

IT'S SPRAWLING, LOOSE AND VERY HAIRY. So, as the press release calls it, "one of Australian Rock music's most important rock and roll archives" is fit for purpose. We'll get to the hair later.

This show, having been around the block a few times, currently fills the Carriageworks foyer. Working in early-1970s Melbourne, it's clear music photographer David Porter/Jacques L'Affrique (say it out loud) experienced few barriers between musicians and photographer. A viewer of the photographer's vintage might respond with a priapic surge of extra-virgin nostalgia for hedonistic fun and anarchic possibility. A viewer of more recent vintage might gape at the pre-pixel roughness of these eight by ten inch black and white prints – many out of focus, contrasty, the odd chemical stain. But the man had access. Alongside the stilted, endearingly naive publicity shots typical of their era, L'Affrique's photographs show bands in their kitchens, at private get-togethers, in back yards. A rock photographer has to be a fan of rock itself, its social and performance rituals, bipolar aggression and vulnerability, and occasional transcendent capacity. L'Affrique the fan could go backstage with his camera and...join in.

Most of these photographs operate as windows on musicians' lives and work, a conscious recording. Some achieve form/content synthesis. *On the Dancefloor* (c. 1973) is both a wonderful social document and a dynamic decisive-moment photograph whose composition harnesses the highly individual dancers' moves. L'Affrique's weighty portrait of industry man Phil Jacobsen centres a still, tuxedoed Jacobsen in a cloud of (presumably his own, presumably tobacco) smoke. The live concert images depend for their animation on their subjects' performances. Stage images of Elton John instill a certain surrealism: photographed from behind, a balding, slightly pudgy man in tennis shorts plays the piano with feet in the air. In the archive also are portraits of musicians deserving of the increased recognition that an archive like this can create. Here's Lobby Loyde, who although not a household name maybe should be, influencing Kurt Cobain and Henry Rollins.

For those without memory or knowledge of this scene, to ask what these snaps of beaming or half-mast-eyelidded, often unknown, mostly male musos might mean is partly to answer the question. These photographs refract our present back to us. For a start, a contemporary archive would contain a lot more women. These seminal Australian musicians also communicate a Facebook-like naïveté about being photographed and having their image circulate. It's not attributable just to pub rock's low-glam anti-flamboyance. These photographs were made before the entertainment industry had recruited its solipsism-fuelling teams of minders, spin doctors, PR reps, stylists and image merchants to release *approved*

images. It's not clear whether the trust L'Affrique's subjects extended him reflects their relationship, the scene they shared or the times they lived in; probably a mixture of all three. If you've seen Rick Springfield's gleefully self-parodying performance on the current TV series *Californication*, it's fun to see its origins. Used in the exhibition's publicity material, Springfield's portrait is a checklist of rock and roll photography tropes: aviator sunglasses, leather jacket, gritty urban background of brick wall, high contrast print, cheekbones. Something this portrait does contain that's missing from many of the others is a suggestion of something less tangible, but necessary to rock and roll: mystique. Viewing this image doesn't necessarily illuminate the subject-photographer relationship – sometimes a photograph isn't evidence of a shoot so much as its resulting debris. But Springfield appears to have considerably more control and understanding of his photographed image than most of L'Affrique's subjects. Even at this early stage of his career he appears contained, not especially available, aware of his value.

*Daddy Cool*, c.1971. Four young men, their slim bodies topped by lush follicular growth, pose around a car. Experienced live performers, their poses are yet unformed; they don't know where to look, don't want to appear too eager. A typical publicity shot of a typically homosocial young band. The photographer releases the shutter; a gust of wind arrives, and on three of the young men their hair, that potent symbol of femininity appropriated here for transgressive purposes, lifts up, up, up, obliterating one band member's face and pricking forever the self-conscious masculine display. And the photograph soars away from its original time, place and intentions and towards a rock and roll future, a more knowing future full of both the daughters and sons of men like these.