



BY [SAMANTHA MORRIS](#)

[ART & CULTURE](#) [MUSIC](#),

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# EVERYTHING A BAND NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT INTERNATIONAL MUSIC SHOWCASES, (ACCORDING TO THE PEOPLE THAT RUN THEM).



Sounds Australia, established in 2009, supports Australian artists attending international showcase events with on-the-ground support. The organisation gives artists the best possible environment to showcase in and ensures that key people attend.

Millie Milgate is the organisation's Executive Producer. At Australian Music Week today, she led a panel discussion on international showcasing for Australian artists.

Gold Coast's Graham (Asho) Ashton was part of the panel. As well as running Footstomp Music, Asho was the programmer for the southern hemisphere's biggest music industry event BIGSOUND for four years.

Also on the panel were Robyn Stewart (Western Canadian Music Alliance, Breakout West, Western Canadian Music Awards), Lisa Whytock (Showcase Scotland Expo, Celtic Connections), Andy McLean (East Coast Music Association, East Coast Music Awards, Canadian Blast).

"For me, the reason it makes sense to go to showcase events is that you get to have your cake and eat it too," Asho told Australian Music Week delegates.

"When I was doing BIGSOUND, we'd get 1000 applications each year for like 100 spots," he said. "So what I would do for three months, I'd listen to that music... and take really extensive notes and get it down from 1000 to 400 and then it became this real battle to find out who and why to include."

"Where else are you going to get 200 industry who you can address in one time?" Robyn said.



“ A lot of research and study goes into our roles to make sure the right people are there and ready to do business. ”

Andy said that his team spends two full years ahead of each event bringing the best people they possibly can. And with many of these showcases supported with government funds, understanding return on investment is important for organisers.

“We pick the best buyers,” Andy said. “We don’t let them get back on the plane unless they spend some money and book some Canadian acts. That makes the music business a real cultural industry and government are starting to get that message now.”

To ensure the best possible outcome for artists and the music industry, Showcase Scotland sets a cap on the targeted delegates they invite. Doing so has meant there’s a waiting list year-on-year.

“We focus on inviting 180 targeted delegates and music industry from around the world,” Lisa said. “It piggy backs on the back of a major arts festival where we have 16 different venues every day, from 2000 to 80 people.”

“Buyers come in and see artists at all different levels and every year we have a waiting list.”

And it seems that recipe is working for Scotland. Last year they had 2.2 million pounds of artist fees generated as a result of the event. Lisa points out, that figure doesn’t include all the other components like flights and accommodation and production. That’s just artist fees. 2.2 million pounds.

Sounds Australia classifies these showcase events into seven categories. Some of those



categories include boutique events (such as Showcase Scotland and Breakout West). Territory events are focused on a specific market such as Great Escape (UK), Music Matters (Singapore) or Canadian Music Week. There are also genre events such as Folk Alliance International and then there are sector events, for example events targeted specifically at labels.

It seems the best advice is to “go before you show,” but the panel of international music showcase experts had a heap of tips to share.

## TIPS ON BEING PROGRAMMED

**Go before you show.** “Go there the year before,” Asho said. “But without playing, so you understand what the market is. It takes a while to understand exactly what the event is like.” Millie says doing so is worth every cent in “that you take away from that, and improve your readiness and capacity to optimise the trip the following year.”

**Be export ready.** Programmers want to know that you’re doing OK in your home market and that you have infrastructure ready. “You don’t get a second chance to make an impression,” says Andy. If you go and don’t have a real team behind you, it’s a wasted opportunity.

**Have clear goals.** You basically need to articulate why you’re going. You need to prove that you have interest, that there’s a buzz about your band and that you’re ready to take it to the next level.

**Check out local showcase events first.** “BIGSOUND is a good stepping stone for artists,” says Asho. Before making the financial investment to showcase overseas, BIGSOUND and local options are a good call. When you find yourself at an international showcase, you’ll better understand what’s going on and according to Asho “you’ll be more prepared.”



The poster for 'Summer Time Sessions' features a photograph of a live music performance at night. The title 'Summer Time SESSIONS' is written in a large, white, cursive font at the top, with 'In The Woods' in a smaller font below it. A red banner with white text is visible in the background. The time '5:30 - 7:30 PM' is printed in white. Below the time, a list of venues is shown: 'CUBBING PARK', 'CAR RAILWAY', 'SWAN LAKE', and 'FRIDGEERABA'. On the right side, a list of dates and artist lineups is provided, each preceded by a red triangle. The dates are OCT.28, NOV.4, NOV.11, NOV.18, NOV.25, DEC.2, and DEC.9. The artist lineups are: Luke Pauley + Wandering Eyes; Kimbal Imaz-Hurst + Leopolds Treat; Hailey Calvert + Sean Fitzgerald; Eisenberg Moon + Benny D Williams; Senik Maghem + Claire Anne Taylor; Moreton + Ryan Gittoes; and Jason McGregor + Blues Stamp. The poster also includes the logos for 'GOLDEN STATE' and 'PUBS'.

5:30 - 7:30 PM

CUBBING PARK  
CAR RAILWAY  
SWAN LAKE  
FRIDGEERABA

OCT.28  
NOV.4  
NOV.11  
NOV.18  
NOV.25  
DEC.2  
DEC.9

Luke Pauley + Wandering Eyes  
Kimbal Imaz-Hurst + Leopolds Treat  
Hailey Calvert + Sean Fitzgerald  
Eisenberg Moon + Benny D Williams  
Senik Maghem + Claire Anne Taylor  
Moreton + Ryan Gittoes  
Jason McGregor + Blues Stamp

GOLDEN STATE  
PUBS

**Update your assets for an international audience.** Local music and artist references (such as what venues you've played or references to similarity of musical style) and talking about local milestones may not have the same impact as they do in your home town or country. Get a hold of old programs, check out previous artists' biographies and press kits, research the event and know how to pitch yourself in a way that will appeal to an international audience. While Triple J is an Australian institution, Millie says radio play on the national youth broadcaster is still an appropriate milestone for international audiences. "People overseas are telling us about artists before we're aware of them," she said, using Triple J unearthed as an example of where they find them. "It's having a big impact on people's awareness."

**Do your research.** Sounds Australia has an [excellent app](#) that acts as a one-stop shop for discovering Australian artists and industry members who are active at international music conferences around the world. The app is a reference and discovery tool for users looking for showcase information on exporting Australian artists. It's available for [android](#) and [iPhone](#).

## IF YOU GO

**Find like minded artists.** Reciprocity is still everything – borrow backline, crash on couch, open their show and then offer the same deal when that band comes to Australia. "That kind of stuff has been important since the 70s and it still is important," says Asho. Robyn agrees. "Meet the other people on your showcase," she said. "They might be good to tour with or to hit up next time you're in their country."

**Start strong and stay strong.** When performing, be mindful of a transient industry audience. "Don't do the introspective, ten minute, spoken word thing," Asho said. "Consider your audience is a bunch of kids on red cordial with a ten-minute attention



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*Though an amazing story, she is not the first*

span.” Having been to quite a few music industry events in the past three years, I can attest that this is, in fact, being generous in terms of attention span. At BIGSOUND, I had colleagues who had decided within the first minute of a song whether they were hanging around or not. After all, there were another six quality acts on at that exact time.

**Stand out from the crowd.** Be memorable. At the end of the set, it’s about how you stand out from all the other acts that day or that week. “It helps if there is something unique about how you carry yourself on stage as well as off stage,” Asho said. Robyn suggests having someone at the door with download cards for your music. “Those details make a huge difference,” she said. “People will be seeing 18- 20 artists in a day, you want them to remember who you are.”

**Take your own sound engineer.** “The house engineer may be the best engineer in that area but he or she does not know your music,” says Lisa.

**Be like a boy scout.** “It’s all about preparation,” says Andy. “Knowing where you’re going, which showcase you’re playing. Some sets are just 20 minutes.” In addition to the logistics, Andy says at most showcase events, all delegate details are loaded onto the website ahead of the event. You need to know what they look like, make sure you meet them and have a hit list ready before you get there.

**Be the darling of the conference.** You have to be a good band on stage and awesome to work with offstage. And then have people talking about both of those things to make an impact and have buzz around you as an artist.

**Changover is critical.** “It can be as important as the performance,” Asho said. “It’s nearly like preparing for a sporting event. And it’s not going to be glamorous. Make sure all of your gear is there and that it’s quadrupled check. “You won’t get a soundcheck,” Millie adds. “Barely a line check.” Have a backup and a triple backup. Preparing offstage is key to that.

**Don’t be a dick.** Ways not to be a dick include sticking around to see the other bands in

your lineup, checking visa requirements well in advance (ie. not at immigration on arrival), not getting too boozy and finishing ON TIME.

**Say your name and keep it personal.** At least three times while performing, according to Lisa. “If you can, project your name behind you or on the stage when performing.” And if you meet someone, follow-up. “You need to make the effort to follow up with key people you’ve met,” says Millie.

## HOW TO APPLY + WHAT YOU GET

- BIGSOUND applications are called around March and close around May each year. BIGSOUND is produced by QMusic, Queensland’s music industry development association. Sign up to the [QMusic newsletter](#) for notifications of BIGSOUND and other showcase opportunities.
- ECMA, 26 – 30 April – two Australian artists are programmed and there’s an [online application](#) open until 2 December. Artists get two shows, backline and accommodation provided. There’s no visa to get into Canada.
- Showcase Scotland, January 2018 – two Australian artists are programmed in partnership with Australian Music Week and are paid at least 150 – 200 pounds per musician because essentially they’re performing as part of a large festival selling tickets. Flights aren’t coerced, but accommodation, per diems, transport and production is and you’re likely to get three performance slots.
- Breakout West – two showcases for every artists. Applications open in January for September event and it’s not paid. Organisers work with artists to provide other support.

Millie points out that getting paid to play is an anomaly for showcase events.

*to do this. Chris Connelly from California is a BASE jumper with CEREBRAL PALSY. He is also a licensed skydiver who...*

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“Don’t think that’s the usual in showcase land,” she said. “And at most of these showcases you get one offer at the showcase.”

Which is why these tips are all the more pertinent.

## Want more?

Subscribe to [Blank GC’s music industry e-news](#) for sporadic information about showcase opportunities, funding, resources and support for Gold Coast’s music industry.

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