

Ask a person how many children's entertainers they've heard of and the same names will no doubt roll off the tongue...and you can bet *The Wiggles*, *Bob the Builder* and *Hi-5* will be part of their hit list. These entertainers are incredibly popular with their young fans who love to dance, sing and laugh (not to mention beg their parents to snap up all the latest merchandise on offer). And there are stacks more children's entertainers, such as the ever-popular Lavender Lily and the Hooley Dooleys, who also enjoy a cult-like following amongst the pre-teen market and are regular faces on the New South Wales club circuit.

Indeed, gone are the days when you bought your kids a few toys or the latest Atari computer game. Nowadays, it's considered cool to dance like a Wiggle or shout Hi-5 at the top of your lungs! And today's children want the best, be it merchandise or entertainment; they want what their friends have; and, they want it all right now. Children's entertainment is a mega-bucks industry right around the globe and some acts have become some of the biggest money spinners

too. You only have to cast your attention over to *The Wiggles* to know that it's spot on – according to the annual *BRW Magazine* rich list, they were Australia's highest-earning entertainers overall in 2007 for the third consecutive year, raking in a staggering \$50 million.

But you certainly don't have to wear a 'wiggle' outfit to get the attention of children. One such performer ranking high in the popularity stakes with kids (not to mention a highly in-demand performer on the club circuit) is the aptly-named Lavender Lily, a Sydney-based solo children's entertainer that targets kids aged between 0-12. She's a "mystical purple character" who loves to spread some purple magic in every show, but it's her reputation in the marketplace where the real magic happens – her popularity is potent, and her presence is preferred over many other acts.

The woman behind the glitz and glamour that is Lavender Lily is an equally intriguing character, while her passion for performance is a relentless pursuit that's earned her the reputation she very much deserves. From her humble beginnings performing at birthday parties and hospital visits, she eventually took a chance on the Lavender Lily characterisation, developing a series of solo shows that instantly saw her sky-rocket in the children's entertainment arena. And having performed across a wide-range of venues across the entire country, Lavender Lily has also performed alongside the best of the best, including those infallible *Wiggles*.

Since then, she's never looked back and the Lavender Lily juggernaut has quite literally exploded – her range of merchandise includes music albums (which have sold thousands of copies at live shows, parties and through mail order), videos, a clothing range, other accessories and party supplies. But it's her humbleness that keeps the alter ego that's Lavender Lily focussed on her one ambition: engaging with kids and giving them the best time of their lives. "I help them to feel uplifted so they're motivated and feel great

ENTERTAINING THE KIDS

Has your club got the right entertainment to cater for the bustling family market? Today's kids want the best and they want it all right now. So, what is your club waiting for?

BY TIM ESCOTT

about themselves on the inside and out," she adds. "The adults love it too because we're all children at heart, and it's important that I always want to look like it's the very first time I'm doing a show and that it's only for that particular audience at that particular moment."

That's precisely what defines Lavender Lily as one of the leaders of the kid's entertainment pack, with every show a cavalcade of non-stop fun with plenty of twists and turns. In other words, be prepared to expect the unexpected. Audience are treated to anything and everything ranging from songs and story-telling through to magic, comedy, physical theatrics, balloon-sculpting, puppetry, and an almost endless list of additional entertainment extras such as a bubble machine and even a fire show for outdoor events. "It's important to design shows that keep kids engaged," she explains. "That's why it's important to have a wide range of elements that can be used to make up every show, as it's important to know your audience as much as

it is the act itself. Today's kids can become bored quickly and easily, so kid's entertainment needs to be able to respond quickly so as to ensure everyone has a great time every time."

Lavender Lily's commitment to the ingredients that go to make a highly successful show are equally matched by her commitment to the club industry too. "Clubs have always been a hub for a mix of high-quality entertainment and they're the perfect venues for children's entertainment because they're increasingly positioning themselves as affordable 'family' destinations. It's what clubs offer best unlike any other entertainment venues and it's a niche market they perfectly cater to," she adds.

"What's more, they offer plenty of parking, are safe and accessible for everyone, including kids, and they offer great facilities," she continues. "And because of the wide range of facilities, with children's entertainment on offer, the flow-on effects for other areas of the club certainly benefit, particularly when the whole family can visit."

Rooty Hill RSL is just one example of a club that organises plenty of children's activities throughout the year. Mike Davis, General Manager of Entertainment and Marketing, says the club's commitment to children's entertainment has grown significantly over the years. "The club was founded



It's her humbleness that keeps the alter ego that's Lavender Lily focussed on her one ambition: engaging with kids and giving them the best time of their lives - the key to successful kids' entertainment.

on community camaraderie and the family and children were part of the entertainment mix but only in a humble way," he explains. "Our youth club was the main source of entertainment in those early days but the last 20 years, and more emphatically the last 10 years of my tenure here, entertainment has been an integral part of our offer. In that time, we've continued to offer a range of free and low-ticket priced entertainment – *The Wiggles*, *Hooley Dooleys*, *Bob The Builder*, and *Funkey Monkey Disco* are a sample of the more popular shows that are ticketed. But we now also provide free tickets for members to school holiday movies and recently introduced kids' bingo at a low ticket price. Family shows on a Friday or Saturday night also play an important part in giving children, along with their parents, a chance to experience club life as a whole family.

"The environment at our club is an attractive one as evidenced by the consistently high numbers in attendance," continues Davis, "If it wasn't attractive, parents wouldn't bring their children. The venue is safe, the offer for food and entertainment is value priced, and the club is now smoke-free which is certainly an added attraction to parents and their children."

Parramatta RSL Club also has a handful of children's shows targeted at toddlers and

pre-schoolers that are carefully scheduled throughout the calendar year. This year, *Bob the Builder* and the travelling dog show, *Circus Ringbarkus*, have strut their stuff among many other acts and struck a chord with the family market.

Functions Manager Karen Singleton says children's entertainment is a genre that the club wants to showcase more and more. "Children's shows are used as a tool for younger families to visit our venue," she adds. "There are a lot of younger families in the Parramatta area and the children's shows play an important part of their decision-making when looking at what options are available for the whole family."

Indeed, children's entertainment shows no signs of slowing down, and either does Lavender Lily. And as clubs look for more ways to increase the value of their venues in the community, as well as in the valuable family target market, then your venue should look no further than incorporating children's entertainment in your mixed bag of offerings. And as Lavender Lily pointed out so well, clubs have always been a hub for a mix of high-quality entertainment and they're the perfect venues for children's entertainment...they're affordable 'family' destinations and perfectly cater to such a niche market. ■



Interested in booking Lavender Lily for your club? Check out her website at www.lavenderlily.com.au or contact **02 4268 0109** or **0417 248 869**. You definitely won't regret it, and your club's kids will love you for it!