

James Dixon Barnes AO Citation

Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 3:30pm

Officiator: **Ms Pauline Carr, Chancellor**

Award being conferred: **Doctor of the University (DUniv)**

Citation delivered by: **Professor David Lloyd, Vice Chancellor and President**

Chancellor, the University of South Australia confers the Honorary Award of Doctor of the University to a person of eminence who has made a distinguished contribution to public service, or a field of academic endeavour or artistic pursuit. It is my pleasure to present James Dixon Barnes AO for the honorary award of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his distinguished service to the community.

Jimmy Barnes of Glasgow via Adelaide was just 16 when he joined the band Cold Chisel in 1973. Raised on tough soul music and gutsy rock, Jimmy brought his monumental passion and a versatile vocal style to this five-piece band who would eventually become the most powerful live act in the heyday of Australian pub rock.

Cold Chisel released a series of classic albums over the years including *East*, *Circus Animals* and *Twentieth Century*. Many of their songs – *Khe Sanh*, *Choirgirl*, *Cheap Wine*, *You Got Nothing I Want*, *Flame Trees*, *When The War Is Over* – are now virtually national anthems.

When Jimmy went solo in 1984 his debut *Bodyswerve* topped the charts, as did his 1986 album, *For the Working Class Man*, which gave him a signature tune and cemented his place at the centre of a generation.

The #1 hits kept coming through the late 1980's and early 1990's with *Freight Train Heart*, the live set *Barnestorming*, *Two Fires*, *Flesh* and *Wood*. *Soul Deep*, an album of Rhythm and Blues classics sold almost a million copies.

The rewards were great but the booze, drugs and an out of control lifestyle eventually started to take their toll. The wildness that Jimmy brought onstage was nothing compared to what was happening inside his head although it would be decades before he finally revealed the demons that propelled him through these high octane years.

By 1993 Jimmy felt burned out. He and the family moved to Europe where he tried to regroup. These were challenging years, struggling with his career and raising a young family of four with the love of his life, Jane whom he had married back in 1981.

The Barnes' came back to Australia in 1996 and returned to the charts with a *Best Of* set that featured a hit single, *Lover Lover*, co-written with Jane. A Cold Chisel tour and #1 album, *The Last Wave of Summer* followed in 1998 but that reunion was short-lived as Jimmy's offstage demons continued to haunt him.

There were two intense rock albums, *Psyclone* and *Love And Fear* around this time and a second soul album in 2000, *Soul Deeper* but it was 2005's *Double Happiness*, featuring duets with family and friends that put Jimmy right back on top.

Since then, Jimmy's career has gone from strength to strength with more successful and acclaimed solo releases.

Then in October 2016 he released the first volume of his memoirs – *Working Class Boy* that told the harrowing story of his childhood in Glasgow and then in Adelaide surrounded by booze, domestic violence and abuse. The book revealed Jimmy as a writer of unfettered honesty. He leavened his dark story with humour and, ultimately, love. In these evocative and emotional pages readers finally discovered the fuel that had fired this singular performer across the decades.

The hugely anticipated second volume of his memoirs, *Working Class Man* landed a year later. The book was a searingly honest reflection on success, music, family, love and addiction. But beyond the combustible merry-go-round of fame, drugs and rehab it was also a story about how it's never too late to try to put things right.

Like its predecessor, *Working Class Man* went straight to the top of the Bookscan Charts and held that position for 10 consecutive weeks while Jimmy's collaboration with The Wiggles, *Och Aye The Gnu* – a kid's book and album inspired by one of his Grandchildren – won the 2017 ARIA Award for Best Children's Release.

But the story doesn't stop there. *The Working Class Boy* documentary film premiered in cinemas in 2018 to rave reviews, and the companion soundtrack went on to win the 2018 ARIA Award for Best Original Soundtrack / Cast / Show Album.

It was followed by three more chart topping albums – *My Criminal Record*, *Flesh & Blood* , and *Soul Deep 30* – which all saw Jimmy headlining major arenas once again. More than 40 years after he first exploded into the national consciousness he is at the very top of his game, creatively, commercially and personally.

Few Australian lives have been bigger than Jimmy Barnes. His story filled three books. His music is our national soundtrack. Lots of things have changed over his decades in the public eye but the one constant is his powerful connection with live audiences across more than 10,000 gigs. Night after night. Year after year. It's the wildness of it all that keeps Jimmy Barnes grounded.

"My job," he says, "is to turn every night of the week into Saturday night for people. It's the best job there is."

In recognition of the job he has done, in 2017 Jimmy was made an Officer of the Order Of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to the performing arts as a musician, singer and songwriter, and through support for not-for-profit organisations, particularly to children with a disability

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