



# Aussie music hits the right note in US

By **Katherine Field**, AAP Entertainment Writer

**A**merica's appetite for Australian music is growing, with Aussie artists now viewed as "cool", a leading Austrade official said.

Tony George has spent the last few years helping hundreds of Australian musicians try to kick-start their careers in Los Angeles, in his work for Austrade's Australian Music Office.

And he says he's seen a big change in the way Aussies are perceived.

"The entire industry is in a bit of an upheaval at the moment and I think that Australian music is perceived as cool in the United States," George, who is originally from the US, said.

"Americans are interested in international music more than ever right now."

This year's *American Idol* is a testament to that, he said, with Australian singer Michael Johns currently wowing audiences on the series and considered a frontrunner to win.

George has assisted a range of musicians from small outfits to big names such as Natalie Bassingthwaite, who struggled to get a following. George says more

Australians than ever are trying to get a start in the US.

But the ones who are most successful and make money tend to be the smaller bands – with the exception of Wolfmother.

Architecture in Helsinki, the Cat Empire, and Xavier Rudd, were three examples of artists that had done it right, he said.

"The artists that are able to hone in on who their fan base is and they speak to a certain demographic and are quality artists are able to do better than the ones who have gone for the mass exposure," George said.

"It's not the time in the music industry right now to try and conquer the world.

"It's a better time to start small, and know who your audience is and play to your audience and grow it carefully and develop a dedicated fan base that will keep you in business for many years."

George said the music scene had changed much in the United States and was going into "underground scenes".

In the future, he said he saw big things for artists such as Lenka, the former singer of Decoder Ring, and Wollongong band Porcelain.

He also believes Missy Higgins could have a solid career in the US.

"Her authenticity is starting to shine through," George said.



**Aussie American Idol contestant Michael Johns.**  
AP Photo/FOX

**Missy Higgins is tipped for big things in the US.**

AAP Image/Tony Mott

