

# Soul search snares success

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When Deep Street Soul formed back in 2006, its members were united in the desire to stop chasing success and just play the music they loved. Ironically, seven years later, they are enjoying the biggest success of their careers, playing a coveted slot at Glastonbury Festival in England at the end of June.

The Melbourne band that started as an instrumental four-piece is now an outfit of seven, comprising bassist PJ Hunter, drummer Agostino Soldati, keyboardist Monique Boggia, guitarist Mitch Power, trumpeter Dorian Broomhall, saxophonist Will Cassell and vocalist May Johnston. "There's something that a horn section and a diva will bring that you just don't get when you're playing instrumental music," admits Hunter, a founding member.

The vocalists and horns were only added in 2011. A year later, while playing at the Australasian World Music Expo in Melbourne last November, the band was approached by a booker who asked them to play at Glastonbury. "It was good timing, and good luck probably," says Hunter. "You don't expect that would ever happen."

The band, who cite the Hammond organ-led soul of Booker T. and the M.G.s and the Meters as influences, toured Europe for the first and only time to date in 2010, after releasing their first album on respected UK jazz/funk/soul label Freestyle Records. Being signed by the label in 2008 was a big leg-up for the then-quartet, helping them to build a presence in the UK, where their profile is significantly higher than in Melbourne. The group has done a live-to-air slot on BBC2 and has been played on BBC6 and other genre-specific radio stations in Europe.

It's been a slow and steady ascent, says Hunter. "We're sort of a band who hasn't really jumped rungs on the ladder," he says. "We've just done it at our own pace and our own time and never really been in a rush to do anything, other than just, sort of, you know, play music that we want to play."

While soul is currently enjoying something of a renaissance in Melbourne, with young bands like Hiatus Kaiyote and Saskwatch attracting attention both here and abroad, Hunter says that for most soul acts, it takes the support of an overseas label for people back home to start taking notice.

Glastonbury, then, should provide a profile boost for the band, who will be sharing a stage with soul stars the Family Stone and Charles Bradley. "We're playing on the Sunday night, the last night, so I'm hoping it's the same night that the [Rolling] Stones are on," says Hunter. A busy two-week touring schedule in Europe means the band will be at the festival for one night only. They are bookending their Glastonbury appearance with a performance at the Saint Paul Soul Jazz Festival in Nice, with a few club gigs in between.

"I'm imagining it's going to be amazing," says Hunter of Glastonbury. "You sort of dream about doing a gig like that, so I'm trying to go with low expectations, hoping it's going to be amazing."



Deep Street Soul. Photo: Simon Schluter

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