



Gave Presley Hound Dog

Freddie Bell

SINGER, SONGWRITER

Born: September 29, 1931

Died: February 10, 2008

FREDDIE Bell was a '50s rock 'n' roll pioneer whose version of *Hound Dog* inspired Elvis Presley to cover the song.

He also had a worldwide hit with *Giddy up a Ding Dong*, which he performed with his band the Bellboys in the seminal 1956 teen film *Rock Around The Clock*.

In 1951 his Bellboys were one of the first white combos to play black music. They specialised in covers of rhythm-and-blues hits of the day.

In 1955 Bell made his first recording, a reworking of Big Mama Thornton's *Hound Dog*.

In April 1956 Presley, who was in Las Vegas, heard Bell singing *Hound Dog* and asked if he might cover the song.

While Bell's version was buried on an album, Presley's was released as a single and soared to the top of the charts.

A film producer asked Bell and his group to appear in *Rock Around the Clock*.

Bell, 76, died of cancer.

Dr CUNNINGHAM DAX, AO

Health visionary kept art for heart's sake

MENTAL HEALTH REFORMER

Born: May 18, 1908

Died: January 29, 2008

DR Cunningham Dax, a former Victorian Mental Health Authority chairman, believed patients should be treated rather than locked up.

Dr Dax stood tall, a big-hearted man and a visionary with boundless energy and enthusiasm.

An organiser and a leader, he was also deeply compassionate.

As the state's most senior mental health official from 1952-68, Dr Dax adopted a hands-on approach at hospitals.

It is said that he wept openly when he first visited Kew Cottages in the early 1950s and saw it in a state of neglect.

Mental health patients in the 1940s had been examined in large hospitals and then locked away in asylums in dirty, overcrowded wards.

Most slept on worn-out mattresses on the floor.

Dr Dax was considered a pioneer in the use of art as a valuable therapeutic aid for the mentally ill.

With his love of music as well as art, he insisted that studios be built in hospital grounds where artists and musicians visited.

His many reforms included anti-psychotic and anti-depressant medications and general anaesthesia for electroconvulsive therapy.



Cunningham Dax

He wanted all patients to have their own bed and cupboard because he believed it was important to respect their privacy.

He was also closely involved in setting up Australia's first telephone counselling service.

Born in England, Eric Cunningham Dax graduated in medicine in 1932.

As a Surrey mental hospital superintendent in 1946 he was the first psychiatrist to introduce art as a way of treating mental patients.

Dr Dax arrived in Melbourne in 1952 to take up his appointment with the Victorian government.

Victoria's reputation as a world leader in treating the mentally ill grew enormously during Dr Dax's tenure as the boss.

Dr Dax recorded his work in the book, *From Asylum to Community*.

The World Health Organisation recognised his achievements by appointing him a consultant.

In 1968 he quit Victoria when the Tasmanian government asked him to take charge of its community and mental health research.

For his Tasmanian contribution he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia.

Returning to Victoria in 1984, he spent the rest of his life assembling a collection of art.

The Parkville-based Cunningham Dax Collection, with more than 12,000 works, is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

The collection is exhibited regularly at an onsite gallery and on tour interstate as well as throughout Victoria.

Dr Dax never considered it a personal collection but rather one belonging to the public.

Its aim was to promote a greater understanding by the public of people who are mentally ill or psychologically traumatised.

Kew Cottages was a high priority for Dr Dax, something that greatly pleased one of Kew's most promi-

nent residents, the then prime minister, Robert Menzies.

Visiting Kew Cottages, Menzies praised Dr Dax's approach and work as a mental health reformer.

During the '50s Dr Dax was rarely out of the spotlight as he pushed his reforms, trying to enlist the media to help sway apathetic politicians for more money.

His crusade received much help from *The Herald* and one of its senior journalists, Bill Tipping.

Dr Dax was adept at gaining the strong support of the public and community and service groups.

Having never lost touch in retirement, he burst forth in a local paper in 2005, outraged over the "dismantling of the mental health system".

He was perturbed over the sale of public land surrounding hospitals and centres for the intellectually handicapped, in particular Kew Cottages.

Last May, the Victorian Parliament voted to establish a select committee to inquire into the sale and development of public lands, especially Kew Cottages.

The annual lecture of the college of mental health nurses is called the Eric Cunningham Dax Lecture.

Dr Dax, 99, died at a Camberwell hostel of natural causes. Survivors include four children, nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. His wife, Katie, nee Thompson, died in 1997.