

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN MUSIC FEATURE: Kait Hall



This October, the spotlight of the music industry will turn to shine on some of the unsung heroes and shooting stars tirelessly shaping and evolving the Aussie music world with the 2nd annual **Australian Women in Music Awards** taking place in Brisbane.

Featuring an array of industry forums alongside a night celebrating all things women in Aussie music, the AWMA is the brainchild of founder Vicki Gordon, this year focusing particularly on recognising First Nations and multicultural performers, as well as excellence in artistry, technical and production skills, leadership cross-cultural development, songwriting, music journalism, music photography, film making, classical music, humanitarian work - and a whole lot more.

In the lead-up to the awards, The Soundcheck will be featuring an array of Aussie women in the music world across a gamut of specialties - from production kweenz to publicity gurus, and everyone in between, come join us as we delve into the worlds of some of our best and brightest who are taking the music industry by storm.

And just before nominations for the 2nd AWMA close this Tuesday 23rd July, for our first feature come get inside the mind of lighting and live production extraordinaire (and 2018 AWMA finalist): **Kait Hall**.
Interview below.

THE SOUNDCHECK

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN MUSIC FEATURES

Kait Hall

owner of 'Let There Be Light' and live production badass

TIANA SPETER: How long have you worked in the music industry and what inspired you to pursue a career in the industry?

- **KAIT HALL:** I began working in the music industry in the mid-'90s. Halfway through my degree, I started doing some work experience in the music industry pushing road cases around for arena tours. I saw a huge range of creative styles and decided that I wanted to specialise in lighting design.

TIANA: What do you love most about working in the Aussie music industry?

- **KAIT:** It's an incredibly exciting time to be working in the Australian music industry because it seems to be going from strength to strength, particularly in the number of shows with women headlining. There have been some incredibly talented people I have toured with and it's great to be able to collaborate with people who are creating amazing music.

TIANA: What does a typical day consist of for you?

- **KAIT:** The first step when I start a new project is getting to know the music and lyrics intimately by listening to them every day. If there is already existing artwork I might use that as a platform for the stage design but often I will spend hours doing CAD drawings, talking to set builders, experimenting with new equipment or finding the right video content to bring the music to life visually. On a big tour, the lighting people are normally some of the first people in and the last people out of the venue. We arrive when the truck doors open, mark out the stage, hang and focus the lights, program, soundcheck, do the show and then pack it all up and put it back in the truck. Fifteen plus hour days are not uncommon, especially when you add travel into the day. It's definitely become more technically complex in recent years so having a background in science and maths has helped. I juggle all of this with my most important job, being a mum to my eight-year-old son.



LET THERE BE LIGHT - MISSY HIGGINS, 2016

TIANA: As a woman or someone who identifies as a woman in the music industry, have you witnessed or experienced gender inequality at any point in your career?

- **KAIT:** Absolutely. When I first started, every day I felt like I had to try twice as hard as any man there to justify my place in the crew. I was repeatedly told that I was too small to be on the lighting crew because the equipment was too heavy, the truck was too dangerous etc. On a heavy metal crew, I was told: "go see the drape or wardrobe dept, it's more a women's kind of job than plugging in lights". One of my colleagues told me I was overlooked for a major tour because "women don't know how to do rock and roll". Thankfully, this is beginning to change but if I wasn't stubborn and thick-skinned there is no way I would still be here two decades later.

TIANA: What do you believe are some of the biggest challenges facing women in the Aussie music industry right now overall?

- **KAIT:** There has been little progress in getting women into the technical side of the industry and I'd love to see more women getting involved in that side of things. It's very hard to retain good female technicians and designers, especially after they have children.

TIANA: And what positive improvements (if any) have you noticed for women working in the music industry?

- **KAIT:** It's come a very long way in the last five to ten years, we are starting to see much more diversity in all sectors of the industry. I think the underrepresentation of women in managerial roles is starting to improve slowly and with this, decisions to actively re-address the gender imbalance in festival programming is starting to become evident.

TIANA: Why do you think women are so important in the music industry?

- **KAIT:** Well the arts, in general, should represent everyone so it's crucial there is representation of all members of society.

TIANA: What's your best piece of advice for any women looking to succeed in the music industry?

- **KAIT:** This is an industry that can be very challenging for everyone, not just women. We have such a disproportionately high problem with mental health and other factors that it's really critical to invest time to look after yourself and your connection to family and friends so that when you do come home from a long road tour there is support around you.

TIANA: What can or should be done to encourage more women into the industry?

- **KAIT:** The [#metoo](#) movement has really shaken up the entertainment business for the better. Hopefully, young women will feel more welcome now that it's becoming a lot easier to call out misogynistic behaviour. I think the industry as a whole needs to be more supportive in creating a better work/life balance.

TIANA: And finally, what's one song by a female artist that inspires you and why?

- **KAIT:** Nameless Faceless by Courtney Barnett. Lyrically it references the Margaret Atwood quote "Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them." disguised in a melodic easily singable pop song. I was doing Barnett's lights at a festival in Tasmania a few days after yet another woman, Aiiia Maasarwe, had been senselessly murdered earlier this year. More than ever these kinds of messages need a loud voice. Hearing this message echo from the main stage and through the audience made me realise how important our jobs are and has inspired me to keep seeking out musicians who strive to make a difference. We definitely are changing people's lives, perhaps even saving them.