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Entertainment


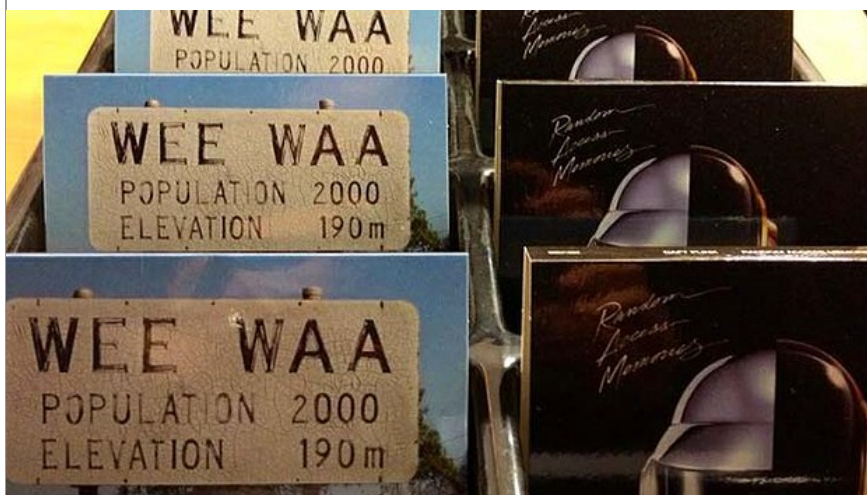
## Daft Punk a no-show as album 'launched'

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Peter Vincent

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Daft Punk albums on display. Photo: Peter Vincent

A severe housefire on the Kamilaroi highway into Wee Waa delayed the start of the much-hyped global launch of Daft Punk's album, *Random Access Memories*. But one of the most ingenious - if misleading - music marketing campaigns of recent times eventually culminated in a spectacular dance music party on a under-lit circular outdoor dancefloor, apparently the biggest in Australia.

Hundreds of carloads of fans had to be diverted around Narrabri after the fire closed the highway into Wee Waa because of concerns over asbestos inside.

The album "launch" was considered misleading by many because the songs were available on the internet earlier this week. And optimism that the two Frenchmen who make up Daft Punk, Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, might make an unscheduled appearance came to nothing, although few fans complained.



The Wee Waa dancefloor and disco ball. Photo: Peter Vincent

The set and lighting, designed by Daft Punk offshoot 'Daft Art', was consistent with the standard of the house music duo's usual live act, given the remote location. Four giant speaker towers and sixteen floodlights, aimed skywards encircled the dancefloor, above which hung a seven tonne disco ball. Lighting timed with the beats ranged from red to pink to green and white.

Susan and Loretta, both 30, from Elizabeth Bay drove eight hours to reach the tiny cotton farming town on Thursday and said the event lived up to the

hype. "It's off the hook right now, Daft Punk in the bush! Just look around!" Susan said.

Although the crowd probably fell short of the 4000 tickets sold, they got into the celebratory spirit on a cold night expected to drop to two degrees. Many came in classic music festival garb: wearing anything from jungle book character outfits to rabbit suits, American indian headresses and of course Daft Punk's trademark robot helmets.

The album was played in full, 74 minutes, followed by a DJ set including older Daft Punk tracks.

NZ Police, who initiated Operation Hadrian to deal with possible drug offences and alcohol related violence in Wee Waa were highly visible, but quiet - at least during the album party. They estimated the crowd at around 1500, although it looked closer to 2000.

Locals mixed happily with the mostly well-behaved visitors, some bringing children and others their parents.

Shirley Steele from the Wee Waa Pony Club wandered around the dancefloor with her mother and an elderly couple, Clive and Greta Richardson.

"The environment is alot of fun," said Mrs Steele jnr. "Everyone's having a good time and it's probably something we'll never see again."

What did 80 year old Clive make of it? "It's alright. As long as we don't get a bill."

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