

# A Night in the Woods

By Allan Fox, March 2006

If you go down to the woods tonight you'll find nothing but trees. You'll be too late and you should have been in the Hills Forest on Saturday night, where a crowd of almost 1000 people were thrilled to meet Kate Ceberano.

The Mundaring Weir and the Golden Pipeline carrying water to Kalgoorlie were built over 100 years ago. The adjacent Mundaring Weir Hotel was constructed to accommodate the visiting dignitaries who travelled into the 'bush' to see what progress was being made.



Located 7 kilometres from the village of Mundaring the Hotel has a reputation for rolling gardens, Sunday afternoon sessions, cold beer, wood fired pizza, bush bands, bbq lamb and motor cycle riders from the big end of town gathering after their weekly run.

The Hotel also has a reputation for staging an annual concert season featuring incredible Australian talent. In addition to Kate Ceberano this year, David Helfgott has already performed to a full house (his 21<sup>st</sup> year) and James Morrison and Jane Rutter have still to delight the crowds.

The owner of the Hotel, Jens Jorgensen, has been staging festivals for 22 years. 'In the early days people just sat on blankets to watch the show' he reflected, 'now we have a terrific amphitheatre, tiered seating for everyone, but we still have a wonderful atmosphere'.



The traditional way to attend a Weir concert is to pack a picnic hamper, arrive at least 3 hours before the show, buy a bottle of wine (or two) from one of the featured local Vineyards, sit back, relax, watch the Kookaburras and the ducks, and enjoy the world.

Those who followed this formula yesterday were treated to an early taste of what was to come as Kate and her band went through a 30 minute sound check. 'She was very funny and very friendly' said Kassy, who says she gets along to most of the concerts.

As late afternoon rolled into early evening the amphitheatre filled. There is no dress standard for a Weir concert you come dressed any way you want. Similarly, there is no typical age group, the audience ranged from 8 months to 80+ years. And so it was that the track suited baby boomers in their trainers rubbed shoulders with the cocktail gown stilettoed socialites, while mums comforted their little ones, and Kate prepared to come on stage.

When Kate said that 'I always feel close to Perth audiences and that this place (the Hotel in the forest) is like my own little secret', you just knew that it came from the heart.



On time and on cue the band made their way to the stage. In this venue there are no backdrops and behind the scenes hideaways. Before the opening chord was ripped and the star of the show was introduced the crowd was already applauding. The short walk from chalet to stage was all it took. It was at that moment, as Kate crossed the lawn that she addressed the audience with a smile as wide as the stage and said 'Not yet, they're supposed to introduce me first' that she won everyone's hearts.

The first half of the program was devoted to jazz and r&b. The band comprising keyboard, drums, saxophone, bass guitar and lead guitar provided a wonderful backdrop for this remarkable voice. She sang high, she sang low, she was sweet and she

was throaty, but throughout it all she oozed passion for her profession.

Kate started performing at the age of 14 when she was only allowed in clubs with a chaperone; she has worked in musical theatre and movies, has been a 'pop' star, and has travelled around the world for the past 20 years.

Is it this life experience that gives her the ability to deliver such an emotional rendition during one number, only to have her dancing on the stage minutes later with uninhibited joy?

The second half of the show was devoted to bringing the house down, with some good old fashioned pop. With songs like 'Feeling Alright' and 'Bedroom Eyes', the song that started her career over 20 years ago, the crowd came alive.

She engaged them, sharing stories about her daughter Gypsy and life with 'Diva' Ceberano that had them laughing out loud. When she asked the audience to get up it was as one that they stood. When she called for 'ladies' to join her on stage she was inundated with volunteers for an impromptu back up group and when she encouraged everyone to dance that's exactly what they did. The scene began to resemble the ensemble from 'Hair', all manner of people dancing together and having a wonderful time.

"Entertaining and making music is what she (Kate) loves to do" said Ben Balfour, Tour Manager and he should know, he travels everywhere with her. 'We get to go to some great venues'; recent performances have included shows in Kings Park and Taronga Park Zoo. It's not all sunshine and roses however, Ben checked his watch a couple of times whilst we were talking 'Our guitarist should be landing about now; he managed to miss the plane but will be here for the show'.

Later this year Kate and the band will travel to the United States for shows at the Australian Embassies in Los Angeles and New York, both of which are cities that Kate has lived in and has a tremendous affinity with. Her last CD was titled '19 Days in New York'. The next CD, due out next month is a recording of last year's performance with the WASO.

If the audience reaction was anything to go by last night this concert was a resounding success.

If you were there you travelled home with fond memories. If you missed the show, there's good news, Jens has already invited Kate to return for the 2007 Concert Festival.

It's too early to get your tickets for next year but in the meantime James Morrison will be playing two shows on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March, Jane Rutter will be in concert on 25<sup>th</sup> March and tickets to both are still available by contacting the Hotel ticket line on (08) 9295 6098.

This writer's recommendation is to pack a hamper and head on down to the woods.

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