



KRISTY PINDER The Hots For The Box

"I hope audiences have many memorable experiences at the Beck's Music Box. That they see some inspirational performances that stimulate discussion, debate and ideas as well as celebrate this stunning place we live in and have some fun!" BOB GORDON speaks with the Perth Festival's Contemporary Music Manager, Kristy Pinder.

Ever been past the Beck's Music Box? Probably not yet anyway.

However if you were a fan of the Perth International Arts Festival's Watershed venue from 1999-2003 and its hugely popular successor, The Verandah, from 2004-2007, then you are about to become very familiar with it.

Located by the river on The Esplanade, the Beck's Music Box is set to see a feast of quality acts from the world over gracing its stage. The Perth Festival's Contemporary Music Manager, Kristy Pinder, has spent the last 12 months booking acts for a venue that has existed purely on paper (or on laptop...or something). Now, it's a physical reality...

"It's really amazing seeing the venue transform from a 2-D plan to reality," she says. "It actually took my breath away the first time I saw it. It's definitely of a very grand scale compared to an A3 piece of paper! And it reinforces what a privileged position the Festival is in to be able to design the dream venue."

The Verandah was taken into people's hearts like no other Perth Festival 'club' or 'contemporary music venue' before it. It's a phenomenon that looks set to continue...

"I believe the stars are the magic ingredient!" Pinder says. "Then there's the great music - a lot of which wouldn't make it to Perth without the Festival - the Festival atmosphere and sense of community. The city really comes alive during Festival time and people celebrate having a new place to go and really make the most of it because they know it only exists for three-and-a-half weeks of the year."

"There's also a lot of love in those walls, 12 months of planning and attention to detail to make it the best possible experience for audiences.

"All these ingredients are present at the Beck's Music Box. Even when it was only half constructed it already had that distinct Perth Festival feel to it."

Was it hard to move on out of the Verandah?

"There were a lot of fond memories at the Beck's Verandah but new beginnings are also exciting opportunities," Pinder says. "It felt quite natural to move on, we had big ambitions for the programme and demand for tickets meant that we needed to create a new space to meet those expectations and to continue to improve the experience for audiences and artists."

While some may mourn the passing of The Verandah, Pinder says there has long been a vision for the Beck's Music Box and it has developed upon the reality coming ever-closer...

"There was a real desire to animate a new space in the City and give the Festival a physical presence on the foreshore," she explains. "We wanted to stop traffic! I think we have definitely achieved that."

"In terms of the venue design, our production team at the Festival has eight years' experience custom building venues, so we had a really good sense of what we wanted to create moving in to the planning process. The main auditorium hasn't changed very much at all from the original design."

In Pinder's role as Contemporary Music Manager, there's a responsibility to the public in terms of the acts that are chosen to perform at the Music Box. There's far more to it than the bottom line.

"I take the responsibility of putting the programme together very seriously and understand that the key to our success has been the diversity of the programme," she says. "The cliché that music is a universal language applies aptly to the Festival. Bringing together artists from all over the globe is a very powerful way of giving people a snapshot of other cultures."

"The aim of the Festival is always to stimulate and inspire and they are the qualities I look for in the artists I programme. Having a great live performance that can move people is a key criterion for selecting acts. We hope that there is a real connection between audiences and performers that takes the experience beyond straight entertainment."

Does the programming of the Music Box reflect (Artistic Director) Shelagh's Magadza's overall vision/notion of the Perth Festival? Does it have to?

"Absolutely. One of Shelagh's main programming streams is 'Life of the City'. The Beck's Music Box has a key role in animating a new space in our city and bringing people together in it. The contemporary music programme also embodies the 'International' programme



stream showcasing excellence and diversity from artists all around the world.”

Several bigger name nights have already sold out at the Beck's Music Box. However there's much to soak in, given it's a three-week feast of music culture.

“One of my picks is the quirky and irresistible sounds of A Hawk And A Hacksaw,” Pinder says. “They are from Alberque but have moved to Hungary and ensconced themselves in the music of Eastern Europe. They are joyous and fantastical and have earned the respect of contemporaries such as Calexico and Beirut but have also been invited to perform at the

Barbican as part of a celebration of gypsy and Roma music. They successfully straddle the line of indie and world music.

“I'm also really looking forward to comedian Lawrence Leung. His show is about trying to be cooler than his older brother while exploring his own insecurities, plus there is a hilarious break-dance scene. He writes for the *Chaser's War On Everything*, so his performance is a mix of stand-up and pre-recorded skits projected on screen.

“Oh and you *have* to see Explosions In The Sky, they will break your heart in a good way.”



Kristy Pinder
Photo: Jo Trilling