



# JUGGLING INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

CAPITAL NEWS JOURNALIST **SUSAN JARVIS** CAUGHT UP WITH HER HUSBAND, GUITARIST **MICHAEL FIX**, AT HOME IN THEIR KITCHEN TO TALK ABOUT HIS DIVERSE CAREER AS A MUSICIAN, COMPOSER AND PRODUCER.

**A**t A Time When It Is Becoming Increasingly Difficult To Make A Living Out Of The Music Industry, *Three-Times* Golden Guitar-Winning Guitarist **Michael Fix** Is Bucking The Trend.

I've never been busier. Ask me what my job is these days, and I'd probably answer 'juggler,' he said.

"Being an independent artist these days requires you to be a composer, performer, booking agent, tour manager, retailer, promoter, webmaster and even a graphic artist.

And that's just my own stuff – at any given time I could be working on two or three other projects, producing, engineering and editing."

His last solo album, *Bending Air*, was released in late 2016, but Michael has since put together another collection of music, a batch of duets with songstress Christine Collister, with whom he toured extensively, earlier this year.

Christine – who hails from the Isle of Man – met Michael while they were both tutoring at a music camp and retreat on Mt Tamborine, and the pair decided to collaborate on a few shows in 2016. However, the response was so positive and overwhelming that they decided to turn their duo into a more enduring act, and put together this year's tour.

"It has been an amazing reaction from fans. We had an incredible response when we played the Port Fairy Folk Festival, and everywhere we've performed we've had packed houses and ecstatic fans," Michael said.

"The album we put together, *Collister & Fix*, has also sold out everywhere. It was meant to be a one-off, but we'll definitely be doing another album in 2017.

Another Australian tour is already on the drawing board for Collister & Fix for 2018, and Michael will join Christine for a week of shows in the United Kingdom in October.

Those concerts will be part of a 10-week tour that will begin with the kind of gig Michael could only dream of two decades ago: a guitar camp in Tuscany.

"I always joked that a Tuscan guitar camp would be my ultimate dream come true, and now I'm planning the second camp, after a very successful event last year," Michael said.

The camp will also feature fellow guitar maestros and close friends Adam Rafferty and Andrea Valeri.

The tour will also take Michael across Germany, Austria, Holland and the United Kingdom. It is now an annual event, after Michael first began performing in Italy and Germany back in 2004 – 13 years ago now.

"Germany has become my second home – which is nice, because my parents are German and I have lots of family over there. My German is still a little quirky, and I'm told I should keep it that way, but I get to the point when I'm there where I think and dream in German," Michael said.

As a teenager growing up in Wollongong in New South Wales, Michael Fix's career adviser gave him just a couple of options: work for BHP or become a teacher.

The concept of carving a successful career as a composer, producer and touring musician simply wasn't on the radar.

But Michael had other ideas. From the moment he picked up his first guitar at the age of 11, he knew his destiny, and he was determined to follow it.

He spent the latter half of his teens performing in a succession of local bands, including party band East and an Italian wedding covers band, The Capital 4.

"The name was inspired by the Capital 3 Ranch Band, which I saw performing at the 1975 Tamworth Country Music Festival," Michael said.

The band performed in appropriately loud clothing to launch colour TV in The 'Gong.

He did complete a Diploma of Education – which he promptly handed to his mother on graduating – but he had his eyes on a different career.

He met Tommy Emmanuel when he was 18, and later moved to Sydney, where he drove Tommy to his many gigs and sessions, and in return was mentored by Tommy, who exposed him to the likes of Chet Atkins, Jerry Reed and a host of other musical styles.

"It was when Tommy was just starting out as a solo guitarist, which at the time was quite a radical thing. Really, it was Tommy who made me see that path as a possibility for me," Michael said.

Much of the 1980s passed in a whirl of live shows, many of them in the hugely popular band *Hat Trick*, as well as a growing number of sessions, which brought Michael into close contact with the world of country music. He also began producing,

creating the album *Colours* with Norma O'Hara Murphy.

That album eventually led him to Graeme Connors, who hired Michael as his lead guitarist, and began a new era, touring Australia for weeks on end as part of Graeme's band.

Graeme had always seen Michael's potential, and after several years on the road encouraged him to follow a new path: as a solo performer.

Two things happened at the same time: a random phone call led Michael to begin writing film and television music for Beatbox Music and a fun consultation with a psychic, who told him he'd need to go overseas to find true success.

The rest is history. He is now the composer of numerous albums of production music that is used by film, TV and advertising companies all over the world, and he's enjoying huge success on the international stage.

As well as Germany and Italy, he has performed in France, Austria, the Netherlands, Eastern Europe, Thailand, Japan and China, with another China tour scheduled for later this year.

Michael also stages an annual Guitar Spectacular tour in Australia, with the next one planned for November this year. As well as Michael, it will feature a bright new star on the German guitar scene, Soenke Meinen, the winner of the 2016 international Guitar Masters competition, and Australian guitar legend Bruce Mathiske.

He has just completed several shows and workshops with renowned American guitarist Richard Gilewitz, and a series of performances at Maryborough's Mary Poppins Festival, and this month will head south for a few solo shows in NSW and Canberra.

In between the live shows, Michael is a busy producer, who has recently created albums for Beatbox, Graham Rodger, Ann Leung, Caroline Hammond, Sam Shepherd, Debbie Grace and Kel Harper at his Parklands Studios in Brisbane.

"One thing I'm really focused on these days is giving back to the music industry and those in it," Michael said.

"I had a lot of help from Tommy and Graeme and others when I was starting out, and now I am passionate about helping talented young musicians in any way I can.

"I get a lot of satisfaction from having been able to make a full-time living out of music for the last four decades, and if I can pass on any of what I've learnt, I'm more than happy to do so."