

MALDON FOLK FESTIVAL – The Spoken Word

Maldon once again held a striking programme of entertainment over the long weekend including a strong spoken word segment. The 37th annual festival had all the usual trappings of fun, festivities and variety.

The organising committee led by Lynda and Mike can once again take a bow. The only down-side was the weather. It's wonderful to have rain of course but a pain for campers, and it's one of those things we simply adjust to. Like digging little drains around performances areas, wearing gumboots and dodging the mud piles.

Poets' breakfasts were held each morning, ably run by Stephen Whiteside, Ed Walker and yours truly. The poets came from as far away as Tasmania (Michael Manhire) and included a great variety of material from young local Crispin Smyth with a poem about the Burke and Wills Dig tree, to Loretta Leslie (Lawless) with her Celtic take on Halloween.

A newcomer to Maldon Col Driscoll really made his mark with his unique sheep philosophy and Ed Walker arrived with his excellent CD entitled Ruby which is a classic poem in itself. It's wonderful to see poets like Ed, who start out with reciting verse at Festivals, progress to having his own show, then a CD. Who knows what next?

Stephen Whiteside was everywhere with his verse as well as presenting verse from his father Arthur Dean, and has just published a small volume entitled The Brigadier's Horse and other poems from the Western Front. Other poets included Tom O'Connor from Swan Hill with his intense bush verse, Ted Horton with his Puffing Billy delights, the ubiquitous Campbell the swaggy, Screitch and many others.

Colin Carrington did justice to the Yarn Event in the Courthouse and made a very impressionable judge. Verse at the Rotunda was a quiet affair, but will undoubtedly grow in the future I presented On the Edge a performance about Henry Lawson as well as a children's show It rock's its cool it's PPPoetry which was well received.

The Australian poetry Omnibus presented a selection of poetry and workshops hosted by Andy Jackson and Ross Donlon. The wealth of material was staggering and paid tribute to the vast array of styles in the spoken word genre.

I didn't get a chance to see a lot of music, but the list of performers was staggering. Monday at the Penny School saw the talents of Pennyweight with Tony English, who is not John English's love child. They were followed by Wheelers and Dealers who were stunning and the piece de resistance Mathew Fagan jamming with Juan Martinez who were totally awesome.

Geoffrey W Graham