

A man with short brown hair, wearing a purple shirt and a white apron with a black cow print, is smiling broadly. He is holding a blue puppet with large white eyes and a red mouth. The background features several large, smiling pumpkin faces on a blue wall, a wooden shelf, and a potted plant.

the
irrepressible

colin buchanan

“ ‘Sometimes God gives you a glimpse of what’s ahead and you’ve got to walk over that hill to see where he’s taking you. If you don’t, you’ll always be asking yourself, what’s over that hill?’ ”

For nearly two decades *Colin Buchanan* has held a special place in the hearts of children and adults alike. But how does this Aussie icon keep himself fresh? *Nicole Partridge* discovers more about Colin Buchanan’s passion, his journey and the inspiration behind his music.

It’s not hard to like Colin Buchanan. He’s funny, zany, passionate, warm and a bit of a larrikin. In fact, he reminds me a little of Steve Irwin with his sense of adventure, school boy looks, enthusiasm and impish grin. He could get up to mischief at any moment. And he does. On any one of his best selling DVD’s for kids you might find him, dressed as a caveman or a rap artist or tracking down and wrestling an inflatable crocodile. It’s these antics and his unique way of presenting Bible truths to kids that have made Colin Buchanan an icon in the Australian Christian market.

Today he’s talking to me from, what he describes, as a modest suburban home backing onto natural bush land in the southern suburb of Heathcote, NSW. It’s a more relaxed day for Colin who is used to a frenetic pace. “I am writing some songs with Tanya Kernaghan,” he says in his trademark Aussie accent. “Before I started writing with Tanya’s brother, Lee, I didn’t think I could ever circle a date, pick a time and start writing a song. I always thought song writing would be more spontaneous, with the urge arising when I was cooking dinner or bathing the kids - and suddenly I’d feel a song coming on, then I’d grab a piece of paper and disappear with my wife asking, ‘Where’s Colin?’”

It may come as no surprise that Colin Buchanan is in fact, everywhere. You can pick up a DVD, CD or book from Christian bookstores around Australia, listen to one of his songs on any number of country albums, hear him speak at a corporate event; tune in to 702 ABC radio, or catch a re-run of playschool. “My career is like a patchwork quilt,” he says. “And it’s the diversity of what I do that keeps me fresh. I love the creative endeavour.”

This month he’s co-writing a country album, finalizing his latest kids praise album, *Super Saviour*, completing his second book, described as a family devotional and planning for his second UK tour. “God has blessed me with a gift bag of creative talents,” he says. “I love using them wherever he opens the doors.”

Just one of the doors that opened twelve years ago was in the area of kids’ entertainment. Today, Colin is billed as Australia’s Number One Christian kid’s artist having released seven top selling CD’s and five DVD’s. His first kids’ album, *Aussie Praise for Kids*, released independently in 1996, marked the beginning of a ministry that has endeared him to a generation of

young Australian’s for over a decade. “People had been saying to me for a long time, ‘when are you going to put Remember the Lord on an album?’” he recalls. “So I thought it was about time to take these songs that I had been writing in Sunday school and put them out there. At the time there was a need for Australian stuff. I got tired of hearing rumpy tumpty rickety dickety versions of big truths. I know there is a lot of craziness and chaos around what I do, but I think our kids albums are engaging and fun. Within them is a strong biblical message, which is the equipment for life.”

Colin admits that his first album was a big risk investing all he had both financially and emotionally. In a step of faith, he approached Koorong for support. Believing in what Colin had to offer, they advertised a Colin Buchanan concert in an upcoming catalogue. “I remember this time well,” says Colin.

“A few days after the catalogue came out; I got this phone call from the Manager who said to me,

‘We’ve created a monster – it’s called, Colin Buchanan.’

In over two days, more than 100 people had responded. So big was the response, Koorong erected a tent in the car park to cater for the crowds.”

Today Colin’s annual two week concerts around Australia attract over 10,000 people. “Colin has the rare ability to relate to an entire audience,” says Rheban Bradley, General Manager of Retail Operations at Koorong. “Both children and parents are entertained by his brilliant antics on stage and are inspired by his passion for Jesus. His engaging performance style and his superb musical gifts have made Colin one of Australia’s best loved characters. After seeing 70 + performances I am amazed how they reach a higher level year after year.”

Road testing the effectiveness of Colin Buchanan songs, I asked my discerning and sometimes critical children to watch one of his DVDS. Within a few days, both of my girls (aged nine and six) were singing *10, 9, 8 - God is Great* and the house-





“I love working with children... Kids are really honest. When they get excited you can't keep the lid on them and when they don't like something they tell you...”



SUPER SAVIOUR

Colin Buchanan's amazing new CD, *SUPER SAVIOUR!* includes eight power-packed songs and mighty memory verses, all brimming with God's indestructible Bible truth.

With all the energy of a speeding locomotive, Australia's Number One Christian kid's artist delivers an album for the whole family with songs including *Super Saviour*; *Jesus Number 1*; *Global WarNing* and *Big Words That End in Shun*

hold favourite. *Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 8 to 10* (sung with a Mexican accent of course). “He’s funny” said the nine year old. “Does God think he’s funny too?” asked my six year old. Both my girls can now recite all Colin’s catchy Bible based songs and have asked if they could star in one of his upcoming videos.

“I love working with children” he says simply. “Kids are really honest. When they get excited you can’t keep the lid on them and when they don’t like something they tell you. I also really enjoy the challenge of bringing biblical truths, not just entertainment. I have a background in teacher training, so many of my songs have a strong teaching agenda. Colin says his approach to writing songs is to take what God is speaking to him personally and then communicate this simply to children. “It’s this simplicity that makes it an easier lesson for adults as well,” he says. “These powerful truths on our kids’ albums are just as real for skinned knees and bullying as they are for cancer and disappointments. He’s a big God and I never want to reduce him down to a puppet God for the sake of entertainment. My aim is to be faithful to God in what I do and to never lose the potency of the truth.”

Born in Dublin, Ireland, 43 year’s ago, Colin migrated to Australia when he was just six years old with his parents and three sisters. He describes his life growing up in Sydney’s southern Suburbs as secure and loving. His father who worked for a paper mill was, according to Buchanan, the creative influence in the family and his mother, the wordsmith. “Dad made a lot of furniture from old packing cases he got from the paper mill. With such skill, he’d plane the wood, cut it and then make a bunk bed, or a trailer. As a family, the Buchanan’s attended church regularly. “I was always attracted to the things of God, “he says. “But it wasn’t until a Sunday school teacher explained things to me more clearly at the age of 10 that I got a revelation about God which led me to appropriate my decision.”

The idea of playing guitar and performing first captured Colin’s imagination at 14 when his older sister brought home a guitar on loan for a course she was doing. Teaching himself a few chords, Colin gradually mastered the craft and by the age of 16 was writing his own songs. But it wasn’t until he had completed Teachers College and moved with his wife to Cornerstone Community in Bourke outback NSW in the late 80’s that his songwriting really came to the fore.

“I was just so amazed by the life and the landscape of the outback, that I felt inspired to write songs,” he says. It wasn’t long before others around him recognised his talent and encouraged him to enter his songs in the Tamworth Country Music Festival. “At this stage, I didn’t know anything about the country music scene, I had grown up in the city,” admits Colin. “So I phoned the tourist bureau who advised me on which section of the competition to enter.” Shortly after submitting his songs, Colin says he received a letter informing him he had made it to the finals and had won \$100.

Encouraged by this win, Colin made a tape of his songs for Sydney based Producer John Kane who was touring central western NSW with his band, *The Flying Emus*. A short time later, Colin was introduced to John’s publisher who helped him release his first album, *Galahs in the Gidgee*. Although doors were opening, Colin admits it wasn’t always easy. “At one stage, I

was thinking, maybe this is not for me," he admits. "I remember calling the Director of Cornerstone asking for his advice. I was quite prepared for him to say,

'Yes Colin, you should give up music and concentrate on your family and get a solid job in a Christian school.'

But instead he said,

'Sometimes God gives you a glimpse of what's ahead and you've got to walk over that hill to see where he's taking you. If you don't, you'll always be asking yourself, what's over that hill?'"

Heading the advice, Colin continued on in his journey, discovering the other side of that hill to be a winner with the release of his first album in 1991 that would not only score him a golden guitar award, but would help to establish him as one of the most enduring musicians on the country music scene today. Reviews for *Galahs in the Gidgee* were strong, with many critics declaring Buchanan as the next John Williamson.

So, what did he think about this? "I am happy to be compared to a great songwriter and performer," he says. "At the end of the day though, I am my own person just like he is. I recall that John himself was described as the next Rolf Harris. Throughout his 15 year career, Colin says he's been inspired and influenced by the greats such as James Taylor and Jackson Brown. "I've always loved the acoustic guitar and the simplicity of a song and a songwriter," he adds.

Following the success of his first album, Colin's gift in acoustic guitar and his unique ability to tell stories motivated him to write a further five country albums, winning him eight Golden guitar awards, an APRA award (for songwriters) and the coveted Aria, awarded for his work on a playschool album.

"Playschool was also a great time for me," he says. Shortly after releasing his first album Colin explains that he was in the cafeteria at the ABC when the buzz was out to find a new television presenter. "I remember thinking this was for me, so I went for an audition. A short time later, I got a polite knock back letter, but always had a conviction that this was a good fit and I should be doing this. A few weeks later, I got a call asking me if I could play the guitar for one of their episodes being filmed in the Botanic gardens. At the end of the shoot, I can remember carrying my guitar back to Circular Quay station and thinking, 'This has been the best day of my life. I thought, I have just done Playschool with John Hamlin and Monica Trapaga, how crazy is that?'"

But this wasn't the last time, Colin would work with Monica. A short time later, he was offered a presenters job with Playschool which was followed up a six year stint on playhouse Disney. "I loved the fact that on both these great shows, I was always encouraged to be myself. I had so much fun and once again, I got to write songs, which is something I love to do."

It was this love of songwriting, a few successful albums under this belt and a chance meeting with Lee Kernaghan that would eventually lead Colin into another of his passions - co-writing. "I first met Lee when I was recording my second album," he recalls. "We bumped into each other at Glebe recording studios and he commented on some songs I had written." Shortly after this chance meeting, Colin went on the road with Kernaghan as his support act and they began writing songs together.

He would later go on to write with some of Australia's most successful country music stars including: Beccy Cole, Troy Casar-Daley and Adam Brand. "When it comes to songwriting, Colin Buchanan's lyrics are like the brushstrokes of a master

painter," says country music legend, Lee Kernaghan. "His songs are full of imagery and beauty and tend to stay with you long after the song has been sung."

And the song of his heart? "A lot of people know that I am a Christian," says Colin. "There are opportunities to share and other times, comments can be made. I just try and take my relationship with the Lord into life with me and live by the phrase: 'let your natural life be spiritual and your spiritual life be natural.'"

Buchanan is a laid back, *very natural* – good natured interviewee, who loves to tell stories. He describes himself as a guy with a short attention span - does this mean the interview's over? He admits he's quite sensitive and that he talks too much. He also confesses to being a bit messy, relying on the calming influence in his life which is his wife of 24 years, Robyn who he met at Youth Group when he was 19. "She's a great balance to my tempestuousness," he says. "She's focused and I'm distracted." Colin says his four children: Elliot 17, Laura 15, Emily 13 and Riley 11 are a combination of the two of them.

I tell Colin about my own children who have been singing his catchy songs for two weeks and think he's really funny. He laughs. "It's important to keep joy," he maintains. "Joy has to look like something. Joy, real joy, comes straight from the heart of God. The same Jesus that cried welcomed children and healed people thought up joy and laughter – so it's got his fingerprints all over it. I don't want theoretical joy. There's a lot of freedom out there for us as Christians – Let's harness the joy of this. I also enjoy what I do, which makes it easy for me to smile." (A)

Nicole Partridge
Freelance writer



King's Christian College

is a non-denominational Christian school catering for Childcare and Preschool through to Year 12. We are one of the most affordable schools on Queensland's Gold Coast and provide a well-rounded education for young people who desire the opportunity to lay the foundation for a successful life. Come for a visit and see the King's difference.

68 Gemvale Rd Reedy Creek Qld 4227 07 5593 4600
www.kingscollege.qld.edu.au admin@kingscollege.qld.edu.au