

WHEN I OPENED FOR LENNY BRUCE IN AUSTRALIA by Derek Strahan

Sayings attributed to Lenny Bruce:

I won't say ours was a tough school, but we had our own coroner. We used to write essays like: What I'm going to be if I grow up.

Satire is tragedy plus time. You give it enough time, the public, the reviewers will allow you to satirize it. Which is rather ridiculous, when you think about it.

The "what should be" never did exist, but people keep trying to live up to it. There is no "what should be," there is only what is.

The role of a comedian is to make the audience laugh, at a minimum of once every fifteen seconds.

The only truly anonymous donor is the guy who knocks up your daughter.

If Jesus had been killed twenty years ago, Catholic school children would be wearing little electric chairs around their necks instead of crosses.

Miami Beach is where neon goes to die.

In 1962 I appeared on the Bob Sanders TV show with a small group to sing a song I had written called "The Family of Man". I'm really not sure how I got on the show, but at that time I was singing my own songs with guitar around "folk venues" in Sydney. Mostly quite off-beat satirical stuff but this song was suggested by a UN promotion at the time, and I was also quite into 60s peace and love stuff.

On the same show was the promoter Lee Gordon who was bringing out Lenny, who, as many will recall, was very well known and had also been involved in bringing Frank Sinatra to Australia in 1958. Anyway, in the chat segment of the show, with everyone sitting around, Lee was complimentary about our performance and offered, on air, to book our little act as an opener for Lenny. It was, by then, well known that Lee was worried that segments of the Australian public would react badly to Lenny's act, and I think perhaps he felt our act might ease the way, my song being a bit high-minded!

Damian Kringas has recently published an account of Lenny Bruce's ill-fated visit to Australia in that year and contacted me to chat about my recollections of that event. (see cover pic and then scroll down for [more details below](#)). He had come across press references, preserved in cuttings in the NSW State Library, mentioning the appearance with Lenny of the "Freedom From Hunger" Trio. (I never knew we were called that!) Damian also filled me in with background details, of which I was also unaware at the time! Read his lively book to find out much much more!

TV BAN ON U.S. COMIC

"SICK" American ^{SUN} comedian
Lenny Bruce has been banned
from tonight's ABN 2 television
show "People." 11 SEP 1962

LENNY BRUCE

13 DAYS IN SYDNEY

Blasphemous

4 WOMEN
WALK OUT
"Language"
complaints

NAUSEATING

STUNNED
SILENCE
BLASPHEMY
AND OBSCENITY

UNEMPLOYABLE



SHOW CANCELLED

BY DAMIAN KRINGAS

What Damian found out was that “Lee Gordon was in financial trouble. He organised Bruce because he thought he could get some go-go from his reputation and make some money independently from Abe Saffron who had him over a barrel. He organised a two show a night, two-week gig at Aaron's hotel. Bruce played the first night, a show at 9pm and then one at 11pm. (We opened for the 11pm show.) The 11pm show was a disaster with Bruce telling a woman in the audience (Barbara Wyndon) to F off. The shows were cancelled. As a last ditch effort the Wintergarden show was put on, but by that time Lenny was ready to move on”.

I have little recollection of the 11pm opening. In view of what followed perhaps I have blanked it out, but there exists a photo of our performance which Damian also found in the archives. (see pic).



Photo taken at Aarons; Derek Strahan, Tina Date, 1962

Following the Aarons debacle, Lenny was only allowed to appear as a "lecturer", not as an entertainer. We, therefore, as entertainers, could no longer appear to open his show! However, we were invited to the "lecture" which played to a packed house at the Wintergarden Theatre in the affluent harbourside suburb of Rose Bay, not in the city centre. (The grand old theatre has since been demolished). Lenny's performance was potent and wonderful.

Afterwards he memorably invited the three of us - singer and flute player Tina Date, and guitarist Sebastian Jorgensen (of the Melbourne Jorgensen art clan) - to join him in his hotel room, where we chatted for about an hour, with Lenny covering many topics including voicing his frustration in colourful language at the way he was being treated in Australia. He gave each of us a gift from the melange of belongings in his luggage. Mine was a brief case, which I carried around for many years, in preference to any other handbag, till it became too bedraggled for use. I have to report that Lennie also, at one point, excused himself and disappeared into an adjacent room, and returned shortly thereafter, somewhat more relaxed.

I still have a cover copy of the song on a private tape, and plan to have it released on a 2nd CD collection of my songs.

[\(Click here for details about my first CD song collection "Take Me To Your Leader".\)](#)

LENNY BRUCE 13 DAYS IN SYDNEY

By Damian Kringas

In September 1962 Lenny Bruce spent 13 days in Sydney, Australia.

Musical promoter Lee Gordon brought Bruce to Australia for what was to have been a two-week Sydney stint. The result is now legendary, but bathed in myth and misunderstanding.

This is what happened.

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