

AKUBRA



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GET WITH THE VIBE, MAN! IT'S COOL. AKUBRA IS ROCK AND ROLLING INTO THE YOUTH MARKET.

Akubra has joined forces with Sydney based rock and roll youth band The Delta Riggs to target the younger market – and it is working.

The four band members wear Akubra hats, not only at their concerts but in general life and are generating a great deal of comment and interest among their followers.

And that interest is gradually spreading to the broader youth market.

Six months ago their management pitched a proposal to Akubra and recognising that there was a whole new market to be targeted, the company agreed to provide the band members with a range of hats including the Speakeasy and Squatter.

The hats have already been overseas once when the band played New York and Los Angeles and they go overseas again in May.

Next month The Delta Riggs will play eight concerts at major centres along the East Coast including, Sydney, Melbourne, and



AKUBRA IS COOL, MAN: Michael Tramonte (left) and Elliott Hammond in their Akubra Speakeasy's at the Rolling Stone awards in Sydney.

Byron Bay and the Akubras will be worn on and off stage.

The love affair with Akubras started virtually from the time the boys formed the band at the urging of their singer, Elliott Hammond.

They then spent six months in an old farm house at Peats Ridge, north of Sydney, practising and writing songs.

Elliott works part time at The Strand Hatters in Sydney and has worn an

Akubra for many years and during those rehearsals suggested to the other three they should do the same.

In fact, Elliott and his Akubra Speakeasy have become something of an icon in the music world.

"No matter where we are fans recognise Elliott because of the hat," base player, Michael Tramonte, said.

"After we formed the band we all decided that hats and in fact, Akubra

hats, were the way to go.

"We are proudly Australian and Akubra is an Australian icon.

"The hats set us aside from every other group and music fans recognise us because of them.

"If we can influence more young Australians to wear hats, given our climate, then we will have achieved something.

"We not only wear them on stage, we wear them in everyday life as well.

"Elliott and I wore our Speakeasy hats to the Rolling Stone awards and were voted the best dressed.

"Again they created a great deal of comment, all positive and that is what this alliance with Akubra is all about."

The Delta Riggs are featured regularly on Triple J, are regulars on Channel V, Foxtel's music channel and are gaining a wider audience through their tours.

Apart from Elliott and Michael the other two band members are Alex Markwell on guitar and Simon McConnell on drums.

AKUBRA – ON TOP DOWN UNDER

VALE GREG AND PATRICIA GRANT

Akubra was saddened to learn of the deaths of Greg and Patricia Grant at the end of their trip of a life time to India.

The couple, who owned and ran Greg Grant Saddlery's two stores in Brisbane, were on their way to the airport at Udaipur, in mid northern India, to begin their trip home when their chauffeur driven car was hit by a semi-trailer.

Their daughter Amanda and her husband Wroxton were following in another chauffer driven car and witnessed the accident.

The night before the four of them had celebrated Patricia's 68th birthday at the Lake Palace Hotel.

They had been to India to attend a wedding, which was held over three days at Neemrana near Delhi.

After the wedding the four of them went to mid northern India to visit friends in the saddlery industry and to see where their supplier's factories were based.

Greg and Patricia established their business in 1977 and at one stage they had five stores before reducing it to two.

They worked side by side and sat down for lunch together, every day.

They were well known in equestrian and racing circles in Queensland and had a small band of race horses which carried their familiar green and white colours.

Akubra director, Terry Hunt, represented the company at the funeral and Akubra extends its sympathy to the family, staff and friends of Greg and Patricia.



SAD LOSS: Greg Grant, the founder of Greg Grant Saddlery who, along with his wife Patricia, lost their lives in India in a terrible accident.

THIRTY YEARS ON AND DON STILL REMEMBERS THE DAY WELL



STILL GOING STRONG: Don Oldfield shows off his Akubra in front of the Notre Dame in Paris.

Don Oldfield remembers well the day, more than 30 years ago, when he was offered the opportunity to become an Akubra agent – a role he has filled admirably

through much of southern country Queensland since 1983.

"I had been at the Gold Coast on business and after arriving back in Brisbane called into the office on my way home," Don said.

"There was a message on the answering machine from Terry Hunt (then Akubra's Company Secretary) telling me he was coming to Brisbane and would I be interested in having a talk about the agency.

"I certainly was but it was too late to ring him back then so I spent one of the longest nights of my life waiting so I could ring him first thing in the morning.

"We talked a couple of days later and came to an agreement and it was the best decision I ever made."

Don and a close colleague, the late Adrian Kite, went into partnership to run the agency but Adrian developed cancer and died two years later.

Don has been in retail all his life, starting at Myers in Brisbane then working in the hat department at Rothwells, then Brisbane's prestige store.

"If a Rolls Royce or Mercedes pulled up at the door it was usually one of our important customers and one of us would be

despatched to hold the door open and usher them in," Don said.

"There were three of us in the hat department and it was invaluable learning experience."

In 1966 Don went into business with his father and when his father moved north set up his own firm.

He has countless stories to tell from the hundreds of thousands of kilometres he has travelled over the years but his favourite is the time he and former Victorian agent Tom Edwards sat in the kitchen of the late R M Williams for half an hour yarning over a cup of tea.

BUMPER SALES CATCH ALL BY SURPRISE

It seems that hats were the flavour of the month leading into Christmas with Akubra experiencing unprecedented demand during the month of December. With hat sales up 50% on the Christmas prior it resulted in virtually no hats left on the stock shelves.

As a result, compounded by the annual shutdown of the factory and strong

demand in January as well, production is now well behind with a substantial number of back orders still to be delivered.

"Retail sales have always been steady and as such even somewhat predictable," Managing Director, Stephen Keir, said.

"Generally over the past couple of years it has been our export sales that have risen.

"Talking to various retailers and Akubra agents just after Christmas they all commented that they didn't see this coming.

"Retail hat sales were probably the strongest for a decade.

"We are endeavouring to get our stocks back to normal levels as well as meet our indent requirements with the factory now on overtime.

"All I can do is apologise to those customers who are still waiting for hats and ask for their patience and understanding during this exceptionally busy time."

It is expected that stock levels will not return to normal for a couple of months. The company will endeavour to meet indent date commitments.

AKUBRA LEATHER GOODS WELL RECEIVED

The launch of the all new Akubra Leather Goods and Accessories range in late November demonstrated the early interest by customers for a range of Akubra branded products. A media company was engaged to promote the range to all market sectors and Ray Hadley promoted the products heavily on the Ray Hadley morning show in the lead up just before Christmas.

"I was amazed at how many calls we fielded at the factory. This clearly demonstrated the impact of the media promotion, especially



NEW PRODUCT: The Nepean Messenger Bag, part of the new range.

Ray Hadley" Managing Director, Stephen Keir, said.

"This reaffirms our desire to offer the marketplace a diverse range of quality

goods branded Akubra".

Strong sellers included the range of men's wallets and the Nepean Messenger Bag. Sales through QANTAS

in flight duty free have surged with the Sydney Travel Wallet listing in the top 25 products purchased during the Christmas period. Since then QANTAS have placed 2 further refill orders.

Should you want to know more about stocking the range of Akubra Leather Accessories please contact your local Akubra Agent.

As a further incentive during the month of March DKM Blue will be offering FIS delivery on all orders over \$500 ex GST anywhere in Australia.

BUSHWACKED BY THE TURKEYZ

The name says it all. They call themselves the Brigalow Bushwackers Rugby Club, their players are drawn from central and northern Queensland and while they delight in having a good time they are not bad rugby players either.

They recently returned from the Bali International Rugby Tens where they won three matches and reached the final, only to be beaten 12-5 by the Bush Turkeyz (these turkeyz can't even

spell) from the Northern Territory.

The Turkeyz had a size advantage over the Bushwhackers but the Bushwhackers had bragging rights when it came to hats.

They boasted their own Akubra Woomeras with their own logo lasered on to them.

And the only time those Akubras came off their heads, in the daylight hours anyway, was when they ran on to the field to play.

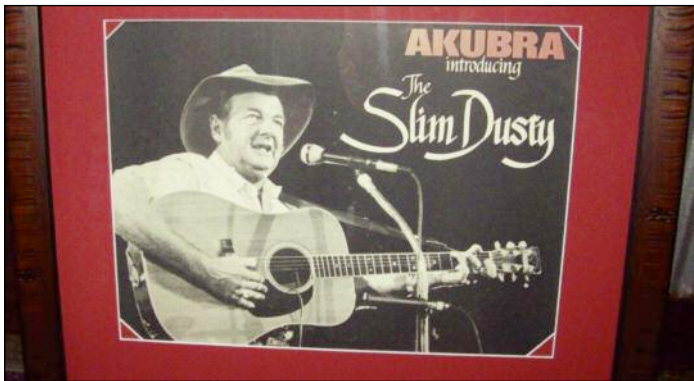


BUSHWACKED: Four of the Bushwackers rugby team showing their Akubras a good time.

IS THIS POSTER A COLLECTOR'S ITEM?



PINK ON PINK WITH SLIM: Michelle Varley (left) and her indispensable store assistant, Amy Hayes, with the framed poster plus a closer look at the poster below.



It is the one item that everyone who walks into the shop wants to buy but it's not for sale, not at any price.

Well, not unless someone makes a silly offer that would allow Michelle Varley to retire to the life style most of us aspire to.

Michelle, who owns and runs Mrs V's Drapery at Lowood, near Ipswich in Queensland, has had this rare Akubra poster framed and displays it prominently in her store and rates it among one of her most treasured possessions.

Posters such as this one were designed and printed for the introduction of the Slim Dusty to the Akubra range but so far no one has been able to tell her when the poster was printed or if there are any others in existence.

"I found it in the store room when I bought the store and had never seen another one like it," Michelle said.

"I am a Slim Dusty fan so I had the poster framed and it hangs in the shop.

"I have lost count of the number of people who come into the store, see the poster and want to buy it but I have to tell them it is not for sale.

"I have sent photos of the poster to Akubra's head

office and the girls there have asked around but can't help.

"Ken MacKenzie (one of Akubras longest serving agents) was in the shop the other day and he could not recall ever having seen one.

"I am wondering if there is someone out there who knows anything about the poster and whether it really is as rare as everyone seems to think."

Michelle bought her business, then known as Ogg's Drapery, two and a half years ago.

"I worked in the hardware store next door and one Saturday morning Otis Ogg, who owned the store, came in and asked me if I wanted to buy it," Michelle said.

"I went home and asked my husband John and he said no but I bought it anyway.

"I am a hat person, love hats so buying the store was a good fit but we also stock a huge range of clothing, jewellery, shoes and manchester.

"I try to stock as much Australian produced items as I can.

"It really worries me that so much of our manufacturing is going overseas and we are losing so much of our heritage.

Keep out the cold. Wear an Akubra!

Earlier this year the famous Sydney Male Choir toured France and England as part of their centenary celebrations, giving 24 performances in 23 days.

Part of the French tour involved singing the National Anthem at the Lighting Of The Eternal Flame at the L'Arc de Triomphe on a very cold French afternoon.

"Everyone in the choir was fitted with Akubra International hats which we thought looked more dressy for the tour than some of the other styles," the choir's vice president, Gary Wityman, said.

"They were certainly very

handy on that cold afternoon in keeping our heads warm.

"We wore them at all the outdoor events we attended and sang at."

That included singing at the Anzac Dawn Service at The Somme and again at the War Memorial at Bullecourt.

"The Dawn Service was so moving, standing on the hill in the early dawn and looking over the plains where so many soldiers fought and died in such terrible conditions" Gary said.

The choir's last performance in France was with a choir of Polish miners at Douai.



KEEPING WARM: The Australian male choir keeping warm and paying their respects in France.

AKUBRA – ON TOP DOWN UNDER