



Dear Orphans – Biography

Connecting with the simplicity of life, while laying bare the bones of the human condition, is what Dear Orphans and their music are all about.

Defying categorisation, Dear Orphans comprise singer-songwriters Nick Payne and Lyn Dearling-Taylor, along with Mike Kirkley on pedal steel, "a big influence on our sound" according to Nick. Dear Orphans are also sometimes accompanied by clawhammer banjoist, Richard Galluzzi.

"Our music takes a little while to get into, but it persists in a way that other music doesn't. It has the ability to stick with you for a long time. We are influenced by traditional bluegrass but we're not traditional bluegrass," says Nick.

He adds: "What I love about bluegrass is that it's music written by people battling with real life. And sometimes the reasons they are writing and playing that music are to rise above that and set their sights on something higher."

A long-time aspiring musician, Nick capitalised on his wanderlust that saw him move from the big city life of Sydney through to country NSW and Queensland, to create the impetus and direction of the band.

"Our music connects with the simplicity of life," says Nick. "It's about getting to the roots of the road, getting away from the city, where everything is 'so important', stripping back to the bare bones and just playing."

Melding innocence and purity of melody, while sometimes tapping into darker themes within her lyrics, Lyn has drawn on her own country roots to create some of the most haunting songs of Dear Orphans' repertoire.

"I wrote the band's first song, *History*, as I visualised driving from Dalby to Sydney to start a new life," Lyn says.

Nick elaborates "when it comes to songwriting, songs that connect with the human condition are what we write about."

History began when Nick and Lyn met in Dalby, Queensland in 1999. Nick had transferred to a new job after moving from Sydney, NSW, and Lyn was about to marry her high school sweetheart. They forged an immediate friendship based on their love of music, which has lasted to this day.

Nick had the idea for forming Dear Orphans after moving back to Sydney from Queensland in 2006. He recalls "it was one of those points in your life where every aspect of your life changes. I had the opportunity to organise my life around my priorities, rather than having external factors pushing me around."

Nick organised a jam weekend in the Southern Highlands, inviting all his friends who had instruments, half-written songs, or simply a voice to contribute. Lyn arrived with her guitar and head full of ideas. It turned out to be her "unofficial audition" for Dear Orphans.

Nick recalls "Lyn blew me away with how good she was. Here I was embarking on a search for a band member, and there it was right under my nose!"

Six months after the Southern Highland jam session, Lyn moved to Sydney, after arranging a mini-tour of all the Toowoomba pubs where she and Nick honed their sound.

Lyn recalls "After our Toowoomba tour, I had to seize the moment! So I lined up 6 job interviews in Sydney, piled up the car and moved on Boxing Day 2006."

Through a fortuitous lunch meeting with respected singer-songwriter Karl Broadie, Nick was introduced to Cletis Carr, who in turn gave the band their first Sydney gig the week Lyn flew into town for her interviews. They lined up a set of gigs at the Merton Estate Hotel in Rozelle.

Cletis recalls seeing Dear Orphans play for the first time "Lyn walked in the room, she didn't look like a supermodel, but there was something there."

In 2007 Dear Orphans played "as many gigs as we could, but towards the end of the year, we played one gig to an empty room, and got gypped on the payment. But we cut our teeth, crafted our sound and learned the skill of playing to a room of people that are unappreciative and giving them something to shut up and take note of!"

The pivotal moment in the band's destiny came when they met Natalie D Napoleon who was scheduled to perform an East Coast Tour with Fiona Kernaghan. When Fiona had to cancel due to family reasons, Dear Orphans found themselves filling in through a bizarre series of Six Degrees of Separation! One of those gigs was at The Mars Hill Café.

The owner of Mars Hill Café, Kevin, liked what Dear Orphans did musically and he and the band organised a series of gigs in 2008, playing once per month, which became The Orphanage Sessions.

The concepts behind The Orphanage Sessions were:

- Shaping the physical environment, by hosting the sessions at a Café rather than the traditional pub setting, which created atmosphere and an intimacy between performers and audience;
- Playing regularly to build a consistent audience; and
- Including a different guest act each month to add variety.

Nick says "2008 was really good for us, because The Orphanage Sessions built up a real fanbase, and gave us the chance to play with some amazing musicians. I like the collaborative nature of it. We were also creating our own destiny, rather than leaving it to chance that a 'bigger name' would invite us to play with them!"