

Interview with Mick Pacholli - Editor of TAGG Mag

So, these are the TAGG (The Australian Gig Guide)

That's the first TAGG ever.

Wow. Number one. It's interesting to see what size they are – A5

They were actually designed to go into the back pocket of a pair of Levi 501s. The TAGG just hung out the back from the top of the pocket. They also fit the average girl's handbag of the day, their little clutch bag. It used to give me a buzz when you would see them in the streets of Melbourne or Sydney hanging out their pockets or some girl ripping one out of her bag and having a look at what's happening. I'd just sit back...big smile.

So, tell me a bit about the background. Your Dad, Jack, in 1972 started the Toorak Times with another gentleman?

Yeah. A fellow called Clive Cook who was an editor from News of the World in London and, you know, he's got that "Ello Jack" Cockney, "C'mon mate let's take the piss out of these toffs", you know. Dad had a bit of a blower factory going on at the time, charity magazines, advertising sales. They called them blower factories where quite fit gentlemen would sit there, "Oh, I'm sitting here with one arm, and I need some money. I've got to pay my rent. Can you buy an ad and I'll get paid?" A real soft sell. They had rooms full of them, going, selling police and TPI magazines and all that.

And what was the vision behind it?

To take the piss out of the Toorak people.

So, it was to take the piss. And did it work? Or did it become legitimate?

Well, yes and no. Legitimate seems a strange word for the Toorak Times. It's at its most legitimate now I suppose.

Was it delivered to people's mailboxes?

Yeah, yeah. I was distribution manager for many years. Up to half a million of them. We had up to 14 papers at one time. And the paper just kept growing and growing and Jack made me do all the work to get them out.

How did you come up with the idea for TAGG?

I'd been doing a visitor's guide and soccer newspaper for him and the Visitor's guide to Melbourne was in motels and bus stops, all over the place. It was a weekly thing and competed against Peter Isaacson's 'This Week in Melbourne' ...and I had a lot of friends who were musicians at the time, and no one could figure out where the guys were. No one ever knew where anybody was playing. It was impossible to find out and because I had the idea from the visitor's guide I thought, "Why not create a gig guide? You can do this."

Did people start sending the info to you?

I had someone working full time, employed, just ringing people. That was the key to it actually. We eventually trained them to send the stuff in, but it all had to be transcribed physically, someone to be physically on the phone and taking it down, so it was very labour intensive.

So, you were ringing bookers like Dolores San Miguel and ringing the venues as opposed to the bands?

Yes, that's right and the bands would ring us and send stuff in.

So, what year did that start?

It started on June 14, 1979. It was the first '**street mag**' in the world and a lot of others came from it. I've got copies of '**Street Beat**', that was created in Adelaide after TAGG, they copied me and emulated me from here to New Zealand, South Australia, Queensland; so, it became a new form of media to some degree.

And so, you'd get ads from venues?

Yes, we sold advertising to survive.

And what would you get? I guess back in 1979...

\$300 bucks for a full page. \$150 half a page.

That was quite expensive for 1979...

It was still cheap compared to Juke or RAM.

In 1979, what were you thinking about? You were in your late 20s or something?

Yes, mid 20s, 26 or 27.

And what did you think of what was going on?

It was great. I wasn't a punk by any stretch of the imagination. I had long hair, you know, and sometimes a beard. A friggin' hippy and it was weird because TAGG was in Sydney as well.

With what magazine?

TAGG magazine.

So, it was just a separate entity?

Oh, totally. It was just me. It had nothing to do with my father. It was me separately.

The Alternative Gig Guide. T.A.G.G. So it was distributed up in Sydney as well?

And then I started TAGG Sydney as well. I had the opportunity of seeing a lot of the punk acts up there, the early Flowers, X, Radio Birdman, INXS's first gig. They presented as punk when they got the Farriss Brothers. You'd go to the gigs like Tactics, and everyone's got their Mohawks there and there'd be 300 people laying on the concrete outside the gig. No one would go inside. They were all wasted and hanging around the front, but we couldn't get a drink, us hippies. You'd go in and the girl behind the bar's got a huge Mohawk on and she just won't look at you. Wouldn't serve you.

You were obviously associated with that sub-culture by the acts and the fact that you were promoting the gigs?

Yeah, we'd do as much as we can for the bands. There's a classic cartoon in there, too, of a punk band that had started up. John Taylor did this series '**Gigs of our Lives**' and there's one section in there of a punk band that, they think their hit song is going to die, and their first promotion is jumping off a building to promote the single. It's a classic cartoon.

How long did TAGG run for?

Until 1983-84. My father sent me bankrupt. All those years he'd been bankrupt and the Taxation Department finally went him and unfortunately since the age of 18 I'd been the managing director, so they went me and kept me in bankruptcy, so I had to close TAGG down. I didn't actually close it down; I closed down the pocket-size version and I had to recreate it in a different form.

In the end it was just put out as a handbill, but at one stage it also went to a quarter fold newspaper. That's actually when I went broke. I had to. You can see I've emulated the TAGG logo as my frame and I had to use the Toorak Times banner to escape and renamed it and then a couple of issues later I just called it TAGG again...so there's three different versions of it.

In the end I put a cover price on it of 40 cents, made it bigger and it went berserk. The problem was Gordon & Gotch and Collins Booksellers wouldn't pay me. Took 180 days to pay the fucking bills. 180 days. It was like a confluence of pain. Dad sent me bankrupt, and I was crushed by this. I couldn't do it anymore.

So, to put the bands info in was free, but it was all the other stuff that people were paying for?

Plus, people paid to distribute it. I had recommended outlets, and they'd pay money to give it away.

Who would do all the printing for you?

Oh, a variety of printers over the years. Ted Hopkins was the first. Ted's a bit of a legend around Melbourne that had a thing called **Backyard Press** up in Greville Street. He was a Carlton footballer and got a bit of a name for himself. A very alternative fellow, you would never have guessed he was a footballer. Yeah, he was a bit of a legend, Ted, and he did the first ones for me.

So, you never really made any money from being this paper publisher?

Well, I created original stuff. The originators rarely capitalise on their work...I gave Graeme Richmond the idea, and he created the **Crystal Ballroom** with Laurie Richards... he started most of the venues that Melbourne had. He's an extremely important person in the live music scene in Melbourne from the point of view of the amount and volume of venues that he actually started and operated and the original tours he did and all that.

What about Joe Gualtieri? He was obviously a very important person as well?

Yes, to some degree. Initially he had **Bombay Rock**. That was in partnership with Gudinski. He didn't own it. Even when Gudinski sold out to the petrol people. They had a, do you know where Prahran Campers is in High Street? There used to be a petrol station there, Peter Landis his name was. He and his Greek mates bought the **Bombay Rock** off Michael Gudinski, but Joey was still running it until they gave him the arse and it all fell apart, and he ended up taking over the **Tropicana Club**, which was actually Lawrence again, and then Joe took it over and it became **Joeys**.

See The Crystal Ballroom opening review in TAGG...

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