

BALLADEERS BRING HOME TOP AWARDS

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By Anna Rose

Tamworth's bush balladeers came home from the Bungendore Country Music Festival with excess baggage - but no-one was complaining.

During the event at the 2005 Stan Coster Memorial Bush Ballad Awards, Brian Letton took out the male vocal award, for Leave Him in the Longyard, and his producer and good mate, Lindsay Butler, won the instrumental award with Lawrie Minson for the Slim Dusty classic, When The Rain Tumbles Down In July.

Former Manilla singer-songwriter Tracy Coster, now based on the Central Coast, won two awards – comedy song for Lawson's Loaded Dog and album of the year for Coster Country.

In another coup for the LBS stable, Matt Manning, the Australian Bush Balladeers' Association Star Quest winner, Matt Manning, won new talent, with You've Gotta Go West, Young Fella.

Matt recorded the song at LBS studio as part of his prize package for winning the prestigious quest.

In other categories, Laura Downing won female vocal for Circle of Sawdust and Bill Crosby and Jeff Brown won the songwriters' award for Fred Gutte.

It was quite a haul for the LBS stable, the aim of which is to keep alive the tradition of the bush ballad style by recording artists who favour that style of music.

This year the LBS team didn't have to rush south to the Bungendore festival after Tamworth's annual hoedown, having a week's break in between, due to the earlier Tamworth Festival dates.

Just as well, too, as Lindsay and wife Shaza Leigh had a huge festival, opening their new auditorium and hosting hundreds over the week for morning tea concerts and studio tours.

"It's a good eight hours' drive to Bungendore," Shaza said.

"And it's a good little festival. They get thousands there now. I think the organisers are a little concerned that it's growing in popularity, that they may not be able to adequately cater for the crowds, if they get much bigger."

Shaza said one of the most moving moments of the entire weekend was the naming of the Greg Gordon Stage, in memory of the festival's founder, who passed away last year.

"It was so appropriate that the stage was named after Greg," Shaza said.

"It was Greg who pushed to have the stage built, as prior to that, the concerts were held on the back of a truck.

"A special presentation was made to Maureen Gordon, Greg's widow, and it was a very touching moment for all there."