

BRODERICK SMITH: BLUES MUSICIAN

Coming to St Albans



Broderick Smith was born in 1948 in Hertfordshire, England. He came with his family to Australia in 1959, when he was aged 11 years. They settled in Belgrave Heights while his father had a job at the Black and Decker factory. Then they moved to the western suburbs because there were more employment opportunities.

The family settled in St Albans, and Broderick started at St Albans High School in 1960. But his first home in the area was only temporary accommodation:

"The first place my father managed to get in St Albans was a small shed at the back of a kindly Yugoslav family's home. There were four bunks in it and not much room for anything else. A black and white TV stood at the end, which we could all lean out of our bunks to watch."

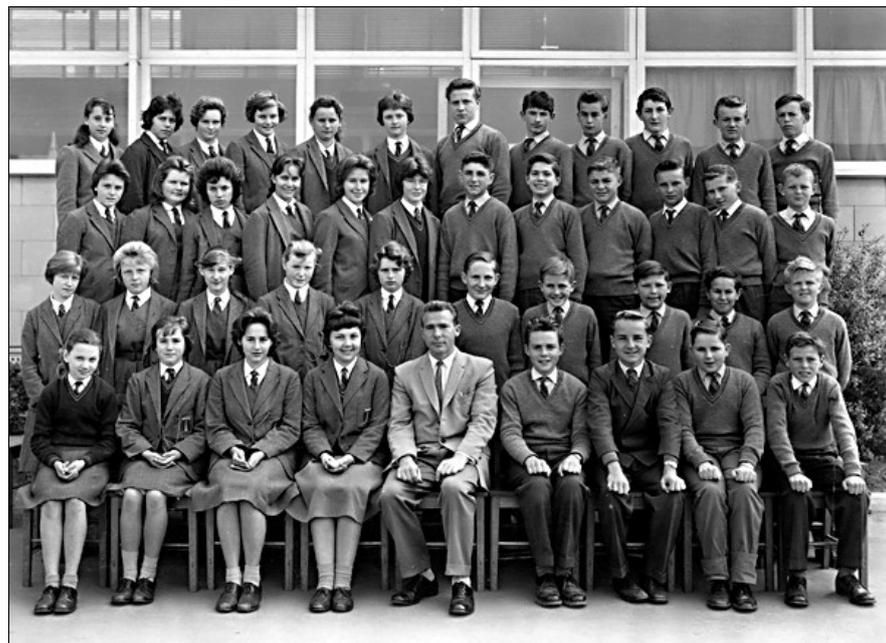
Before long the family moved into their own bungalow in Main Road West:

"The front of it was covered with fibro concrete cement sheeting, which could be taken off when you decided to finish the place. We lived in one of these for a while and then my father got some money together to buy some land on the other side of town - Main Road East and that's where we had our own house built. It was a pink brick veneer and it had about as much character and charm as a dead pit bull."

Whilst at the High School, Broderick remembered being the young Pommie migrant amongst many other migrants from all over Europe:

"The west gave me a deep appreciation of the essence of people regardless of their race or religion. We treated each other honestly, person to person, free of prejudices that existed elsewhere. In those days St Albans was the last suburb west, so we had the advantage of jumping over the back fence and being in the country, or over the front fence and being in the city."

St Albans High School, Form 3, 1962



Form 3 with Mr Pavlov, 1962. Broderick Smith is second from right in the back row.

Here he displayed some aptitude with the harmonica and started experimenting in playing blues and folk music. He was inspired by the likes of American Blues artists Sonny Terrie and Brownie McGee, and he taught himself to play harmonica in the style of their music. Bob Dylan was another early influence. While

many other young immigrants occasionally strummed a guitar or played the piano accordion for casual entertainment, Broderick developed his interests into his future career. He joined his first garage band in 1962 and played a bit of percussion, but he admits he didn't really know what he was doing. In 1963 he left school, and joined a shipping company as a messenger boy. He returned to school in 1964 for one year and then worked in a music store in Melbourne for three years as a clerk.

St Albans Blues Band



The family left St Albans in 1966 and moved to Craigieburn. Reflecting on this early settlement period he later explained: *"My family have always been travellers. It's not something that we've always gone looking for. It's just happened. I guess it's because we said 'okay' when the opportunity came along."*

Over the years Broderick has occupied himself in various ways to earn a living, including clerical work, storeman, copy writer in the advertising industry, a compulsory period as soldier due to the reintroduction of national service, and in recent years also as an actor on stage and screen. But he is best known for his long-term career as a singer-songwriter with a variety of blues and country rock bands, for whom he has fronted as a singer and harmonica player, and also known to play the banjo.

Adderley Smith Blues Band



His musical career advanced in 1968 when he joined the Adderley Smith Blues Band as a singer and harmonica player, and this is when he became more recognized as a musician.

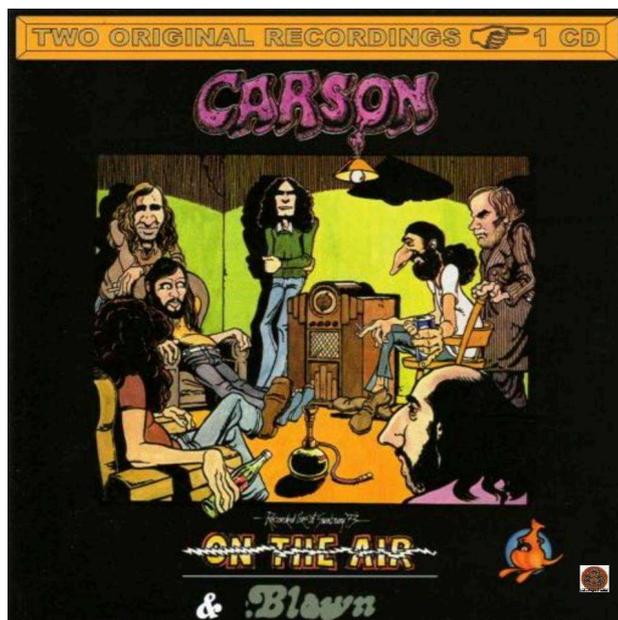
National Service

Between 1968 and 1970 the musical career had to temporarily abandoned, as Smith joined other 20-year-olds who were drafted into the army for their stint of National Service. He spent his time training at Holsworthy in New South Wales, but did not serve in Vietnam. Even here he kept his musical interests alive whenever he could and became acquainted with groups such as the Peter Nailler Jug Band and the Foreday Rider Blues Band, who followed a combination of folk and blues genres. During 1970 he completed his obligations under the National Service Act and returned to normal life by joining the Sundown Country Band as a singer and songwriter. He parted company with that group when their musical directions changed.

The Seventies

In 1971 Smith joined the blues and boogie band Carson, with whom he recorded two albums. This band was popular enough that he was soon earning more from performing than from his day job, so he quit that and became a full-time musician.

Smith also toured with another legendary British blues player, John Mayall, and appeared at the Sunbury Rock Festival.



When Carson disbanded in 1973, Broderick Smith and Kerry Tolhurst (a colleague from the days of the Adderley Smith Blues Band) formed the Dingoes with fellow musicians Chris Stockley, John Lee and John DuBois. Their musical style was a combination of rhythm and blues with Aussie bush music. The Dingoes subsequently became recognized as the epitome of good Aussie country rock and recorded a number of albums.

The Dingoes



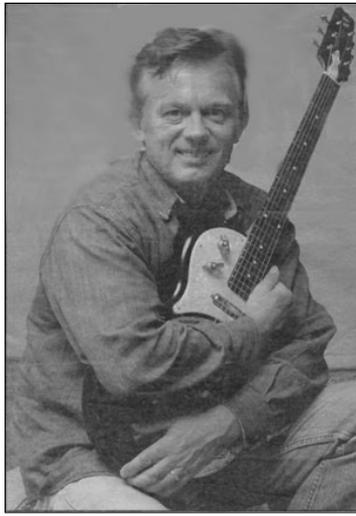
The Dingoes in 2010. Back: Kevin Bennet, John Bois, Ashley Davies
 Front: Chris Copping, Chris Stockley, Broderick Smith, Kerry Tolhurst.
www.procolharum.com/copping_dingoes.htm

In 1974 The Dingoes were achieving a high degree of popular acclaim. They were featured on the “Highlights of Sunbury 74” album and toured nationally with various artists including the likes of Bo Diddley, Leo Sayer, Bad Company, and Freddy Fender. Their musical energy and innovation earned them national recognition through the “Best Australian Group Album” at the Australian Music Awards, and the “Best Group Vocal Album” at the ARIA awards.

In 1976 The Dingoes took their biggest challenge by taking their music to the home of the blues - America. They had a recording contract with a company in Northern California, and for the next two years they were on the road performing in forty states from San Francisco on the west coast to Woodstock in upstate New York on the east coast. They recorded their own album there and briefly contributed to studio backings for recording artists such as Cat Stevens and Buffy Saint Marie. Then in 1978 some of their close colleagues in an accompanying band died in a plane crash, and the rest of the touring group decided it was time to come home.

The Eighties

When Broderick returned to Australia he formed the Broderick Smith's Big Combo. This band received very good publicity when they appeared at a public concert in support of the Peter McCallum cancer clinic, and the album of that performance achieved platinum sales figures. In 1981 Big Combo achieved more success and gold record sales with an album featuring several of Smith’s original compositions. However, the effort in keeping the group constantly on tour was too stressful for everyone, so the members called it quits in 1982.



Broderick then decided to concentrate on a solo career as a singer-songwriter and his first solo album was released in 1984. The inspiration for some of his lyrics is based on the experience of growing up and living in the western suburbs of Melbourne, so his St Albans history is not forgotten. His lyrics encompass such varied geographic icons as the Altona refineries and the Maribyrnong River at Green Gully, as well as more tender reference to emotional attachments between European and Vietnamese youth in Footscray. Such works are also a commentary of the social history of the times.

The Nineties



The 'nineties was a period of considerable diversification in Broderick's professional life as he extended his performance repertoire to include acting and teaching.

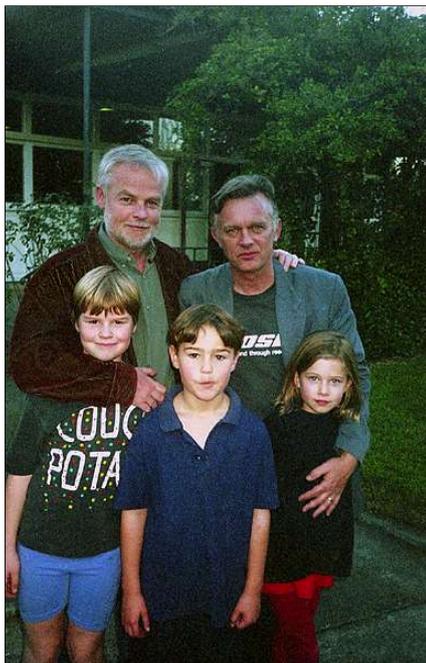
His acting CV includes performing with the Melbourne Theatre Company in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and television appearances in series such as *Janus*, *Blue Heelers*, *Law of the Land*, *the Man from Snowy River*, and *State Coroner*.

In 1996 he was recruited as an "Ambassador for the West" by

the Western Region Economic Development Commission to help promote the west as a region for business development.

Apart from his solo albums, Smith's appearances over the last decade or so include touring Australia with Joe Cocker and appearing at music festivals throughout the country including Port Fairy, Tamworth, Canberra, Queenscliff, Tasmania, and others.

The New Millennium



Broderick's musical style is now called Country Rock with an Australian flavour. With a total of thirteen albums in his CV and six of these being solos, his contribution to the Australian music has undoubtedly been a long term commitment. He's frank enough to acknowledge that: "I'm at an age when I am really hoping to pass on anything I have learned in the hope someone will take advantage of it." To achieve this hope he's also gone back to the educational setting, but no longer as the student. He enjoys running workshops on songwriting, vocals, and playing the harmonica. These workshops have taken him all over Victoria, into community festivals, universities, schools, prisons, as well as music store outlets.

He signed with the Australian Broadcasting Commission to produce several albums, and the first two releases, "Songster" and "Crayon Angels", made it into the top ten albums of the year. His most recent release through the ABC is "Too Easy" which has been described as "Gentle acoustic country rock wrapped around contemporary lyrics in the Lawson tradition."

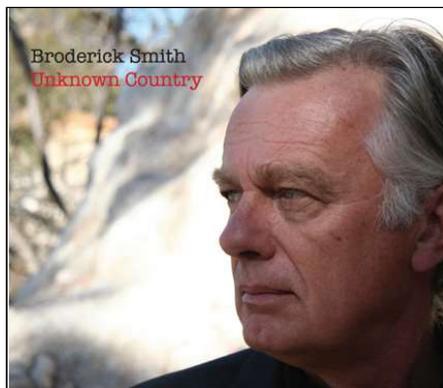
And that's not bad accolades for a British immigrant who spent his early teenage years in St Albans.



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Broderick Smith

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Broderick Smith is currently writing his autobiography in conjunction with a journalist friend.

His official websites are :

<http://www.myspace.com/brodericksmith>

<http://www.brodericksmith.com>

Len Weigh's website is www.ellway.com.au

This article has been compiled from archival material and media articles, including the ABC web site.

St Albans Blues Band 1964-65 photo by Len Weigh.

Adderley Smith Blues Band 1966 photo by Len Weigh.