

Lachlan Thomas – The Stockman’s Grandson

Lachlan Thomas from Port Hedland has been named winner of the songcraft category in his 16-18 age group at the 2018 Act-Belong-Commit Fairbridge Festival Quest.

Lachy, an AIEF-BHP Scholarship Student at Aquinas College in Perth, was inspired to write his winning song ‘The Stockman’s Grandson’ after attending the Earthwatch Student Challenge at Calperum Station in South Australia, sponsored by HSBC.



“I’ve always been passionate about wildlife and conservation,” Lachy said. “For the whole week my brain was like a sponge soaking up all the information I could about this field of work. The experience has definitely inspired me to try and make a difference in the world, and whether it’s raising awareness and promotion through a music career or a job in the conservation industry, I know I can contribute to the cause in some way or another.”

The one-week experience involved students from all over Australia working together at Calperum Station, four hours east of Adelaide, conducting a series of fauna and flora surveys, using pit-fall traps to catch and record what species are commonly found and where. The students worked with conservation and wildlife professionals over the course of the Earthwatch challenge, contributing vital information to a biological study.

Only a few weeks before starting the Challenge, Lachy discovered that Calperum Station was the place where his grandfather first learnt to become a jackeroo

“Walking in my late Grandpa Scott’s footsteps was so amazing, seeing what he saw before my Dad was even in the picture and exploring the beautiful country Scotty did when he was not a lot older than me. The entire experience was so surreal and not to mention great inspiration for a song,” Lachy said.

“When writing ‘The Stockman’s Grandson’ I drew on these family ties out at Calperum, as well as my Indigenous roots, playing with the idea of ‘connection to country’, which is so important to both Indigenous peoples and the stockman way of life, to draw parallels between these two seemingly opposite cultures and bring them together through song.”

As part of his prize, Lachy was invited to play a set on the Backlot Stage at the Fairbridge Festival in April after a songwriting and performance workshop with musicians John Butler and Mama Kin.

At the Festival, Lachy played a full set of original songs, each one having personal significance to him, especially the one titled ‘Oh, Little Brother,’ a ballad Lachy wrote in May last year in memory of his younger brother who passed away in a car accident in 2011. Originally, Lachy wasn’t going to sing this particular song, but when he spoke to John Butler and Mama Kin during their mentoring session together the morning before his performance, both told him that the more personal a song the better you will connect with the audience.

Lachy’s performance was a rollercoaster of emotions, with the audience laughing, crying, smiling and clapping along to his originals. “I love connecting with people, and in its bones, that’s what my music and song-writing is all about, so to get such an amazingly intimate reaction from the audience... words can’t describe the feeling,” Lachy said.

“Meeting and playing for John Butler and Mama Kin was also incredible, and receiving their feedback was invaluable. It was also amazing meeting and hanging out with the other artists who played at Fairbridge over the weekend. The standout for me was hanging out with Garrett Kato, a Canadian folk singer from Byron Bay, who I saw open for Ziggy Alberts last year. It was so surreal going to the festival as a fan and leaving as one of his mates.”

Lachy will continue to travel down this path towards becoming an indie-folk and roots recording artist and hopes to tour around the country in a few years, playing music and getting his name out there. His prize also included a four-hour recording session with John Butler Studios; a professional photo shoot with HK Photography; and a chance at a publishing deal with Perfect Pitch Publishing.

“The connections I’ve made over the course of the festival will definitely help me along this road, both physically and metaphorically,” Lachy said. These connections and his Fairbridge performance have already helped Lachy in his development, earning him a spot in the ‘State Of The Art’ WA-Day Festival line-up in his hometown of Port Hedland on 4 June, an opportunity made possible by Western Australian Music (WAM), who saw him play at the festival.

Lachy has also recently been nominated for ‘WAM Song of the Year’ in his age category, which could catapult his music career even further. Lachy says he is still pinching himself after the festival. “A dream coming true; fingers crossed it’s the start of something bigger!”

You can find Lachy’s music online @LachyJohnMusic on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.