

STAR RISE FOR OLLY

Five years ago, Britain's Olly Murs backpacked in Australia – an unknown. This year, he returns as a superstar, writes **Sally Browne**

It was a trip to Australia five years ago that made Olly Murs strengthen his resolve to embark on a musical career.

He travelled around the country for three-and-a-half months back-packing and living it up.

"We had such an amazing time," the 28-year-old says today. "I saved all my money and went on a plane journey on my own. I travelled up the east coast and met some amazing people. It was something that I'd never done before and it was a real eye-opener for me."

It was also a soul-searching journey, and by the time he got back to his native UK, Murs knew he was ready to audition for *The X Factor* again. He had tried out twice before.

This time he was successful – and, boy, was he successful. Murs came second on the show in 2009. Now he's selling records in the millions and collaborating with mega stars like Flo Rida and touring with One Direction. He has released three chart-topping albums and scored four UK No. 1 hits. His songs like *Troublemaker*, *Heart Skips a Beat* and *Army of Two* are clocking up YouTube hits in the tens of millions. And life just keeps on blossoming.

Tonight Murs steps on stage in Australia to perform at our very own Logie Awards, which take place in Melbourne. And he's thrilled to announce he'll be returning to Australia in November for a headline stadium tour.

"I'm really excited. Australia is like a second home for me," he says. "It's the one place outside of the UK that I've spent the most time."

"So to come back on tour is going to be a real shock for me and it's going to make me think about how much my life has changed but in such a great way."

This month also sees the international release of his new album *Right Place Right Time*, a record fuelled with funk, pop, soul and r'n'b numbers. He's looking forward to getting a few new Australian fans on board.

And, he's also looking forward to not only our sun and surf, but the chance to walk around with a bit of anonymity.



In the UK, Murs can't go five metres without being recognised. It makes for some funny experiences, especially if his song comes on in the supermarket. And, yes, he still does go to the supermarket. "You'll get the odd person look at you and sort of stare you out – it's like a staring contest," he admits.

"It's really funny because when I'm in a grocery store getting food with normal people they'll go, 'Oh my god, what are you doing here?' And I go 'Well, what does it look like I'm doing? I do eat. I am a human being!'"

Being a pop superstar also means the ladies look at him in a new light. Before he was on *The X Factor*, Olly Murs was a cheerful, happy-go-lucky recruitment consultant from Essex. Now he's a star – and that means he has the "x" factor indeed.

"Yeah, it's weird," he confesses. "I don't think I'm the best looking guy in the room. I used to go out with my mates before I was famous and I used to have a bit of fun with the girls, but obviously not to this level, and all of a sudden you get famous and you become a heart throb and people say you're sexy, you're an attractive guy. So for me, I find it really weird. But at the same time you embrace it cos you

never know how long it's going to last."

In his four-year career, Murs has met some very cool people as well. He nominates fellow *X Factor* graduate and One Directioner Harry Styles as one of the coolest.

"I met Harry Styles when he was 16 when he was on *The X Factor*. For a young guy he's very mature. He's a real down-to-earth guy."

Touring with the One Direction boys was also a life-changing experience. And it was an eye opener to witness some of the boys' most enthusiastic fans in action.

"I saw some of their fans going through the bins trying to find Niall's crisp packet or Harry's old sandwich. It was like, 'what are you girls doing? Stop it!'"

"The hysteria around the boys was incredible." But Murs' life seems to be going in a similar direction. He has already written a book about his adventures so far called *Happy Days* – and that could sum up his outlook on life.

"My philosophy is it's not a sprint, it's a marathon, and you're only here for a good time not a long time," he says, "so I think you've got to enjoy it, live life to the full, stay happy, and if you don't like doing something then don't do it."

And while his life may have changed dramatically, he's still happy-go-lucky Olly Murs from Essex.

"I've still got the same friends and obviously the same family. I still live in the same area. I've still got amazing people around me that I love."

"But also, it's been life changing. Coming to Australia, that says it all really. I've worked my arse off music-wise. I've done really well in the UK, I've had some good success with my songs in Australia and that's incredible for me."

Olly Murs performs at the Logies tonight. He returns to play the Brisbane Entertainment Centre on November 16.



Down Under: UK pop star Olly Murs will perform live at tonight's Logie Awards.