

Interview **Peter Barrett**
Photography **Rodger Cummins**

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Wales – I'm the only non-singing Welsh person on the planet. We migrated to South Australia in 1966, so I grew up in Adelaide.

When did you move to Melbourne?

When I was 20, to take up the position as vice-president of the Australian Union of Students.

Where do you live?

Altona. Like a lot of other houses (here) it's three bedroom, brick veneer, 1970s construction. It's your very standard suburban home with a garden I keep in a shabby state of disrepair.

If money were no object, where would you live in Melbourne?

I'd live in Altona but have a house on the Esplanade instead of next to the petrochemical plant.

What do you do for fun when you're in Melbourne?

I am a big walker on Altona beach.

What was the most expensive meal you've had in Melbourne?

I make the error each New Year's Eve of going out to dinner with Simon Crean and his family. Simon manages to pick some very expensive bottles of wine. We had a New Year's Eve at Becco and we parted with a considerable amount.

Where did you last get drunk?

I couldn't say I've been drunk in many a long year. One, you get older. Two, this job is so relentless and so unpredictable that you can't afford too much downtime the next day.

Where is the best pizza in town?

Stella Pizza in Pier Street, Altona. I like the spicy ones, the mexicana with the really hot salami. Or – I know it's daggy – the margarita, with some anchovy and pineapple.

Are you a member of a club?

I'm patron of the Werribee Tigers (VFL) footy team and I'm a member of Emily's List, a Labor women's organisation founded by Joan Kirner.

What would you abolish from Melbourne life?

Traffic jams on the West Gate Bridge.

What is your favourite place for a drink?

The European (in Spring Street).

Where's the most romantic place in Melbourne?

The Windsor Hotel.

What did you last blow \$500 on?

Clothes from Celia Coates at Sarti, in Little Collins Street.

Which shop couldn't you live without?

Readings in Lygon Street. I like the fact you can wander and potter.

Which Melbourne person would you most like to sit next to on a tram?

I worked at Slater and Gordon and I was always very intrigued by the life story of Hugh Slater, who founded the firm.

Which Melbourne person would you least like to sit next to on a tram?

Peter Costello. Maybe not, that's a bit mean, poor old Pete. I do occasionally have to sit next to him on planes, whereupon he makes many jokes at my expense.

Federation Square – yes or no?

No. Controversial call, I know. Wrong location and I don't like the stone.

Where in Melbourne would you have your ashes scattered?

Werribee Zoo, on the savannah.

What's the most important issue facing Melburnians today?

Making sure we manage (residential) growth properly: how it looks, how it feels, how the traffic moves and where our open spaces are.

Describe Melbourne in three words.

Vibrant but understated.

Why hasn't there been a female prime minister yet in Australia?

You need lots of women to be in a system for a long period of time for any one woman to end up being prime minister.

How do you feel about being tipped to be the next leader of the Labor Party?

It's nice people have faith in you.

How does Kim Beazley feel about you being tipped to be the next leader of the Labor Party?

Kim Beazley's too confident a man to be worried about that.

Is it your ambition to be prime minister?

I didn't used to sit in kindie dreaming about it. I'm pretty sure Peter Costello did.

Are you ready to be the prime minister now?

Impossible question to answer. It's not in my thinking. What's in my thinking is making Kim Beazley prime minister now.



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Julia Gillard, 44, federal shadow minister for health, answers the questions.

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(the best of) film stage music art

New Buffalo, also known as singer Sally Seltmann, comes to the Laneway Festival.

Words Peter Barrett
Photography Rodger Cummins

You can take the Sydney musician to Melbourne but it won't stop her pining for the beach. Sydney-born Sally Seltmann (aka New Buffalo) plays Lounge in Swanston Street this month for the St Jerome's Laneway Festival, a music event with performances in and outside St Jerome's bar in Caledonian Lane and at Lounge. But she may have to stay the night at a friend's house: the 30-year-old singer/songwriter and her husband, Darren Seltmann (of sample-meisters the Avalanches), have sold their Yarraville home and are headed for a sea change – perhaps somewhere near Torquay.

Seltmann says she loves Melbourne and thrives in the city but has wanted to try living by the sea for some time. Before she fell in love and followed Darren here 12 years ago she lived for a stint in a friend's North Curl Curl granny flat, on Sydney's northern beaches. "I just loved it so much. You could pretty much walk to the beach. I remember a friend calling me up saying we've got tickets to some film premiere in the city. I was like, 'But there's a full moon tonight and I really want to be on the beach to see it'. I have really fond memories of loving that; just being there and having that space – being able to go for walks."

The introspective and melodic pop songs you'll find on her debut album *The Last Beautiful Day* were recorded at home in a converted veranda studio, which Seltmann dubbed Lonely Studio ("lonely in a good way"). On the strength of the album's Australian release (through Dot Dash) she did a few "little shows" in New York and the UK. Canadian indie label Arts & Crafts snapped her up, with their stable of artists including Stars, Jason Collett and Broken Social Scene (also playing the Laneway Festival).

Despite the album's success, Seltmann still manages herself. "(It) can get pretty full-on," she admits. "When it's really busy, that's when it freaks me out a bit and all I want to do is focus more on the music side of things. It's taught me a lot about being confident, knowing what you want and dealing with people in a business way."

Her personal and intimate compositions are a mix of her experiences, stories she has made up and memories of childhood. Broadly, though, they are about love, a theme that inspires her in life and work. A year ago she bought Darren a motorcycle and thrills in being his passenger. "It's all about trust and surrender. Putting myself in a situation (where) I could die ... but I'm totally trusting him with my life. I guess I see that as a really beautiful thing."

The St Jerome's Laneway Festival is on February 26.

Tickets \$66, phone 136 100 or www.ticketmaster.com.au

