

BACHARACH BRINGING THE MAGIC BACK by Cara Davis

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After 60 years in the music industry, Burt Bacharach has come to the conclusion that the world does not need more bad popular music.

And with three Academy Awards, seven Grammy Awards and 500 compositions under his belt, he is qualified to say so. "Popular music today is not too good, it's the depths of what music could and should be," he said.

"The record business is a disaster, and downloading on the internet contributes to it. I wouldn't like to own a record company right now.

"It is just a hard time, there are no great songs around, so great songs are not getting recorded."

But if there is one thing Bacharach can never be accused of, it's writing bad music. The prolific and celebrated songwriter has notched up 48 Top 10 hits, nine Number One songs and his music has been recorded by the Beatles, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Neil Diamond, Linda Ronstadt, Aretha Franklin and Dionne Warwick.

After a sell-out Australian season in 2007, Bacharach will be returning to NSW, where he will perform with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Opera House on 31 January and 1 February, and the Wyndham Estate Winery in the Hunter Valley on 2 February.

As well as carting his singers and his band to Australia, Bacharach will be bringing some of his most well loved hits, including What's New Pussycat, Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head, I Say A Little Prayer, Alfie, and Always Something There To Remind Me.

And while writing and performing music is fulfilling for Bacharach, it's in the recording studio where the "magic" unfolds.

"That is when it all comes to truth, you either succeed in the vision you have for the song, and how you orchestrated it, or it just doesn't come to life," he said.

Most people would remember Bacharach and his music from the three Austin Powers films, but his melodies have also featured in Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid, Arthur, My Best Friend's Wedding, and The First Wives Club.

But there are two credentials Bacharach doesn't bandy around, and that was his naming by People Magazine in 2000 as one of the "Sexiest Men Alive".

"That was a while back," he said.

"I never understood it then, and I don't understand it now."

To book contact Sydney Symphony on 02 8215 4600 or www.sydneyorchestra.com, or Sydney Opera House on 02 9250 7777 or www.sydneyoperahouse.com or Ticketek on 132 849 or www.ticketek.com.au. For VIP, accommodation and dining packages call 1300 658 009 or www.showbiz.com.au.