

Vote Rudd, vote yidaki

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Mikey Cahill

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XAVIER Rudd can't take his yidaki on planes with him, which is a hassle, as he's now playing his distinctive music in venues from Europe to America.

"In America they might think it's a bazooka," he laughs.

Rudd's yidaki has almost become a third arm. The popular roots king gets his yidakis specially crafted from termite-hollowed woolly butt (*Eucalyptus min-iata*).

Rudd's use of the Yolngu people's instrument hasn't hurt a bit, especially because his fourth album *White Moth* and infectious single *Better People* has had him playing all over Europe and the US. He already has another 35-date US tour booked for the start of next year.

And he'll have son Joaquin's lucky sock with him.

"It's in my bag, it's always there. I remember when I first found it, I was stoked," he says.

Rudd has a French-Canadian wife named Marci and two children, Joaquin and Finojet.

A blond-coiffed tank of a man, Rudd grew up in Bells Beach, reared on a diet of Paul Simon and Neil Young.

His debut one-man-band album *To Let* came out in 2002, followed by *Solace* in 2003, which reached the US at the time the John Butler Trio were showing just how far the roots had spread in Australia.

Clearly, Rudd wanted the top of the tree. In 2006, *Food in the Belly* increased his reputation. Jack Johnson, Ani DiFranco and even actors Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson counted themselves as fans.

"On *White Moth* I was able to capture my connections to Australia. My travels inspire my music," Rudd says.



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"In some situations the spirit comes through me via my music and I feel like a vehicle for some kind of communication."

The song Whispers is a literal example: "The spirit within me breathes now, these old people sit here with me, my feet draw it up, and inside I receive it."

Rudd says the lyrics came to him in Queensland and were finished in Arnhem Land.

"It's a combination of different spirits that came through me and we were able to capture that in the recording."

Through his songs on land rights and Aboriginal issues, Rudd's music has spoken universally to indigenous people. In particular, North America embraced him.

Canadian star Alanis Morissette is another high-profile fan who turned up to Rudd's shows this year. And the McConaughey connection has now led to a new gig for Rudd.

"I'm doing a soundtrack for Matthew McConaughey's new surf film, Surfer Dude," he says.

"Woody Harrelson and Willie Nelson are in it. Matt approached us about doing the music and he was really complimentary.

"I was pretty stoked."

White Moth (Universal) out now. Xavier Rudd, Capital Theatre, Bendigo, Tue, \$35, www.thecapital.com.au; Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, Wed, \$48.70, www.her:maj.com; Forum, Nov 15-16, \$50.60, Ticketek; Costa Hall, Geelong, Nov 17, \$48.30, venue 5225 1200; Centre Cinema Theatre, Horsham, Nov 19, \$46.60, venue 5382 1249.