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Meredith Music Festival 2009: the paddock that rocked

By [Jarrod Watt](#)

Images and sounds from the 19th Meredith Music Festival

A sold-out crowd of 14,000 witnessed the 19th Meredith Music Festival on the Nolan family farm this year, once again for two and a half days' worth of music and madness created by acts from around Australia and around the world.

Ranging from veteran Australian singer-songwriter Paul Kelly to American garage punks Thee Oh Sees, hardcore rapper Pharoahe Monch, guitar rock legend Jon Spencer, and the 1950s-style stylings of English sibling trio of Kitty, Daisy and Lewis, the crowd was fed a broad mix of music, while above the weather remained overcast but calm.

A higher than normal presence by local police was contrasted with more than 40 arrests for drunken behavior in Ballarat, while only 2 people were charged with leaving the festival under the influence of alcohol.

Ballarat was again well-represented by the likes of the City of Ballarat Municipal Brass Band's traditional Saturday morning performance, as well as a manic set by the new darling duo of the decks the Yacht Club DJs, who finished their late night Saturday set with an abortive attempt to launch their own boat across the crowd.

While the festival that began with some bands playing on a flatbed truck has evolved substantially both in crowd numbers and organisation, this year's big change was to the Meredith Community Tucker Tent - no more is it a massive sausage sizzle held under a big tarpaulin, it now has its own building.

Local school principal Doug Cations is one of the Tucker Tent's supervisors, and says the upgrade was primarily because of the expense of having to rent the gear for the weekend - and given there are now two annual events on this site (the Golden Plains Festival is held in March) the benefits to the community that flow from this fundraiser warrant an investment in its future.

"The festival was originally set up by a group of friends of Chris Nolan, who came back from a holiday having contracted a serious disease, and now needs full-time care.

[Day 3 - 2009 Meredith Music Festival \(nudity warning\)](#)

[Day 2 - 2009 Meredith Music Festival](#)

[Day 1 - 2009 Meredith Music Festival](#)



Paul Kelly live on Saturday night at Meredith (Jarrod Watt - ABC Ballarat)

This is his mum and dad's property, John and Mary Nolan, so during that time the community tucker tent was set up to also raise money for Chris.

A portion of the money we raise here every year goes to Chris, which is a fantastic thing we can contribute to Chris' care," he says.

Asked to name where in the town of Meredith people can see the benefits of selling snags and hamburgers all weekend at a music festival, Cations has a long list to get through.

"The school... the Meredith Cricket Club, the Meredith Kindergarten, the Meredith Tennis Club, the Meredith Masters Football Club... the Meredith Golf Club and the Meredith Hall Committee...

"It's built playgrounds, it's built the new shed - instead of constantly barraging our parents with different drives and different community fundraisers, this is a fantastic way of getting money for these things from outside the community.

Another person celebrating his umpteenth Meredith Music Festival was Info Tent veteran Paul Haines; having attended the first Meredith Festivals in 1991 and 1992 (and performed there with his band the Fat Thing), he has spent over a decade working as a volunteer in the Info Tent, helping people with all sorts of enquiries and problems.

"Our most common questions are where can I get ciggies, do you have a lost and found I've lost my phone, where can I buy beer... where can I get sunscreen, is there first aid; then you get the ones at 4 in the morning: people say 'I dunno where I'm camped'... " he says with a smile.

Does he think the festival has evolved over the years, and if so - what to?

"I think it's kind of evolved. The audience is still basically the same - the same sort of Melbourne pick up and move to the bush for the weekend. A lot of the older crowd still turn up...it's just fun, there's a lot of young crowd here too, everyone has a good time. I think the actual vibe has stayed the same - they've never gone down the road of corporate sponsorship, they've always kept true to their values, they support the community, the community supports them, it's still all about the same thing," he says.

What would he put the good behavior of the crowd down to?

"I think people have a bit of a sense of ownership about

this festival, they like it, it's sort of their festival... people really love being here, no-one wants to wreck it - and people respect the fact you can still bring an esky here - nowhere else can you do that... I work here at the lost and found - we get handed wallets with money still in 'em - and I reckon that's great, we get that all the time.

"I don't reckon you get that at other festivals."

Warning: the visual presentations accompanying this article contain nudity



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