

# Barry proves a little Bull goes a long way

A veteran of the Australian music industry, Barry Bull is now 73 but he's still a long way from hanging up his Fender, as ANGELA BENSTED reports.

Barry Bull is still wet from his morning swim at Mooloolaba, buoyant after running into reporters from the *Today* show.

They chatted and he asked Richard Wilkins, who had interviewed Barry 10 years ago, if he remembered him.

"Of course I do," the reporter replied, confirming the 73-year-old music industry veteran is not easily forgotten.

Among other achievements, Barry Bull is the name behind Toombul Music, which revolutionised music promotion in the 1980s and '90s.

Barry was the first retailer in Australia to use shopping centre stage appearances, drawing on 12 years as national marketing director with CBS Records (Sony Music) to entice national and international stars including Neil Diamond, Billy Joel, Olivia Newton-John and Michael Crawford to meet-and-greet sessions.

Each event inflated the shopping centre crowd by as many as 2000, with a corresponding explosion in music sales. Barry's business flourished and industry awards followed.

Retail success gave Barry a national profile and led to a parallel career as a motivational speaker and author.

But music has always been his real love. Like a lot of kids growing up in the '50s and '60s, Barry knocked around in a backyard band. He spent £250 importing a Fender guitar, an investment which "made an indelible impact" on his younger self and now plays a pivotal role in his retirement.

The Toombul Music fairytale ended when Barry sold the business in 2008.

"I didn't see any future in music," he says, but he hadn't planned on retiring and "fell into a real hole".

Salvation came from doing favours for friends. Barry often sourced obscure songs for special events and was struck by how many came in lacklustre compilation albums. He figured he could do better and started his own record label, *Music for Cruizin'*.

"I knew people of my generation would enjoy this. I knew the music that they like," he says. "That was exciting. It was moving on from the hole that I fell into after closing my business."



He moved to Mooloolaba 10 years ago, converting his longtime holiday pad to a permanent home. Two years ago, at the launch of his fourth book, the Fender reappeared. The seasoned promoter figured music would add spice to the launch, and he was right.

The positive crowd reaction led Barry to start playing again and he recently wrote a one-man show using music, video and his trademark yarn-spinning to tell his life story.

It includes surfing songs from the

'60s, James Bond themes and Neil Diamond and Willie Nelson songs.

Peter Rigby, who recently worked on the history of the Maroochydore Surf Club, says Barry was part of the club's centenary program "to remind folk how we operated Christmas concerts in the late 1950s and '60s as both entertainment and fundraisers."

"I appreciate his zest for life and desire to inspire others to simply have a go," he says.

Barry's life has come full circle.

From the boy in the backyard band to a one-man memoir show, the promoter has morphed into a celebrity, signing copies of his own compilation CDs and motivational books for fans.

But he wants his show to be more, hoping it will inspire other people to find a passion in retirement, musing "as you get older there's no reason there has to be a finishing line in your life".

✦ *A little Bull Goes a Long Way* is at *Mooloolaba Surf Club, Sunday, May 15, 1.30pm for 2pm. Tickets \$20 at [barrybull.com](http://barrybull.com) or call 5477 7704.*

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