

# Foots Hill Blues & Roots Festival

January 2021

**It takes more than COVID-19 to stop the music for the Townsville Folk and Acoustic Music Club, who established a new boutique music festival to re-engage and reinvigorate the region's live music community**

## What

In October 2020, the [Townsville Folk and Acoustic Music Club](#) (TFAMC) presented the Foots Hill Blues & Roots Festival – a new, small-scale “boutique” festival that engaged COVID-safe numbers of under 500 people, including all patrons, artists, staff, volunteers and other services.

The festival was developed with a focus on revitalising the live music industry in the region in direct response to the impacts of COVID restrictions, which resulted in the cancellation of the region's annual Palm Creek Folk Festival, due to take place in June 2020.

With the support of the Regional Arts Services Network North Queensland (RASN NQ) provider Queensland Music Festival (QMF), the TFAMC were able to coordinate all aspects of the festival from establishing a new ongoing partnership with Foots Hill cattle station, to managing the event, advertising and promotion. RASN NQ also helped to fund the cost of artists, production crew, and mentor fees for a work experience program.

The Foots Hill Blues & Roots Festival program featured a line-up of regional artist and bands, with highlights including 2020 Queensland Music Awards Finalist [Dan Baker](#) and his band the Bookmakers along with audience favourite [The Hillbilly Goats](#).

## When and where

October 2020, Calcium. Participating artists were from Townsville, Charters Towers, Mission Beach, Cairns, Port Douglas, Mackay, and the Sunshine Coast.



Group shot of organisers and volunteers

## Key stats

- 🌟 One new regional music festival
- 👤 Work experience and mentorship for 2 youth trainees in the TFAMC Production and Technical training program
- 👥 Engaged 3 North Queensland stall holders
- 🎬 Paid opportunities for 6 North Queensland production and technician crew
- 👤 Employed 75 regional artists and arts workers, including one fire and poi twirler, two silk aerialists, two street theatre entertainers, 23 bands and musicians

## Investment

Foots Hill Blues & Roots Festival was a partnership between the Townsville Folk and Acoustic Music Club (TFAM) and Foots Hill Station, supported by Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) North Queensland provider Queensland Music Festival (QMF).

RASN is an initiative of the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. RASN empowers local communities, drives regional development priorities, builds capacity, supports collaboration and leverages the value of the arts to achieve social and economic outcomes with Queensland Government investment of \$6.5 million over four years (2018–2021).

## Outcomes

- Economic benefits: Foots Hill Blues & Roots Festival facilitated paid employments for 70 artists and five production staff. This was the first paid gig for most of the participants since COVID restrictions came into effect in March 2020.
- Increase region's cultural profile: The festival sold 210 full weekend camping tickets, with 28 of those from outside of the Townsville Local Government Area.
- The partnership established a new festival event for the region with the potential to become an annual event. The response from the community and bands who participated has been positive with bands contacting the festival about being part of the event in future.
- New partnerships
- Capacity building for regional artists
- Increased profile for local artists
- Support for creative practice
- Skills development
- Community and social engagement during a challenging time

## Learnings and reflections

**The Foots Hill Blues & Roots festival, while challenging to establish and coordinate in line with COVID-safe measures, was a testament to the resilience and creativity of the regional music scene.**

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*Creating a new site takes time and we have been able to see where improvements need to be made for future planning. We have also been very pleased with the ease at which we coped with this small festival. We see the 'boutique' festival as a great way to attract bigger named artists and ticket prices and keep that community feel where artists are accessible to the audience and to each other. We will keep this festival as an 18+ event.*

**TFAMC benefited through offering work experience opportunities to two young trainees during the festival, encouraging industry knowledge-sharing and expanding its not-for-profit workforce.**

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*Supporting local musicians and capacity building is vital. We have an ageing core group of volunteers who run the club and the festival so we are always looking for new people. We were able to give two young people a chance to get their hands on festival experience in production and technical areas, which is invaluable.*

## Feedback

“ You all put so much effort into making this happen. Right down to preparing the grounds for weeks before the festival happened. Every bit of work you put into it is greatly appreciated. How amazing to think we're a part of history. A first of many more in the future.

**Sharon Solomon (festival participant)**

“ Definitely a great weekend. Super excited about the future of this festival and the new site.

**Sam Rundle (festival participant)**

“ What a success. 4 day music-led social group endorphin bath. Yep. As a volunteer I liked the good food the great kitchen people gave us. Good feeds = good work.

The whole experience was a heady treat. As a very vibrant, well-led club: Yea TSV FOLK CLUB! Bringing TSV music to the world.

**Douglas Goudie (festival volunteer)**

“ To all that made this inaugural festival such a success I say thank you thank you thank you!

**Debi Candlish (festival participant)**

“ Thank you for a great weekend, was well needed. Fantastic effort.

**Jo Gray (festival participant)**

“ Had an awesome weekend full of great talent made new friends thanks to all that made it happen. Looking forward to more fun camping getaways

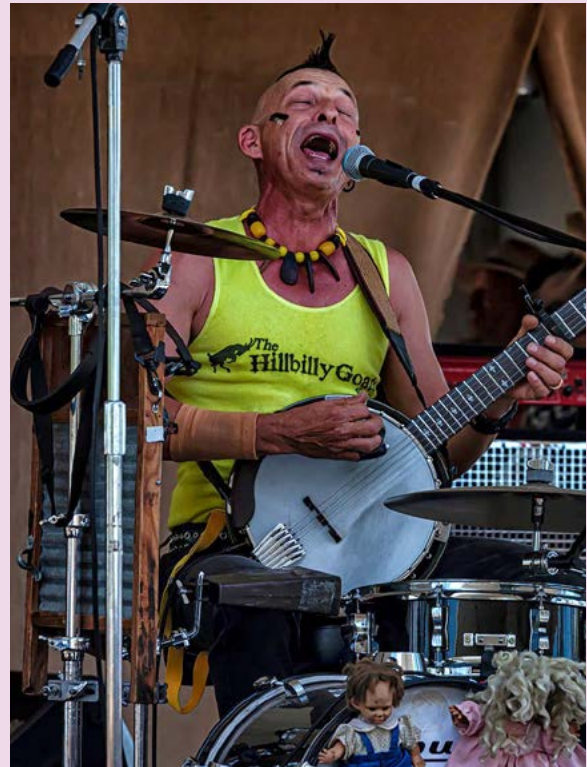
**Judy Webster – Ryan (festival participant)**

“ I had an amazing weekend and I would like to acknowledge all of the amazing volunteers. They fed me, looked after me, nothing was too much trouble.

**Joyce/Cay Crow (festival participant)**

## Tips for others

We have a lot of people to thank for making this go as smoothly as it did. We had to really contemplate what we could manage as far as COVID restrictions went. We decided to only go up to the 500 people as we were not confident with managing anything bigger. I think this was the key to it being successful. We now have the confidence to go bigger in 2021, but still stay within the COVID-safe checklist requirements.



BRYCE HILL BILLY GOATS

## What next

To create this new festival for the Townsville region, the TFAMC developed a long-term partnership with the owners of the Foothill cattle station to establish it as the event site, ensuring plenty of room for safe distancing requirements and room for growth in the future.

The feedback following the inaugural Foothill Blues and Roots festival was encouraging from participants, volunteers and staff, with bands also contacting the festival enquiring about being involved in future events. The festival team plans to continue the Foothill Blues and Roots in 2021, with the aim of expanding and continuing the event on an annual basis.

## Find out more

[Foothill Blues and Roots Festival](#)

[www.arts.qld.gov.au/rasn](http://www.arts.qld.gov.au/rasn)

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