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by Frank Gauntlett

'WORLD'S A STAGE FOR REEVES'

There was something about the way Normie Rowe and Tommy Tycho spoke that went beyond natural enthusiasm for a new project. David Reeves – the man who penned the stage show *Seven Little Australians* – is behind the project, a new Australian musical based on the much-loved romance of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Both Normie and Tommy had just returned from recording the *Cyrano* album in Brisbane with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and to say they were keen would be the understatement of the year.

Cyrano, they insisted could be Australia's admission ticket to the international music theatre stage. It could make the mark. It could bring home the cultural kudos and mega-buck bacon.

So it's not hard to understand why David Reeves would foster enthusiasm. He's a busy man – somewhat obsessive, ambitious, practical, pragmatic, shrewd and completely unaffected. But none of the pragmatism or the practicality can conceal his strong romantic streak.

“You really invest five years of your life in something like this. The writing of it is an enormous task and when you get to opening night it is the culmination of a hell of a lot of your life.

“I don't know how other people do it but for me I become totally absorbed. It just runs me. I can't do anything else until it's done, it's on, and it's going. I'm very happy now that this thing is out”, he taps the magenta cover with a masterful finger.

As Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber did with *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the *Cyrano* recording is out to proclaim the show. It's going to be big and plans are afoot for a Brisbane opening next November, around Australia and then the world.

The basic outline of the story gives it familiarity.

Most people have heard of the noble, cultured and brave *Cyrano de Bergerac*, marred by a big nose, and the 17th century French original was the subject of a still popular play by Edmond Rostand written for the great French performer Jean Coquelin Senior near the turn of the century.

“The business of musicals is an international thing”, David insists. “We don't have a theatre circuit here that justifies a large production, as this is. You've got to be working for the international stage. Our main aim has to be to produce it overseas.

“This is a huge thing, a huge production with an enormous budget and I've told various people who we hope will indulge us and be involved, that all they can expect in Australia is for the production to cover themselves. It has got to be seen in the international arena.

:But the main thing is, I just love the story of *Cyrano* – just as I loved the story of *Seven Little Australians*. I'm not looking to be academic and I'm not looking for something that is specifically Australian. I'm looking to tell that story musically as well.”

David Reeves the businessman says: “You've got to be realistic in what you're doing.”

David Reeves the artist says: “Bugger the cost.”

After *Seven Little Australians* the Sydney born former concert organist, and nightclub musical director had a flop.

“I wrote which bombed down in Melbourne. It was called *Favourite Son* and you wouldn't have heard of it because it closed after a week. We opened right in the middle of the recession and it had a lot of problems – a lot of problems.

“Everything went wrong, it was just a nightmare. I've seen the highs and lows and you just put it down to experience. If you haven't been through those low times then I don't think you can write good shows either.

“But this thing is nothing like that. I think in *Cyrano*, my life experience sort of comes through.”

In his enthusiasm to see *Cyrano* realised, it is fairly unusual to see the artistic sensibilities of David Reeves making an appearance. They usually crop up later.

“Artistic achievement is more interesting to me than the money – otherwise you'd never write these pieces. As a financial exercise you couldn't do anything dumber in your life.

“That's the most important thing to me, but, of course, a producer can't think like that, if he wants to stay around.

Success, I think, would be if people loved it. A source of great satisfaction to me, was to watch some of the audiences for *Seven Little Aussies*.

“Australians don't expect other Australians to succeed in this game – Lloyd Webber does that – but I feel this album aspires to world class because of guys like Normie and Tommy Tycho, Simon Gallaher and everyone else involved.

“We can do it. There's no way that we can't do a production that would more than stack up in the West End. I can't do it myself but with the right support....
