

Entertainment & Lifestyle

New Theatre celebrates its 75th year

Garrett Bithell

Newtown's New Theatre celebrates its 75th anniversary this year with CENSORED!, a season of staged readings of plays that have been banned or censored or evoked significant controversy somewhere in the world throughout history.

As New South Wales' oldest theatre company in production, New Theatre has maintained a flamboyant dedication to exposing contentious and revolutionary material. Founded in October 1932, its mantra was 'Art is a Weapon'. This year's weapon, CENSORED! is "fundamentally about celebrating controversy," says Lyn Collingwood, who is season coordinator and an actor in *Home and Away*.

"It's also about language – how people interpret language differently, and how morals and opinions have shifted throughout history."

The season opener in February was Mae West's *Sex*. Alex Buzo's *Norm and Ahmed* followed in March and Alan Seymour's *The One Day of the Year* in April.

"Audience reactions have been very positive so far. At the end of each play we run an open discussion, which everyone has really appreciated," Lyn Collingwood says.

Next is George Dibdin-Pitt's melodrama *Simon Lee* in May, followed by Dick Diamond's *Reedy River* in June. New Theatre's first production of 'Reedy River' was banned by Ashfield Council in the 1950s.

"They banned it not because of the material itself, but because New Theatre was staging it," says Lyn Collingwood. At the height of the Cold War, New Theatre members were targeted by ASIO for "suspected Communist activities".

New Theatre also staged



Celebrating 75 years of controversy is blood sucking fun – A scene from 'Vampire Lesbians of Sodom'.

Arthur Miller's timeless *The Crucible*, in March and April.

"Everyone involved in the production has become very aware of the contemporary resonances. It's very much a play for our times," says director Louise Fischer.

"It's only a frighteningly small step from the Salem witch-hunts to McCarthyism to the Bush Neo-Cons."

In March, the National Institute of Dramatic Art honoured New Theatre for its unique place in the history of

theatre, and its courage to thwart resistance from government and big business.

New Theatre members have performed down mines and on the docks to support striking workers, and for over 20 years have fought against stage censorship, culminating in the historic production of Jean-Claude Van Ittalie's banned play *America Hurrah* in 1969. This play closes the CENSORED! season in November.

In March, the State Library of NSW presented *Words Can*

Be Bullets, a 90-minute montage of highlights from New Theatre's history of confrontation with authority.

New Theatre was founded on the belief that theatre can be a vehicle for political change. "In this time of terrorism and fear of the unknown, there's a different kind of censorship going on – and it's more insidious and more scary," says Lyn Collingwood.

CENSORED! is a celebration of controversy, but it is also a reminder to continue questioning authority.

Mad and festive hatters in the 'Loo

Astha Gupta

A surprise international performer, dancing hats, sumptuous food, live music and drums were highlights of the recent ninth Woolloomooloo Festival.

The Festival, organised by the Walla Mulla Family and Community Support together with the City of Sydney, Hope Street and Juanita Nielsen Centre attracted a crowd of 4000 to Forbes Reserve.

Festival organiser Mary Kennedy said "Walla Mulla is a family and support group. The Festival is a means to introduce ourselves to the community and to let people be aware of our existence."

The Festival also aims to bridge the gap between

the diverse Woolloomooloo community where wealthy business families and the homeless co-exist.

"The Cowper Wharf Road divides not only communities but it divides the spirit of the area as well," says local resident Janet Ravet. Another resident Sharon Brunell says, "It will take much more than just this festival to change attitudes."

Forbes Street resident Lalita Morar says the Festival has grown in popularity and should be held more often.

"The local churches, the children's centre, the Aboriginal and ethnic community, everyone participates in the Festival with gusto," she adds.

Sixty market stalls offered

foods, jewellery and clothing.

However, the sales this year seemed to be lackadaisical. Stall owners Selena Blikey and Saithin Choocham were a little disappointed.

"I think there was a lack of advertising and so the cash registers aren't exactly ringing," Saitlin Choocham says.

This year's theme 'Mad as a Hatter in the Loo' saw boys and girls, wearing quirky hats.

The Festival was opened by City of Sydney Councillor Phillip Black after the traditional smoking ceremony. Tanya Plibersek, Member for Sydney, and Malcolm Turnbull, Minister for Environment and Water, also made guest appearances.

Peter Powers, the inter-

nationally renowned hypnotist, literally had people dancing to his tunes.

With two performance stages, people watched the Western Regime Chinese Association Dance Troupe in awe, then swayed to the beats of the Sydney-based soul, funk and blues band Continental Blues Party.

The Rhythm Hunters, a drumming and percussion band also played their finest numbers combining Japanese Taiko drums and Indonesian folk music.

Sydney reggae outfit, King Tide, kept the crowd dancing to their beats, some with careless abandon, long after the 3pm finish for the Festival was past.



Rhythm from the Western Regime Chinese Association Dance Troupe.

Entertainment & Lifestyle

Midnight Basketball plays down crime rates

Farha Zabih

Midnight Basketball tournaments in Redfern and Waterloo have shown local youth have found an alternative form of entertainment and in the process, been steered away from crime.

"The tournaments are very successful. At Redfern, 55 to 60 kids turn up on Saturdays nights to play basketball," says Travis Lane, ex-basketball player and Redfern Tournament Manager.

Midnight Basketball was first launched in the USA, UK and other European nations as an alternative activity for young people during high crime periods.

"If basketball was not on, then there's risk of anti-social behaviour, when kids are staying at home, bored. It provides a safe

place for them to get together, so kids can have fun," says Jonathon Wolfe, a member of the Midnight Basketball Board.

Midnight Basketball Australia works with local community youth agencies, police, juvenile justice departments, sponsors, councils and housing estates to coordinate a local basketball competition held on Saturday nights between 7:30pm and midnight for young people aged 12-18.

This is a high crime time when young people may be vulnerable to drugs, alcohol and anti-social behaviour. Sandra Riley, whose grandson plays Midnight Basketball says it is "something to stop him chasing cars".

Players attend mandatory workshops each competition night. The motto is 'No Workshop, No Jump Shot'. Workshops address life issues such as nutrition, substance abuse, conflict resolution. They also tackle how to manage anger, domestic violence and teen pregnancy.

Mrs Jose, 30, is a parent of a Midnight Basketballer. "Family comes down before game, dinner is also provided, volunteers also get involved in the game and a bus is available to take them home at night, which is why parents support it," she says.

NSW Crime statistics reveal a three per cent reduction in street offences (assault, break and enter, robbery, and stolen

vehicles) from the period before competition, compared to the previous year's 12 per cent increase.

Brittannie Miles, 16, says "I like Midnight Basketball because it's a good opportunity to play, to get better at school." Midnight Basketball helps "to meet friends," says 13-year-old Elizabeth Haines.

Sue Hogan, Midnight Basketball Project Manager, says "Midnight Basketball has become a community event. They like it, they expect it."

Community members and parents are also encouraged to act as volunteers, supervisors, supporters or just participate.

"It helps the community help themselves and

forms interactions with the community, council and police," says Jonathon Wolfe.

"Sport is an outlet for young people; it provides opportunities to get fit, both socially and physically. It forms friendships, discipline, how to co-operate and be part of a team," says Shane Brown, from South Sydney Youth Services.

From the players' perspective, a post-competition evaluation found that playing basketball and attending workshops were the best things about Midnight Basketball. Being occupied on a Saturday night and making new friends were also important benefits.

Mariah Haines, 12, says "It's cool, You should come as well!"

Taking the Fresh approach

Maya Zahran

Nearly 1500 people partied to the thundrous music of the Rogue Traders and TV Rock who headlined the recent inaugural Fresh Party.

Four hours of music, fashion and fresh living concepts were all part of the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation (AER) Foundation's vision of a Fresh Party – an alcohol-free event.

AER funded research earlier this year found an escalating problem of binge-drinking among young people aged 18-24. One in three drink to get drunk or continuously drink excessively. Two in three aged between 18 and 24 had friends who regularly binge-drink.

Cheryl Bart, AER Foundation Director, believes a positive approach is the most successful way to tackle binge-drinking.

"We believe that by fusing music, fashion, food, entertainment, we would be able to serve up a fresh approach, and say 'hey there are other options available!'" she says.

The AER vision is to help young people find a 'fresh' way of living, by changing the image of drinking from a form

of entertainment towards an image of being dated, unhealthy and uncool.

Carl Gardner, the Managing Director of Mushroom Marketing, a Fresh Sponsor, says that turning towards the music industry to help with an issue like alcohol is really important.

"We're a proud Australian company and passionate about the local music industry. A large part of the music business here revolves around pub rock, and it means that music has a drinking culture to it," he says.

The AER initiative is not against youth drinking, but rather suggests that alcohol should be part of the entertainment at social events, not the entertainment itself.

"I want to emphasise that we're not advocating that you shouldn't drink. We recognise that drinking is part of our social culture. We're not saying that's a bad thing; what we're saying is bad is the misuse of alcohol, which is growing along with the harms and costs around the misuse," Cheryl Bart says.

The AER believes the Fresh Party initiative is a realistic one.

"Any kind of behavioral

change is the hardest kind of change that we can achieve, and the first part of that is reaching awareness, then education, before people can react to that change.

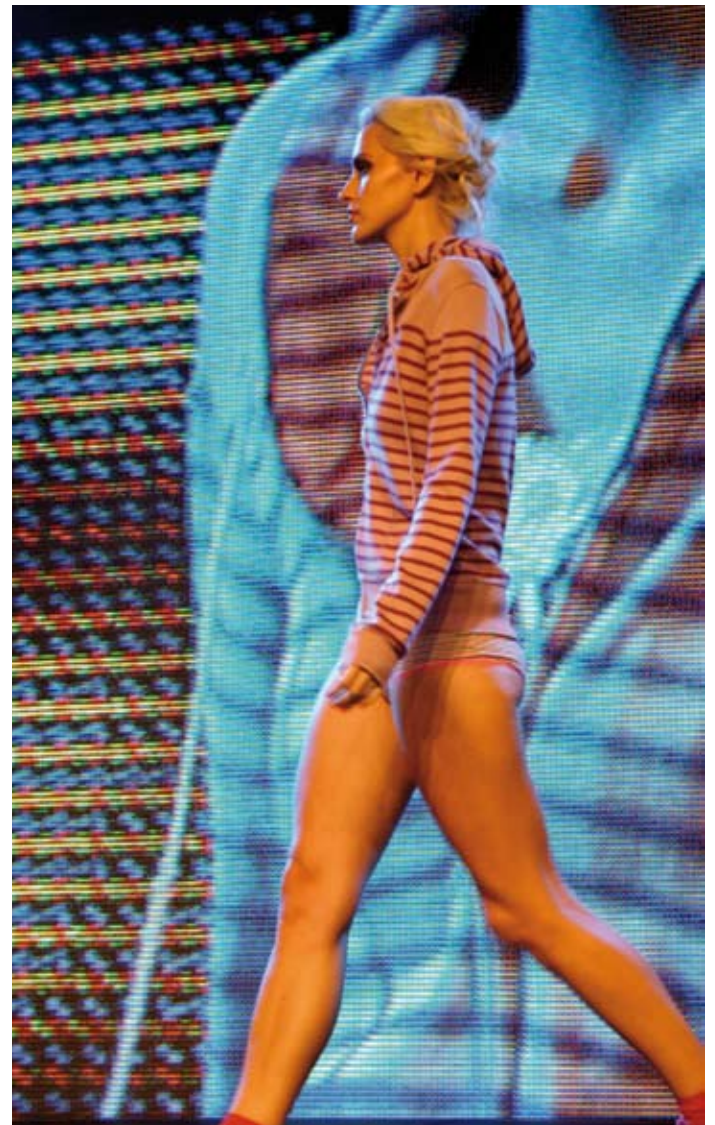
"We are not silly enough to think that one Fresh Party is going to change social behaviour. But what we do say is this is the beginning of a long term initiative," Cheryl Bart says.

Carl Gardner, echoed her sentiments, saying the initiative will succeed because it does not take a prohibitive approach.

"We know that you can't change people's behaviour overnight but we have already broken the mould and this time there has been a focus on the positives rather than the negatives," he says.

Cheryl Bart likens changing alcohol control to the change of attitude towards social smoking. She says long-term success for this campaign is realistic because the young people want it.

The Fresh Party is the first of many day-time events centred on music, fashion, food, and sport. There will also be a calendar of 'fresh' events.



Served fresh from the catwalk... a live fashion show at the Fresh Party.

Entertainment & Lifestyle

Technological whiz kids scoop design awards

Alicia Hamilton

It was a night of glitz and glamour for Sydney's fashion elite. But for UTS textile design students, the Lancome Colour Design Awards (LCDA), provided a chance to showcase the fruit of their technological labour.

While the competition brief was simple: design a collection based on Lancome's new 'Pop Cherub' range, the scene was extravagant. Sydney University's Great Hall housed the event, where guests devoured gold plated chocolates as they basked in the sweet aroma of 200



Winner Lee Matthews with model.

imported Austrian roses. Models draped over couches, candidly peeling off their Marie Antoinette costumes, provided the pre-show entertainment.

For winners Robby Tjia, Lee Matthews and Laura Prideaux it was an expectedly frantic night, but unlike most fashion shows it started on time. A theme to emerge from the evening was the intertwining of technology and fashion.

Lee Matthews, 25, who won the award for Colour and Texture, focused on the pop element of the brief, creating a collection that incorporated 3D fabric folding and digital printing on textiles, as well as perspex neck pieces and corsets. Drawing much of her inspiration from architecture, she concedes that the two disciplines are becoming increasingly intertwined as technology advances.

"Once I realised I had access to laser printers at uni, I was able to enhance my designs and build and build until I had a complete collection," she says.

Modern Femininity award winner Robby Tjia, 23, combined 18th century celestial beauty with

the harshness of laser cut leather and agrees there are benefits to drawing inspiration from the available technologies at UTS.

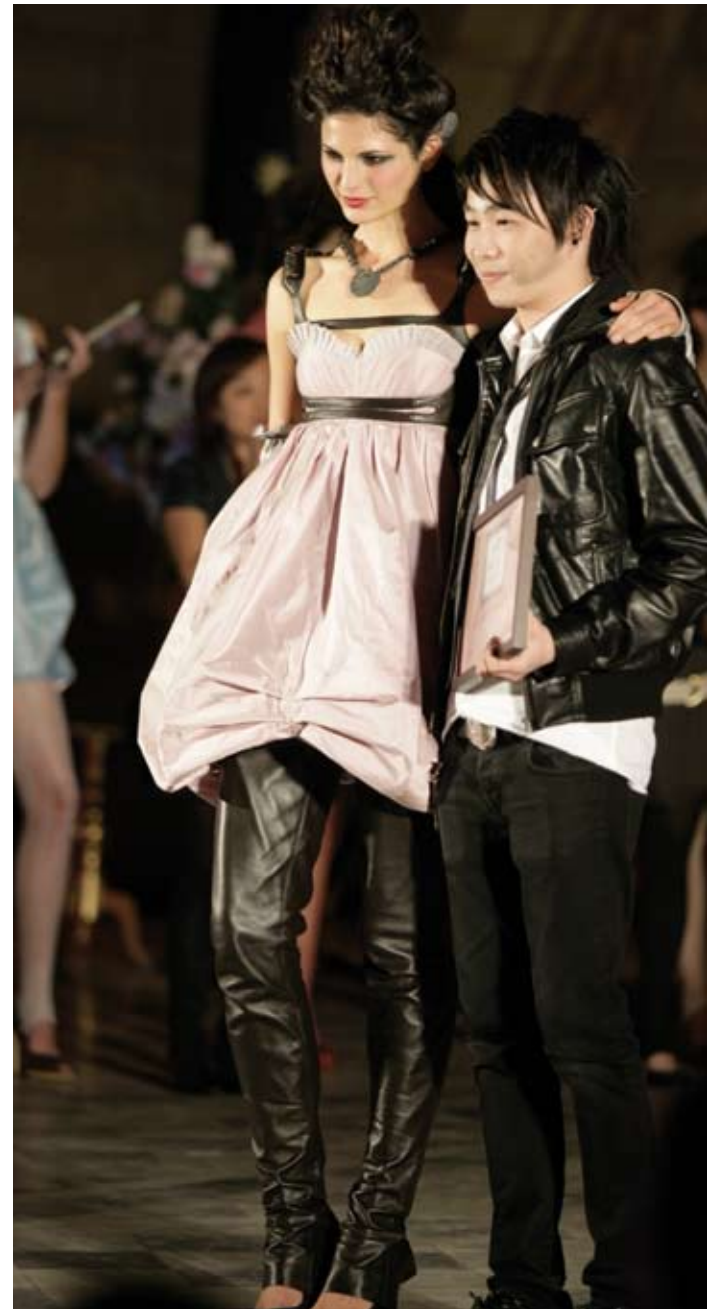
"The good thing about the technology is that it forces you to think outside the box. You don't just look at individual pieces but a whole look. For example, I had a wooden ear piece of Marilyn Monroe that I created with the laser cutter."

The technologies allow students to print objects in three-dimensions, layer by layer, and to transfer photos onto pieces of fabric with 30,000 pixels in a small space.

At a cost of \$250,000 per printer this type of technology is not readily available and, along with the LCDA, allows students to push their ideas to a professional level.

"Technology is changing every day and it's becoming cheaper. So eventually technology will influence commercial clothes just like it does with high fashion," says Tjia.

The winners will be flown to Paris to compete internationally with designers from 10 other countries.



Modern Femininity Award winner, Robby Tjia, with model Stephane.

Faith on the run in the rush hour

Melissa Sequeira

In the hectic Wednesday morning rush along York Street a trickle of workers in suits, coffee in one hand briefcase in the other, scurry against the crowd into a historic sandstone building. They take their places inside, centre themselves spiritually, and await guidance.

For the last six weeks, Reverend David Mansfield of St Philip's Church has been trying something different. In an attempt to resurrect falling church attendance he has developed an innovative style of service to suit contemporary needs. Every Wednesday, starting at 8am, he conducts two 10 minute "commuter services"

offering guided Bible reading, quiet reflection and communal prayer for city workers.

He has even composed a special commuter prayer to represent the hustle and bustle of daily city life.

Reverend Mansfield says he has been getting a good response with many people returning. However others are not so convinced.

"It doesn't sound like there would be a lot of reflection. It appears to be a commodification of religion, much like a fast food shop, where you just drive in and get your fast religion," says Professor Neil Ormerod, Director of the Institute of Theology at the Australian Catholic

University (ACU), Sydney.

"The energies of religion would be much better spent telling people to slow down and reflect properly. Otherwise it buys into people's busyness, rather than challenging it," he says.

But Reverend Mansfield says that 10 minutes can be more effective than an hour.

"The idea that church is a one hour Sunday morning meeting in a sandstone building is a faulty idea anyway. It's not a matter of time, it's a matter of the heart," he says.

Margaret Rogers, the spokesperson for the Sydney Anglican Church Diocese, called it "a great way to encourage people to come to church".

Pastor Steve Turner at Central Baptist Church also endorses the idea, emphasising that the church needs to become more relevant to society.

But the 10 minute services have provoked a mixed response from other city churches of different Christian denominations. Representatives from St Patrick's Church and St Mary's Cathedral commented that the service is not a bad idea, but will not be followed.

"Our mass services centre on the Eucharist and that would take longer than a mere 10 minutes," says Father Pat McCave, of St Patrick's.

Both St Patrick's and St Mary's offer services before and

after work and at midday for people on their lunch break.

Yet, despite their differing opinions, all believe the road back is a hard one. Glen Powell, a NSW Uniting Church of Australia consultant, says. "The church needs to continue to reinvent itself so that people find meaning and fulfilment in service attendance. We no longer live in a one-size-fits-all world."

As for Reverend Mansfield, he will continue to nurture and extend his ministry in the city.

"I have all sorts of plans. I don't know what I'll come up with tomorrow in the shower. And even if ideas I come up with are no good, one in 50 isn't bad and one in 100 might just work."

Entertainment & Lifestyle

Freestyle celebration

Yvette Poshoglian

The *Freestyle: New Australian Design for Living* exhibition is the first of its kind: a mobile celebration of Australia's strength in modern design, and the names behind the creations.

Freestyle brings together the work of cutting-edge Australian designers at the Object Gallery in Surry Hills, and the National Art School in Darlinghurst.

Don't expect dusty old art on the walls of an exclusive gallery. Furniture, lighting, textiles, homewares and fashion accessories are not just displayed for their aesthetic appeal, but also as a demonstration of functional design.

Freestyle features household names like Akira Isogawa and Dinosaur Designs alongside rising stars of the local

contemporary design scene.

The title of the exhibition itself reflects the attitudes of contemporary Australian designers. The curators wanted to pay homage to their design family.

"One thing that has become very clear to me is the growth in confidence of the design industry in Australia," says Brian Parkes, the curator of the Object Gallery.

Australian designers are making their own rules and finding their own opportunities – both locally and overseas – and *Freestyle* reflects this mood and attitude.

Sydney industrial furniture designer Stefanie Flaubert, of Korban/Flaubert, says she is encouraged by the scope and breadth of the exhibition.

"It is a fantastic opportunity," she says. "*Freestyle* is an excellent forum for modern Australian design."

Korban/Flaubert see design as a "process of discovery", and work with a diverse range of media, including metals and plastic. Stefanie Flaubert, and her partner Janos Korban, specialise in furniture, lighting installations and other sculptural forms.

They are off to America to put together a specially commissioned installation for a New York gallery.

Their sentiments are echoed by the international success of many of the designers featured, bringing a world-class feel to the event.

Freestyle will travel to other Australian capitals and overseas.



Sherin Re

Korban/Flaubert lighting installation: 'burst light, 2006'.

Graduates find gritty glamour in store

Karlie Jeffrey

Rave reviews can catapult a new designer to the fashion hubs of New York and Paris faster than you can say Lover or Sass & Bide. But it takes business brains not just fabulous frocks, and that's something designer Toby McLean is well aware of.

"The market is unbelievably competitive, and you really have to stay on top of business. If you are not good at business, you probably shouldn't be a fashion designer... otherwise you drown."

Toby McLean, of the Ultimo College Fashion Design Studio (FDS), is one of six recent graduates who established and operate The Graduate Store.

Tucked away on the fourth floor of The Strand Arcade, The Graduate Store sits alongside Alex Perry, Lisa Ho and Zimmerman. All are graduates of the FDS.

Nicholas Huxley, fashion authority and head of the FDS, hand-picked the six designers (Andrea Cainero, Karla Spetic, Melissa Polynkova, Michael Lo Sordo, Naomi Swalwell and

Toby McLean) who now call this retail centre their own.

"The designers had to have some experience, and they had to have a professional attitude. I had to think the product was saleable and interesting and different, not run of the mill, not too commercial. People who go into The Strand like to see something a little bit different," he says.

In an era where fashion designers are the new pop-stars, Nicholas Huxley is well aware of the important role business plays. His program at the FDS, a part of TAFE, alerts students to the realities of becoming a fashion designer, and Toby McLean is grateful for the experience.

"I have said this before but there is probably only 10 per cent design, the rest is business: working with budgets, sourcing for fabrics and finding what you want, sourcing for production, getting the right people, good makers and getting people who are going to have good finishes. It's a lot of hard work and it's full time," says Toby McLean.

The hard work seems to be paying off though. In the first month of business, retail

sales covered all operating costs, with each designer receiving the same amount of monetary attention.

"When a shop opens you know it's more about a bit of a sticky beak, but this stuff is lovely, and it's really flattering, and it's really well made, and it's different and you know, there is no reason not to go to that shop and buy something - if you love clothes," says Nicholas Huxley.

Toby McLean's label 'McLean and Paige' has received buyer interest, as have the other designers. Toby McLean stresses it's all about being unique and having that edge.

And as for the next in look? "Bring back the nineties! Silhouette-wise everything will start going a lot tighter, a bit more figure hugging, and probably a lot shorter."

Champagne couture was the brief, and this is 22-year old Kyla Crozier's inspired interpretation. It was displayed at the Future Directions Exhibition at the Strand Arcade, which showcased the creations of the TAFE NSW Fashion Design Studio students.



Andrew McKean

Arts & Culture

Art and culture in the park

Katey Loughman

From its beginning as a public space in 1888, Centennial Park has become more than simply a park where you go for a picnic. From jewellery making to large scale music festivals, these eastern parklands have become a wonderland for all things cultural.

The Centennial Parklands has been hosting large-scale events since 1901, when it held the inauguration of Federation. But what makes a park a site for so much culture?

The location plays an important role in its success: it is less than five kilometres from the CBD and a short drive from Sydney's famous eastern beaches.

With its impressive size of over 360 hectares, the Parklands includes Moore Park and Queens Park, the former of which plays host to many music festivals such as Parklife, hosted world-renowned events such as, Cirque de Soleil and Circus Oz.

It is no surprise that the Centennial Parklands precinct has a total asset base of more than \$650 million, as it also includes the Hordern Pavillion, Royal Hall of Industries, Entertainment Quarter and Fox Studios.

On the music scene, the Parklands has hosted some of the biggest Australian and international musical acts, including Missy Higgins, Ben Lee and Jamiroquai, not to mention annual music festivals. It has hosted Good Vibrations and recently the first V Festival in Australia, which drew over 35,000 people.

These festivals bring to the park artists like Snoop Dogg, The Pixies, The Pet Shop Boys, Gnarl Barkely, and Groove Armada.

Roger Field, organiser of the

V Festival, says Centennial Park provides a fantastic and unique environment for these sorts of events due to its location and planning.

Stuart Dutton, Centennial Park Manager of Venue Services, agrees, saying it is becoming very sought after because of its outdoor setting. "If you looked at V Festival, you had people laying around on the grass watching major international acts and I think that's the key to it," he says.

Film buffs are catered for throughout summer with the outdoor big screen of the Moonlight Cinema at the Belvedere amphitheatre, where people picnic and watch their favourite movies.

And in this same spot, theatre has recently found its place in the parklands. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed by Night Sky Productions in the amphitheatre last year.

Producer Barry Watterson says, "Outdoor theatre hadn't been performed there prior," and that Centennial Park is "supportive of cultural and artistic events."

"From our perspective, the amphitheatre is the perfect venue for outdoor theatre," he says

He also sees the central location of the park as a key drawcard. "Plus, it's simply beautiful, particularly at night, when the sun sets across the park," he says.

Stuart Dutton attributes the development of the venue management at Centennial Park to the increase in the popularity of larger events. He says there are now practices in place to ensure these events can be managed in a sustainable way with care and control. "In recent years it's gotten a lot bigger; we're now



Music fans enjoy the outdoors at music events such as the Missy Higgins concert (above) and Parklife (top).

hosting larger music events than we have in the past and we're capable of doing that."

But it's not just big-scale productions that people are going to Centennial Park for; there is a range of smaller cultural courses on offer. Paul Solomon, Centennial Parklands Senior Ranger of Education and Interpretation, organises a variety of cultural programs for adults and children.

Among the many courses are

jewellery-making, kids art, and art for adults.

Mr Solomon says these courses are so popular that they are often booked out. Swamp Dreaming is also popular, he says. It involves local Indigenous people taking children on a tour around Lachlan Swamp, telling them dreamtime stories, and teaching them about Aboriginal culture, tradition, and food. Kids also get to try their hands at bark painting.

Another course, Art in the Park, recently gave young Australian artists the chance to showcase their original works. These included oils and acrylics on canvas, to sculptures and ceramics.

This hub of art and culture is part of the plan, according to Mr Dutton. "We want to have a wide range of community activities. We want to get that mix, we want it to be something for the whole community," he says.

Arts & Culture

Silence makes the heart grow fonder

Rebecca Isaacs

Nowadays, sitting in a cinema with no sound would be totally unheard of. But Australia's first silent film festival showed modern-day audiences just how entertaining the silent films of the 1920s can be.

Cremorne's Orpheum Theatre showcased some of the best, lovingly-restored films from the early 1900s such as *Storm over Asia*, *Blackmail*, *Comedies for Kids*, *Sunrise* and other classics, from March 30 to April 1, accompanied by some of the world's best musicians.

Max Rapley, a student, was brought along to the festival by a friend studying the silent film era. He says he thought the films would be dull and boring.

"But sitting through *Sunrise*

has totally changed my tune. Really, for the 1920s, these films are so advanced and much more raw and rewarding than so many films today."

Ronnie Sarrar, one of the Festival's organisers, believes the silent films of the 20s touch audiences more than today's films.

"To see kids respond to the comedy of Charlie Chaplain, to watch young people in hysterics, crying, really responding to the films, shows that these films connect with people," he says.

"The silent film era laid the foundations for the best of cinema; these films have stood the test of time."

The idea that silent films are of poor quality is a misconception.

Films from the silent era often appear in bad condition compared to the cinema of today only because they have deteriorated significantly. Unless they have been properly restored, many silent films exist only as damaged copies.

Sunrise, the 1927 American classic, was shown at the Festival after having been restored to its original quality. The sets are ahead of their time, and the cinematography is impressive and sophisticated.

"*Sunrise* is one of the greatest films of all time," Ronnie Sarrar says.

Film lovers and critics, such as David Stratton, who was also involved in the Festival, and Ronnie Sarrar, view silent films

as an integral part of the history of modern film and cinema.

"It's important to screen these films to make people aware of broader world film heritage" says Ronnie.

The Festival's nominated charity is the Deaf Society of NSW. Ronnie Sarrar says that the Festival gives the Deaf Society the opportunity to be involved in a cultural event.

Dianne Lewis, a mother of a deaf child, attended *Blackmail* to show support for the Deaf Society.

"I believe the Festival is going to be beneficial in terms of awareness. Sitting in a cinema and not hearing a word but still understanding is a real eye opener to the way deaf

people have to live," she says, adding that her daughter Eliza, who suffers from moderate hearing loss, "loved *Comedies for Kids*."

Silent films give the audience an appreciation of facial expression, gesture and the language of signs as well as movement.

The success of this year's Festival has marked a new tradition in Australian film. Ronnie Sarrar hopes the Silent Film Festival will become an annual event in Sydney and throughout Australia.

After all, says Ronnie Sarrar, "This is an opportunity to see the greatest films shown in high quality with live music. They are films that will be remembered."

Sydney film school gets mobile

Karen Tong

The streets of Bonalbo are lined with identical one-storey houses, trees, the odd corner store, a bowling club and - that's about it. This remote town in northern New South Wales, population 180, doesn't attract many visitors, let alone filmmakers.

"You often think that they have other things going on there but you find that there's nothing for them to do," says Melissa Anastasi, Metro Screen's Mobile Unit coordinator. "You realise how much it means to them to actually have something to engage with."

Metro Screen's Mobile Unit, created in 2001, is a film production hub that travels around regional New South Wales, to places like Bonalbo, training people in filmmaking. Programs range from intensive three-day workshops to six-month Certificate IV courses in Screen or Multimedia, and are taught by industry professionals.

Adrian Rostirolla, an editor of big-budget feature, *Kokoda*, and Oscar-nominated short film, *Birthday Boy*, now teaches filmmaking in remote

communities as a Mobile Unit tutor. "I sit in a dark room for months and months working on feature films," he says. "So I actually enjoy getting out. It's a whole other world."

His working with the Mobile Unit also reminds Adrian of his own filmmaking beginnings in Griffith. "When I left school in the late eighties, there was nothing like this mobile unit. I had to go to Sydney and do it the hard way," he says. "It's great that remote areas have this resource now."

Adrian Rostirolla found some of his students were troubled, and although he initially worried about how they would cope, he found they put a great deal of energy and commitment into the course.

His regional students have also taught him to have more patience. "If you can get through to some of the difficult ones, they teach you what you can achieve in yourself, how tolerant you can be."

In Narrabri, a regional town in northwest New South Wales, Melissa and the Mobile Unit helped six young Indigenous

men create a short film about alcohol and drug issues for young people.

"We'd go to start the workshop at 11, and they'd be swimming in the river," Melissa says. "We'd be thinking, 'We're not going to get anything done!' But when they were ready, they were so amazingly on the ball so focused - and they did everything in one take."

She says the young filmmakers didn't really get the concept of a schedule "but they were so amazing in their own way and so productive".

Despite the drawbacks, Melissa says, "They seem to get so much out of it and they have so many stories to tell."

If all goes to plan, council funding will allow the Mobile Unit to return to Narrabri and conduct a longer six-week filmmaking program.

"I think it raised awareness of the young Indigenous people in the community that, perhaps, other parts of the community didn't know," Melissa says.

"The Mobile Unit opened up their ideas of what they are capable of doing with media,"



Melissa Anastasi goes to country towns to teach children filmmaking

says Melissa, of the Narrabri Indigenous Film Project. "They were all interested in dance and storytelling but they hadn't been exposed to the technology."

According to Adrian Rostirolla, the film project

allowed the young filmmakers to get involved in the community. He says if the young people were asked to write an essay about an issue of concern to the Indigenous community, "they are not going to be interested".

Arts & Culture

Blend of coffee and flowers for the soul

Emma O'Neill.

Setsuko Yanagisawa is standing in front of a large whiteboard at the back of a sunny café in Glebe. She is drawing half moons with a thick red marker, comparing the shape to a delicate curve in a fresh peach tulip.

Waitresses duck past Setsuko and her whiteboard to serve café customers, but they do not distract her. Setsuko's intense gaze is fixed as she skillfully weaves Japanese and English sentences for each eager student.

You will find Setsuko here, at Yuga Floral Design and Café, every Saturday morning. She won't be indulging in a moist friand and an Italian coffee like the couple sitting at the table opposite her. Nor will she be marvelling at the stunning photographs of spring rain at Uluru that line the wall. You won't even catch her relaxing to the trickle of a water feature in the small courtyard out the back. She will be teaching the art of flower arranging with a contagious passion. It's an art that she believes "heals the soul".

Setsuko has always been fascinated by flowers. Her grandmother grew garden-beds full of purple irises in Japan where she grew up. But it wasn't until Setsuko's divorce many years later that she discovered the soul-healing qualities of flower arranging.

"After my divorce I was sick physically and mentally, I couldn't eat. I had to do something so I enrolled in a flower school in Japan," Setsuko says. Ten months later, after full-time study under master floral arranger Keita Kawasaki, Setsuko graduated.

However she didn't just want to make floral arrangements, she wanted to share this art with others. So she returned to Australia where she had worked for 20 years in tourism and began teaching Japanese and European flower arranging in her home.

Soon after moving to Australia, Setsuko met Ben Crisafulli. According to Setsuko, Ben is as mad about coffee as she is about flower arranging. Two years ago they fused their passions to create Yuga Floral Design School and Café from an old office building. "There is no barrier between the classroom and the café. People are often curious and watch the students from their table," Setsuko says.

One such student is Josephine Stenglin. She was having coffee one morning in the sunny café and enquired about the class being conducted behind her.

She soon enrolled in the course; so, too, did her husband Roland. "It's really relaxing and such a personal thing. My husband and I could be given the

same flowers and come back with totally different arrangements," Josephine says.

When doctors advised Josephine's mother-in-law to do something relaxing, Josephine enrolled Maree Stenglin into one of Setsuko's courses.

During the course, Maree took one of her floral designs into hospital for her husband who has cancer. "He loved it. Everyone who visited commented on it," Maree says quietly with a smile.

As Maree and Josephine reminisce, Mina Kashiwagi is working on a pastel bouquet. She has been a student of Setsuko for over two years. "I work in a big office all week and I find flower arranging so relaxing. I love chatting with the other students too, although Setsuko sometimes tells me I chat too much," Mina says.

Mina stands next to a pile of cut lillies, roses, vines and tulips selected by Setsuko from Flemington Market. Next to these is Setsuko's display folder, containing photos of beaming brides with dazzling bouquets created by Setsuko, pictures of her 2006 Garden Expo 2nd place display, and her 2005 Art of Flowers display, which filled Old Government House's drawing room.

"You put your spirit into each arrangement," Setsuko says.

Emerging artists strut their stuff

Amy Perkins

The youth of Sydney were on display recently in the SmARTarts festival at Pine Street Creative Arts Centre and Peace Park in Chippendale. As part of National Youth Week, the City of Sydney festival provides an opportunity for young people to share their creative talents as well as co-ordinate the event.

About 1500 people came to the free festival to view and participate in dance workshops, including belly dancing and hip-hop, as well as communal mural paintings, skate board art, and careers forums led by such speakers as young Australian designer, Marni Skillings.

The event, organised 'by youth for youth', aims to showcase young performers, writers and visual artists, giving them a kick start into what can be a very competitive industry.

Christie Torrington, Youth Arts Co-ordinator at Pine Street Creative Arts Centre and Event Co-ordinator for SmARTarts, says, "I'm a visual artist so I feel very strongly for young people especially who are trying to get out there and get



The boys from upcoming band, Dead Kitten Parade, playing it smart at the smARTarts festival in Chippendale.

their work seen:and it is hard".

I think people have to be really enterprising; you know it's all about selling yourself, and the young people involved in SmARTarts are so good at that," Christie says.

Supporting the festival was independent Sydney radio station FBI. Venessa Marks, Volunteer Events Co-ordinator for FBI,

says that the festival is a great way to bring people together and support the community. Some of the bands playing at the festival were lucky enough to have been given air time on FBI. Venessa says, "We encourage youth to come in and show us their music, we want to get them on air. We want to help them get on in the industry... we're a great

portal for youth bands."

Currently in Triple J's unearthed competition, rock band superFLORENCEjam has been lucky enough to score some air time on FBI.

At 21, Mike Solo plays for the band and works hard to promote it through "all the right channels". In terms of promotions, Mike talks realistically about the

challenges. "You kinda need to juggle the two things, doing what you want to do musically in terms of creating an image for your group and also being able to apply that practically," he says.

Comically referred to by his band, Dead Kitten Parade, as a "genius", guitarist Rob Ingrisano also knows how imperative it is to balance out good organisational skills with creative pursuits.

Rob, who created the bands website and acts as spokesperson for the group, comments sarcastically, "I don't just play guitar you know, guys." Of his Maroubra-based band, Rob says, "It's inevitable when you're in an Indie band to be involved in promoting things. It's not so easy when you've got a little budget and there are so many other bands out there and you have to compete with commercial radio stations."

Tina Kao, Cultural Programs Officer for the Sydney City Council says, "events like this are crucial because young people are going to be teaching others in the future. They are going to be initiating new ideas and new projects...So this is a springboard for them to have a go".

Arts & Culture



Arts and crafts programs keeping everyone smiling...Toddlers and parents see eye-to-eye at the New South Wales Art Gallery's popular educational program for toddlers.

Art gallery tours for tots

Laura Glendinning

A claim often heard from parents when they visit art galleries is, "My toddler could have painted that". Now, thanks to Tours for Tots, an innovative program run by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, parents have a chance to prove this claim.

Tours for Tots is for children aged three to five and is an hour-long adventure where they swap their dummies for DaVincis and explore art-works, listen to stories about them, and then get to enjoy a hands-on craft session, creating their own masterpiece to take home.

The tours, which are run twice monthly, were created by Victoria Collings, the Gallery's Primary School Program Coordinator. Inspired by her three-year-old son's love of art, Ms Colling's aim was to find a fun way to introduce toddlers to art and culture.

"The Gallery has always run

programs for children, but not for really young children. There was nothing the kids could actually get involved in, which is why Tours for Tots is different," says Ms Collings.

Encouraging young people to have an interest in art has become a prime focus of the Art Gallery of NSW, which has developed an extensive list of education programs that span from infants school, up to a tertiary level.

Tours for Tots was trialled in 2006 and was so popular that it is now a permanent part of the Gallery's holiday program.

David Plaister, from Rushcutter's Bay, heard about the tours through his Gallery membership, and has since taken his four-year-old daughter on five of the tours.

He believes introducing children to art at such a young age is fantastic. "It is important to me that my daughter creates an appreciation of art, and as

with anything, the younger you introduce a child to something, the more they absorb," he says. "The tours are a lot of fun, and the fact that the children are introduced to the paintings by an art professional means they are stimulated to see more than just the colours."

"Children love making art," says Victoria Collings, "and it is amazing to hear what they say about the works. They are not held back by any preconceptions. The tours also help the kids to feel welcome and comfortable in the Gallery."

Up to 18 children go on the tours, each accompanied by an adult. Two Gallery Educators walk them around, showing the group three or four paintings from a current exhibition, usually with a theme such as a bushwalk, the beach, animals, or city scenes.

"We want to show them things that they can recognise,"

says Ms Collings. "We tell them a little bit of information about how the work was made, when, and by whom. But we're mainly interested in seeing what they think of the work."

After being shown the art works, the children get started on their own work which they can take home.

"We get them to make something that they have seen; for example, once we looked at paintings of angels, and the kids got to make their own pair of angel wings, or another time we showed them city scenes, and they all went home wearing ties and carrying briefcases they had made," Ms Collings says.

The theme for the tour this month is 'Let's go on holiday'.

When the children arrive they will be given a 'passport' for which they will have to draw their own picture, and a cardboard suitcase.

After viewing an Italian

Impressionist-style painting of the Alps, the children will sketch a mountain scene. For a contrast in climate, the children will then be shown an Algerian painting, *The Snake Charmer*, and will make a curly snake.

According to Victoria Collings, the popularity of the tours is due in part to the fact there are so few educational holiday programs available for toddlers, and also because of the 10 dollar cost.

And the tours don't just benefit the kids. "The tours are also educational for parents, as it shows them how they can do craft with their kids at home," Ms Collings says.

"It is a fantastic way to expose children to different cultures and new experiences," says David Plaister. "It extends their world, taking them outside their normal routine of home and pre-school. It is also a great time for my daughter to spend with her dad."

Residents blame ills on M5 exhaust stacks

Benjamin Rossleigh

Cough. Splutter. At 3am Lilian Camenzuli has woken up overcome by fumes and the smell of burnt rubber. Opening her bedroom window only makes the smell stronger, so she closes it and tries to go back to sleep. A truck's air horn is heard minutes later.

Living literally metres from the M5 East motorway and only a few kilometres from the tunnel's unfiltered exhaust stack, Mrs Camenzuli is one of many residents who have developed health problems since the road opened in 2001, and their health problems are set to worsen.

The M5 health risks are looking more serious than ever, with the Roads and Traffic Authority applying to the Department of Planning for unfiltered air to be pumped out of both ends of the tunnel for 14 hours a day, potentially affecting thousands more residents.

"My husband was in semi-retirement and he's pushed himself to get another job to get away from the place 'til the middle of the afternoon," Mrs Camenzuli says. "We pretty much forced our daughter to move out because we were so concerned."

The Camenzulis have lived in their home for 34 years and their health problems only began to emerge after the motorway opened. Others in the neighbourhood tell a similar story.

Angel Guirguis has lived across the road for 15 years. Her front garden is full of flowers and trees, all planted years ago. These days she doesn't do any gardening. Her health problems have kept her indoors with her windows and shutters closed.

"I never used to get headaches in my life," Mrs Guirguis says. "We used to sleep with the windows open but now you cannot do that. We want to run away from all this, but who will buy our homes now with the freeway and emissions coming out of the tunnel?"

Mrs Guirguis often wakes up with a dry throat, cough and

itchy eyes. She and her husband experience asthma and severe headaches on a regular basis. They never had these problems before the M5 opened.

Dr Ray Kearney, a community advocate for the installation of filtration systems in tunnels to remove exhaust pollution, says the lack of filtration in the M5 East tunnel is causing health problems for local residents. He says their health will deteriorate.

"The problem is getting worse because the tunnel is increasingly carrying enormous volumes of traffic that is pumping out 156 tonnes of volatile organic chemicals. They include benzene and toluene, known to be associated with the induction of leukaemia and other cancers," he says.

"Can you imagine if I backed up a tanker, or several tankers, with 156 tonnes of benzene plus all these other noxious chemicals and poured it into Sydney Harbour? Would I get away with it?"

Despite heavy lobbying by Residents Against Polluting Stacks (RAPS), the State Government refuses to install filtration in the M5 East tunnel's air stack.

Mark Curran is one member who continues to fight for filtration. "What we're caught with are regulation and design rules that are 15 to 20 years old and in the last 10 years there's been explosive growth in medical knowledge about the effects of fine particles," he says.

Although a NSW Health study released in 2004 was unable to find a link between the M5 East and the health problems experienced by local residents, Dr Kearney and Mr Curran say the study was flawed.

"There was no relationship to the emissions because of the experimental design. They [NSW Health] didn't have enough people to sample to have a proper answer, so the whole thing was a waste of money and time," says Mr Curran.

"At the parliamentary inquiry into the report, a health

department spokesman had to admit under oath that the study was flawed," Dr Kearney says.

While some residents have already sold their houses, others are planning to move. Mohamed Sadek and his young family have lived near the motorway for 10 years.

Since the motorway was built, every member of his family has developed asthma. The Sadeks are planning to put their home on the market and will suffer a big financial loss.

The family used to play ball games on the front lawn and ride their bikes on the neighbour hood footpaths. Other children living in the area would fill the streets playing games outside in the sunny weather. Today the streets are empty.

"When you can start smelling it, you have to take the kids inside. We used to ride our bikes but we never do that anymore. It's a nice area but it's all polluted," Mr Sadek says.

"My wife's a nurse so she's freaking out about it because she knows what the health implications are. It's slowly killing us - it's the new asbestos."

Meanwhile Ms Camenzuli and her husband are contemplating whether to follow the Sadek family out of the neighbourhood. Their doctor has advised them to leave but the Camenzulis are likely to suffer a significant financial loss.

"Our goal was always that we would buy a smaller place and have that money to help us in retirement. Now we'd have to move into a much cheaper area to try to break even which would double my travelling time to work and force me to retire early, which will again affect our long term prospects," Ms Camenzuli says.

Mark Curran is confident the Government is heeding their concerns, but only time will tell whether proper filtration is installed.

Locals say it may be a while before the sound of a child's bicycle bell is heard again.



The 'bottom' end of Glebe Point Road near Parramatta Road

Pedestrian response to Glebe economic divide

Farha Diba Zabih

Sydney City Council has started work on the \$12 million upgrade of Glebe Point Road, estimated to finish in 2008, which will bridge the economic gap between the 'top' end and the 'bottom' end of Glebe.

The village of Glebe had its origin in 1790 when Governor Phillip surveyed Sydney and granted 400 acres known as "The Glebe" to the Church of England. When they later sold the land, "Australia's first suburb" as locals call it, was born.

'Bottom' Glebe is located at the end of the road closest to Parramatta Road. It is likely to remain an area of socio-economic and ongoing welfare because the Church gave it to the Department of Housing on the proviso that it remains as government housing forever.

"The 'big money' is at the top," says Colin Stokes, Coordinator of Youth Services and a 'bottom' Glebe resident.

Conflict does arise between the two areas, as 'bottom' Glebe contains the majority of youth and Indigenous extended families.

Mr Stokes says, "People are resentful, which results in endemic crime such as opportunistic theft which is also sometimes inter-generational."

The Council says the redevelopment of Glebe Point Road will create more vibrant street life and a sense of community.

Among many improvements, the revitalisation will include footpath widening and repaving for pedestrians, ensuring disabled access, cycle tracks, the relocation of telephone cables underground and expanding the green street lighting strategy.

"The idea of the redevelopment is to make businesses more successful," says Jan Macindoe, President of the Glebe Society.

By rejuvenating business to improve its economic standing, the upgrade will attempt to remove the concept of 'top' and 'bottom' Glebe and bring 'bottom' Glebe to almost or the same standards. At the moment, Mr Stokes believes that the "rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer".

The Glebe Chamber of Commerce has also developed its own Economic Development Strategy with Council funding and support. This strategy includes tourism and marketing initiatives for the development of local business.

Ken Shearman is the President of the Glebe Chamber of Commerce. "If we have more business, which is the objective of the Chamber, it would allow greater employment, healthier businesses, and in that case, it will definitely improve the economic standing of 'bottom' Glebe," he says.

Urban Affairs & Development

Ozlem Eskicioglu

There are peeling posters and graffiti haphazardly scrawled across the walls, cigarette butts and rubbish littering the floors and a definite air of weariness to the old, grey rundown warehouse. For these reasons, most people would consider the old MacRobertson chocolate factory on Chippendale's Cleveland Street an eyesore worthy of demolition.

But this is not true for a small but vocal group who oppose the upcoming proposed redevelopment of the historically significant site. If the development application is approved, the sprawling four-storey building would be subjected to an overhaul estimated at costing more than \$4 million, which will convert the warehouse into a backpacker hostel to accommodate 304 people.

Located smack bang in the middle of the Chippendale Heritage Conservation Area, the building is listed as a contributory heritage site, though it does not qualify for an independent heritage listing. Nevertheless, renovation plans have recently come a few steps closer to approval with the release of a Heritage Impact Statement and a Traffic Impact Statement commissioned by Sydney City Council.

The proposed refurbishments will include drastic internal alterations and additions to the 3,196m² building, as well as minor external renovations to the façade and fenestrations. The dull, grey paint will be stripped back to the original brickwork and the building will be given a new lease of life as an 85-room budget accommodation hostel with a laundromat and internet café operating out of its street-level floor.

Some see this as a fresh injection of life into the area, but not everyone's happy about it.

Built as an ancillary warehouse by the well-known confectioner MacPherson Robertson in 1916, the building reflects Chippendale's character as a mixed industrial and residential area of the inner city and has a colourful past. Dangar Place, at the rear of the building, is the site where drug trafficker Warren Lanfranchi



In spite of the rundown appearance of the venue, Sydney band xNOBBQx manages to pull one last crowd at Lanfranchi's in Chippendale.

Chocolate factory plan leaves a bitter taste

was shot and killed in 1981 by disgraced former Detective Roger Rogerson. Infamy aside, it is also the building that gave Sydney Cherry Ripes and Freddo Frogs in the 1930s.

More recently, the building has consisted of five residential spaces and was one of the last ungentrified and affordable warehouses left in the inner city. Since 2002, it has been the home of Lanfranchi's Memorial Discoteque, an artist-run space with dedicated performance sessions.

Lanfranchi's has provided a bohemian outlet for some of Sydney's most inter-esting and diverse musicians, artists, new media performers, writers and journalists.

Wander into the monthly performance sessions, and you'll be greeted by a perpetual haze of cigarette smoke, hand-painted murals on the walls and

a wide variety of off-the-wall performances from established as well as emerging artists.

Nic Warnock, 19, has performed at the venue twice with his Sydney-based experimental band *Onani* and believes the redevelopment of the building will be a great cultural loss to the grassroots music scene. Mr Warnock says, "I've been in Sydney for two and a half years and have already seen the closure of a few great D.I.Y, all-ages venues. Some of the best shows I've ever seen have been in independently run spaces like Lanfranchi's."

Mr Warnock also believes that Lanfranchi's made fringe artists feel welcome and appreciated, whereas more established venues made them feel out of place: "There aren't many places around that new, exciting bands can play, now there's one less."

Mr Warnock's comments

are echoed by Simo Laughton, 24, the lead vocalist of local band *Call The Medic, Call The Nurse!!*. Mr Le Bon says, "It was definitely a very excellent and needed contribution to the Sydney scene. The place had this awesome friendly relaxed, creative vibe to it."

Mr Laughton recalls his band's 2006 performance at Lanfranchi's as one of his favourites to date. "The people running it were dedicated to fresh, original great music."

While there are clauses in place which safeguard a building from redevelopment where a local community or cultural group has special or strong associations with a site for social or cultural reasons, for unclear reasons, these artists were deemed by the Heritage Impact Statement as not fulfilling the criteria.

Of the redevelopments, Mr

Warnock is more optimistic: "It's something you have to get used to in Sydney ... It's a downer to see them close but you know somewhere new is going to pick up where they left off."

Perhaps the community's views on the redevelopments are best summarised by local resident and journalist Nick Race, who submitted this comment to an online weblog.

"I honestly don't know what to think about this. On one hand it will bring a bit of life to the greyness that's the Chippendale end of Cleveland St, but at the same time, what the hell are we going to do with 300 backpackers day in, day out?"

But with submissions closing on the development application at the end of May, it seems that Chippendale will just have to wait and see to find out.