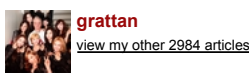


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## Meredith Music Festival @ The Supernatural Amphitheatre, Meredith (11-13/12/09)

**grattan**[view my other 2984 articles](#)

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Tue 15th Dec, 2009 in [Gig Reviews](#)

There was a quiet murmur that could be heard around Melbourne's bars in early December that built to a solemn prayer. It went something like this: "Please god, don't let it rain again at Meredith! please, please, please! don't let it rain". Thankfully as the cars stocked with tents, tarps and tinnies fled for the unofficial start of the summer's festival season the clouds kept a discrete distance and a repeat of the Great Flood of 2008 was avoided.

The Friday morning of Meredith is almost certainly the only time you'll find a service station on the road to Geelong filled with Wayfarer and gumboots clad coffee snobs happily downing International Dust black water at seven in the morning – but with a spot in Bush Camp up for grabs such sacrifices must be made.

With haphazard accommodation assembled, the Friday afternoon is largely devoted to sneaking in lost sleep, chatting to new neighbours and devising some sort of complicated band to beer ratio in order to successfully pace yourself through the weekend. Staking out a spot in front of the stage isn't nearly as fraught an expedition as securing a camping space, with the Amphitheatre offering superb views from almost every angle and the clouds providing enough cover that cowering under the trees isn't mandated.

After the countdown and the ceremonial raising of the mirror ball cow, **Regular John** opened the festival by teaching us the varied ways they spell love – L-U-V, and apparently F-U-C-K – in a set that rumbled along but didn't set pulses racing. They were followed by **Oh Mercy** who were as memorable as a band with almost no hooks and little to say could possibly be, but the festival shifted into gear with **Witch Hats**. The last minute replacements for Crocodiles (who bailed due to a family emergency), delighted in fucking with the atmosphere so early in proceedings – declaring themselves to be delighted to be playing – æthe Pyramid festival' – before tearing and howling their way through the late afternoon.

The first act to lift the seated residents of Meredith Amphitheatre to their feet was **Akron/Family** who opened with *River*, the highlight of their new *Set – æEm Wild/Set – æEm Free*. It set up their set perfectly and though some of the tribal drumming freak outs (surely *the* sound of indie circa 2009) ambled too long, they offered one of the standout Friday sets.

Playing too early for her Day-Glo outfits, **Sia's** set of pop and helium accented banter was strangely pop for Meredith and the rockists fled to restock eskies leaving the Amphitheatre an oddly female populated zone; perhaps a brief vision of that other festival sharing a girl's name – Lilith. With chilled out tunes like Zero 7's *Distractions* and the always gorgeous *Breath Me*, the set perhaps took a back ward step when everyone was gearing up for a party; though new song *You've Changed* brought a sunny jaunt to the show.

Loping to centre stage in a cape, the divisive **Patrick Wolf** played a set filled with operatic vocals, costume changes and complaints about the effect the – ætropical' weather was having on his tuning. As the punters

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### Playlist

Vivid saved some of the best for last.

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shivered on the hill Wolf bounded the stage throwing himself into his performance, but unlike his now infamous show at a German festival earlier in the year. Though the set drew heavily from his latest album *The Bachelor* the flamboyant closer *Magic Position* was the highlight of the bombastic performance.

After the theatrics of Patrick Wolf, **Tumbleweed** blazed their way to Meredith glory with a raw set of 90s rock. Opening with the crackle of thunder and the sound of *Frankenstein* – "It's alive!" – booming over the speakers, the reformed grunge heroes brought back the Meredith of old with (surprisingly) their first ever set at the festival. Classic dirty, sludgy riffs including *Daddy Long Legs* even brought back a revival of moshing and crowd surfing as though flannelette never died.

After such a powerful set it was always going to be hard for the remaining Friday acts to impress. **Royal Crown Revue** tried to bring a touch of Vegas to proceedings without ever really hitting jackpot. **Jennifer Keith** impressed with *40 Cups of Coffee*, but **Eddie Nichols'** Sinatra was more airport lounge than fancy cocktail bar. The instrumental breaks during *Hey Pachuco!* gave the band a chance to show off – with a drum solo on the double bass winning the set before the band closed with *Viva Los Vegas*.

Like an episode of *Spy Vs Spy* directed by Calvin Kline, **Yacht** danced and karaoked their way through a series of overly scripted slogans – which was more fun than it might sound, but not much more. Finally a blissed out disco tinged set from **Tim Sweeney** provided the perfect backdrop to a final Friday Pink Flamingo and unintelligible conversations with a stranger, before Silence Wedge's always welcome set cleared the floor for the night.

Saturday opened with coffee and the woozy, off-key sounds of the **Ballarat Municipal Brass Band** playing selections from The Beatles, the *Grease* soundtrack and even the Wiggles; as one punter summed up so eloquently "They were rubbish – but lots of fun". With the Brass section packed off to prepare scones and lamingtons, the stage was cleared for **Kid Sam** to play the unofficial – cœnext thing' slot – a spot taken in recent years by Tame Impala and Snowman. Standing as far apart as possible on the stage, cousins **Kishore and Kieran Ryan** proved why they've this year's hotly tipped with singles *We're Mostly Made of Water* and *Down to the Cemetery* standing out in a perfect start to the day.

Though **John Dwyer's** attempt at spitting into the air and catching the nugget on the way back just missed his mouth, he was spot on as he lead **Thee Oh Sees** to the title of "Hillbilly Eddy Current". With guitars worn high as bowties, they yelped and bashed away through an unpretentious and enjoyable set, in stark contrast to **Why?** who followed them on stage. Despite a gifted drummer, who managed to play his kit and a xylophone at the same time, **Why?**'s efforts at combining limp indie with nebbish lyrics saw the band essentially providing their review with their name. Wearing an old Anticon shirt in a reminder of days when he was interesting, **Why?**'s cringeworthy lyrics were outdone only by the template cut indie rock in an unfortunate race for mediocrity.

Kitty and Daisy opened with accapella before their brother Lewis joined them on stage. Backed by their parents, the young trio switched between instruments with ease and brought olde time blues back to Meredith. Aided by heavy rotation on RRR, **Kitty, Daisy and Lewis** drew a huge and very appreciative crowd for their set, which almost saw them upstaged by the giddy fun of their guest trumpeter.

Though sadly not touring with a live band on this jaunt, **Pharaohe Monch** did the next best thing and roped in a member of the X-ecutioners to tackle the decks. With a brief trick DJ show from **Boogie Blind** and backing singers passionately crying out on *Desire*, Pharaohe was almost overwhelmed in his own set. But, as expected, the inevitable set closer *Simon Says* was enormous – providing a Meredith moment for the ages – as the hill exploded with Godzilla-like force.

Festival perennials **Combo La Revaluation** returned for their 14th year to conga and salsa with the punters. Sure it's the same every year, but it's tradition – like that gift voucher you get from your uncle at Christmas; not unwelcome, but not the greatest either. Another, newer, tradition led a few hundred off into Bush Camp to indulge in cocktails served by spacemen, an esky jump world record attempt and the strangely terrifying smashing of a guitar shaped piñata filled with pirate treasure, sex toys and other goodies.

Back on the Meredith stage (after a visit with the Blues Explosion back in 2002) Jon Spencer fronted **Heavy Trash** with **Matt Verta-Ray**. However, despite his perfectly slicked back hair and the slightly maniacal looking dude slapping the double bass, their set lacked the energy and howls of a JSBX gig. Spencer tried to inject some passion in toward the end of the overlong set, but sadly it never really took off.

With only one stage and BYO beers in the esky at your feet there's none of the frantic scrambling between bands that characterises most other festivals. Instead the punters remain on the hill to sing and dance along to the DJ selections between bands, happily joining in the communal joy of – cœtrashy' classics including Dire Straits, Beyonce and DJ Kool's *Let Me Clear My Throat*. It's all part of the strange Meredith magic that brings hipsters and bogans together in song. (The punter's even voted Yello's 1985 hit *Oh Yeah* the official – cœClean up Meredith' song and happily filled garbage bags with crushed cans whenever the track boomed over the speakers.)

Joining Tumbleweed on the list of – cœMeredith debuts you were sure should have happened much earlier', **Paul Kelly** took to the Amphitheatre for the first time as the sun dipped past Inspiration Point. Saint Paul, recently canonised by a tribute show at Forum, mixed crowd pleasers – *Careless*, *Deeper Water*, *To Her Door*\_, *Sweet Guy* and *Dumb Things* – with lesser known material that struggled with an audience expecting a festival set of sing-alongs. The decision to include the depressing *Everything's Turning White* and several songs with **Vika Bull** taking the lead saw Kelly briefly losing the crowd to a game of catch. However some punters, obviously thinking they were at Golden Plains, showed their appreciation by offering Kelly the highest form of Supernatural Amphitheatre praise by holding a shoe in the air and it spread across the crowd. It might not have been a great festival show from Kelly, or even the right festival, but it's hard to think of a man more deserving of the honour.

**Animal Collective** opened with the Grateful Dead sampling *What Would I Want? Sky* and proceed to noodle their way through a set with little interest in playing for the festival crowd. 2001-esque screensaver projections may have looked more impressive on the brown acid, but the set drifted dangerously close to disappearing into a black

(25/5/2012)

**Clairy Browne & the Bangin' Rackettes @ GoodGod Small Club, Sydney (25/5/12)**

**Oposom, Bloods @ GoodGod, Sydney (16/5/2012)**

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hole of an entirely different kind. Finally gathering some momentum they lifted the hill into the joyous *Brothersport*, but crashed back to earth as they exited the stage without playing *My Girls* – undeniably their crossover moment. As they've played it at their sideshows, it seemed a weakly defiant gesture set to deliberately alienate anyone not devoted enough to fork out for their headline shows. A fine, if unengaging set, that won't have won any new fans – but you get the feeling that they're trying to pre-empt the inevitable backlash.

With the backing band, including Pulp's **Steve Mackey** on bass, keeping a low profile, **Jarvis Cocker** cavorted about the stage offering banter on par with, if not better than, his lyrics as he touched on Edvard Munch's birthday, Frank Sinatra and Turkmenistan's Neutrality Day. Some punters complain that he's all show and no tell, but from the introduction of *Angela*, the biting wit of *Fat Children*, the mirror ball lit *Disco Song* and the closing sing along of *Cunts Are Still Running The World* Jarvis is never short of thoroughly entertaining.

Taking the headline slot with their third show in the Supernatural Amphitheatre, **Eddy Current Suppression Ring** made a convincing argument for renaming the stage in their honour. Simply put – no band owns the Meredith stage like Eddy Cuz. Still standing on stage as though cramped into a tiny bar, they played a scorching set filled with crowd pleasers including *Insufficient Funds*, *Precious Rose* and *Which Way To Go*. **Brendan Suppression** decided to walk from the stage to the mixing desk and the punters part to make a path – with everyone looking around and Cheshire grinning; yep – it's already an official **Meredith moment** set to take its place beside the Dirty Three's lightning set and The Make-Up's set all those years ago. Forget Combo, it's ECSR that should play every year.

The local franchise of the Girl Talk fan club, **Yacht Club DJ's** offered a premixed set for premixed punters, with little that couldn't be achieved by quickly flicking a radio dial back and forth between commercial radio stations on a Tuesday night. Playing after the woeful MGMT and hilarious Muscles in 2008 Yacht Club killed it, but after Jarvis and ECSR they're dead boring and kill the need to linger in the Amphitheatre.

There are few things funnier early on a Sunday morning than the look of determination on the face of a servery addled punter attempting Master Song's Tai Chi session, but there was nothing amusing about the insulting awful set from **Kes Band** which followed. Opening by alternating screeching with silence it didn't take long before the pauses were filled by volleys of abuse from the hill. Not even the satisfaction of a Tucker Tent bacon and egg sandwich could block out the horridness of Kes' chalkboard vocals and drigey guitar and those that were able to move fled to take down their tents.

Self-declared "Santa of Meredith" **Henry Wagons** challenged Jarvis for the – æAndy Falkous trophy for Best Meredith Banter' with stories of Adelaide landmark desecration, faulty jean zippers and jumpsuit era Elvis. **Wagons** offered country ( *Drive All Night – æTill Dawn* ), covers ( *Never Been to Spain, Willie Nelson* ) and carols ( *We Three Kings of Orient Are* ) – all with class and charisma to burn. And hopefully the gang from Why? didn't have to race to a sci-fi role play convention and were able to hear **Si the Philanthropist** and **Mark "Tuckerbag" Dawson** slay them at their own game with a pistake rap.

If Wagons offer a materclass in stage presence then **The Middle East** may want to enroll to improve their current show of shy smiles and awkward shuffles. Their bass player does break out in a grin on occasion, but their dour stage presence still suggests band night at Christian camp. Thankfully they write an excellent tune and with all six members harmonising, bar their hooded drummer, the beauty of *Blood* and *The Darkest Side* drew a hushed awe from the crowd.

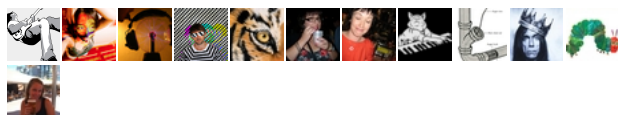
As **The Fauves** amble through a collection of uninspiring Aussie rock and the Gift runners limber up in horrifying fashion it was clearly time to bid Aunty Meredith adieu for another year. We've probably been left with a strange Pavlovian need to pick up cans whenever we hear Yello's *Oh Yeah*, but as we recover from our excesses and reminisce about Eddy Current and Tumbleweed it's clearly a small price to pay for such an amazing weekend. Thanks Aunty, see ya next year.

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**sarahanne** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

Amazing review Tom. Paul Kelly, despite the setlist, nearly mad me cry. Although that may have also been the vodka. And Im actually considereing starting a Church Of Eddy Current.



**sunnyp Perth** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

My mate crabbbers froths over AnCo but i reckon they are rubbish



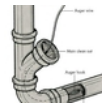
**sarahanne** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

They were



**brownie-ll** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

Sarah: Who did you class as worse at Meredith - MGMT or ANCO?



**JackT** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

Very entertaining and well written review Tom. Enjoyed it thoroughly. Your point about not playing My Girls is interesting!



**sarahanne** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

I dont know really? Hard call as with MGMT I wasnt a massive fan, so I didnt really have any expectatins. They were shit but they didnt let me down, so to speak. AC I had seen at ATP and had been really underwhelmed depite the fact I was a fan so I wasnt expecting much of them from Meredith. That said I think they played a really selfish set and not playing My Girls at a festival was just ridiculous. LOL. So in conclusion - ANCO. I think. What about you?



**tyler07** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

Sounds like a mad time, and amused by AnCo being shit.



**spintheblackcircle** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

If i may interject and answer this question, i would rate them equally as bad.

i for one didnt like the mgmt album. my girlfriend on the other hand loved it. i was expecting them to be absolutely terrible electro trash. i was actually pleasantly surprised by their heavier sound live and some of the songs were quite good. their stage presence and attitude were just fucking bad though. i've never seen a bad look so disinterested in being on stage and the punters that braved that weather to still be there deserved better.

again, i had the same expectations for animal collective. didnt really like their albums and wasnt expecting much. not playing my girls was just complete arrogance in the extreme. they were particularly boring early in the set. but i actually ended up enjoying the second half of the set for simple reason that it was like listening to a dj playing some upbeat progressive circa 2001. whilst that was a nice retro moment for me, it was very disappointing to be hearing them actually playing that live in december 2009.

i would give them both a 3/10.

1 point for it being live music  
1 point for having a couple of songs that i enjoyed  
1 point simply for being at meredith



**The Great Monkey War** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

Meanwhile, back at the ranch. AC rocked at the Enmore.

Anyone got the setlist for what they playe at Meredith?



**sophieb90** said on the 16th Dec, 2009

wow, disappointing attitude from AnCo! I wouldn't have expected that from them. great review!

**sophieb90** said on the 16th Dec, 2009



agreed



**sarahanne** said on the 16th Dec, 2009



Meanwhile, back at the ranch. AC rocked at the Enmore.

Anyone got the setlist for what they playe at Meredith?

I lot of it was samples of bits of their songs that they kind of jammed out - Ill try and find it for you

And I agree spin - the end of their set was getting there...!



**spintheblackcircle** said on the 16th Dec, 2009



this year was my 12th visit to meredith and it was by far the most fun i have ever had. all our crew had an amazing time and the music was as good as ive ever seen.

highlights for me were:

akron/family - had to convince all my mates to actually get down to the stage for it and every single one of them loved it.

tumbleweed

between set dj/crowd involvement friday night - its always great, but this year was on a whole other level. saturday was pretty damn good as well.

royal crown revue

kitty, daisy & lewis

heavy trash

paul kelly - a couple of the best singalongs i've heard there for years.

jarvis

ecsr

that totally bizarre shit they come up with in the cinema.

lowlights:

why?

patrick wolf - the last couple of songs sounded alright, but he just isnt my thing.

animal collective

kes band

having to go home

and i must say thanks to guys with the bar under the tree in the amphitheatre for sharing a beer with me and kindly allowing me to write on the bar.



**grattan** said on the 16th Dec, 2009



Meanwhile, back at the ranch. AC rocked at the Enmore.

Anyone got the setlist for what they playe at Meredith?

Something like:

What Would I Want? Sky

Guys Eyes

Summertime Clothes

Who could win a rabbit

fireworks

daily routine

brothersport



**strangemistake** said on the 18th Dec, 2009



out of all the meredith's and golden plains i've been to, this year, for some reason was the "acid" festival. I've never seen so many people dropping it! Such a great fest this year- as i say every year.

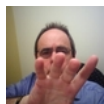
re: AnCo - thanks for wanking off in front of us. I'm sure you enjoyed it, but you could have been a bit more inclusive, ya know?



**billo** said on the 19th Dec, 2009



was i the only person to enjoy animal collective, thought they were tight as



**ex\_king\_john** said on the 19th Dec, 2009



yeah probably close to the only one. but seriously they could have phoned it in for all the presence they exhibited.

'hillbilly eddy current' damm i thought i invented that on the hill on saturday. had not seen or heard thee oh sees before saturday but was totally blown away. and i'm watching thinking these guys remind me of someone. bingo, "hillbilly eddy current" saw them again on thursday in brisbane and was better still. nice guys [and girl] too.

As for Patrick Wolf, I still don't understand how he passed the audition. Jobriath lite. The first half was laughable. At least the second half you didn't want to kill yourself.

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