

# 5

## Wendy Saddington: Beyond an ‘Underground Icon’

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[Wendy Saddington] sung with a gutsiness that no other chick singer in Australia even approached ... There would be few singers from overseas that could match her, and everyone soon knew it ... Wendy was the star of the [East Coast Rock] festival (Elfick, 1970, cited in McFarlane, 2011).

### Introduction

After Wendy Saddington passed away in March 2013 at the age of 63, an outpouring of grief, recollection and admiration for her unique contribution to Australian popular music erupted on her Facebook page and in the media (see McFarlane, 2013; Brown, 2013; Watts, 2013).

‘Saddington had attitude’, Everett True said in 2015. Loene Carmen (2012) had previously announced that Saddington had ‘this utterly unique gift of a heart-stopping old soul singer’s voice and fully-formed, almost punk fuck-you, performance aesthetic’. Kathleen Stewart (2006) declared, ‘I loved ballsy women singers like her, with more vocal passion and range than was fashionable in the early eighties’.

So, if you heard someone declaring that ‘[s]he was amazing, such an icon and fiercely pioneering artist, paving the way for the rest of us female musicians’ (Levin, 2013), you might be forgiven for thinking

they were further describing Wendy Saddington. That description was actually applied to Chrissy Amphlett, lead singer of the Divinyls, after she also passed away in 2013. Similar comments have also been made about Saddington's friend and sometimes collaborator Renée Geyer, who recognised Saddington's equal ability to '[tear] up the mike' (Stratton, 2008, p. 183)

It is not unexpected that Amphlett's legacy to Australian popular music is greater than Saddington's, given Amphlett's profile in recorded music and the mainstream Australian rock industry generally. Nevertheless, many of the statements about Amphlett's pioneering role for Australian women musicians eclipse Saddington's equally 'pioneering' role. In fact, Amphlett is among many who have cited Saddington as an influence. Others include Robert Forster of the Go-Betweens, actress/singer Loene Carmen and Karise Eden, winner of *The Voice* in 2012 (True, 2015; Bayly, 2015).

The high praise given to the musical legacies of both women was, nevertheless, unusual. It happens infrequently, despite women having always contributed to various genres of music making in Australia (for example, see Barrand, 2010). The contributions of women to Australian popular music in the past have been poorly celebrated or documented. Further, women musicians remain hidden or underrepresented, as an analysis of Triple J's 2016 Hottest 100 reveals (Riley, 2016) and as has been previously noted in academic discourse (Strong, 2010). An article on the Icon exhibition 'Rock Chicks' declared in its opening line that any search engine would contain very little of relevance to Australian women in rock music history and observed the 'sad lack of notetaking on the influence of female musicians ... in Australian rock history' (*Beat Magazine*, 2010). Whiteley (2013, p. 83) highlighted that to ignore gender inequality in popular music is a failure of popular music studies. More recently, Strong (2015, p. 150) argued:

The lack of information that we have about past female rockers makes it harder for women in Australia to see this field as one they can participate in, and also makes the retention of memories about currently successful women musicians less likely. This leads to a situation where documenting information about these women should be an imperative for popular music scholars.



Figure 5.1: Wendy Saddington, Station Hotel Melbourne, 1976

Source: Courtesy of Peter Maloney.

Therefore, this chapter goes some way in documenting information about Wendy Saddington, whose contribution to Australian popular music is understudied. It draws from various sources: music journalists, commentators, fans and, importantly, an exhibition at Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) that opened during the IASPM–ANZ Branch Popular Music, Stars and Stardom Conference in Canberra in December 2015. The chapter explores the documentation and commentary that

surrounded Saddington's career during her life and posthumously. It addresses the lack of attention given to her work through the lens of Australian popular music and gender, especially the expectations and treatment of women musicians by the Australian rock industry in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

## Australian Popular Music in the 1970s

No, we are not freaks, we are human beings grasping at a freedom.  
(Saddington 1970)

By the early 1970s, young popular music audiences in Australia sought 'direction and identity in alternative patterns of social interaction, in fashion and the arts; some of them also began to develop distinctive political outlooks and dabbled with alternative economic theories' (Douglas and Geeves, 1992, p. 101). The Vietnam War, sexual liberation, women's liberation, the election of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and a wider sense of values and preferences that included rock music had introduced an alternative culture. As Douglas and Geeves (1992, p. 103) suggest, 'many ... genuinely believed they stood at the "dawning of the age of Aquarius" and on the brink of revolution'. In the late 1960s Wendy Saddington was embedded in the psychedelic era with friends and colleagues in the music and art worlds (for example, see McIntyre, 2006a, 2006b; Leatherdale, 2014). As the quote above indicates, she was firmly placed in that social and cultural change, almost anticipating the 'countercultural wave of the coming years' (McIntyre, 2006b, p. 188).

Those investing in these new ways of being were students, hippies and rock fans looking for more in contemporary music and lyrics than was offered by the established Australian recording industry, radio stations and television programs. They were understood as rejecting mindless pop or teeny-bopper music, instead consuming various subgenres of rock music that included soul, blues, heavy rock, acid rock, jazz rock, country rock and folk rock (Douglas and Geeves, 1992, p. 105; McIntyre, 2006a). This 'underground' music was given intellectual analysis by those rejecting pop, which brought a respectability to those within it.

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1 Since writing this chapter, the *Journal of World Popular Music* has dedicated a volume to 'Gender, Popular Music and Australian Identity' (2016, 3[1]), which expands many of the arguments made here.

According to Marks (2006), the early 1970s were years of diversity in Australian popular music, with an accepted division between ‘progressive rock’ musicians such as Skyhooks, Daddy Cool, Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, Lah De Dahs, Chain, Zoot, Max Merritt and the Meteors, Jeff St John, Copperwine, Axiom, and the ‘bubblegum’ contingent such as Johnny Farnham and John Paul Young. The most significant feature within this representation of ‘progressive rock’ is the absence of any direct reference to women musicians. It was only male musicians who were promoted as ‘finally singing directly to Australians in a language they understood’ (Douglas and Geeves, 1992, p. 107). As Douglas and Geeves recognised, while the feminist movement had some impact on Australian society, the ‘rock music business remained unremittingly chauvinist’ (1992, p. 107). Among the few women musicians at the time, the ‘only woman performer given enthusiastic and serious attention was Wendy Saddington’ (Douglas and Geeves, 1992, p. 107).

While recognising Saddington’s contribution to Australian popular music in the 1970s, it must be recognised that she was not the only female rock musician during the 1970s to early 1980s. Contemporaries included Margret RoadKnight, Jeannie Little, Linda George, Renée Geyer and the female members of Stiletto. These women were removed from the ‘limp queens of pop like Alison Durbin and Olivia Newton-John and a few “personalities” like Denise Drysdale, who were not taken seriously as musicians’<sup>2</sup> (Douglas and Geeves, 1992, p. 107).

Saddington was a pioneer in the rock music scene in the late 1960s. McFarlane (2011) noted that during the grip of the pop ‘scream scene’ in Australia, Chain, which featured Saddington, was one of the ‘first local bands with a progressive outlook, and by the end of [1969] the underground Melbourne scene was beginning to burgeon forth’. By this time, Saddington had already been named ‘The Face of ’68’ by *Go-Set*, the Australian pop magazine of the 1960s and 1970s,<sup>3</sup> describing her as ‘singing like a white Aretha Franklin, loud, raucous, soulful and gutsy’ (*Go-Set*, 1968), and had fronted blues/psych band The Revolution and psych-pop band James Taylor Move. She was similar to other ‘blue-eyed soul’ singers, drawing on Motown soul and blues for her musical

2 As Strong (2015) has noted, this dismissal of pop music as disposable and not requiring talent reinforces the wider social hierarchies between men and women. See also Nelligan (2016).

3 *Go-Set* celebrated its 50th anniversary with an interactive website: [smh.com.au/interactive/2016/school-of-pop/](http://smh.com.au/interactive/2016/school-of-pop/)

expression. Many commentators at the time likened her to Janis Joplin, a comparison she did not enjoy. While acknowledging that it was ‘a compliment I suppose’, she added that ‘Janis was the great white hope and it killed her ... I’m no great white hope. I’m an out-of-money, frizzy-haired singer greatly influenced by the styles of Aretha Franklin and Nina Simone’ (quoted in Nimmervoll, 1971, p. 10). McIntyre (2006b, p. 187) claimed that ‘Wendy was so distinctive in her presentation of her personal life and her music that she had developed a cult following’. She was at the cutting edge of alternative music making and possessed the capacity to move from band to band, driven by a desire to find musicians who could support her unique voice with empathetic professionalism and similar aesthetic and artistic aspirations.

## An Outline of Saddington’s Career

Most commentators limit Saddington’s recording output to the single ‘Looking Through a Window’ (1971) and the CD of her live performance with the Copperwine at The Odyssey Music Festival (1971, 1972). The release of the live performance recording was against Saddington’s wishes, as it was never intended to be a commercial release. These two recordings were re-released as a compilation by Aztec Music in 2011.

Additional recordings that capture her voice have, however, been produced. Saddington recorded three tracks on the 1984 Hare Krishna Band CD *Where to Now?*. Her performance of Bob Marley’s ‘Redemption Song’ on that recording was described as a ‘glorious version’ (McFarlane, 2011). She did backing vocals on the Kevin Borich Express CD *One Night Jamm*, recorded three tracks on the *Women ’n Blues* CD in 2003, and was included on the *Soulful Sisters: From the 60s and 70s* CD in 2013 with the track ‘Looking Through A Window’ and *Then & Now: Australia Salutes the Beatles* CD in 2014 with the track ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’, both of which were from her earlier recordings. Other attempts were made to record her voice but all failed due to technical or other issues (see McFarlane, 2011; Culnane, 2008). Her recordings, however, do not fully document her contribution to Australian popular music.

Saddington featured on music television shows such as *Fusion*, *Radio with Pictures* and *GTK*, including a half-hour special screened as *Wendy Saddington and Friends* on 24 and 31 January 1973. This special also featured Jeff St John and Morris Spinetti (aka Teardrop) and revealed

her striking clown-inspired performance persona. She also featured in Peter Weir's 1972 film *3 Directions in Australian Pop Music* with a similar performance. Her heartfelt rendition of 'I Think of You'<sup>4</sup> in this film is significantly different from the Captain Matchbox Whoppee Band's comic act and the psychedelic nature of Indelible Murtcepts.<sup>5</sup> Saddington was the sole female performer featured in the episode 'Billy Killed the Fish 1968–1973' in the *Long Way to the Top* series: coverage that was brief and poorly articulated. Later, the series was criticised for its male-centric nature (Strong, 2015, p. 151). In 2012, Saddington appeared on the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) program *RockWiz*, performing 'Backlash Blues', a long-performed cover of a Nina Simone classic.

Chronologically, Saddington's live performance career can be mapped over five decades, across numerous music venues, especially in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. Her performances were prolific and have been significantly outlined by McFarlane (2011) in his notes accompanying the re-release of her two major recordings. Her festival appearances were during the height of her popularity: The Odyssey at Wallacia, New South Wales (NSW) (1971), The Myponga Festival of Progressive Music, South Australia (1971), The Pilgrimage for Pop, NSW (1970), East Coast Rock Festival in Sydney (1970), and the Miracle Festival in rural Victoria (1970).

Influenced by Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin, Mahalia Jackson and other blues singers and US soul music (McFarlane, 2013), Saddington's musical preferences are telling. She mostly sang covers or songs penned by others for her. These were songs that were message driven, supporting her political and social leanings. Her ambition was to record her own songs, although she was far from a prolific songwriter. Her song 'Five People Know I'm Crazy' and 'Blues in A' were the only ones recorded; however, she also performed others including 'I Want to go Home', a song she wrote in New York when she was able to devote time to writing lyrics. MacLean (1972) described the numerous song lyrics written in New York as 'almost overwhelmingly expressive, and each one had a point made clear in beautiful style' but needy of the empathetic hand of a composer to come to fruition. By 1973, she had 'drifted and generally progressed further into her one-woman repertoire of songs' and even 'spontaneous, improvised, free-form music that [was] developed between Wendy and

4 A cover of cult US folk singer/songwriter Sixto Rodriguez (McFarlane, 2013).

5 The Indelible Murtcepts was the alter ego of the band Spectrum.

her accompanying musicians' (Nugent, 1973). 'Blues in A' was an ideal vehicle for improvisation and performances of the song were very fluid (Maloney, 2016). Saddington also wrote a song for Billy Thorpe, 'Mothers and Fathers', which was recorded on the *Thump'n Pig & Puff'n Billy—Downunda* recording in 1973, and later re-released as a CD in 2005.<sup>6</sup>

Part of her desire to travel to the US in 1971 was to find musicians and a music industry that could support her appropriately. She ventured overseas to discover other possibilities because she had 'sung everywhere [she] could in Australia' (*Go-Set*, 1971). The brief stay did not deliver the professional experiences she was hoping for, but it exposed her to other influences. Especially notable was the theatrical attire that emerged on her return to Australia, having lived with performance artist Jeff Crozier in his 'tool shed' in New York (MacLean, 1972). These theatrical performances could '[bewilder] sections of the audience [who were not] accustomed to an artist releasing so much emotion' (Nugent, 1972).

Saddington's motivation to sing was to 'make more people cry and feel things' (MacLean, 1971b), but she was repeatedly disappointed with the skills of bands she joined willingly and bands supplied by venues. She tired of the demands of daily performances and poor payment. Recording promises rarely materialised. 'People just don't understand you or recognise what you do' she declared in 1971 (MacLean, 1971a).

Saddington also contributed to the popular music scene through her work with *Go-Set*. The weekly magazine was the first to explore 'an emerging and developing Australian popular music industry' (Kent, 1998, p. 1; see also McIntyre, 2006a). As a writer, she was both music journalist and 'agony aunt'. Her entry into journalism was featured on the cover of the September 1969 edition. Her advice column, 'Wendy Saddington takes care of business', dealt with the reality of teenagers' problems directly and, at times, controversially. Her responses were far from conservative. Saddington's full-page image also featured in May 1970 above the headline 'Go-Set says goodbye to Wendy'. She was well aware of bias in the rock industry, stating:

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6 Most songs were written by Billy Thorpe and Warren Morgan, who, together with other legendary musicians, recorded this album. Additional live tracks were added to the CD re-release in 2005 (see Vogt, 2005; McFarlane, 2011).

Go-Set doesn't give enough space to good unknown people. It talks about the same ones over and over—like Russell Morris and Johnny Farnham, and if anyone else goes along to places like Uptight, they're treated like dirt. You have to belong to the in group, or you're considered to be just crap. (Samantha, 1969)

Eventually, she proceeded 'to shun the rock world and its endless promotion as a hollow and ultimately futile exercise' (Bayly, 2015), performing outside the 'high bracket rock scene' (Nugent, 1973) throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

## Australian Popular Music and Saddington

Richard Guillatt (2012) recognised the deeply masculine influence on Australian music in the 1970s in his contribution to *The Monthly* entitled 'That Blockhead Thing'. Concentrating on Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, he cited music journalist Murray Engleheart's description of Australian popular music at the time, 'Blood, Sweat and Beers', as an apt label for bands such as the Aztecs that 'kept both feet planted in blues machismo while astral travelling' (Guillatt, 2012). He stated:

The only chicks in sight are wearing 'Band Moll' T-shirts. Sunbury famously featured only one female performer in its first three years, the extraordinary Wendy Saddington, an Afro-haired blues shouter who appeared at the 1972 festival after recording her one and only album, then retreated from the scene. It wasn't a time for anyone who had trouble dealing with the male id. (p. 59)

Guillatt's statement begs investigation. It reinforces what Strong (2015, p. 150) has argued is the 'symbolic alignment between men and rock in the collective memory of Australian music'. It places women distinctly as sexualised audience, is somewhat insulting to Saddington's musicianship by reducing her to simply a 'shouter' and suggests the male id as the reason for her withdrawal from public performance.

Sunbury, a music festival on the outskirts of Melbourne that began in 1972, signalled a shift away from the music inspired by the 1960s hippie ethos to the grittier sounds of pub rock (Arts Centre Melbourne, n.d.). Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs were on that first stage, as was Chain, but without Saddington.

Interestingly, Warren Morgan, a member of Chain and later the Aztecs, wrote songs and instrumentally supported Saddington in her only recorded single. Chain and the Aztecs were not the only male musicians to collaborate with Saddington in recordings and live performances. As outlined above, Saddington also recorded with Copperwine, the Hare Krishna Band and the Kevin Borich Express, and performed with The Revolution and James Taylor Move. These same musicians and others performed as members of her backing bands in live performances. She also shared the stage with Ross Wilson, Barry McAskill, Lobby Lloyd and Max Merritt. She performed in the rock opera *Tommy*, alongside Daryl Braithwaite, Billy Thorpe, Broderick Smith and Keith Moon. The Wendy Saddington Band, which performed in the early 1980s, featured jazz pianist Bobby Gebert, guitarist Harvey James, bass guitarist Billy Rylands and drummer Chris Sweeney; the later line-up included Mick Liber and Des McKenna. Her later performances were most often with rock pianist and singer-songwriter Peter Head.

This suggests that rather than having ‘trouble dealing with the male id’, Saddington’s musicianship was highly valued by her male cohort. Her voice was greatly acknowledged by music journalists, including Molly Meldrum, who declared ‘her voice is unbelievable ... to compare it with any other would be a criminal act’ (Meldrum, 1968). Interestingly, while Meldrum obviously admired Saddington’s voice and worked with her at *Go-Set*, she never appeared on *Countdown*, possibly because, as is discussed below, she did not fulfil the standard requirements of female musicians, especially for television. Further, it may also be because of her later withdrawal from mainstream performances. Not unexpectedly then, Saddington was absent from the *Molly* miniseries. Only three female Australian artists appear across the soundtrack discs: Kylie Minogue, Tina Arena and Chrissy Amphlett, with the Divinyls. This selection not only reinforces what constitutes mainstream acceptance and thereby memory of Australian popular music, but, as Strong (2016, p. 2) articulates, the program and its soundtrack again raise the question ‘about the extent to which only white men will be presented as important to popular music in Australia’.

Other journalists at the time similarly pronounced Saddington as ‘the best female rhythm-and-blues singer in this country’ (Raffaele, 1969), and ‘a star, she’s a star’ (*Go-Set*, 1971). Nugent (1973) not only acknowledged her as ‘the finest female feel [sic] singer in Australia’ but firmly placed her in the rock scene. Her influence on other women singers was also

articulated because of the passion, raw intensity and power of her voice (Peter Head, quoted in Watts, 2013, p. 12). Her long-time friend and musical collaborator Jeff St John (2013) shared a memory in his eulogy for her:

It seems that she was just suddenly there and I was happily sharing the stage with one of the most electrifying voices and personalities I have ever been graced to know. Her commitment to a song was total and absolute. Her understanding and empathy for a lyric was second to none, whether you, as a listener, grasped the song or not, she'd touch your soul. Such was the power of this gifted, enigmatic woman.

## Beyond the Music

Wendy Saddington's trademark kohled eyes, pale, sombre lips and enormous Afro suited her wildcat purr and other-worldly rhythm-and-blues improvisations. On her small but powerful frame, singlets, vests, Levis and lashings of gypsy jewellery defied the 'girly' look then expected of the tiny percentage of females who managed to fight their way into the spotlight. (Brown, 2013)

By Wendy Saddington's own admission, she could be at times a somewhat confrontational, stubborn and terrifying prospect for audiences, friends and enemies—a fact that was to both help and hinder her musical career. (McIntyre, 2006b)

The privileging of white male Australian musicians reinforces an attitude that devalues female musicians in subtle ways, particularly regarding physical appearances. Saddington could be described as frail and little (see Meldrum, 1968), but her strong performances and compelling presence were often also mentioned. This tension was frequently noted. She was introduced to *Go-Set* readers as 'a little girl with a pixie face and a big voice and lots of hair, and some call her tough' (Samantha, 1969).

Wendy Saddington challenged the popular music industry. As with most female musicians, her looks and style drew frequent comment, although they focused on her unconventional appearance. She was 'strange looking' (*Go-Set*, 1968), 'tough, sensitive, vulgar and shy' (Caught in the Act 1970, cited in McIntyre, 2006b), she broke 'all the rules ... drinking, smoking and swearing on stage' (Stoves, 1971). This was also admired, as Chlopicki (2011) later recognised:

She looked like a cross between The Bellrays' Lisa Kekaula and Germaine Greer—photographs of her exude independence and an earthy kind of cool; you can bet there would have been hordes of girls wandering around Darlinghurst and Fitzroy in 1970 whose entire look was based on Saddington. Not that such physical concerns were Wendy's bag.

Photographs capture her often intense presence. Greg Weight's portrait of Saddington with Chain (1969) is part of the National Library of Australia Collection. Saddington's 1973 portrait by feminist photographer Carol Jerrems is part of the collection at the National Gallery of Australia. In August 1994, Australian art historian Catriona Moore dedicated her book, *Indecent Exposures. Twenty Years of Australian Feminist Photography* (1994) to Jerrems and used Saddington's photograph to promote the work, as did Helen Ennis in her review of the book (Ennis, 1994). Mark Juddery's (2006) article 'Almost Famous' also used a portrait of Saddington as its leading image. Other images of Saddington were taken by John Newhill, Peter Maloney and Brett Hilder; many were captured by Phillip Morris.

Saddington might have been petite with striking features but, more importantly, she was a musician who expected professionalism from those around her. While she could not necessarily articulate it, she knew what she wanted and recognised its lack in many of the musicians with whom she worked. Saddington said that 'all the bands I've had I've never been on the same wavelength musically. I know inside me what I want to do, but I don't know how to say it, to them' (Frazer, 1970). She was 'definitely her own woman and [wouldn't] be pushed into something she [didn't] want to do' (MacLean, 1971a).

Saddington's independence and strong convictions were notable in other ways. True (2015) argued she was a 'feminist icon', possibly because of her outspoken statements in her role at *Go-Set* on issues such as pregnancy, loneliness and drug addiction (Kent, 1998; McIntyre, 2006a), her connections with lesbian and feminist creatives (e.g. see McIntyre, 2006a) and her support of the Sydney-based libertarian collective *Sylvia* and the *Synthetics* during the formative years of the Australian Gay Rights movement (True, 2015). She was certainly involved in feminist and counterculture movements, and strongly opposed the Vietnam War (e.g. see Saddington, 1970; Stoves, 1971). Jeff St John described her as a 'champion of causes' (cited in Brown, 2013). It has been suggested that Saddington fended off sexual approaches by men (Brown, 2013; Maloney,

2016), identified as lesbian (Brown, 2013; Maloney, 2015) and, after she joined the Hare Krishna movement, as confirmed by those close to her, was celibate (McFarlane, 2011; Maloney, 2015; Bayly, 2015). Therefore, her sexual identity was fluid.

Saddington's independence, outspokenness and assertive (at times acerbic) nature often featured in reviews or interviews. In some interviews, she was deliberately provocative. Just as easily as she could capture and mesmerise her audiences, she could also leave them unsatisfied and disgruntled. She would walk out of gigs, upset with the supporting musicians or the venue conditions. McFarlane (2011) described her as 'a mess of contradiction and not an easy persona for the public at large to accept'.

Her relationships with other musicians could also be difficult, as suggested by her frequent changes of bands due to musical differences and divergent paths. Phil Manning stated that 'working with Wendy was quite an incredible experience, and although it was fun at times, we wouldn't wish to go through it again' (Elfick, 1969, cited in McFarlane, 2011). Years later, Peter Head acknowledged that working with Saddington was unpredictable. 'Sometimes it was great; sometimes it could end in some kind of disaster, but most of the time, musically it was great' (quoted in Watts, 2013, p. 2). These narratives and similar others are overwhelmingly from men. However, as previously articulated, many musicians, both male and female, acknowledge her complexity, but, importantly, they highlight her influence on their musical careers.

She challenged and had difficulty with the 'cut-throat world of corporate rock' and would 'shrink back and depart from the scene ... almost as if success was anathema to her' (McFarlane, 2013). Jeff St John (2013, cited in Bayly, 2015) said her withdrawals resulted from a disillusionment with the music industry more than anything else. Saddington certainly 'tired of the pettiness of the music business and embraced spirituality through conversion to the Hare Krishna faith' (Curran, 2011), a part of her life I do not engage with in any detail in this chapter.

## The 'Underground Icon' Exhibition

The 'Underground Icon' exhibition at the CMAG in 2015–16 was the first exhibition dedicated solely to the career of one female Australian musician. It was a significant contribution to maintaining Saddington's

legacy in cultural history and collective memory. Exhibitions at the Arts Centre Melbourne had featured women musicians; however, 'Kylie Minogue: The Costume Collection' focused on fashion and identity, and 'Rock Chicks' featured many other musicians but not Wendy Saddington.

'Underground Icon' was made possible because of the remarkable admiration for Saddington held by the collector of much of the archival material included, visual artist Peter Maloney, and the curator of the exhibition, his partner, Mark Bayly. Maloney is also one of the administrators of the Wendy Saddington Facebook page, which further captures the memories and recollections of her friends and fans.

Maloney first saw Saddington perform when he was about 17 years old; he 'was transfixed by the experience ... led willingly on a journey into a cultural underground' (Bayly, 2015). Saddington continued to be a fascination for Maloney and he became devoted to her and her career. 'The two met by chance in the streets of Sydney's Darlinghurst in the late 1980s when he was resident there' (Bayly, 2015). By this time, Maloney had lost virtually his entire circle of friends in the city to HIV/AIDS and the two artists developed a lasting friendship.

Maloney and Bayly used a variety of objects and sources: photographs, posters, sound recordings, reviews, interviews, film clips, paintings and personal memorabilia, including postcards Maloney received from Saddington. The film clips played in a continuous loop, saturating the exhibition space with Saddington's unique voice and style. Other recorded material was accessed through headphones. In addition to Maloney's archival collection, the exhibition included works sourced from the ABC, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Library of Australia and other private collections. This variety of objects and sources produced a memorial that revisited her achievements and captured personal moments and her connection with others.

Very little of her spiritual life was mentioned in the exhibition. Instead, it concentrated on celebrating Saddington and her musical career. It did not consider the perplexing notion of why she was not successful in the mainstream music industry, but rather highlighted her talents and achievements. Involved in the floor talk given by Peter Maloney and, as discussions with museum staff verified, I was well aware that people were captivated by the exhibition. It was an immersive environment utilising visual and aural cues that became 'animated by way of ... memories and the affect generated' (Baker, Istvandy and Nowak, 2016, p. 77).

## Conclusion

[M]any people are agreeing that Wendy Saddington is the most unique talent Australia has ever produced. (MacLean, 1971a)

She's the real thing, as honest, brutal, haunting and pure a songstress as Australia has ever had the honour of laying claim to. (Carmen, 2012)

In 1968, *Go-Set* declared Wendy Saddington the face of Australian music. During the early 1970s, she wrote for the magazine and reviews of her performances and interviews were frequent. She also featured in other magazines such as *Sound Blast*, *Music Maker*, *Weekender*, *Gas* and *Daily Planet*. She graced the front cover of the first edition of *Magazine* in February 1970. Her death in 2013 prompted an outpouring of grief, recollection and admiration, which continues on her administered Facebook page. In 2015, Gayle Austin played Saddington's 'Looking Through a Window' as the opening track in Double J and Triple J's 40th anniversary celebration. Later that year, the first exhibition dedicated solely to the career of one woman in Australian popular music was opened in her honour. In the decades between, Wendy Saddington performed in numerous venues and at festivals, was heard on radio and watched on television. Her live performances were many and most often outstanding. Called the 'undisputed Queen of Soul' (Frazer, 1970), 'Australia's Lady of Soul' or 'First Lady of the Blues' (McFarlane, 2013), it is to Australia's detriment that she was supported so ineffectually by the mainstream popular music industry. Saddington is said to have stated she was 'not into legacies' (Schwartz, 2012) and Peter Head declared that 'she didn't *want* to get famous' (cited in Watts, 2013, emphasis in original), but, as this investigation reveals, Wendy Saddington is an important musician in Australian popular music history.

Saddington has been described as 'mercurial', her early career 'meteoric', her later performances occurring 'once in a blue moon' and her spiritual path into Krishna Consciousness might be described as 'transcendent'. These are delightfully applicable metaphors for the theme of popular music, stars and stardom. More significantly, they aptly describe a complex individual in a challenging industry: an industry that could not find a way to work with Saddington in a way that truly recognised her individual and unique talent but rather assessed her from its own problematic and biased perspective. As MacLean (1971a) assessed, she was an 'over-publicised, underexposed super-talent'. Too often Saddington's personality was

blamed for her lack of success rather than the systemic inequalities that existed in the 1970s. That hypermasculine rock industry had little capacity to encourage and support a woman of non-heteronormative sexuality with an unusual talent. Such a musician was simply not encouraged by the industry and her contribution has subsequently been neglected. Had the industry treated her differently, she might have indeed become a well-known ‘star’ and her talent given greater recognition than even the complimentary ‘underground icon’ delivers.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Peter Maloney and Mark Bayly for granting access to the collection in the ‘Wendy Saddington: Underground Icon’ exhibition. I would also like to give a note of gratitude to the reviewers of the previous versions of this chapter for their supportive and constructive critique.

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This text is taken from *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom*, edited by Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood and Samantha Bennett, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

[doi.org/10.22459/PMSS.06.2018.05](https://doi.org/10.22459/PMSS.06.2018.05)