

on the record

Classical recordings bring the talent of Australian orchestras to the world.

Orchestras like to make recordings “because it’s a way of making themselves famous,” says Lyle Chan, artists, repertoire and marketing manager at music label ABC Classics. “Great orchestras of the world all dedicate a lot of time to recording and that’s how you and I know about them.”

From the hundreds of CDs reviewed each month by the British magazine *Gramophone*, the top pick for September was *The Keyboard Concertos 1*, one of two albums recorded by Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt with the Australian Chamber Orchestra; part of her project to record all of Bach’s keyboard music.

“After we played in Wigmore Hall in London a few years ago, she came backstage and said she’d finally found the orchestra she wanted to finish the Bach recordings with,” says Katherine Kemp, ACO artistic administrator.

Most of the orchestra’s recordings, she says, come about after touring with top international soloists. “Apart from liking to work with us, I think they also find something intriguing about teaming up



Angela Hewitt rehearsing with the Australian Chamber Orchestra

with an Australian orchestra.” And for the ACO, which regularly tours internationally, having such highly regarded CDs “is very helpful in getting gigs overseas and is great for Australian culture generally”.

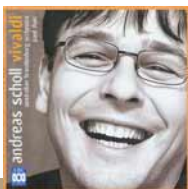
It was the same story for the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra when it first worked with countertenor Andreas Scholl in the late 1990s.

“From the moment we met, we hit it off,” says Brandenburg artistic director Paul Dyer. “Scholl thought the world should know about the Brandenburg, so he invited us on a European tour and to record with him. It’s helped us raise the benchmark for ourselves – we know the rest of the world is watching us.”

Another recent collaboration has been between English soprano Emma Kirkby, the Australian chamber choir Cantillation and the Orchestra of the Antipodes – to celebrate Musica Viva’s 60th birthday. “We wanted to make sure we documented it – it’s an amazing thing for a little label like ABC Classics to have done,” says Chan, whose label launches about 50 releases a year.

Even without big international names, Australian recordings have been received well overseas. The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra’s ambitious three-year project to record 20 CDs by Australian composers, due to be completed next year, has received much attention. The Queensland Orchestra’s recording of Peter Sculthorpe’s pieces featuring didgeridoo soloist William Barton has also garnered raves.

In a world where corporations swallow up small players, independent labels Tall Poppies and Move are recording Australian composers and musicians. While the death of CDs through downloading has been predicted, the internet is proving a boon for niche market sales of Australian classical music. According to John Davis, general manager of the Australian Music Centre, “The eccentric, experimental and unique can find a sustainable market out there.”



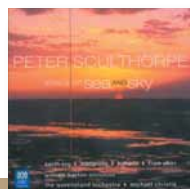
Andreas Scholl & The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

Vivaldi: *Nisi Dominus* (ABC Classics)
This acclaimed recording has won a number of awards and sold more than 200,000 copies.



Angela Hewitt & The Australian Chamber Orchestra

Bach: *The Keyboard Concertos 1* (Hyperion)
“The old meets the new in an excellent survey of Bach’s keyboard concertos.” – *Gramophone*



William Barton & The Queensland Orchestra

Peter Sculthorpe: *Songs Of Sea And Sky* (ABC Classics)
“[This] will help the cause of defining Sculthorpe’s orchestral works as modern classics.” – *Gramophone*

classical

John O'Donnell

Handel: Organ Works (ABC)

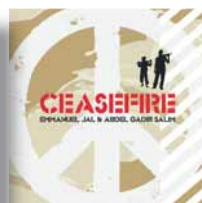
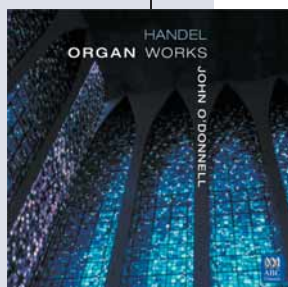
One of Australia's finest keyboard players presents a good case for re-assessing Handel's organ works. Slighter than JS Bach's mighty body of organ music, these are largely arrangements used in other contexts or as teaching pieces. Played with crystal clarity and sparkling attention to detail.

St Lawrence String Quartet

Awakening: Christos Hatzis (EMI)

Wonderful quartets by Greek-born Canadian composer Hatzis are given performances of compelling conviction. The first incorporates Inuit singing and locomotive sounds for a powerful statement about cultural conflict. The second, responds to the Balkans conflict, drawing on diverse musical cultures for inspiration. Engrossing and electric; highly recommended.

Graham Abbott presents *Keys To Music, Saturdays at 9am* on ABC Classic FM. www.abc.net.au/classic



world

Susheela Raman

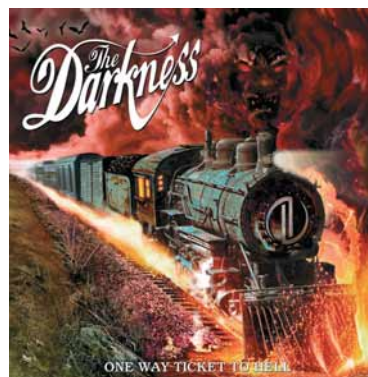
Music For Crocodiles (Narada/MRA)

Talk about global beat. This London-born, Australian-raised Tamil reworks traditional Indian music over modern grooves with musical partners from Africa, Asia and Europe. It's the sound of an artist whose musical teeth are razor sharp. Tablas massage East African melodies and hypnotic, sinuous ragas curl around romantic strings. Her glorious, sultry voice sneaks up on you and drags you into deeper water.

Emmanuel Jal & Abdel Gadir Salim

Ceasefire (Riverboat/World Music Network)

Salim is from the Muslim north of war-ravaged Sudan; Jal a former child soldier from the Christian south. In this first-ever north-south music meet, Salim brings jazzy sax, rippling guitar, traditional Arabic singing and accordion to Jal's tunes. Jal returns the favour by rapping over Salim's compositions like the powerful hit *Ya Salam*. It's faith and respect, rather than bling and bluster. As relevant as it gets. **PR**



rock/pop

The Darkness

One Way Ticket To Hell ... And Back (Warner)

England's most ridiculous band, but only because there's no way they could play the pomp rock and no-nonsense metal they love with a straight face. Justin Hawkins' preposterous soaring falsetto recalls visions of his painfully tight catsuit and the grimace that should go with it. Plenty of catchy tunes, gargantuan riffs and self-important solos underneath all the hair to keep fans smiling.

Franz Ferdinand

You Could Have It So Much Better (Sony BMG)

The self-titled debut was a suave 'n' sexy modern masterpiece, so this follow-up has more to live up to than most. It very nearly does, only some of the subtlety and mystery has vanished, cheapening the effect. It still has big, bright, irresistible hooks – *Do You Want To* may have you bouncing off the walls – but otherwise takes a little getting into. This is an album that really improves with every spin.

Wolfmother

Wolfmother (Modular/Universal)

Someone certainly enjoyed their parents' Black Sabbath and Led Zep records. This young Australian trio hasn't so much dipped a toe into '70s heavy rock as divebombed in, developed gills and started breathing it. The debut is shamelessly derivative, but loads more fun than Jet. The driving riffs and vocal howls are as alive as anything you've heard lately; the quieter moments also pretty loveable.



dvd

Various Artists

Live 8 (EMI)

All the historic moments of this year's nine Live 8 concerts are on this four-disc DVD. The London gig alone is enough to warrant purchase. More than 100 songs, with stellar performances from Green Day, Jet, Björk and Muse. And your money goes to an excellent cause. **GP**