

TOURING

AUSTRALIA

ADAPTED FROM THE OUTWARD SOUND GUIDE
TO TOURING AUSTRALIA BY DAVID BENGE

FOR

BEGINNERS

THIS IS A GUIDE PRIMARILY AIMED AT YOUNG UP-AND-COMING ACTS THAT ARE LOOKING TO MAKE THEIR FIRST OR SECOND FORAY INTO AUSTRALIA, PLAYING BETWEEN 100- AND 400-CAPACITY ROOM SIZES. THIS GUIDE IS SUITED TO BANDS, SINGER/SONGWRITER-TYPES AND DJs/HIP HOP ACTS ETC AS IT'S MORE A COMMON SENSE CHECKLIST OF ALL THE VARIOUS PEOPLE, PLACES, PROCESSES AND GOALS YOU NEED TO FACTOR INTO A TOUR.

IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT AUSTRALIA HAS A LONG HISTORY OF ROCK BANDS AND HAS A REALLY STRONG "PUB ROCK" SCENE, MORE SO THAN IN NEW ZEALAND. BANDS LIKE AC/DC, THE ANGELS, THE SKYHOOKS, RADIO BIRDMAN MADE THEIR NAMES BY RELENTLESSLY TOURING THROUGH AUSTRALIA, AND PURELY DUE TO THE POPULATION SIZE AND THE VASTNESS OF THE COUNTRY ITSELF, IT DEFINITELY FEELS LIKE THERE'S A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE AND APPROACH TO TOURING IN AUSTRALIA. NEW ZEALAND ROCK BANDS SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT; AUSTRALIA IS BASICALLY ON OUR DOORSTEP!

AS A RULE OF THUMB, IDEALLY YOU SHOULD START PLANNING YOUR TRIP NO LESS THAN THREE MONTHS OUT FROM YOUR DATE OF ARRIVAL.

TOURING TO GET INDUSTRY ATTENTION

When touring Australia it is important to decide on what it is you are wanting to achieve by going on the tour, prior to booking your flights and putting your instruments in hard cases. If you're wanting to develop or increase a fan base, then your approach will be somewhat different to someone who is trying to gain industry attention from a record label, publisher, booking agent, or promoter.

If your aim is to gain industry exposure first, you can be a little more selective about the cities you travel to and the length of time you spend in them. If you want to have a serious go at making your mark in Australia it helps to have some people on the ground there to further your cause. Getting the attention of these people is the tricky part and again comes down to having an overall plan of what it is you want to achieve. I cannot stress enough how important preparation work is.

You can take two approaches: you can organise your own industry showcases, and/or you can apply to play at one of Australia's annual music industry trade shows.

The vast majority of music industry people from independent labels through to majors, booking agents, publishing companies, publicists, and promoters, operate out of Sydney or Melbourne. Showcase-type shows in these two cities primarily to gain industry attention can be very useful. Identify the type of people you want to come to your showcase and then start the process of contacting them. Look up acts that have a similar sound or style to yours and then research the people that work with them – labels, publishers, booking agents, publicists and promoters. All of their contact details will be available somewhere online.

The truth of the matter is that a lot of these people rely on each other. For example, a booking agent is going to be a lot more interested in working with you if you already have a record label involved. A record label is going to be more interested if you've got a good booking agent involved – and so the chicken and egg situation begins. Depending on whether finances allow, it may not be a bad idea to send a manager or band rep over ahead of you to meet with people, hand over your demo, and put an overall face to the band name. It's always harder for people to turn you down when you've developed a relationship with them. Don't expect too

much from your first meeting, but make sure you've gone in with a good demo that is representative of where the band/act is at now. You don't necessarily need to bother with lengthy bios about your high school band or opening for another band that the person in question hasn't heard of before. Let the music do the talking and explain you'll be out with the band in three or four weeks for some showcase type shows and you'd love for them to attend. Make sure your demo and bio includes contact details that are clear and obvious in case they want to get hold of you. If you have a good music video that you think represents you well, include that too. Doing these things a month out will give the person you're meeting with enough time to get to listen to the music but not so much time that they forget who you are. Even the fact they've had two or three conversations with you about the meeting and then have a follow-up note from you thanking them for their time, will help solidify your band name in their head. A couple of weeks after your initial meeting follow up with an email asking what they thought of the demo and reminding them about your impending dates. If the company has other offices in other cities (i.e. Melbourne and Sydney), ask them if there are contacts that you should invite along to the show in the other city too. Remember to check with the venue that you're showcasing at to see how many people you can have on your guestlist. Chances are likely that you'll be opening up for someone else, so check with the headlining act too.

The second way to get exposure is by playing a trade show. These are attended by all kinds of musicians and industry players, large and small, Australian and international. There are two main music industry trade shows that New Zealanders can apply to play at: The first is Big Sound in Brisbane, which happens annually in September. Big Sound is better suited to pop or rock acts, anything that might appeal to radio. As well as being seen by potential labels, booking agents etc, you can also learn a lot from the speakers and seminars scheduled throughout the conference (last year's keynote speakers included Nick Cave and Billy Bragg). www.bigsound.org.au
The second is AWME (Australasian World Music Expo) in Melbourne, in November. In

this instance "world music" includes hip-hop, roots, reggae, funk, soul etc, all of which New Zealand does to a very high standard. A number of Kiwi acts, such as Ladi6 and Hollie Smith, have done well out of playing there. It is a good place to be seen by festival bookers. www.awme.com.au

You can look into an Outward Sound grant to attend either trade show.

Be aware that the music industry is fickle and music industry people often have to change their plans at the drop of a hat. They may have had best intentions of seeing you play and have had to change their mind at the last minute. This happens ALL THE TIME to everyone... It's not you; it's just the nature of the game. If you can't afford to send someone ahead of you, all is by no means lost. Luckily Australia and New Zealand's time zones are only two hours out from each other, so simply keep persisting by phone and email. Give it three or four days between notes and messages. Don't send large audio or video files that will clog up peoples' emails unless they have specifically requested you to do so. Ask permission first. If you're sending out a group email to a list of contacts you've acquired inviting them all along to the same showcase, 'BCC' everyone to ensure their email addresses remain private. All this will help avoid people getting frustrated at you before they've even heard the music!

If, on the other hand, you're aiming to create or increase an Australian fan base then you would have to take a different approach.

TOURING TO GAIN A FANBASE

Melbourne and Sydney are still the two biggest cities in Australia and the easiest to get to from most main centres in New Zealand. If increasing your fan base is your overall aim, you'll no doubt want to expand out of these two cities. Adelaide, Brisbane and their surrounding areas are

also relatively easy to get to from each other and cost a similar amount to fly between as it would to fly from Christchurch to Auckland, Auckland to Wellington, or a variety of combinations in between. Perth on the other hand costs as much to fly to from Melbourne or Sydney as it does to fly between New Zealand and Melbourne/Sydney. Perth is definitely not a city to look at including on your first tour unless you are convinced you have a good fan base there already, or someone has offered you a decent guarantee. Flights (if you book far enough in advance) are relatively cheap, and with the cost of one-way relocations for hire vehicles, and the fluctuating fuel prices, flying can often work out cheaper depending on your tour party size. If your touring party is small (i.e. DJs, two or three piece bands, solo artists, etc), I would always recommend looking into flights first. We'll get more into the specifics of internal travel later on.

One of the best ways to increase your fan base is to get on a tour supporting an established Australian band and attempt to steal their audience. If this is one of your first forays across the Tasman then finding Australian bands of a similar ilk with an existing fan base that are out on tour already – or have a impending tour planned – can be invaluable.

If you are lucky enough to find a band that is willing to take you with them on tour, then you can start enquiring about the possibility of sharing backline to keep your costs down, asking if you can sell merchandise from their desk, and ringing ahead to the venues to find out whether they have an in-house sound person or not, and if so what this person will charge you to mix you for the evening. Do not under any circumstances expect that the headline band will let you borrow their gear and that their sound person will be happy to mix you. If you enquire far enough in advance sometimes you can arrange these things but it's most certainly not a given. If someone has agreed to take you on tour and let you share their backline, make sure you offer to help load it. Offer to pay for drum heads, make sure you have breakables (cymbals, snare etc) with you, and definitely have your own guitars! Make sure you get onstage at the specified time and do not play over your allocated time slot. Australian venues will often pull the plug if a band goes over their allocated time. The more prepared you are the more professional you will appear, and the more likely you are to be asked back.

If getting on a tour with an established band is impossible, then look at booking your own run by approaching venues that host bands that play your style of music and trying to get on existing bills that they have, or asking them to help build a bill around the night you want to perform. Having local bands that will bring their own fans along to the night is always going to be preferable to trying to introduce yourself to a whole new city in a headline capacity. Building your own fan base is a long, hard, slow road. It doesn't matter if you're big in New Zealand – if you're beginning in Australia you're starting from scratch and you need to realise this. Be humble and be prepared to work hard and play to not very many people. Personally, this is why I think focusing on Melbourne and Sydney initially and trying to create a buzz out of those cities first makes sense, as this will have an impact on other cities in Australia – it costs far less and overall can be more effective.

PRESS & MEDIA

You may have already toured and released some music in New Zealand, in which case you'll know that a tour is made easier if you can sync it up with a release, radio play, and print/online exposure. However, you need to be careful as to when you play these cards. If you're ultimately looking to get a record released in Australia and continue to grow your fan base from that, then sending tracks to radio yourself to gain exposure first may not be the best idea, as it doesn't allow the company you hope will release your record much room to move when they discover you. This is because you will have already had your run at media, and it's highly unusual for media to pick up a track and then play it or review it again later when it gets "officially" released (you can always look to release your record yourself by partnering with a distributor, but that can be hard and expensive as well). If this is the case, concentrate on promoting your tour rather than a song or album, using the social media tools available to you online – if you're supporting someone ask the headlining act or acts if they might link to your pages. Make sure there are plenty of examples of your music for people to listen to on your Bandcamp or Soundcloud profiles, your tour dates are easy to find and that any music videos you have are easy to find on Youtube. Send your tour dates to street press like Beat magazine (Melbourne), The Brag (Sydney), X-Press (Perth), Scene (Brisbane), The Music

(distributed in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane), TimeOut ('what's on' site for Sydney and Melbourne), and FasterLouder.com.au.

MONEY AND VISAS

The good news is that if you are New Zealand citizens with New Zealand passports you don't need work visas to perform in Australia so at least that part is easy. If you only have a New Zealand bank account, some venues will expect you to invoice them in advance. Figure this out before you leave for Australia. Some venues will be able to pay you cash on the night, but not all of them, and this may affect what venues you choose to perform in. Venues often split the door take in the following way: if the gig is \$10 per person on the door and there are three bands playing, the door and there are three bands playing, the door and there are three bands playing, \$6 of that will go to the headliner, \$2 to the second band and \$1 to the third band (and \$1 to the venue). This is very common; don't jump to the conclusion that you're being ripped off.

Budgeting a tour can be hard, whether it's at home in New Zealand or overseas. We've included a Beginner's Guide to Touring Budgets tour in this handbook, which can be found on page 33. You can download a handy budgeting Excel spreadsheet that covers everything from flights to postage at nzmusic.org.nz/resources.

BOOKING AGENCIES AND PROMOTERS

This list isn't completely comprehensive, however it is a start. The main difference between a booking agency and a promoter is that a booking agent will quite literally book you onto shows, whereas a promoter will promote a festival or might be promoting a large international (excluding Australia and New Zealand) touring act through Australia. A booking agent may pitch you to promoters of festivals or large international tours but they often act on your behalf to build a touring plan, and in conjunction with your management and or label, and to build you a live following in Australia. A booking agent will contact all

the venues on your behalf and attempt to set up a cohesive run of dates that make sense financially and are the right size and type of venues for your act to play. As this is what they do for a full time living, they're a lot more connected with all the right people in terms of the right venues, and promoters are more likely to pick up the phone if a booking agent they know is calling them, instead of receiving a call from a New Zealander that they're not familiar with.

Booking agents can really aid your cause. On the following page is a list of the major agencies in Australia. If you're heading to Australia for a run of industry showcase dates it's certainly worth getting your music out to some of the agents at these agencies in advance and try and convince them to come and see you play live. In this day and age a good agent can be worth their weight in gold. An in-house booking agent is someone that instead of being responsible for the touring needs of a specific band, are purely responsible for booking their venue.

They need to make sure the nights will be full and that the line-ups are appropriate. Again the various agencies will approach the in-house agents at the various venues and try and convince them your band is worth having on a line up for a particular evening.

VENUE SPECIFICS

Here is a checklist of things to ask each venue so you can be as prepared as possible. These apply to playing any live show, but when you're overseas it's important to have these bases covered in advance, as you won't have the option of bringing a friend to help you out at the last minute.

Is there an in-house PA?
Is there a hire charge for using the venue?
Is there a door person provided?
Is there an in-house sound person?
Is there an in-house backline?

Is there an in-house lighting rig/operator?
Will the venue do any promotion of the show?
Will we get a rider?
Is there accommodation associated with this venue?
How do I get paid after my show?

Don't be afraid of asking "stupid" questions. If it's your first trip to Australia, no question is stupid, regardless of how people may react.

BACKLINE

While the first port of call should always be to beg and borrow backline from whoever else you're playing with (as this will definitely help keep your costs down), it's also very important to have a backup plan. If you're going to spend the time and money getting to

WHAT ARE THE DISTANCES BETWEEN CITIES?

YOU'D GENERALLY WANT TO PLAN A TOUR IN ORDER OF 'EASE OF TRAVEL'. IF YOU'RE INCLUDING PERTH IT SHOULD BE AT THE END OR THE BEGINNING OF A TRIP AS IT'S SO FAR OUT OF THE WAY OF ANYTHING ELSE. BRISBANE, SYDNEY, CANBERRA, MELBOURNE, ADELAIDE IS A DIRECT RUN WITH NO DRIVE LONGER THAN 12-14 HOURS. BELOW IS AN ESTIMATION OF TRAVEL TIMES BETWEEN THE MAJOR CENTRES IN AUSTRALIA. I HAVEN'T INCLUDED ALL THE AUSTRALIAN CITIES AS THERE ARE SOME THAT JUST DON'T MAKE SENSE TO DO. THE DISTANCE IN DRIVING AND FLIGHT TIMES BETWEEN CITIES IS APPROXIMATELY:

PERTH TO:
Adelaide: 3 1/2 hour flight.
Melbourne: 4 hour flight.
Sydney: 4 hour flight.
Brisbane: 5 to 6 hour flight.

What are the regional areas between cities worth trying to play shows in? Between Brisbane and Sydney, Byron Bay and Newcastle are worthwhile. Between Sydney and Canberra / Melbourne, Wollongong can be worthwhile... in Perth it's worth looking at Fremantle as well if you're going all that way!

ADELAIDE TO:
Melbourne: 1 hour flight, 9 hour drive
Sydney: 1 1/2 hour flight, 18 hour drive.
Brisbane: 3 hour flight, 36 hour drive.
Perth: 3 1/2 hour flight.

MELBOURNE TO:
Canberra: 1 hour flight, 8 hour drive.
Sydney: 1 1/2 hour flight, 10 hour drive.
Brisbane: 2 hour flight, 24 hour drive.
Adelaide: 1 hour flight, 9 hour drive.
Perth: 4 hour flight.

SYDNEY TO:
Brisbane: 1 1/2 hour flight, 12-14 hour drive.
Canberra: 3 hour drive.
Melbourne: 1 1/2 flight, 10 hour drive.
Adelaide: 1 1/2 hour flight, 18 hour drive.
Perth: 4 hour flight.

BRISBANE TO:
Sydney: 1 1/2 hour flight, 12-14 hour drive.
Melbourne: 2 hour flight, 24 hour drive.
Adelaide: 3 hour flight, 36 hour drive.
Perth: 5 to 6 hour flight.

BOOKING AGENCIES

HARBOUR AGENCY
www.theharbouragency.com

PREMIER ARTISTS
www.premierartists.com.au

ARTIST VOICE
<http://artistvoice.com.au>

IMC MUSIC
www.imcmusic.net

VILLAGE SOUNDS
www.villagesounds.com

THE ATLAS AGENCY
www.theatlasagency.com

SELECT MUSIC
www.selectmusic.com.au

For more booking agents, publicists and labels you can find an Australasian Music Industry Directory at themusic.com.au.

Australia in the first place, you don't want to be stuck without any equipment to play your shows with! It's really expensive to freight gear over to Australia from New Zealand, so I definitely recommend getting quotes from backline hire companies. Find the best ones by researching online and asking other bands which companies they've used in the past. If you're playing outside of the capital cities, investigate hiring a van from one of the vehicle hire companies listed and take your own backline to the shows. If you hire equipment for more than a couple of days in a row, they'll often give you a discount. Always ring ahead, get a quote, and print out the quote when you go to collect your gear. There are a lot of touring bands in Australia, so the further in advance you book in backline the more likely it is you'll be able to get what you want. Usually they have a 48-hour cancellation policy, so I recommend putting a hold on the backline you want and then seeing what you can get for free from the other bands playing on the bill. You can always cancel what you reserved but if everything goes pear shaped you're not left in the lurch with a great showcase booked at a cool venue, with a whole bunch of industry turning up and no drum kit! Most of these hire companies have a pick up and delivery service as well at between \$100 and \$150 on top of your bill. If you've hired a smaller vehicle to drive yourself around in, it may make sense to get the hire company to deliver and pick up the backline on your behalf. Again just make sure you enquire about this and book it in well in advance.

HIRE CARS & INTERNAL TRAVEL

These days it's pretty much cheaper to fly than it is to drive between cities. If you're travelling light and there's only three or four of you, if you book flights far enough in advance, it'll often work out cheaper (and a lot less tiring) than driving between the cities. If you're doing mainly showcase gigs then I recommend flying between cities. If you're hitting the road hard and are supporting someone else's band, you'll probably be playing a bunch of rural cities as well so then

driving becomes inescapable. Depending on how many people are in your tour party and how much equipment you have, the Toyota Tarago (or Previa as it is known in New Zealand) is a great band vehicle. Failing that, a station wagon will do too...

Important things to check are whether there is a limit on the amount of km's you can drive each day, and what it costs to reduce the excess on insurance for the vehicle. Find this out when you're getting quotes so you can build it into your budget. Also be cautious about one way hire fees - these cities are a long way apart, so you can end up paying a lot to have your tour van relocated. These things can really add up if you haven't accounted for them in the first place! The major domestic airlines are Virgin, Qantas and Jetstar. Two words of warning! Make sure you check where any discount airlines depart and arrive. Some cities have smaller airports that are well over an hour from the city, so the \$50 you saved per person on your ticket could end up costing you far more on your taxi fare out to the airport. Also double check whether you have to pay to take luggage with you - Jetstar's "add ons" can become confusing when booking online. Two really good websites for finding the cheapest domestic flights are www.webjet.com.au and www.skyscanner.net - they show you different prices for all the different airlines for the time and day you want to go on the same page, so you can see which is cheapest and book from there. Very useful! Otherwise, you'll find the airlines and hire car companies here. Again there will be others of course, but these are the major operators and they're more likely to have airport drop offs etc.

AIRLINES:
www.virginaustralia.com
www.qantas.com.au
www.jetstar.com.au

HIRE CAR COMPANIES:
www.avis.com.au
www.hertz.com.au
www.budget.com.au
www.europcar.com.au
www.thrifty.com.au

HOTELS & BACKPACKERS

This all depends on what kind of level of comfort you require. If you can crash on peoples' couches and you're fine with doing that, I would always recommend it on your first trip over. People can spend a lot of unnecessary money on hotels and it can definitely add up over the week or so you're there. The hotels listed below aren't the cheapest in the world but they're fairly moderate and often have "apartment" style accommodation where if you're happy to top and tail in a bed you can usually fit a full band in the one apartment with a couple of rooms with double beds in each room, and a washing machine and a kitchen and a couch for around \$250 a night - which is about as cheap as you're going to get hotel accommodation. If that's too expensive I seriously just recommend Googling the area you're playing in with the word 'backpackers' after it. Works a treat every time!

NATIONAL CHAINS:
www.medina.com.au
www.questapartments.com.au
www.travelodge.com.au
www.theoaksgroup.com.au
www.stayatbase.com (Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane only)

In Melbourne a good cheap backpackers is called The Nunnery, a lot of bands stay here and most days breakfast is thrown in complimentary: www.nunnery.com.au

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the more you prepare the better off you'll be. The more people you've contacted in advance and the more time you give yourself to arrange things before you arrive the more you're going to get out of your trip. I hope some of this is useful... Just remember to be courteous and respectful and most of all have fun and play your hearts out!

Good luck!