

Down Under

(Men at Work)

[Verse 1]

Traveling in a fried-out Kombi
On a hippie trail, head full of zombie
I met a strange lady, she made me
nervous
She took me in and gave me breakfast
And she said

[Chorus 1]

Do you come from a land down under
Where women glow and men plunder
Can't you hear, can't you hear the
thunder
You better run, you better take cover

[Verse 2]

Buying bread from a man in Brussels
He was six-foot-four and full of
muscles
I said, do you speak-a my language
He just smiled and gave me a
Vegemite sandwich
And he said

[Chorus 2]

I come from a land down under
Where beer does flow and men
chunder
Can't you hear, can't you hear the
thunder
You better run, you better take cover

[Verse 3]

Lyin' in a den in Bombay
With a slack jaw, and not much to say
I said to the man, are you trying to
tempt me
Because I come from the land of
plenty
And he said

[Chorus 1]

Do you come from a land down under
Where women glow and men plunder
Can't you hear, can't you hear the
thunder
You better run, you better take cover

Do you come from a land down under
Where women glow and men plunder
Can't you hear, can't you hear the
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"Down Under" is a song recorded by Australian rock band Men at Work. It was originally released in 1980 as the B-side to their first local single titled "Keypunch Operator", released before the band signed with Columbia Records. Both early songs were written by the group's co-founders, Colin Hay and Ron Strykert. The early version of "Down Under" has a slightly different tempo and arrangement from the later Columbia release. The most well known version was then released on Columbia in October 1981 as the third single from their debut album *Business as Usual* (1981).

The hit song went to number one in their home country of Australia in December 1981, and then topped the New Zealand charts in February 1982. The song topped the Canadian charts in October 1982. In the United States, the song debuted on the *Billboard* Hot 100 on 6 November 1982 at No. 79, and reached No. 1 in January 1983 where it spent four non-consecutive weeks. It eventually sold over two million copies in the US alone. *Billboard* ranked it at No. 4 for 1983.

In the UK, the song topped the charts in January and February 1983, and is the only Men at Work song to make the UK top 20. The song also went to No. 1 in Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland, and was a top 10 hit in many other countries. "Down Under" is perceived as a patriotic song in Australia; it remains popular and is often played at sporting events.

Slang and drug terms are featured in the lyrics. They open with the singer travelling in a fried-out Kombi, on a hippie trail, head full of zombie. In Australian slang "fried-out" means overheated, Kombi refers to the Volkswagen Type 2 combination van, and having "a head full of zombie" refers to the use of a type of marijuana. Hippie trail refers to a subcultural tourist route popular in 1960s and 70s which stretched from Western Europe to South-East Asia. The song also contains the refrain, where beer does flow and men chunder. To "chunder" means to vomit.

Speaking to *Songfacts* about the overall meaning of the lyrics, Hay remarked:

"The chorus is really about the selling of Australia in many ways, the overdevelopment of the country. It was a song about the loss of spirit in that country. It's really about the plundering of the country by greedy people. It is ultimately about celebrating the country, but not in a nationalistic way and not in a flag-waving sense. It's really more than that."

In 2007, on the ABC-TV quiz show *Spicks and Specks* the question was posed "What children's song is contained in the song *Down Under*?" The answer, "Kookaburra", a song whose rights were owned by Larrikin Music, resulted in phone calls and emails to Larrikin the next day. Larrikin Music subsequently decided to take legal action against the song's writers Colin Hay and Ron Strykert.

In June 2009, 28 years after the release of the recording, Larrikin Music sued Men At Work for copyright infringement, alleging that part of the flute riff of "Down Under" was copied from "Kookaburra". On 4 February 2010, Justice Jacobson ruled that Larrikin's copyright had been infringed because "Down Under" reproduced "a substantial part of Kookaburra". On 6 July 2010, Justice Jacobson handed down a decision that Larrikin receive 5% of royalties from 2002.

Colin Hay has since suggested that the deaths of his father, Jim, in 2010, and of Men at Work flautist Greg Ham in 2012 were directly linked to the stress of the court case.