

ROCK 'N' ROLL WALK OF FAME 'N' SHAME  
CITY TO PYRMONT

CAESAR'S PROMOTIONS PRESENT  
FLYING LUFTHANSA



EASY BEATS  
SUPER SHOW



FROM THE FASHIONABLE HEIGHTS AND DESPERATE DEPTHS OF DOWNTOWN SYDNEY'S MUSIC HERITAGE, WE TRAVERSE THE CITY CENTRE AND DISCOVER WHAT REMAINS OF OUR FAVOURITE VENUES; THEN WE CROSS TO THE STREETS OF ULTIMO AND PYRMONT AND VISIT THE SITE OF THE WORLD FAMOUS FESTIVAL RECORDS, ITSELF A VIRTUAL CORPORATE JUKEBOX OF AUSTRALIAN ROCK 'N' ROLL HISTORY; AND THEN DISCOVER THE VENUES WHERE BANDS AS DIVERSE AS SHERBET AND NIRVANA MADE THEIR EXTRAORDINARY STAMPS ON THE AUSTRALIAN MUSIC SCENE

“REMEMBER THE FAME 'CAUSE THE SHAME  
LASTS FOREVER!”

# CITY TO PYRMONT

## 1 DISCOS, TAVERNS AND ALL THAT JAZZ

Some soi-disant jazz aficionados decried the closure of the old Basement venue and its "radical" move a few doors away at Circular Quay to its current site, with far better sound and visual access, in Macquarie Place. Nevertheless, jazz eminence John Shand concedes "there have still been some unforgettable nights with Betty Carter, Mike Nock, Richard Thompson, Ten Part Invention, Jackie Orszaczky and so many more. Sydney's music scene would have been infinitely poorer without it".

With the closure of the Harbourside Brasserie early in this millenium, and Soup Plus in George St long gone by now, the Basement remains pre-eminent in the northern reaches of downtown Sydney for fine music of all genres and plenty of jazz too.

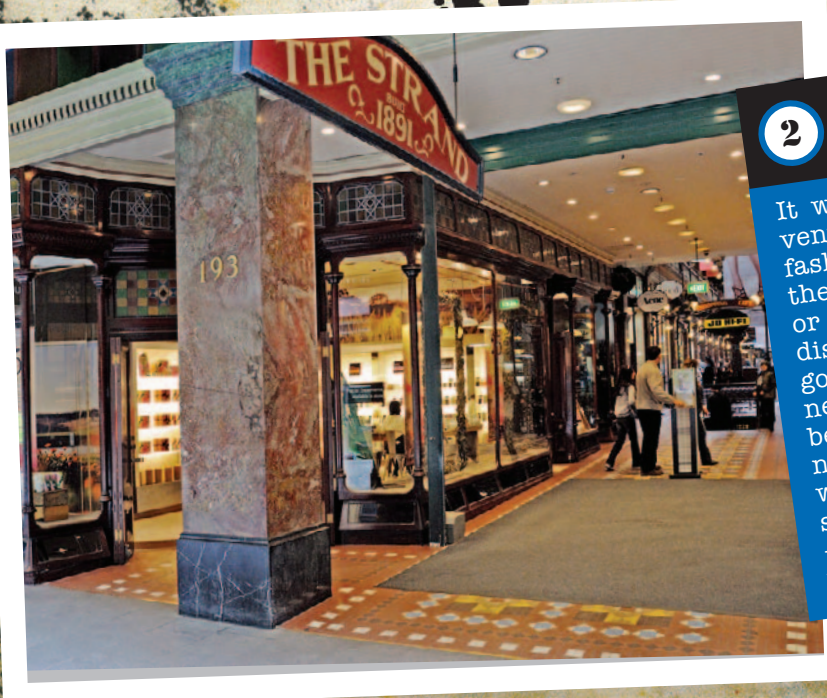
Some nearby rock venues from the '80s that no longer remain, but were oh-so popular, were the Governor's Pleasure at The Rocks and the Sydney Cove Tavern in the AMP Centre.

Walking south on Pitt St, Kings St looms as the next street with a musical heritage but alas (and not surprisingly) not a plaque, not a brick or even a cornice remains of Albert Studios (139 King St), Lucifer's or Suzie Wong's where the MLC centre now stands.



## 2 NEW ROMANTICS STRANDED ON THEIR OWN

It was appropriate that one of Sydney's first fashionistas' favourite place to shop and stare, the Strand Arcade. As the '80s progressed, or went on, and males and female fashion discovered (too much) colour again; and hair got bigger and taller; and romantics became newer; Stranded moved from being a simple, below-ground punkish venue to a quite garish night-time circus where hairdressers mixed with arcade workers, and music industry types seamlessly merged with the fashion industry — all in the lights and shadows beneath the wonderfully unchanging Strand Arcade.



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## TAKE ME TO THE TIVOLI, NEITHER HERE NOR THERE

George St, south of Town Hall, is a downward sloping boulevard of demolished building and fast turnover developments with very little to remind us of the southern CBD's once fecund music and dance history. Before the Regent Theatre was pulled down late in the previous century, the Telegraph once splashed on their front cover "Punk Riot at Regent." Apparently a few chairs had been thrown at an Elvis Costello concert, but our sources remain unconvinced whether the cause was Costello and The Attractions playing for not long enough, as reported, or for too long as we suspect (it was for about an hour anyway).

The Trocadero, the city's number one glamour hall for singing, dancing and romancing was visited by Hollywood royalty, real Anglo/Australian royalty and — most controversial at the time — the annual bohemian Artists' ball where (gasp) men dressed as women (a dozen Carmen Mirandas

appeared one year) and sometimes vice versa. Just a harbinger really for Sydney in decades to come ...

The "Troc" was where Hoyts George St has stood since 1971, but the Tivoli was in Castlereagh and burnt down and re-birthed in Haymarket and faded fast as rock'n' roll took hold.

Another Tivoli rose in lower George St, beneath the cinema strip, to become a really substantial rock venue for the best of local and overseas artists during the '80s and early '90s. It also closed as development issues took precedence for the owners.

The Metro at 624 George remains one of Sydney's most popular gigs since the nineties. It says of itself that its artists have included Muse, Placebo, The Eels, Alex Lloyd, Damien Rice, Gomez, The Dandy Warhols, Eskimo Joe, The Hives and Beth Orton. Now that's variety...



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## TWO WONG VENUES HIT THE RIGHT NOTE

If the Chevron was glamorous and showy then Chequers in Goulburn St was the sophisticated centre of Sydney nightlife from the late '50s to the early '70s. Run by the Wong family, it attracted the cream of world entertainment – Liza Minnelli, Sammy Davis Jnr – to perform for Australia's who's who of the period.

As a rock venue it continued for many more years with famous performances by Lobby Loyde and AC/DC. Angus Young is quoted as saying, "We'd been together for about two weeks, we got up and blasted away. From the word go it was great. Everyone thought we were a pack of loonies – who's been feeding those kids bananas?"

The Wongs also owned the nearby Mandarin Club, almost as famous as Chequers, but open 24 hours and therefore a true favourite with the entertainment industry, especially late night after their own performances.

The neighbouring Goulburn Club was another favourite for Sydney's night owls and glitterati, notwithstanding that it was actually an illegal casino in the days when the word illegal had more flexible definition.



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## MODS, ROCKERS, PUNKS AND PROGRESS

Across the road in Goulburn St is the Civic Hotel, now a flash enough wining and dining venue in its own right.

The Civic was a memorable rock venue as far back as the '70s when sub cultures like Teddy Boys, Mods and the rising Punks would meet there. In the '80s it was a well-known rock venue for many of Sydney's more popular bands on the rise such as Mental as Anything or the Hoodoo Gurus.

At the bottom of Goulburn St in Chinatown is the Sydney Entertainment Centre, revamped somewhat in recent years, and still proving to be a fine auditorium for the world's big acts.

Further venues of fame and shame at the southern end of the city included the Stage Door Tavern in lower Castlereagh St, where oversized, sweaty crowds would shout and scream to Chisel and the Oils; Gas Lash in lower Elizabeth St near Central (right next to the owner's Binky Burger store), which was undoubtedly an influential counter culture haven in the '60s, festooned by Martin Sharp designs and folkies. Guitar legend John Robinson who played there early in his career described it as "a dive of a joint – a coffee house, all sorts of substances were consumed there".

Still visible is Rhubarb's, another sub culture hang that hung on for decades near the corner of Sussex and Liverpool Streets.

Other venues that have disappeared entirely from one end of the city to the other include Beach Hut, Teen Canteen, The Bowl, Uptight, Beethoven's, Ward Austin's Jungle, St James Tavern, the New York Tavern, the Sussex Hotel and all too many more. Memories are never set in concrete. Of course, the Capitol and State Theatres remain as stalwarts of Sydney City's entertainment precinct.



# CITY TO PYRMONT

## 6 SAD DEATHS AND ONE-OFF PERFORMANCES

In Broadway, near the corner of Wattle St, was a fine balconied venue in the '70s called Jonathan's Disco and first became popular as the resident band Sherbet, perhaps Australia's finest pop rock exponents, honed their songwriting and performance skills there before going on to be creative and consistent chart toppers.

Later the Phoenician Club, it was famous for Jeff Buckley in 1995, really famous for Nirvana in 1992, and sadly infamous for the ecstasy-involved death of schoolgirl Anna Wood.

Further along at 500 Wattle St is the Vulcan, a tiny venue of the '80s and early '90s in particular, still powering along as a Boutique Hotel. Depending on the night of the week, you might see the Celibate Rifles, Happy Hate Me Nots, even the Scientists, Ratcat or a combo of punk bands for entrée, main course and dessert. In its prime, little effort was made to provide a comfortable venue. But it was loud, it was close and warm, it was very good.



## 7 THIS WAS THE END

While Festival Records took many years to find its early feet as an Australian record manufacturer and distributor, there's common agreement that its two headquarters in Pyrmont coincided with its most successful days. Head office from 1957-67 was at 223-229 Harris St, Pyrmont – Rupert Murdoch buying the business from LJ Hooker in 1960. There was only a rudimentary studio at that address, so the move around the corner to the hard-to-miss deco building in Miller St, Pyrmont on the corner of Bulwarra Rd, was a welcome change.

The history of Festival Records is very much a history of Australian popular music and culture and is captured in wonderful detail by Peter Cox of the Powerhouse Museum in his book *Spinning Around: The Festival Records Story*. The demise of Festival Records is as shameful as any story in Australian music history: of corporate neglect, personal empire building, and mad financial decisions. The handsome, curved building remains – for always we hope – as a reminder to passers by of the truly golden days of Australian music.

## • CREDITS •

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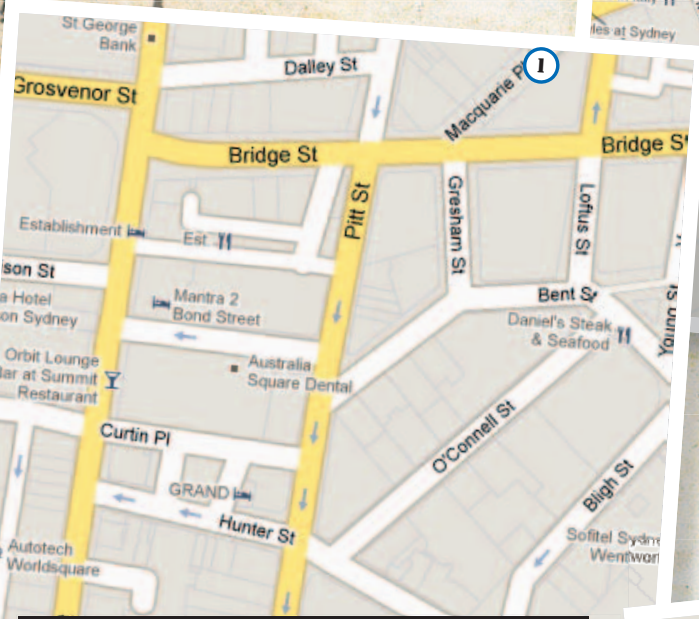
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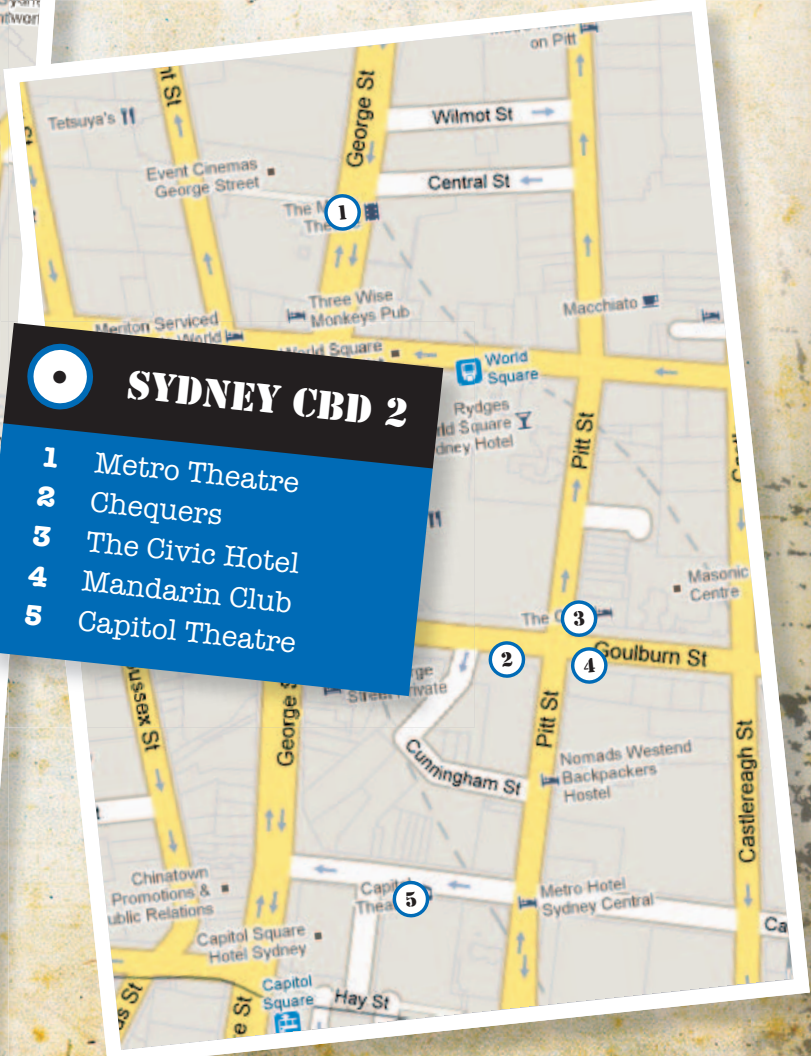
# ROCK 'N' ROLL WALK OF FAME 'N' SHAME CITY TO PYRMONT



**1 PYRMONT**  
1 Festival Records



**1 SYDNEY CBD 1**  
1 The Basement  
2 King St.  
(Alberts Studios, Suzie Wong's)  
3 Stranded (in the Strand Arcade)  
4 The State Theatre



**1 SYDNEY CBD 2**  
1 Metro Theatre  
2 Chequers  
3 The Civic Hotel  
4 Mandarin Club  
5 Capitol Theatre

