

Printed January 21, 2008 12:23am AEDT

Silverchair in an even bigger day out

Iain Shedden, Music writer | January 21, 2008

SILVERCHAIR gave new meaning to being one of the biggest bands in Australia last night when they performed at the opening Australian Big Day Out Festival on the Gold Coast.

The Newcastle rock trio turned into a 12-piece ensemble for their evening set at Southport's Parklands Showground, the biggest line-up they've had since they began. "It's great to ... replicate all the things we do on record in a live show," said bassist Chris Joannou. "We're going to spoil ourselves, of course. Now we're touring with a 12-piece band, we won't want to go back."

Silverchair led the Australian roster at this year's BDO, with other local acts such as Grinspoon, Paul Kelly and Regurgitator joined by international drawcards Bjork, Rage Against the Machine and Arcade Fire.

The Chair's singer, Daniel Johns, powered through songs from the band's ARIA-winning sixth album, *Young Modern*, and earlier hits, augmented by three backing singers, two keyboards players and a four-piece brass section. "We wanted to do something more interesting for the festival crowd," said Joannou. "This is our third time and it's always a great experience."

A record sellout crowd of 53,000 attended the Gold Coast show. The BDO audience is largely under 30, but there were a few older performers hoping to convert young fans.

One was English folk bard Billy Bragg, who turned 50 last month. His solo afternoon set was one of the early highlights. "I'm the kind of performer who turns up and steals an audience," said Bragg. "I'd love to steal a Rage Against the Machine audience - there are quite a few of them."

Headline act Rage Against the Machine played their first Australian show in 11 years. The band's singer, Tom Morello, got two opportunities to impress the crowd, playing an acoustic set in the afternoon in the guise of his alter-ego, the Nightwatchman.

Icelandic pop queen Bjork had the task of preceding RATM but had no difficulty engaging the crowd. Promoter Ken West said the contrast between the two main acts was not detrimental to the show, despite the fact some Rage fans had booed Bjork at the Auckland BDO last Friday.

"They complement each other quite well," said West. "She has a large female following and Rage has a large male following, but I think Bjork can appeal to their feminine side."

There were no signs of Australian flags, following last year's proposal from West that flags be banned. West said it was no longer an issue.

The Big Day Out heads to Sydney on Friday before hitting Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth. A total of 275,000 tickets have been sold, making it the most successful in the BDO's 15-year history.

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