

TIMELINES

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MICK HADLEY 1942–2012

Blues man inspired future rockers

In January 1965, Brisbane band the Purple Hearts were a support act on the Rolling Stones' first Australian tour and Stones guitarist Keith Richards congratulated singer Mick Hadley on a good show. "You guys," Richards said, "sure picked the right name."

Purple hearts were amphetamine pills, consumed in quantity by London mods, who popularised Carnaby Street fashion and the furious beat of rhythm and blues. This was the music Hadley brought from London to Australia in the early 1960s, converting Brisbane band the Impacts from covers of Cliff Richard and the Shadows to furious R&B. A guitarist with blistering finger speed, Barry Lyde (later renamed Lobby Loyde) joined.

"We needed a new name and Purple Hearts just popped up," said Hadley, who eschewed drugs. "We were a high energy band."

The Purple Hearts proceeded to tear Brisbane apart. The legal drinking age was 21, so the band played unlicensed venues, their stronghold being the Primitif Coffee Lounge in central Brisbane. It was patronised by a young bohemian set who, like London mods, demanded everything they heard be maximum R&B.

The Purple Hearts relocated to Sydney, then Melbourne. Their influence on other musicians was intense. Vince Melouney (Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, the Bee Gees) recalled: "I'd never heard anything like the Purple Hearts. Mick was the whole package; blond hair, tall, skinny, a great singer, a great performer."

The Purple Hearts became the seminal band of the Melbourne club and dance scene.

"They were such an influence on me," Brian Cadd said. "They were ferocious on stage. I thought of them as Celts pouring across the border to attack the Romans."

"There were two styles of music back then," said Jeff Joseph, who managed many successful Melbourne groups including the Zoot. "Underground and there was commercial."

The Masters Apprentices and Cadd's band, the Groop, had hits and became commercial. The Purple Hearts didn't and remained underground. They disbanded in January 1967.

Lyde became Lobby Loyde, formed the Wild Cherries and created his own legend. In 1969, Hadley returned to London as a member of the Virgil Brothers; a trio of tall, blond singers masterminded for success in Britain by an Australian rock writer, Lily Brett.



Drug-free high ... the Purple Hearts were renowned for their energy.

'He got on stage and delivered the performance of his life.' **craig Claxton**

But Hadley was too bonded to R&B to be absorbed into a blue-eyed soul covers band. He returned to Brisbane and formed Coloured Balls. (Loyde later took over the name, which became

synonymous with skinhead violence in Melbourne.) Hadley stayed in Brisbane, reaching iconic blues man status with a succession of bands that included Leroy, the Shakers, and Atomic Boogie Band. He reformed the Purple Hearts with Loyde for a 2006 tour.

The Purple Hearts' legendary performances and determination of vision inspired subsequent generations. The Saints and Midnight Oil in the 1970s and '80s, Silverchair in the '90s and 2012 stage blazers Dead Letter Circus.

Offstage, Hadley was quiet and

polite, rarely volunteering details of his personal life. He was born December 28, 1942 in London, the eldest of Norman and Joan Hadley's four children. He had three marriages. His second wife, Carrie, died of leukaemia and Hadley dealt with his anger and distress by turning more pensive and private away from the stage and more passionate when on it.

In 2004, he married education writer Lyn Traill who patiently aided his recovery from Carrie's death. Traill too had unresolved trauma and, with Hadley's encouragement, wrote *Sizzling at Seventy - Victim to Victorious* describing her recovery from the post-traumatic stress following sexual assault at the age of six.

Hadley's last performance was with Atomic Boogie Band on September 16. "He was so ill," the guitarist Craig Claxton said, "he couldn't talk for three days before the show. Then he got on stage and delivered the performance of his life. He then couldn't talk for the next three days."

Mick Hadley is survived by Lyn, daughter Michah, grandson Jordan and siblings Mary, Christine and Stephen.

A memorial will be held at Jubilee Hotel, St Pauls Terrace in Fortitude Valley next Thursday.

Anthony O'Grady



Healing partnership ... Mick Hadley and his third wife, Lyn Traill, on their wedding day. They helped each other recover from past trauma.