

BY DAVID DAWSON

WHEN SINGER-
SONGWRITER-RADIO
HOST AND CYCLIST
SMOKY DAWSON DIED AT
94 ON FEBRUARY 13, 2008,
IT WAS NOT THE END OF
HIS CAREER.

Smoky finished 27th in a field of 400 in the 1932 Warrnambool to Melbourne bike race long before having a chance to enjoy hill climbs in the Tour De France cycling classic.

But now Smoky, whose sweetheart of the radio and singing spouse Dot lived until she was 104, is back in the saddle with songs on a new Howie Brothers DVD.

Dot, nee Florence Cheers, met Smoky after performing sketches with her sister Jean on Melbourne radio station 3JR in Preston.

They graduated to 3KZ and 3UZ and joined Smoky to host Smoky Dawson's Pepsodent Rangers.

It was an entrée to the Kelloggs sponsored, nationally syndicated *Adventures Of Smoky Dawson* that ran for a decade from 1952 after he completed a long tour of duty in the US as a whip-cracking juggler and country singer.

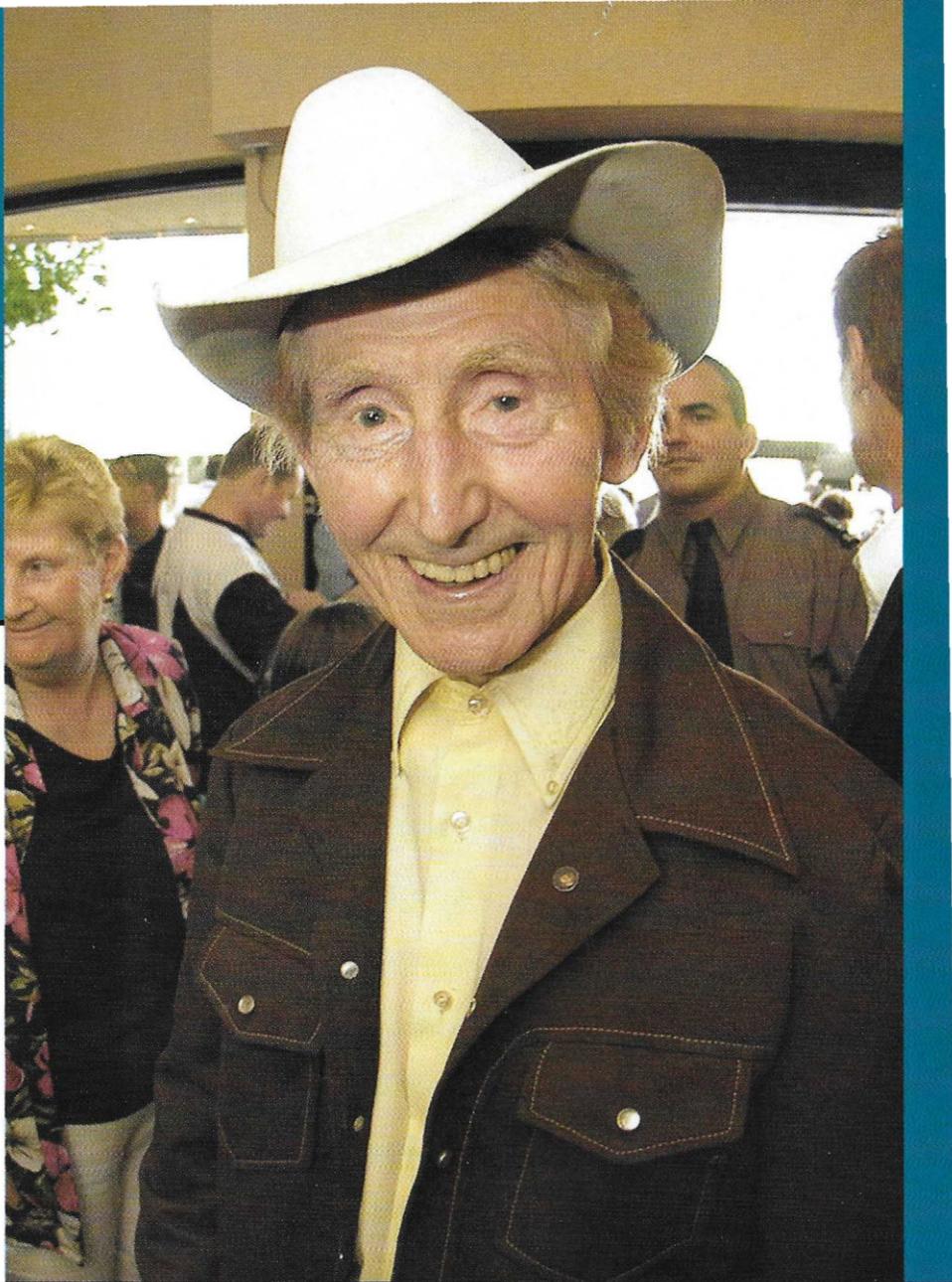
Smoky's songs and videos have now been resurrected on the two DVD set - *40 Cowboy Songs* - with The Howie Brothers and Wayne Horsburgh.

Smoky classics *I'm A Happy Go Lucky Cowhand*, *Ridin' With A Smile* & *A Song and Will I Meet Old Faithful Up Yonder* are among the classics released on the Howie Brothers' Glenample Records in Melbourne suburb North Brighton.

It's south of the Yarra River from where Smoky was born in Abbotsford and where he spent four years in Warrnambool.

Smoky MBE, had another three years in St Vincent De Paul orphanage in South Melbourne after his mother died and elder brother Les drowned in the Yarra.

"I remember Smoky telling me, on many occasions, about his bike riding, and in



particular, the Warrnambool-Melbourne race," Graeme Howie told Country Music Capital News.

"We were great friends - Smoky, Dot, and us guys. I learnt so much from Smoky. He had wonderful stories to tell!"

They included his heart ailment, discovered during his cycling career, that precluded him from the Military during World War II.

Instead he joined the Army's medical corps where his musical expertise was also in demand.

And, like many of his colleagues, he returned from service in Borneo a burnt-out shell with malaria, dysentery and

collapse of the nervous system.

But 12 months of Red Cross care at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital brought Smoky back his health - but no pension.

"I never expected to perform again after that ordeal," Smoky, then 92, told me about the eve of his big break in music and show business.

Smoky, born Herbert Henry Dawson on March 19, 1913, was promoting his new CD *Homestead Of My Heart*.

Dawson graduated from radio to rodeo with his vast array of rope, knife, axe and horse tricks.

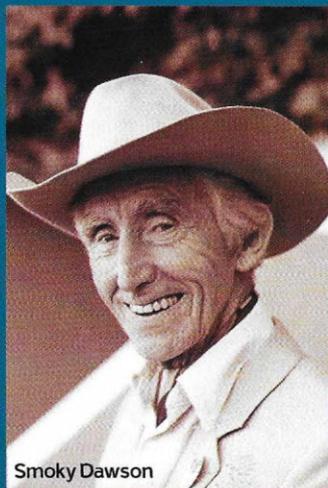
Armed with a whip and a guitar, the singing cowboy gathered a huge following on Stan Gill's rodeo circuit and agricultural shows.

But a bigger challenge awaited Dawson in 1950 - a chance to blaze a new trail in the US.

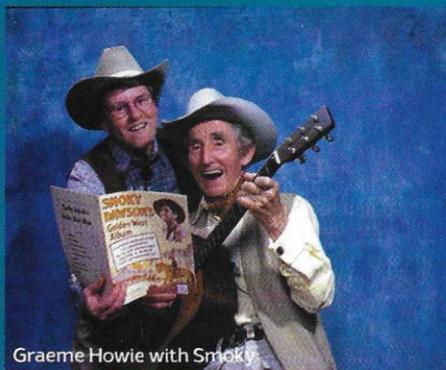
His performance at the New York premiere of Twentieth Century Fox movie *Kangaroo* - starring Peter Lawford and Richard Boone - made international headlines when two



The Howie Brothers



Smoky Dawson



Graeme Howie with Smoky



Smoky & Dot

HOWIE BROTHERS RIDE ON TOP OF OLD SMOKY

zoo roos Zip and Zap escaped en route the screening.

It was at the height of the Korean War but the New York World Telegraph front-page story *Zip Zigs As Police Zag* made world wire service headlines and earned Smoky infamy.

He became the first artist to record for the Nashville Record label Hickory – the label created by Wes and Fred Rose who also managed and published the late country king Hank Williams.

The Howie Brothers' DVD opens with their original song *I Dreamed I Was A Cowboy* and includes Gene Autry classics *Back In The Saddle Again*, *Riding Down The Canyon*, Dale Evans' *Happy Trails To You*, Bob Nolan's *Tumbling Tumbleweeds* and *Cool Water*, and Cole Porter's *Don't Fence Me In*.

Twin brothers John and Graeme Howie

have been performing and recording for over 30 years.

Their vocal harmonies are complemented by piano, guitar, accordion, mandolin, ukulele and drums.

As members of the band 1901 the Howie brothers won three Golden Guitar awards at the Australasian Country Music Awards in Tamworth, including two Group of the Year awards in 1980 and 1982.

They have recorded more than 20 albums, including *Singalong With The Howie Brothers*, *20 Love Songs* and *Singing 'til the Cows Come Home*.

The Howie Brothers are

based in Melbourne and perform throughout Australia.

John Howie also operates music tours with Australian travel company Travelrite International.

These music coach tours have a focus on Ireland, Scotland, America, Europe, New Zealand, Canada, and the Australian Outback.

Next is a New York, Panama Canal, Central America Music Cruise with Adam Harvey, from April 2 to 24.

His latest is an Australian Outback Music Tour with Terry Gordon from May 10 to 24.

Followed by a Music Tour of Ireland & Scotland with Craig Giles from July 19 to August 11 and the Spirit of Australia Music Tour with John Howie from September 5-19.

Then a Music Tour of America from October 17 to November 7.

GLENAMPLE RECORDS DVDS are at PO Box 2289, North Brighton - 3186.