

Podcast 72 – AC/DC

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 72 – AC/DC

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast72.mp3>

Hi,

Australia has produced a number of rock bands which have been internationally successful. Amongst the best known of these are INXS, Little River Band, the Bee Gees and, last but not least, AC/DC. In this podcast I would like to tell you a little about AC/DC, the most successful rock band ever to come out of Australia. AC/DC have sold more than 200 million albums around the world, with around 71 million albums in the United States. This makes them one of the biggest selling bands of all time.

It's fair to say that AC/DC's music does not appeal to everybody, although I guess that is true of every artist to some extent. Their music is what I would call 'hard rock'. It's loud and has an edge to it and that's not to everyone's taste. But there are millions of people around the world who love their music, who keep on buying their albums and who turn up in their tens of thousands to see their concerts.

The band was started in November 1973 by two young brothers, Malcolm and Angus Young. With their family, they had arrived in Australia as immigrants from Scotland in 1963, when Angus was just 8 years old. Their older brother George also became a famous Australian musician. He was in the band called The Easy Beats which had an international hit in 1966 with the song 'Friday on my mind.' George has since had a great career as a musician, songwriter and music producer.

The band's name AC/DC was taken from the technical term which describes a type of electric current. It was first suggested by Malcolm and Angus's sister Margaret, who had seen the term on a sewing machine. In Australia, it is quite common for people to sometimes use the expression Acca Dacca to describe the band AC/DC. The band's logo has an image of a lightning bolt between the AC and the DC. I think a lightning bolt is about right when you are talking about Acca Dacca.

Over the years, AC/DC have had a few changes in their lineup, although the two longest serving band members have been Malcolm and Angus who were both there right from the start. Malcolm only recently retired from the band in 2014 owing to declining health, after 41 years in the band. Not a bad effort. However, in my opinion, Angus is the real heart and soul of the band.



He has a unique guitar playing style and has used the same stage costume, a schoolboy's uniform, ever since their first gig on New Year's Eve 1973. He even still uses the same movements on stage, including his own version of Chuck Berry's duck walk. His fans would have it no other way.

The band has had their current lead singer, Englishman Brian Johnson, since 1980. Before Brian, their lead singer was Bon Scott, also a Scottish immigrant to Australia. He joined the band in 1974 and was the perfect front man for the band's hard-edged rock and roll music. Unfortunately, his life ended too early and his death nearly led to the end of the band. In February 1980, after a heavy night of drinking, he died

from alcohol poisoning. At that time, the band had started to have major success in the United States with their album Highway to Hell. They considered disbanding, but with the encouragement of Bon Scott's family, they decided to select a new lead singer and that was Brian. It was lucky that they decided to continue because their next album was titled Back in Black. It became their biggest selling album and it made them into international rock stars. It is now the second highest selling album ever by any artist, second only to Michael Jackson's Thriller.

Malcolm and Angus have been the key songwriters and have somehow hit upon a unique rock sound, with the strong lyrics and great rock riffs which are typical of an AC/DC song. Their many years of working together have produced the consistent sound which their fans love so much. Unlike most other bands and musicians who change and develop their style over many years, AC/DC have tried to stay true to that one pure rock sound which their fans love. Their music today sounds very similar to how it sounded in the mid-1970s. Yet somehow, it still retains a freshness and that's exactly what their fans want. You know what you will get from an AC/DC performance and that's hard-edged rock and roll.

AC/DC have performed consistently well since 1973 with 17 best-selling albums and 21 huge concert tours reaching millions of fans. They don't seem to show any signs of stopping either.

It's amazing how often you will discover people who you least expect to be fans of AC/DC. I recall working for a few months on a special project at Australia Post's headquarters with a colleague who was in his late 40s. He was the manager of a Post Office in Melbourne and a great family man. I was surprised to find out that he was an avid fan of AC/DC. I met him one time in the street on a weekend and he had a tee-shirt with AC/DC in bold letters across the front. When I asked him about it, he told me enthusiastically about how much he loved

the band and how he went to their concerts whenever they were touring in Australia.

Here in Melbourne, in 2004, the city even named a street after the band.



It is not far from Swanston Street in the city centre, where in 1975, AC/DC made their famous video of them playing their music on the back of a truck while driving through the streets of Melbourne. The song was 'It's a Long Way to the Top' – a great song.

I have always loved their music without being a dedicated fan. I certainly have Back in Black in my music collection. I did go to one AC/DC concert in 2010. It was at the Docklands Stadium in Melbourne, where they sold out a crowd of around 50,000 screaming fans. I went with two friends and our seats were really high and right up the back, in the very last row in fact. We had a great view and it was almost as much fun watching the enthusiastic crowd as it was to hear the band. My lasting memory of the concert is how incredibly loud it was. I discovered that my two friends had brought ear plugs to put in their ears. I wish they had told me before, because I would have done the same. Even so, it was a great experience and one I wouldn't have missed for the world.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 72 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

albums = a collection of songs

alcohol poisoning = when you have too much alcohol and it makes you sick or you die

appeal = when something is liked

avid = enthusiastic

bold = bright, stands out

career = the time from when you start your job to when you finish your job

colleague = someone you work with in your job

concerts = when many people watch performers

consistent = when things are done the same way over time

declining = getting less or getting worse

dedicated = when you like only one thing

disbanding = when a band decides not to stay together anymore

ear plugs = small things you put in your ears to block out the sound

edge = (here) when the music is loud and a little angry

effort = how much work you have done

electric current = how electricity goes down a wire

encouragement = when you tell someone they should do something

exactly = the same

expression = 1 or more words used to describe something

front man = the lead singer in a band

gig = when a band plays for an audience

headquarters = the main building for a company

heart and soul = the most important part

hit = (here) when a performer has a record which is bought by many, many people
huge = very large
image = a picture
immigrants = people who go to live in another country to live
in my opinion = what I think about something
internationally successful = known in many other countries
last but not least = you put it last in a list, but it is still important
least expect = when it is a surprise, you did not think it would happen
lightning bolt = a strong spark of electricity during a storm
lineup = the people in a music band
logo = a picture used to represent something.
lyrics = the words to a song
millions = 1,000,000s
music producer = someone who helps a group or singer make a recording
produced = made
pure = is not mixed with anything else
recall = remember
retains = does not change
retired = your career has finished and now you don't work anymore
riffs = the repeated musical parts of a song
row = a line of seats in a stadium or theatre
Scotland = the northern part of the United Kingdom
serving = to do something
sewing machine = a machine to make clothes
stadium = a place where many people can watch a performance or a game of sport
stage costume = what clothes a performer wears when they perform on stage
taste = (here) liking, when you think the music is good
technical term = a special word or phrase to describe something complicated
titled = to give a name to something

to some extent = when it is mostly true, but not completely
to stay true to = when you believe the same thing over a long
period

uniform = a costume

unique guitar style = the way you play guitar is different to
other people

version = when something is done differently to how others do
it