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Friday, 15th August 2008

## Xavier goes where the spirit takes him



Xavier Rudd



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"I DIDN'T wear shoes until I was in my teens, we didn't have to wear them to school or anything like that," Xavier Rudd says.

The singer and multi-instrumentalist from the south-eastern corner of Australia is a laid-back hippy for the modern age.

That's not meant in a derisory way.

His talk about mysticism and the spirits around him might seem other-worldly for those who are surrounded by the trappings of modern life, but this 30-year-old is likeable and engaging.

"I don't really dig shoes they make me feel quite claustrophobic," he said.

As well as being a committed barefooter, he is an ecologically aware performer who is heavily influenced by his Aboriginal roots.

"The most accurate way I can explain it, and this might sound a bit odd, is that I have an old women's spirit inside me and she is responsible for most of the music," he said.

"I have a few strong spirits that move with me – I've felt them ever since I was young – and my music is a result of that."

Reading those last two sentences back, it seems absurd, and not the sort of thing your average performer

would say, yet with Xavier there's no sense of a forced persona.

And his Australian accent and attitude mean it's hard to be cynical as he outlines a lifestyle that's evocative and romantic.

"My music's a result of how I feel in my journey through life and what's happening around me," he said.

"I love the Earth, I grew up in the bush near the coast and spent a lot of time on my own camping, surfing – I live and breathe that stuff, I miss it and part of me longs for it."

Now a performer who travels across the world, he has become a beacon for those who share his goals.

"I'm attracted to people who care for the place and want to preserve the planet," he said

"Because of the nature of the music a lot of those groups come to me."

The musical interest is something Xavier has had from an early age, using part of a vacuum cleaner as a makeshift didgeridoo when he was a boy.

While the native Australian instrument is a part of his act, and certainly the most striking instrument he brings on stage, Xavier insists it's only a small part of his musical repertoire.

"The didgeridoo was one thing that I did – I always played music and sang songs," he said.

"I taught myself to play a lot of different instruments and it's one of the things that I messed around with."

For Xavier, a career in music was an inevitability: "I never spent a lot of time dreaming, I knew that I would end up doing what I do, though I wasn't sure in what form.

"My fascination for making sounds led me to where I am," he said, "but I'm still pretty blown away by what I do as a career."

Five albums on, he is a star in his native Australia and has a growing reputation across the globe.

His live shows feature Xavier in the centre of a bank of instruments, playing organic guitar-driven tunes that fuse folk sensibilities with a modern feel.

Not that the man himself would be so analytical.

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- **Last Updated:** 14 August 2008 5:22 PM
- **Source:** News Letter
- **Location:** Belfast

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