



Flashback: Crowds pack into Sunbury.

# The wild years recalled

IT was a happening — all those years ago.

Thousands of fans camped, drank, chanted and danced. Hundreds smoked drugs, some walked naked, others swam in the creek and young couples made love.

It happened on the Australia Day weekend on a desolate farm paddock near Sunbury between 1972 and 1975.

Mike Rudd and Bill Putt, who as members of the band Spectrum and later Ariel played to insatiable crowds during the festivals, returned to the property this week for the first time in more than 20 years.

No audience, no lighting experts, no stage managers, no amplifiers, no roadies — just two local musicians

By ANTHONY BLACK

playing and singing *I'll Be Gone*.

The active rockers, now in their 50s, are to be part of a documentary about the life and times of people involved in the four festivals.

The film will include interviews with bands, roadies, recording engineers, fans, police, festival organisers, music promoters, critics and others who played a part in creating what was dubbed "Australia's Woodstock".

Film maker Paul Murphy is appealing to anyone who may have film footage of the Sunbury festivals to contact him.

Mr Murphy said footage of bands, fans and any other activity could be included in his docu-



Recalling: Mike Rudd and Bill Putt reminisce at the site of the festival. Picture: ROB LEESON

mentary, to be released this year.

"We would love footage of AC/DC, the Angels, Captain Matchbox and the Dingoes," he said.

"We would kill for footage of Queen!"

Mr Murphy considers it vital that Sunbury's influence is passed on for future generations to draw on rather than it becoming a distant memory of the baby-boomer brigade.

"The real reason for making the film is to capture the significance of what happened here," he said.

Mr Murphy said Sunbury was a watershed in the Australian music industry, when local bands carved out their own particular brand of rock.

"It was the declaration of independence for the Australian music industry," he said.

"Some of the bands which played Sunbury went on to carve out international careers," he said, referring to AC/DC, the Angels, Rose Tattoo and Skyhooks.

"Back then, if a band managed to play Sunbury, they had entered the big league."

Mr Murphy said Sunbury was also the catalyst behind the creation of Mushroom Records, Australia's first major recording label.

Mushroom's first album release was a triple vinyl set recorded live at Sunbury '73.

In the years that followed, local bands such as Chain, the Dingoes, Lobby Loyd and

Skyhooks signed up to record with Mushroom.

"Before Mushroom, the major record companies were English and American," Mr Murphy said.

Mr Murphy said the four years of Sunbury were set against the background of some of the most turbulent and interesting times in Australia's political and economic history.

A month before the second Sunbury, the Gough Whitlam-led Labor Party was swept to power after 23 years in opposition. By the time the final Sunbury was staged, the Whitlam government's days were numbered.

By 1975, high unemployment had become a national reality, inflation soared, and industrial disputes raged.

In 1974, the Sunbury Festival was running out of steam. The initial concept of Australian bands only was put aside for the third festival when an unknown English group called Queen showed up in limousines.

In 1975, it was the last hurrah. The rains put paid to Sunbury, and the English band Deep

Purple was the only group paid.

● Mushroom's 25th anniversary celebrations will feature a Legends of Sunbury concert with Chain, Ariel and Billy Thorpe at the Crown Casino's Mercury Lounge on Friday night.