

# Observer Magazine

# André Who?

Thousands of Melbourne fans gathered on Saturday at Eastland Shopping Centre, Ringwood, to greet Dutch violinist and showman André Rieu.

Fans had started to arrive at Eastland as early as 5.30am, to catch a glimpse of the entertainer, who will stage a spectacular show at Telstra Dome in November next year. 3AW weekend overnight host Alan Pearsall was master of ceremonies for the stage appearance in which André Rieu played *My Way* and *Waltzing Matilda*.

It was a whirlwind tour of Melbourne, with André giving interviews to Ernie Sigley, Ian Maurice and Keith McGowan on Friday. McGowan's interview will be replayed on the *Overnighters* program (12.05am-5.30am) each morning this week.

On Thursday, André appeared on television with Kerri-Anne Kennerley, on her morning show on Channel 9.

Journalist Paul Nicholson says the performance was brief, but André Rieu spent an hour signing autographs - at the rate of about 16 per minute!

The appearance was a bonanza for JB Hi-Fi who had some of Rieu's DVDs and CDs on special.

His DVDs are consistently in the Top 10 sellers around Australia, through Universal. His work has been chiefly promoted in Australia by Keith McGowan on 3AW, and the Ovation channel on Foxtel.

Sydney radio personality Alan Jones has also just 'discovered' André Rieu.

Rieu, who celebrates his 58th birthday on Monday (Oct.1), was in Australia for a brief visit, before flying to Japan for three shows in Tokyo, starting tomorrow (Thurs.).

It is no wonder that with his demanding airline schedule he is known as 'The Flying Dutchman'.



● André Rieu: thousands of fans at Eastland on Saturday

In a deeply personal radio interview that he shared with McGowan, André Rieu reveals that he was given a violin at the age of five ... but as he took lessons the teenager was more interested in his female instructor!

André's father was a conductor, and there was an abiding interest in music amongst his six siblings.

Rieu studied violin at the Conservatoire Royal in Liege, and in the Conservatorium Maastricht, from 1968-1973.

He was exposed to nothing but classical orchestral music until university where he performed the *Gold and Silver* waltz by Franz Lehar.

He says he was impressed by the audience reaction to the waltz music, and decided to pursue its form.

Rieu went on to form the Maastricht Salon Orchestra, and he performed as a violinist with the Limburg Symphony Orchestra.

Some 20 years ago, in 1987, he created the Johann Strauss Orchestra, and his own production company.

He added drama and fun, even a rock-star personality, to reinvigorate performances.

The orchestra started with just 12 members, but is now often seen with up to 50 musicians.



● Plenty of fun in André Rieu's concerts

There was a significant revival in waltz music, mostly in the Netherlands, ignited by the recording of the *Second Waltz* from Shostakovich's *Jazz Suites*.

This success saw Rieu dubbed as 'The King of Waltz'.

Rieu and his orchestra have performed throughout Europe, in North America and Japan. Next year's Australian tour will see shows in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

André Rieu has developed his own recording studios, and records every June. The range of music has expanded from classical, to add popular and folk music.

Even famous movie sound tracks are included in the lists of tracks on the DVDs and CDs.

Rieu told Keith McGowan that he was originally rejected by a number of recording companies, but was finally accepted by Universal.

He said the company expected to be happy with 25,000 CDs sold, but achieved a sales record of 850,000 albums on his first release.

His recording success is confirmed by George Ash, Managing Director of Universal Music:

## Who is André Rieu?

Retailers of DVDs will explain who André Rieu is ... last month he commanded a record six of the ARIA Top 10 positions in the charts.

All nine of his DVDs stormed their way into the ARIA Top 40 DVD charts, and stayed there for three consecutive weeks from July 30.

André Rieu is an acclaimed violinist, who tours the world with his Johann Stauss Orchestra. His crew comprises at least 120 people.

Married to Marjorie, and with two sons Marc and Pierre, André's home is Maastricht in the Netherlands. He speaks Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Limburgish.

One writer Maximilien de Lafayette is overwhelmed by his talent: "Maestro André Rieu is unquestionably the world's greatest living musical legend."

in terms of sales. The pure artistry and popular appeal of André is what makes each DVD such a compelling experience."

Now André Rieu has a staggering 19 albums in his catalogue, and has sold 23 million copies worldwide.

His latest release is *New York Memories*, recorded in October last year. The show was last week seen on the Ovation pay-TV channel.

Rieu told Keith McGowan that the performance schedule so far for 2007 was 120 shows, with extensive touring across the United States and Europe.

New Australian releases are:

■ *André Rieu On His Way To New York* (DVD, Sept. 1)

■ *Romance* (DVD, Sept. 8)

■ *Love Around The World* (DVD, Sept. 15)

■ *La Vie est belle* (Life Is Beautiful, CD and DVD, Oct. 6)

■ *Wonderful World* (CD and DVD, Nov 24).

PHOTO: PAUL NICHOLSON



● Part of the Eastland crowd on Saturday, estimated at 3000



● The Vienna Debutantes are part of the André Rieu concerts