

# PAULIE STEWART

## *All The Rage*

Paulie Stewart OAM is an Australian rock legend. He's also a legend of the movement advocating for the freedom of East Timor and West Papua.

In this tell-all, highly entertaining memoir, we read how Paulie channelled his anger from the murder of his brother, one of the Balibo Five, into the infamous Painters & Dockers band that put the Australian music scene on notice.

From being formed with the intention of a one-time performance to pay a friend's parking fine, it became a 40-year-long punk rock band with a cult following.

Paulie's activism also formed the Dili Allstars which highlighted the plight of the Timorese and he tirelessly supports Timor-Leste's Alma Nuns.

Not only was he a rockstar and an activist, Paulie also worked as a music journalist with the *Melbourne Herald Sun* for 30 years.

This is a much-anticipated story that transcends music and activism. The book is full of laugh-out-loud anecdotes of his encounters with major stars, including Billy Idol, Keith Richards, the Wiggles and Nick Cave.

St Kilda-born Stewart has a close affinity with Australia's First Nations people, his daughter was the first female Prime Minister in Australia's National Indigenous Youth Parliament. He was instrumental in setting up charity and music industry groups the PRICS, the Mirabel Foundation, The Push and Ausmusic.

Despite his life-threatening liver transplant, Paulie continues to mentor refugees and young people at risk and is still performing with the Dili Allstars and Painters & Dockers.

*With a murdered brother forever lurking on my mind, I couldn't tolerate normal and relaxed.*

*If life was short, I wanted to make my mark and scream into the night. We liked to push crowds over the top. The wilder the show, the better.*



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*When the sisters and I first met Paulie we didn't know what to make of him, he is very funny. Mother Superior was expecting someone more serious.*

*In Timor Leste he has helped us many times. He bought a van to transport our children around and we were able to travel to the districts to attend to handicapped and abandoned children. Before Paulie's help they were living with little support.*

*I love to see Paulie perform with both The Dili Allstars and The Painters And Dockers. He is very wild.*

*We have done great work together. With Paulie I have done the best things of my life. He also inspired me never to give up in this life, no matter what. I love Paulie because of his golden heart, diamond heart or silver heart or whatever color of his heart hahaha. He is my inspiration.*

*He is not only my friend but very close to many Alma Nuns.*

*God Bless him*

*Sister Anastasia  
Alma Nuns  
Timor Leste*

**On his brother Tony's murder in Balibo, Timor**

The nasty truth is that the only call Mum ever got from the Australian Government was from a lowly official at our Embassy in Jakarta who contacted her weeks after Tony went missing to say, 'Where do we send the bill for the coffin?'

... Mum never wanted revenge against the Indonesians, just the truth about her boy's death.

It was ingrained in me early that while six white newsmen died in 1975 (eight weeks after the Balibo murders Roger East was shot on the wharf in Dili by Indonesian troops), there were hundreds of thousands of East Timorese killed during the Indonesian occupation of the former Portuguese colony.

**On becoming the music columnist for the Herald Sun**

I became the editor's pet project and he gave me my own prominent column, *All the Rage*, a rare privilege for such a junior reporter ...

Many still recall the day the editor was walking through the newsroom and stopped suddenly at my desk to stare at my nail polish, which for some reason was red on the left hand and black on the right. There were strict dress standards and reporters would be sent home for minor infringements, let alone a man wearing make-up.

'Okay Paulie, that's it, enough's enough!' he said. The room hushed.

'From now on the nail polish on your left hand has to match the nail polish on your right hand.'

**So why did we call ourselves the Painters & Dockers?**

Simple. We were playing the benefit at a small Port Melbourne pub and Chris O'Connor suggested the name because hard-core members of the waterside union hung out there. And besides, we were only supposed to do one gig. Little did we know this would lead to a lifelong involvement with music, the union movement and more than 2000 shows in Australia and around the world.

\* \* \*

One of our most popular tunes, '**You're Going Home in the Back of a Divi Van**', is instantly familiar to anyone who has heard that chant from a sunburnt crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as an over-lubricated fan is being led off by the police. I added one verse about Indonesian military atrocities in East Timor, and another about Australian police brutality against black fellas but the song's birthplace is definitely the Outer at the MCG.

For a bunch of soft ex-Catholic schoolboys we were suddenly Public Enemy No 1.

When a group called the Art Terrorists stole the rare and expensive Picasso *Weeping Woman* from the National Gallery of Victoria, the police thought they would find it in our offices at Richmond Recorders.

I suppose it didn't help that we used the ransom note for the return of the painting on the cover of our single 'Die Yuppie Die', which also pictured the band in a bed with the missing painting as our doona cover.

**On the Dili All Stars**

... it became increasingly important to me, and almost therapeutic, to channel my anger, grief and sense of injustice into something positive by supporting the brave underdogs who were fighting the same army that had killed Tony.

\* \* \*

Gil Santos and I formed The Dili Allstars in the mid-1990s during the campaign for independence to lift morale and provide a soundtrack for the stubborn resistance movement. Our greatest impact came from us becoming the musical opposition to the Indonesian Governor of East Timor, José Abílio Osório Soares, who fancied himself as a pop star.

Soares wrote songs leading up to the independence referendum in 1999 saying things like, 'Let's stay part of Indonesia', which were played on government loudspeakers at Dili airport and on local radio stations.

To counter this Gil and I came up with the pro-independence song 'Liberdade', the Portuguese word for freedom. Working with Melbourne-based Scotsman Billy Abbott we reworked one of Billy's tunes and in just a few minutes we had written what many people have since called the unofficial anthem of Timor-Leste.

Earning all the gold records in the world would never match the feeling of having joyful ten-year-old Timorese children dancing around me in the streets singing that song, which they knew by heart.

**On José Ramos Horta**

The thing that truly sold me on José's generous spirit was that he took time out of the bustle of forming a new nation to write a note for Dad's funeral in 2002.

Five years later I was downright shocked when the President of Timor-Leste rang me at the Austin Hospital saying he had heard about my liver problem and urging me to stay positive and get back up to his country soon.

When an ABC journalist asked him to comment on my surviving a liver transplant, he grinned. 'Heaven didn't want him and Hell wouldn't let him in,' said His Excellency the President.



Sample photos from *Paulie Stewart: All the Rage*



**Top left:** Tony enjoys a last meal in Balibo with Greg Shackleton hours before the village was overrun by invading Indonesian forces. *Photo: Gary Cunningham*

**Top right:** Our main aim was to offend and upset. Predictable was unacceptable. *Photo: Paulie*

**Middle left:** With Gil Santos in a very unreliable Russian helicopter touring Timor-Leste. *Photo: Paulo Almeida*

**Middle right:** Singing with resistance leader Xanana Gusmao and Carla Araujo at Rod Laver Arena Melbourne following his release from Jakarta Prison. *Photo: Ross Bird*

**Bottom left:** With The Wiggles on the road in the USA. They were huge supporters of East Timor thanks to manager Paul Field. *Photo: Paulie*

**Bottom right:** The real punks The Alma Nuns. Reject material possessions, don't take orders from men, up at 4.30am every morning. *Photo: Paulie*