Matt Heydon (keyboards; ex-Nick Barker and the Reptiles), Michael Hegerty (bass), Angus Burchill (drums) and Lisa Hunt (backing vocals).

Barnes worked with a number of artists such as The Badloves, Deborah Conway, Archie Roach, Diesel and Joe Cocker on his album of acoustic duets Flesh And Wood (December 1993). The album produced the Top 10 hit cover of The Band's 'The Weight' shared with The Badloves. The next two singles lifted from the album, 'You Can't Make Love Without A Soul' (February 1994) and 'Still Got A Long Way To Go' (with Diesel) were not chart hits. Barnes contributed a version of Chain's 'Black And Blue' to the Various Artists compilation Earth Music (June 1994).

In 1994 Barnes found himself in financial difficulties. Success was a double-edged sword. He certainly made a lot of money from touring and record sales, but essentially the more he worked to pay off debts, the more he had to pay out to cover the costs of touring and recording, let alone paying his taxes. Leaving his Bowral NSW country estate, Barnes took his family to live in Europe. Barnes returned to Australia in mid-1995 to promote his ninth album *Psyclone*. It produced the hit single 'Change of Heart' (#17 in May 1995). His next single, the ballad 'Come Undone' (July), was not a chart success. At the end of 1995, Barnes supported overseas visitors Bon Jovi on that band's Australian tour. Barnes's hit for 1996 was 'Lover Lover' (#6 in October), followed by 'Never Give You Up' (#33 in March 1997).

His biggest latterday album was the 1996 triple platinum, #1 collection *Hits*. In October 1997, Barnes teamed up with his erstwhile Cold Chisel companions in the recording studio with the view to reforming the band. Which they did do, for a short time only. They recorded the album *Last Wave Of Summer* and toured to support it.

As well as collaborations with INXS, John Farnham and The Badloves, Barnes has recorded successful duets with Tina Turner '(Simply) The Best'/'River Deep Mountain High' (which reached #14 in June 1992) and Nathan Cavalleri ('Gonna See My Baby Tonight', September 1993), Jimmy Barnes is an Australian phenomenon. He has sold over six million records in a country of 17 million people. To date, major overseas success has eluded him. Nevertheless, Barnes looms large as the admirable journeyman musician who has consistently revitalised his career with quality input and earnest execution.

In 2000, Barnes released the sequel to the successful 1991 album *Soul Deep*, *Soul Deeper*. Again he recorded a batch of favourite Soul/R&B songs from the 1960s, this time he utilised many of the actual musicians from that era as well as fellow Aussie musos such as Mark Lizotte (aka Diesel).

2005 saw the release of "Double Happiness". In this new album Jimmy Barnes has found a new, evolving sound, building on the foundation of his rock & roll heritage, he's added a strong female element to the tunes, a lot of acoustic, down-to-earth sounds and a deep seam of soul music through the whole record. For it he collaborated with many other well known artists including- Dallas Crane, The Living End, Diesel, Tina Turner, Joe Cocker, John Farnham, The Badloves, Troy Cassar-Daley, Smoky Dawson, Tim Rogers, Billy Thorpe and David Campbell.

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