

Phil Tripp – Interview

Music Industry Directory Publisher and Convenor of the upcoming **8th AustralAsian Music Business Conference** Phil Tripp talks to Loop about the conference, Sonic shoplifting, mobile phone ringtones, exporting talent and finding homeless dogs and parrots a home. Phil owns his own business, answers to nobody and does it the way he wants. I called him up after an email hit my inbox advertising the conference and he emailed a response back within the hour.

The 8th AustralAsian Music Business Conference is on in August 16-18 at Acer Arena. For more information and early registration got to: <http://www.immedia.com.au/ambc/>

Loop: *Can you run through some of the highlights of the upcoming conference for our readers? Bear in mind that a large proportion of them are independent, unsigned artists and musicians and are primarily interested in self-publishing for their growing niche market.*

Phil: We've always been about empowering and enabling the creators of music to overcome the technological and political impediments of the industry to build their own niches and hopefully export them from our very first conference 15 years ago. Every other year, we take up topics that are about the future of the music business and not just rehashing past injustices. We are more about DIY (do it yourself) than music industrialism and more about taking up new tools and technologies in favour to old formats and formulas.

Loop: *Way back in January 2004 you said one of the most important issues facing Australian Music was Sonic shoplifting by youth who don't recognise the value of music. In the same interview you went on to say that, "they want tap water prices for bottled water songs. And the ridiculous lack of leadership that ARIA shows in educating the industry and consumers". What are your thoughts on Sonic shoplifting and ARIA's leadership in educating the masses two years on?*

Phil: Sonic shoplifting hasn't changed, if anything it's increased. More lawsuits in the US and UK have not deterred file sharing, it's increased. But the good news is that so have digital download purchases by a phenomenal amount. The stick hasn't worked but the iPod carrot has! Bottled water vs. tap water. Yes, people still want 'brand name music' just like McDonalds and KFC are still the most popular food outlets. But like those who will choose quality unbranded music of a niche variety through discovery of the 'spring' through the Net or live performance, there are those who don't go for fast food (Idol fodder, Pop tarts) and opt for aural restaurants like indie labels and artists' own servings. As for ARIA, my mother always said if you couldn't say something nice... so I'll shut up entirely. Nothing has changed.

Loop: *It's been said recently that the biggest online download (i.e.: biggest money maker) for/of music on the Internet is ringtones for mobile phones. With new generation mobile phones as capable MP3 players how is this affecting the music industry?*

Phil: This is a hot issue at our conference. Will consumers want to use their communications device as interruptive playback units and have to wear two ear buds to have music dislodged by calls? Or are they happier having one entertainment device that is audio and video capable and keep the phone as a simple communications device? Or will they actually combine the two... and will they accept the data charges, online time and other fees when they get their first whopping bill ???!!?? You mentioned the word 'capable', yes they are, but not 'preferable' not even 'compatible' nor 'high quality'. I think consumers want more clarity, fidelity and speed in moving music than phones offer at present. At the same time, they want convenience and immediacy in ordering. It's a battle between telcos, handset manufacturers and the music industry--both publisher and record companies--to see who wins. In the end the consumer governs the decision, and usually, the musician, the creator, is the loser.

Loop: *In your industry profile written by Jane Cohen and Bob Grossweiner you are described as an expatriate and creator of a public relations firm that services artists and corporate clients in their needs or strategies to break into overseas markets, and a creator of a series of music industry contact directories servicing the Pacific Rim. That's a big role to play in any industry and you've been at it for a long time. Can you give us some tips on just how an independent Australian artist should go about breaking into overseas markets given they have all the music and Press material in the bag?*

Phil: In short... never do or say anything you can't live up to or can't live down. Never hype, but do have a broad range of well written, grammatically correct, properly spelled and punctuated facts and stories instantly available with high quality arresting images (including a great brand logo) in a variety of shapes to fit any print media need--tall, wide, square, vertical rectangle, head shot, etc). Make sure you can prove how well you are doing in your own market--what your chart positions, market share, sales records, gig attendances, figures are--and that you are also 'export-ready'. Too many bands believe that just because everyone they unprofessionally approached here with crap packages and woeful promo has rejected them, that by heading overseas they are going to be feted as the next new thing. It's just not true. They believe that if there is an exception--like Crowded House or Savage Garden being signed overseas before here and selling 20 million albums, that it will happen to them without the management and investment they were backed by. Better to look for that dollar coin under the pillow in the morning.

Loop: *And lastly, one of our magazine's aims is to support the RSPCA. We run an Ad in every issue to find a home for a homeless animal. Any tips on how we*

can do more for the animal kingdom based on your successful Urban Animal quarterly and ABC-TV program "The Pet Show"?

Phil: Wow! You do your homework! Not a lot of people know about our free street press for pet lovers! As someone who has no kids, but two parrots and two Dalmatians as fur and feather children, I urge anyone who wants to have a pet to re-home one that has been abandoned or needs a new home--don't just buy a puppy on impulse at a pet shop or get a designer dog as a fashion statement. One of our Dalmatians was abused and almost hopeless but we got her from Dalmatian Rescue and turned her life around from a puddle and fear aggressive pup to the most wonderful companion. One of my parrots had to be given up by a guy who played video games all day (hence the strange sounds it makes) and, whom we believe ate junk food a lot (hence the Pavlovian reaction to wrappers and chippies!). We took it in and gave it a life that parrots can only dream about and he has enriched ours equally. The nice thing about a mutt for example is when you get home, it's always happy to see you. If you smell bad or are un-bathed, it's even happier to see you. If you ask it "Do I look fat in this dress?" it will immediately point the way to the nearest food source and eat with you. The only bad thing is that they pass away too soon. But they love you like God's special agent, as long as you love them first and last.

Phil sent this through in another email with more info about the conference.

The AMBC is the only national industry gathering and has run for over 15 years, produced every other year at Sydney's Acer Arena Grand Ballroom where in 2007, more than 770 attendees are anticipated and more than 100 have already registered and paid. In 2005, there were 660 attendees and in 2005, close to 550. We're happy to announce our third keynote speaker for the 8th AustralAsian Music Business Conference, opening our third day--Saturday August 18 at 10 am--at the Acer Arena, Sydney Olympic Precinct, Homebush. He is the acclaimed Los Angeles-based music industry analyst Bob Lefsetz and the 30th speaker to be slotted in for the nine-seminar, three lunch event which will feature 50+ talkers. Bob Lefsetz is the author of "The Lefsetz Letter." Famous for being beholden to no one and speaking the truth, Lefsetz addresses the issues that are at the core of the music business: downloading, copy protection, pricing and the music itself. "The Lefsetz Letter" has been publishing for the past **20 years**. First as hard copy, most recently as an email newsletter and now, for the first time, in blog form. It is updated daily at <http://www.lefsetz.com>. Never boring, always entertaining, Bob's insights are fueled by his stint as an entertainment business attorney, majordomo of Sanctuary Music's American division and consultancies to major labels. The AMBC has also added Shock Entertainment Group Chairman David Williams to the first day panel "As The Chair people, CEOs and MDs See The Future of the Music Industry" which will be moderated by first day keynoter Michael Smellie, former global COO for Sony BMG and former head of BMG Music Asia Pacific. The second day keynote is by top manager John Watson (silverchair, Missy Higgins, Wolfmother, Paul Mac, Pete Murray) who will

then chair the panel on Artists and Managers with noted Australian band members and their minders. We have also just added MySpace Business Development Manager Nick Love, formerly of Soundbuzz and ARIA as well as Ken Outch, GM of Destra Digital Entertainment Group, formerly with BMG, Festival Mushroom and Sony. The current price for tickets is \$440 for all three days, \$385 for two days and \$220 for one day with a 20% discount for students, 15% for APRA writer members and 10% for Music Managers Forum members. Registration at <http://www.immedia.com.au/ambc/registration.php>

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