

# *The New Holland Honey Eaters*

present

## **The *WYOY* Southern Melody Hour**

### **About the Performance**

*(Duration – 1 hour):*

*The New Holland Honey Eaters*, dressed in period garb and working around a single broadcast microphone, transport you right back to the early days of country music as small southern radio station *WYOY* delivers a “live-to-air” segment of its successful ‘barn dance’ radio show.

It is 23 June, 1938, and America, still in the grips of the Great Depression, is sliding towards war. *WYOY* has survived the hard times largely through the popularity of its local ‘barn dance’ program *The Southern Melody Hour* hosted by one J.D. Forrest - better known to his listening audience as ‘The Ol’ Perfesser’.

Unable to afford musicians in the hard times, Forrest has had to put together a ‘house band’ from the station staff, (including himself, the station’s Program Director, sports broadcaster, and the cleaner). Unbeknownst to the listening audience, they are playing all the “guest” musicians on the show, including *The Boone County Revellers* string band, *La Famille Sonnier* and their Cajun tunes, the *East Alarka Jubilee Quartet and Jug Band* and their varied repertoire, *Rufus Clapsaddle and His Lone Star Wagoners* providing some Western swing, and the male and female duets *The Darnell Brothers* and *The Cades Cove Girls* as well as ‘surprise special guests’.

This is ‘real-time’ radio, and the Band keeps up a constant radio chat while changing instruments and personas, managing a dash of country comedy, and working the sound effects board as they greet and farewell their ‘guests’. Audiences are guaranteed to be both informed and entertained.

### **About the Band:**

*The New Holland Honey Eaters* have been working together for over 28 years, doing themed performances and concerts which they have presented at folk festivals and clubs around Australia.

**You can see more of the Band’s performances on YouTube at:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/NewHollandHoneyEater>



or follow them on FaceBook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheNewHollandHoneyEaters>

Band images and CD information can be found at:

<http://www.stanspage.com/new-holland-honey-eaters/>

### **A Little History:**

Between 1900 and 1940 the southern American rural population fell drastically, and displaced country folk who had nostalgic memories of their rural upbringing (as well as those still on the farm) responded enthusiastically to hearing rural music on the new medium of radio.

This led to the development of dedicated programming in the form of the radio ‘Barn Dance’. Although *WBAP*, Fort Worth, probably started the format in 1922, it was *WLS*, in Chicago who brought the format to national attention in 1924 with its hugely successful *National Barn Dance* program. The *WLS Grand Ole Opry* started in 1925 and remains the great survivor of the genre, even though today it is greatly altered from the original model – which was a fast-paced, vaudeville-style variety show with a ‘down-home’ feel, aimed at a rural audience, with guests ranging from string bands and gospel groups, to barbershop quartets, Dixieland bands and popular crooners.

Prior to the radio era, stage performers had to have strong enough voices to reach all corners of a venue acoustically. The development of radio naturally meant the development of microphone technology, so at last performers with softer voices and more subtle harmonies could be heard.

Central to radio broadcasting was the so-called “figure-of-8” microphone pattern – of which our performance mic is a modern reproduction. These mics picked up sounds preferentially within the two lobes of the “8” (looking down on the mic) while creating null areas in the “waist” of the “8”. This allowed performers to face each other as they worked within the lobes, and to hold script papers in the “nulls” where the noise of page turning would not be heard (performers would often simply drop their used script pages on the floor, unheard, to eliminate the possibility of getting lost).

Enough transcription discs of early radio exist to allow us to pay homage to Barn Dance radio with *The WYOY Southern Melody Hour*; the script is a combination of original pieces and bits inspired by various programs of the times. The music and the historical references are accurate to the period, but the names of the performers and the regional geography are impressionistic (and relate to names and to places we visited as a Band on a trip to the South in 2002).