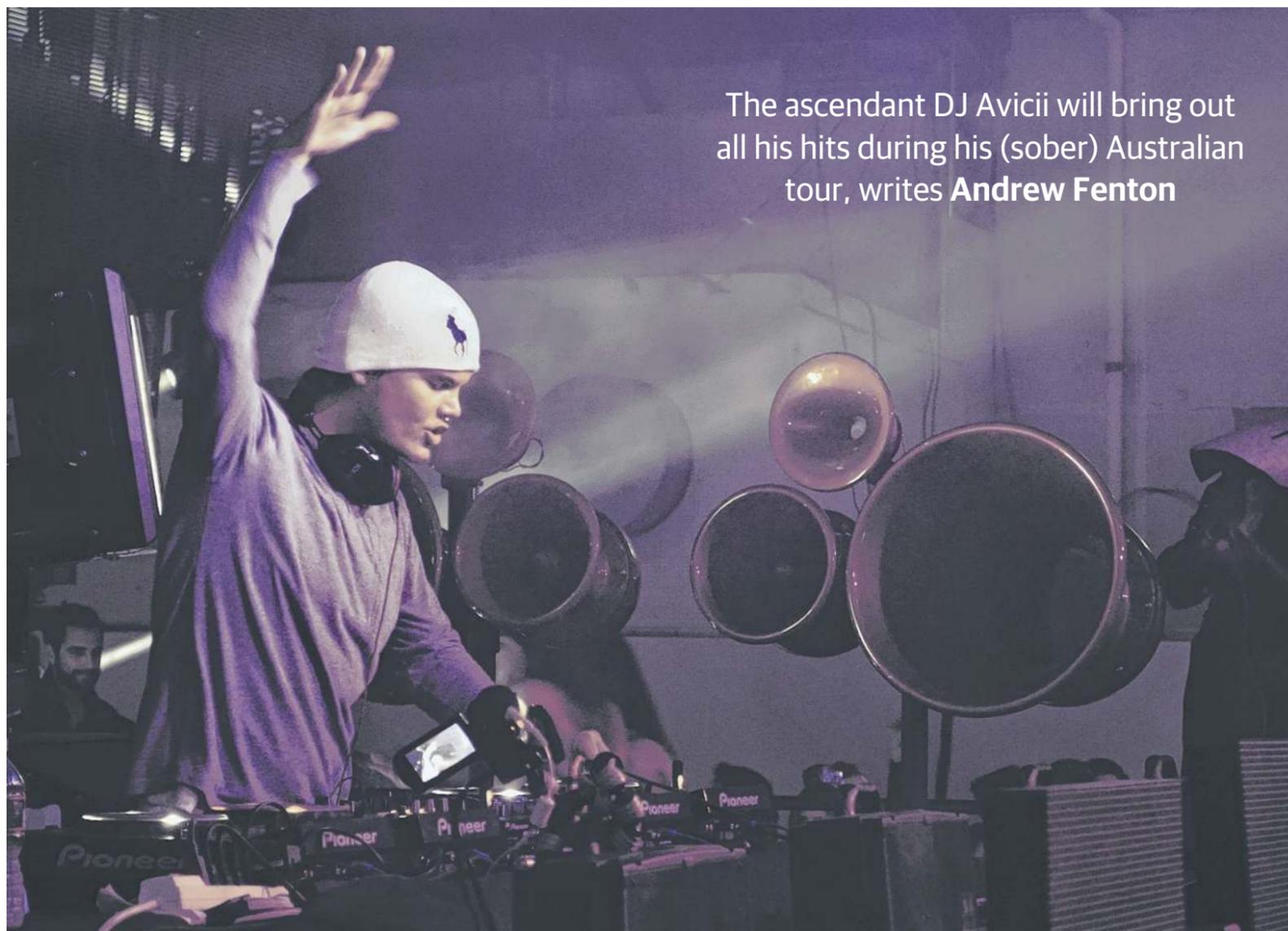




The ascendant DJ Avicii will bring out all his hits during his (sober) Australian tour, writes **Andrew Fenton**



DJ stays true to his music

Swedish superstar DJ Avicii admits he's "completely super sick" of some of his big hits — but that won't stop him from dusting them off for January's *True* arena tour.

The 24-year-old Stockholm native (real name Tim Bergling) has only been massive for a couple of years now but has already amassed a grab bag of tracks he's almost contractually obliged to play: think *Levels*, *Fade Into Darkness* and *Silhouettes* alongside recent radio staples *Wake Me Up* and *Hey Brother*.

"I met so many artists that can look at that as something negative and that (hit) track becomes something that just follows them for 10 years," he says. "But to me it's really an honour ... so even if I am tired of hearing some of the songs — and I am obviously completely super sick of them — I never get tired of the reaction they get."

Ranked No. 3 in the world by *DJ Magazine* two years running, Avicii's rise has been nothing less than astounding, thanks to his club and dance festival friendly tracks including the Grammy-nominated *Levels*, *Alcoholic* and *Last Dance* as well as a heap of remixes. But earlier this year he took a bit of a left turn on his debut album *True*, taking the emphasis off the main room bangers and on to finely crafted songs — featuring acoustic guitars, folk and bluegrass — with collaborators including Aloe *I Need a Dollar* Blacc, Chic's Nile Rodgers and Mac Davis (who penned Elvis's *In The Ghetto*).

His folk-influenced *Wake Me Up* went No.1 in 70 countries and topped the charts here for six weeks, while his current ARIA No.4 single, *Hey Brother* — more Soggy Bottom Boys than Ministry of Sound — has even crossed over to country

radio in the US. Some point to his global success and accuse him of "selling out".

He hasn't. "If I wanted to sell out it would be the easiest thing in the world, like just go and recreate what I've done and choose a couple of pop stars to work with," he explains.

"What's hard is finding something credible to yourself. I've never compromised with my music."

Avicii had his own reverse "Dylan at Newport" moment at Miami's Ultra Music Festival in March when he brought out Blacc and a Bluegrass combo complete with banjo and kazoo

to showcase his new sound. The backlash was swift and immediate — he was criticised for "jumping the EDM shark" and played alive on social media.

But the subsequent success of *True* — top 10 in 20 countries — made the haters look a little bit like those electric-guitar-hating folkies at Newport.

Svengali-like manager Ash Pournouri (so hands-on he gets a co-writing credit for each track) later admitted the controversy went exactly as planned. "We knew people were going to react ... they had over 160 artists per weekend. The one artist that was talked about the most, by far, was Avicii.

"Everyone was talking about the album."

Avicii admits it was still hard to be the focus of that torrent of abuse. "I did know what was coming, I mean I had that discussion with my manager before going into Ultra (but) obviously it's always different when it actually happens," he says. "I thought ... if once the dust settles people still hated it then at least I did something that I liked and something that I can stand by."

True suggests his passion is as much about well-written pop songs with huge melodic hooks as it is dance music, so it comes as no surprise he says he wants to work more with fellow countrymates Benny and Bjorn from ABBA. (They collaborated on this year's Eurovision Song

Contest theme.) Avicii also says he only got into dance and DJing as a result of creating music on his laptop "not the other way around".

"I pretty much listen to everything that's melodic and has these, like you said, poppy hooks, I've always been a sucker for that," he says.

Avicii is happy to send himself up, as in Lena Dunham and Spike Jonze's live short film set to his music at the recent YouTube Music Awards, which featured Michael Shannon portraying the DJ as a complete douchebag.

"I really think I'm pretty far from what was portrayed in the awards show, which just made it funnier," he says.

Avicii's last visit to Australia in March saw his Brisbane and Perth Future Music Festival appearances cancelled after he was hospitalised with stomach pain. And in 2012 he went into hospital with acute pancreatitis and spent 11 days recovering.

With a punishing 300 gig a year schedule, he admits that constant partying took its toll.

"I partied pretty much every night because I had a show every night," he says. "That was kind of how I lived my life for the first four years of touring. But then I just couldn't keep up with it, my body couldn't keep up with it. I'm not drinking any more." He was "never an alcoholic" but was faced with a stark choice: "I'm either going to do it 100 per cent serious ... (or) I'll just keep partying. The obvious choice for me was to go with the music and the career."

SEE AVICII, MELBOURNE SHOWGROUNDS, JANUARY 26, MOSHTIX.COM.AU



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"I'm either going to do it 100 per cent serious ... (or) keep partying. The obvious choice for me was to go with the music and the career"

AVICII (TIM BERGLING)