

# IN HER GROOVE

We speak to the nine-time ARIA Award-winning indie-pop artist **MISSY HIGGINS** ahead of her upcoming tour

**What have been your biggest ‘pinch me’ moments?** Touring with Ed [Sheeran for his 2018 ÷ *Tour*] was up there because I’d never been in front of that many people consistently before. His fans were so excited and full of love for him, I got an inkling of what it was like to be that big a star. And doing that while I was pregnant, then announcing my pregnancy on stage to 80,000 people before singing his biggest single at the time with him—the [one] he did with Beyoncé, “Perfect Duet”—was a dream. **You’re a mum of two now. Has your growing family changed the way you approach work and fame?** The days of me going away for months and months on the road are probably gone now but that’s okay, because I did so much when I was in my twenties. My husband [playwright Dan Lee] is a stay-at-home dad whenever I’m touring, so ideally, I’ll space shows to just one or two a weekend, then go home during the week. I just want to hang out with the kids while they’re young...they’re so much fun. **Last year saw you explore new creative avenues closer to home. You co-created songs for the ABC series *Total Control*, starring Rachel Griffiths and Deborah Mailman, which won the 2019 AACTA Award for Best TV Drama. How did that process compare to writing music for radio?** It was very different, but really fun. The guys at Sonar Music who were [managing the score] would send me the backing track, then I’d do the vocals over the top, send it back, and we’d bounce back and forth. They’re in Sydney and I’m in Melbourne, so it was a really interesting collaborative process where I didn’t have to leave my house. I watched every episode many, many times before I did the music. That was interesting too—having Deborah Mailman on my computer on repeat. I feel like I know her face really well now. **You also collaborated on an original song in Tim Minchin’s new TV show *Upright*. How did that come about?** We’d never worked together before, but I’d met Tim once or twice backstage at

various things. He wrote the song and wanted me to do the vocals, so we recorded it when he was performing in Melbourne. That same night, I got up at the Palais Theatre and sang it to him as the encore of his show and it went down really well.

**Did anything surprise you about how Tim operates?** He’s more serious than when he’s on stage, which is understandable—most people are less performer in real life. But he’s a really lovely guy, super smart, very passionate about his work, and he’s got a lot of energy. He takes his work very seriously.

**Now you’ve dabbled, have you caught the soundtrack bug?**

Yes, but because I don’t know how to write music or compose in a traditional sense, it has to be the right kind of project. For *Total Control*, the Sonar Music guys did a lot of the hard work for me—all I had to do was think of the melody and the lyrics to go over the top of the music, then they’d cut it up to make it work. That’s the perfect collaboration for me.

**You just performed again at the Melbourne Zoo Twilights series.**

**What keeps you coming back?** It’s just got a really good vibe—a lovely, family friendly evening, chilling out on the grass, listening to music and drinking wine. I’ve always enjoyed it...and proceeds all go to helping critically endangered native species. This year we performed for the mountain pygmy possum, which I admit I’d never heard of before, but would love to meet.

**You’re vegan for ethical reasons. What sparked that conviction?**

I’m vegan now but I’ve always been an on-and-off vegetarian because I battled with the idea of factory farming—it really saddened me. I read a book by Jonathan Safran Foer called *Eating Animals* that opened my eyes to the truth of mass meat production, then that was it.

**You’re touring regional Australia in February and March. What do you enjoy most about performing outside urban areas?**

Aussies tend to be more laidback when they live out of the main city, so regional shows are a lot of fun. There’s a sense of community and you can feel they’re really excited because people don’t tour there as much. There’s a sense of...celebration—the smiles are always bigger.

**What’s the next big project in your pipeline?** I usually just wait and see what opportunities come my way, but what I’m really excited about is [my family’s] move soon to the bush. We’ve got some land and I’m hoping to build a little farm with some chickens out there, set up a studio, and write music. It’s a bit of a tree change [for our family]. ■

Missy Higgins tours Sydney Coliseum Theatre (Feb 28), Inland Sea of Sound in Mount Panorama (Feb 29) and A Sunny Afternoon in Wollongong (Mar 1); visit [missyhiggins.com/shows](http://missyhiggins.com/shows). Melbourne Zoo Twilights series; [zootwilights.org.au](http://zootwilights.org.au)

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