

# Art inside - thinking outside the square



Screen printing teacher Sharon Anderson with prisoner's print on 'Apple Theme'

**Celebrating our artistic abilities in a way of our own choosing is something most of us are able to take for granted. We can choose which artistic field we are going to follow, and also when and where we will participate in it. However, there is a small group within our community who have a very limited choice in deciding the when and where, as they are inmates of a state prison.**

Seeing first hand, the immediate benefits of an art workshop in this unusual environment, is class teacher Sharon Anderson, an experienced silk-screen printmaker and artist, with exceptional teaching skills.

Sharon is currently tutoring a small group of inmates at Fulham Correctional Centre in the skills and techniques of printmaking.

"By volunteering their inclusion in this art workshop activity, participants are taking the opportunity to change the way they see themselves," Sharon said.

"The art students realise that they are able to avoid destructive behaviour and learn strategies to control outcomes in their lives through activities as simple as controlling outcomes in their artworks.

"The intentions and objectives of the art workshops for inmates in the prison are to provide opportunities to motivate, empower, learn new skills, break down barriers, to encourage and support, broaden perceptions, to have focus and to have goals," she added.

Sharon emphasised that some of the valuable benefits to participants in her classes, come not only from the end product of creating fantastic artworks, but are evident in an indisputable improvement of self esteem, and also in assisting to develop creative outlets, planning and completing projects, being satisfied with the end product and utilising new found skills.

"Students participating in the art workshops can achieve something tangible and demonstrably feel better about themselves inside prison, and ultimately out of prison. This creative activity can prevent depression brought on by isolation from family, and assist people to engage in positive thinking. With their involvement in art comes the realisation that they have a renewed opportunity to become important members of their community," Sharon explained.

There is a wide range of artistic talent and skill levels within the group and Sharon endeavours to assist each person to develop at their own rate and skill level. She engages with each individual in a meaningful and respectful way.

"The artwork I see produced in the screen printing classes I'm tutoring is fantastic! Some of the artwork is phenomenal, jaw-dropping amazing, a very high standard," she explained. "The group members are free to bring out their artistic side, and I get great satisfaction from seeing people achieve their full potential. I will sometimes hear

inspired comments like; 'I can't draw, but I like doing this stuff'.

"The classes encompass all manner of media to express each person's interests, for example we've used imagery from street-art and stencil art to document social messages, or images incorporating various text styles that relate to the written word. We're learning colour theory, learning to look and to observe. Everyone is encouraged to keep going and to develop their work, especially those who think they can't draw. They end up proving to themselves that they can.

"One of the group members has produced some artwork featuring images of his children, in which fond memories are reclaimed. They relate to common feelings in this environment caused by separation from family. We went through the process of transferring the portrait images to a photo stencil, transferring onto a silk screen and then finally printed them onto paper. The joy on this particular person's face at seeing the images of his children, his family, was wonderful," she said.

The long-term social outcomes of this group's artistic endeavours will no doubt enhance the nature of our environment and enrich our society. They have been encouraged to do better, to feel good about themselves, to embrace new skills and to think outside the square. Their involvement in art bodes well for their future lives outside of the prison environment and their successful reintegration into their communities.

## Old records can be tweaked to create a new sound

**Did Sony kill the record when it released its compact disk player? Have well loved record collections, painstakingly collated and looked after over years, gone to waste - left forgotten in the dark attics of music lovers, or thrown away with yesterday's rubbish?**

Jared Hiriaki says no. These record collections have not been left by the wayside, they've been rediscovered, recycled and turned into something new.

The music may not be the same, and the tempo sounds a little different, but the heart of the music still beats as loudly.

Turntables, a mixer, and a couple of good records are the instruments needed to create a new masterpiece today. Layering beats, vocals, and different sounds from a multitude of disks - DJs (Disk Jockeys) around the world are composing senses-tingling tunes.

Jared, also known as DJ Phatz, moved to the Latrobe Valley from New Zealand when he was six and says that he grew up with music around him.

"There was always music playing in our house - my mother is a very good piano player, she used to play at the church. Two of my brothers also DJ and although I never had the patience when I was younger to really master reading sheet music, I can still play piano, guitar and the drums by ear," Jared said.

"Djing should definitely be considered as a real art. Same as playing a guitar, a trombone, or another instrument, to become good it takes a lot of dedication, practice, hard work and a musical ear. People may see a DJ up on stage, and think of them just as pressing some buttons and putting on a disk of already mixed tracks - but what I'd consider to be a real DJ, is a lot more than that. It might still be using existing songs and sounds, but I'm making them sound completely different," Jared explained.

"It's not as simple as waking up one day, spinning a disk and suddenly

you're a DJ. I practice every single day, and also like an instrument, it really does take a musical knack. It wouldn't matter how long you practice for, you might become very skilled, but if you don't have it, you don't have it and you'll never make it.

"I guess it's a bit like being a painter, when someone looks at a finished painting they can admire how nice the image is, but it takes a different kind of person to really appreciate how it's put together and how the different strokes and skills come together to create a life-like image," Jared said.

"I first became curious about Djing after listening to a CD my cousin had when I was about 15. I was inspired to work out how they made their music sound like that, and when I did work it out, I was hooked!

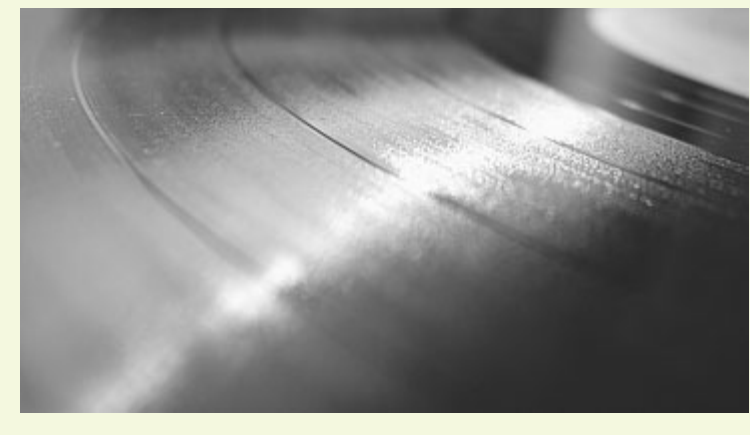
"My brother and I first started mixing sounds together on a very basic computer program; that was the real start for me I guess. These days I use either vinyl (records) or CDs as my instruments. I probably prefer vinyl because you can really feel the music, many clubs don't have the right equipment for that though.

I've been playing in clubs for probably five or six years now. I don't pre-mix, everything I'm playing I'm mixing on the spot. I often have four CDs going at one time, using samples from different songs or soundtracks to create a complete piece.

I play regularly at Nova Lounge in Traralgon, and my brother and I used to have a gig at Inferno in Traralgon. I've had a lot of offers, I've played in Melbourne and Sale before, but to be honest I don't consider myself ready for too much yet - it's all for the fun at the moment.

What keeps me playing is the love of the music, and the people. There's something about having a crowd of people be inspired to dance to the music you're putting out over the speakers. It's a challenge to make them want to listen to you, to get them moving and dancing.

"Music is all about communicating with your audience," Jared concluded.



## Blues is a feeling and it's ever evolving

**Peter Gray, Ray Woolley, and Ken Mactaggart, around the year 1980 realised that they shared a passion - a passion for rhythm. It was at this point that the phenomenon called 'The Powerhouse Blues' began.**

Twenty-five years on, The Powerhouse Blues band is stronger than ever with the recent release of their fourth album recorded live at the Moe RSL in March, and the group is performing their blues style music to packed-out venues at gigs around the state.

Throughout their years together the original team has welcomed some rising talent and familiar favourites to their line up, with the addition of the sounds of harp, saxophone, keyboard and female vocals to their gigs; though never straying far from the original three members.

Approximately ten years ago, the band decided that it wasn't enough just playing together and invited fellow



The Powerhouse Blues

music lovers to join them, forming the Gippsland Rhythms and Blues Club who meet on the last Sunday of every month to meet up and play the blues. Peter Gray, one of the original three members

of the Powerhouse Blues, said that it's a whole lot of fun and that some great music comes from it.

"It's a free for all. People who have never met before will get up on stage and just

play. Our youngest player on stage has been just 11 years old, and our oldest has been 70. We get a whole variety of people turning up, and it's absolutely fantastic to watch the unity that forms between the musical communities," Peter said.

"The current Powerhouse Blues line-up includes Travis Winter on guitar and vocals, Ken on drums, Ray on bass and myself on guitar and vocals. We're all basically self taught on our instruments - none of us have had much formal training really, but that's the great thing about blues, you either have it or you don't.

"Blues music has a magnetic feel to it. It's not something you can put down on paper, on sheet music. It's a feeling, and it's forever evolving. A song will sound different every time you play it," Peter explained.

"You can do so much with a blues piece, it follows a pattern and can be quite

hypnotic but one passage can be very powerful and the next nearly nothing - you take your audience on a journey with you.

"After playing together now for 25 years, you could say we're in a real groove with each other - if you believe in ESP (extrasensory perception) we've got it! We can pull some amazing things out of our hats sometimes, one of us might say 'let's give this a go' and within minutes we're blending and weaving music, composing a whole new piece almost right there on stage.

"We really enjoy playing for the crowd, it's not just through our music that we communicate with them, we love to tell stories and talk to our audience during our gigs. We love what we do and we like to involve the audience in that. We're looking forward to spending many more years playing music together," Peter concluded.