

SSAA exclusive with Australian hunting musician

Shannon Noll



by Jennifer Martens

As a 15-year-old, Shannon Noll jumped from his tractor, grabbed his .22 and headed for the bush. Creeping along the hilly terrain he searched for one of the many wild pigs and foxes that surrounded his home. Little did he know that 15 years later he'd become one of Australia's most sought-after musicians.

In 2003 Shannon became the runner-up on the first series of *Australian Idol* and has since skyrocketed into fame. For those who are not familiar with him or his music (he'd forgive this as long as hunting was your excuse), he is one of Australia's most popular touring artists. In 2004 he completed a sold-out tour of more than 100 concerts in just three months. His first album *That's What*

I'm Talking About was a huge success, going platinum seven times. His second album *Lift* and the single 'Shine' debuted in late 2005 at number one on the Australian Music

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Charts. Both albums contain a mix of pop, rock, country-rock and power-ballads - a little something for everyone. He was also recently recognised for selling one million records - quite an accomplishment in a country of only 20 million people. He's a real showman with a voice some have compared to Australian icon Jimmy Barnes.

Shannon's life can be separated into two distinct periods: pre-*Australian Idol* and post-*Australian Idol*. Most people know a bit about his post-*Australian Idol* life because it's been made quite public. He's been featured on numerous magazine covers, he's done television shows, concert tours and his number-one selling songs are frequently played on the radio.

But before he was a regular on television, his daily life was quite different. His days were filled with farming duties and down-to-earth hobbies such as horse and motorbike riding, camping, fishing and hunting. Given the high profile and fame he is enjoying now it would be easy to leave all of that behind but that just isn't Shannon. He still considers himself an avid outdoorsman

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and heads bush when his schedule permits. Unfortunately, that isn't very often these days. "It is a bit of a shame really," says Shannon, "as hunting is a release for me."

He is at home in the bush, having grown up on his father's farm in Condobolin, NSW - a farming community in the centre of the state. With a population of just 3500 people, Shannon is related to a good number of the town's residents and is mates with more than a few others. One of the town's residents said that when Shannon comes home he often stops at the Condobolin Hotel/Motel for a meal. He also said that Shannon is a real "everyday, down to earth bloke who doesn't act like a superstar or grandstand, and that is why he is so well liked in the town". His popularity in his hometown is evident by the turnout at a concert he performed there a few years ago. More than 12,000 people attended from surrounding communities to support him. In the outback, 'family' often extends to friends, neighbours and sometimes even acquaintances, making that concert one heck of a 'family' gathering.

The folks in Condobolin will tell you that Shannon is a celebrity who really has time for his friends. Just before leaving a pub one night, he learned that it was a waitress's birthday. With a little help from his brother, Shannon made a point before he left to sing 'Happy Birthday' to her.

Some celebrities only reluctantly or grudgingly acknowledge their fans. Shannon, however, enjoys that part of his celebrity. Talk to the townspeople or some of his fans and you'll hear countless examples. Once, while he was having a meal at a Condobolin restaurant, a bus loaded with kids stopped for a meal. When they had all finished and re-boarded the bus, Shannon hopped aboard too and spent considerable time signing autographs. The kids were thrilled. If he didn't have a busload of fans when he boarded, he certainly did when he got off. It is these actions and others that have endeared him to the Condobolin community. They all seem to love him and follow his accomplishments like he is a true member of their family.

Shannon has a love of hunting and the bush, which he attributes to his father. His dad taught him how to shoot at an early age. He grew up with lots of space and many hills around their property. He honed his shooting skills with his .22 by hunting rabbits and foxes in between and after his chores on the farm.

As a kid in Condobolin, Shannon said he, his father and grandfather would make an annual outing to Bourke for a "bit of a blokes' trip". There, they'd pursue pigs and foxes. They enjoyed each other's company, the time away from the farm and the solace that



Shannon belts out a song at the Sydney Entertainment Centre. Newspix, Noel Kessel

is found in the outback. Shannon said that even with the recent excitement in his life, those days spotlighting and tracking with his father and grandfather will always be among his fondest memories.

He used to use his quiet time in the bush to write music. Now, hunting and going bush provide him with time to be alone and to reflect. While his current hit songs have yet to be inspired by his life in the outback, he does plan to "try to put something down in the future". Given where the heart of this bushman lies, expect a winner.

With the schedule he's been keeping during the past two years his current firearm of choice, a .270 Weatherby Vanguard, may be acquiring some dust. He's looking forward to a break in his schedule so he can hop in his old ute and give the .270 a bit of a workout.

He's also hoping to arrange his first pig

Shannon Noll Biography

Born and raised:	Condobolin, NSW	
Age:	31	
Status:	Married	
Children:	Cody and Blake	
Interests:	Music, hunting, fishing, motorbike riding	
Favourite bush meal:	Murray cod and yellow-belly	
Current firearm of choice:	.270 WSM Weatherby Vanguard	
Current residence:	Sydney	
Albums released:	<i>That's What I'm Talking About</i> (2004), and <i>Lift</i> (2005)	
Best-selling single:	'Shine' (2005)	
Awards:	Two ARIA #1 Chart Awards for the album <i>Lift</i> and the single 'Shine', the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards, Favourite Australian, Favourite Song, 2005 Australian MTV Awards Best Male	

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and buffalo hunt up in Cape York with a mate who Shannon says is “as keen as mustard” to accompany him on the trip. Being a keen fisherman as well, he said he’d also like to get in a bit of time on the water to catch a

A SSAA member, Shannon is keen to hunt pigs and buffalo in Cape York. The days spent hunting foxes with his father and grandfather are among his fondest memories.

yellow-belly or Murray cod - a favourite meal of his while out bush.

The SSAA recently provided the first opportunity for Shannon to register with a club. Notwithstanding that, hunting and target practices were regular events during his teenage years because, living in a farming community, many of Shannon’s friends and family members were also shooters.

A proud member of the SSAA, he might

Shannon recorded a new version of ‘C’mon Aussie’ for the Australian cricket summer last year. Here he is pictured with former cricketer and Australian team captain Steve Waugh. Newspix, Chris Hyder

well be able to find the time to get in a shot at one of the many SSAA shooting venues peppered throughout Australia during his coming national tour.

Shannon is happily married with two young boys, Cody and Blake - not a fact that his female fan base likes to be reminded of! While heading bush isn’t a common event these days, he has found the time to expose his sons to his pre-*Australian Idol* life and has given them an introduction to the shooting sports. As his boys grow up he plans to share with them his love of the outdoors and hunting. His experiences on the farm and in the bush have made him who he is today and based on his approval ratings, that isn’t a bad thing at all.

Look for Shannon in or around your town in 2006 as he’s beginning the first part of another national Australian tour from January to March. You may also want to keep your eyes out at your local SSAA club. If neither of these are an option, turn the radio up. He’ll soon be releasing more singles from the hugely popular album *Lift*. ●

