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STARS OF THE OUTBACK

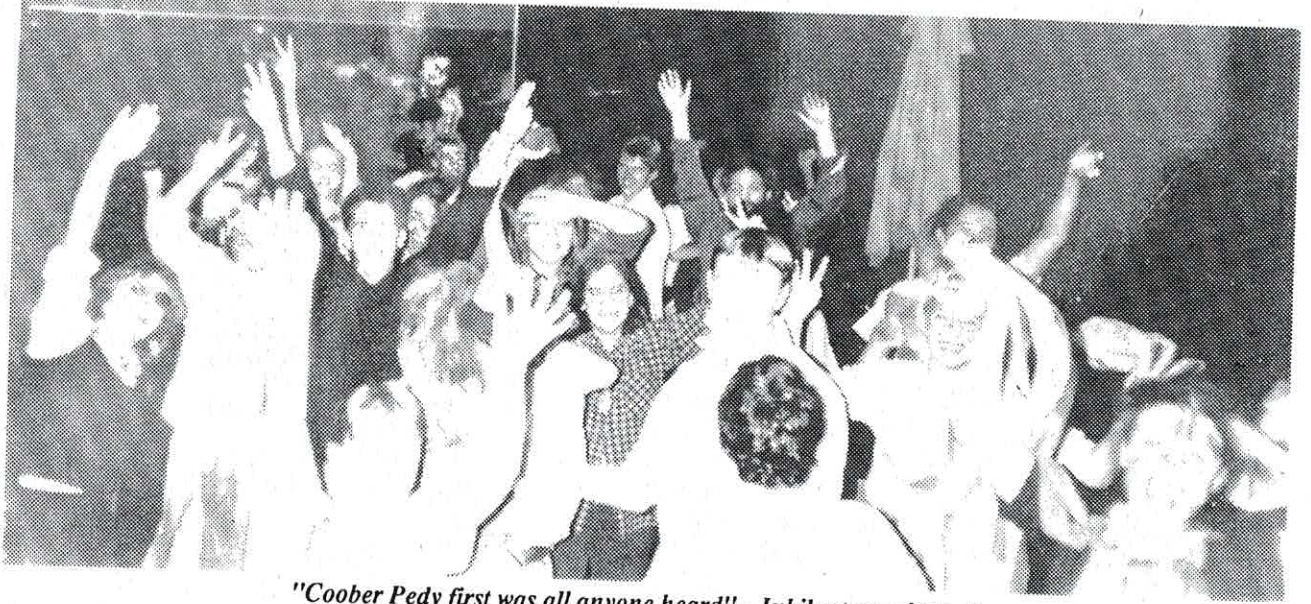
A double act that would be hard to beat. Two productions, one old, one new but both having the same resounding success. Coober Pedy should be proud of their multi-talented children who have been put under the spot light recently.

Two ex-students were chosen to perform in the immensely successful "The King and I", which was a sell-out within one week of opening at the Festival and Theatre. Veronica Richards and Michaela Lucas are stars of the future.

A group of twenty students performed their own production, "Rainbows in the Desert", as their entry in the equally successful SAFM Rock 'n' Roll Eisteddfod, Coober Pedy won their heat and are now on the short list for the finals. Well done. Full story inside.



Michaela Lucas (standing fourth from the left) and Veronica Richards (Standing sixth from the left) with the other members of the "Gold Cast" from "The King and I"



"Coober Pedy first was all anyone heard" - Jubilant members of "Eisteddfod" Coober Pedy as the results were announced.

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Eisteddfod - We're on the short list

From Page 1



"Yes the Opal does open and close!"

Six thirty on Thursday morning of 20th June.

It's cold and it's dark.

A group of twenty students, four teachers and four parents from Coober Pedy Area School gather in the incoming fog, ready to take part in the Rock 'n' Roll Eisteddfod, a dance/movement competition.

Seventy schools have entered, we are the farthest from Adelaide. Parents and students, anxious about what is to happen, farewell each other. Final adjustments are made to the loaded trailers.

"Good luck," "Break a leg", the cries echo as the bus disappears into the fog. As they drive down the long road to Adelaide five months of hard work and dedicated effort goes with them.

The bus drags the tandem car trailer containing the set props, including the giant fourteen foot fibre glass opal designed by Mike Davison and manufactured by him and several volunteers. Backdrops, an old hand winch, buckets, barrows, picks, shovels and costumes are packed around the opal.

A giant eight foot lizard presides silently on top of it all, just like a real one sunning itself on a rocky outcrop.

Like all other trips to Adelaide, this will be a breeze, no drama, no worries. We were all hoping for a pleasant 12 hour trip. Not this time. Flat tyres and all the trailer lights burn out. We battle on. Finally we arrive in Salisbury, 11.30 at night and it is great to meet up with friends. Denise and Patrick Kelly had organised accommodation at Trevor and Sue Roberts, Denise's sisters' place, as well as the Pines School just around the corner.

The next morning, Friday 21st, saw all the students and helpers at the Parafield Gardens community centre. Another practice session for the performance that night. Phil Ralston and Suzanne Donovan took a drama workshop with the students to help them overcome opening night jitters.

Mike Davison and Barb Cawthorne are left to unload the trailer load of backdrops and sets, it's a "helluva" job, but someone has to do it! The students have gone to look over the

Festival Theatre, the venue for the finals. Do they know something that we don't?

We all assemble at Scott's Theatre, behind Adelaide University, ready for the day's work. Rehearse all afternoon with the Adelaide stage crew, one more time and we've got it right, we hope! Competition is between 7.30 -10.30pm, Coober Pedy is the last school on, are they saving the best till last? Time will tell. The costumes are put on and the set prepared for yet more rehearsals. The stage hands in Adelaide are greatly impressed by the set, especially the opal.

"Did you guys really make this just for this competition?" "Who made it?" "How did you make it?" "How long did it take to come down?" "Where do you want it on stage?" "What lighting do you want?" "Where do you want the blower?" "What is a blower?" What is this, Sale of the Century or twenty questions? The students are becoming more and more excited. Yes, the opal DOES open and close!

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Eisteddfod cont...

From Page 23

Seven other schools were in the theatre that day, all preparing as we were. What were they like? How old were they? What were their costumes like? Where were their props? Our turn for questions. One school has seventy students involved, the costumes are brilliant and vastly different to ours. Will we have a chance?

Six thirty and rehearsals are finished, off to Hungry Jacks for tea, a surprise birthday tea for Katrina Kelly. The students relax, or is it just indigestion?

Back at the theatre, seven thirty and the place is packed, people every where. Where did they all come from? In the crowd a familiar face. Mike Day, former Principal of Coober Pedy School, was there with his students from Burra, one of the competing schools. He wishes us all the best and we know that he means it.

We gathered in our dressing area and prepared ourselves for what was about to happen. Costumes on, faces made up. "Suns," "Opals," "Tourists," "Miners," suddenly transported from

the real to the unreal, or is it the other way around? Out comes the hair spray as Sharon Faggeter, Denise Kelly, Steve Baines, Maxine Hoad and Barb Cawthorne put the final touches to the dancers' hair. The atmosphere is electric.

We all look on through the wings as the other schools perform, comparing, judging, hoping. We take word back to our group. The other school costumes look great, the sets are unusual, the dances were different. The other schools had dance/drama teachers, did we have a chance?

The stage hands kept re-assuring us, "Your costumes are great, your set is unique and the dance is different, Go for it! "We THINK we are re-assured.

Nine-thirty, Coober Pedy YOU'RE ON! The set is quickly put into place, the opal has a final testing. Suzanne Donovan is inside dressed in black, ready to operate. Yes it opens and closes beautifully. The announcer gives us a great introduction and up goes the curtain. The lights come on and centre on Angela Martin and Kate

Cawthorne, two of our dancers, on centre stage. As the light expands into a broader circle Coober Pedy Area School goes into action. "Rainbows in the Dust", the Coober Pedy production is underway. We all watch in anticipation.

Suns swirl, opals dance, miners move buckets, dig and wind the winch, tourists leap all around and take photographs. The opal is dragged out by some of the dancers and slowly opens and more dancers pour out of it. The audience is enraptured, a hush followed by spontaneous applause. Nervous dancers lift and perform perfectly.

The curtain comes down at the end and the theatre erupts in thunderous applause. The set is quickly taken off stage and the opal is dragged to the edge of the stage area and stored in a corner to be dismantled later. Several hundred students from the other schools join our students on stage. Everyone is bubbling with excitement waiting for the judges decision.



Students from Coober Pedy Area School are pictured before their successful heat in the SA.FM/State Bank Rock 'n' Roll Eisteddfod.

Eisteddfod cont...

Amidst all the screaming and yelling someone realises Suzanne Donovan is missing. In all the excitement we had left her locked in the Opal! A Rescue mission is launched, the Opal is freed from the corner and a slightly distraught Suzanne steps demurely from her opal prison.

The moment of truth has arrived, the announcer quietens the theatre. The judges introduce themselves and talk about the nights competition. Fingers crossed, eyes crossed, legs crossed, willing the judges to make the right decision.



Relaxing during rehearsals



Waiting on the judges decision

"Coober Pedy first," was all we heard. Everyone went mental. Screams, whistles, hugs and tears, believing yet not believing. The students broke out into their war cry, and why not?

We left the theatre at twelve midnight after taking down the set and packing it on the trailer. We talked about the win until the early hours of the morning. We did it, Coober Pedy did it. So this is what euphoria feels like!

We didn't surface the next day until 8.30am. Breakfast and back on the road for home at 10.00am. Everyone was tired but, Oh! What a feeling!

We finally arrived back home in Coober Pedy at 10.30pm and once again the students disappeared into the darkness, although they did have a certain sort of glow about them.

What a trip, what an experience. When we do find out about the finals we will let you know. Hopefully we will be able to make an announcement on Friday night, 5th July at the Greek Hall. The group will be performing for the community on this special night organised by the Coober Pedy Dance School. Please come along, the small five dollar entrance fee will support the Eisteddfod group, the Dance School and SPAG. This will be a full night of entertainment featuring the Eisteddfod kids, plus a variety of vocal, comedy and dance acts.

Details are sketchy at the time of going to press but it would appear that as a result of the performance in Adelaide one of our performers, Mark Hoad, was approached with an offer of a short term scholarship in a dance/drama workshop. Well done Mark.

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From behind the giant opal

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I am the only supplier in Coober Pedy of one of the most balanced and powerful natural foods known to us today. 2-3 teaspoons of "Barley Green" and "Feroxin" combined will clear your body of the daily build up of toxins which ultimately lead to illness, and restore your body to a healthy balanced state. If you would like to know more then phone me on 725779.