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The British funnyman on threesomes, and breaking up Oasis. Page 26

VIOLENT SOHO

With a hit single in the U.S., the Brisbane quartet are living the dream. Page 28

THE GIN CLUB

The sprawling classic rock act deliver another impressive set. Page 32

Rock & Roll



THAT'S ALL, FOLKS
Mitchell, Pyke,
Temperley and
Parkin (from left)

Rubber Records Move Entire Operation Online

Respected indie puts an end to retail distribution to fight shrinking profits

By Darren Levin

IT MAY NOT BE THE FINAL nail in the CD's coffin, but Rubber Records' decision to shift its business model online reflects the drastic measures independent labels are taking to stay afloat.

After more than 20 years in the CD trade, the label – which has put out records by the likes of

INDUSTRY

Jet, Underground Lovers, Even and the Casanovas – will now sell albums digitally through its online store. While physical albums will still be produced in limited quantities, they will be sold through Rubber's website only. Announcing the decision in late April, Rubber MD David Vodicka says third-party distribution costs compounded by shrinking CD sales were largely behind the move.

“Physical retail distribution is dictated by a business model that no longer works for either the customer, the artist or the label,” he says. “It's also anti-competitive. We can't sell-in direct to the biggest national retailer, JB Hi-Fi, we have to go through a third party distributor with an account. Distributors take a minimum cut of 25 per cent, and [Cont. on 16]

Perth Supergroup Ready Folksy Digital-Only Release

Basement Birds bring together four of our best in classic folk-rock collaboration

By Stephen Bruel

IT'S HARD NOT TO DRAW comparisons between Basement Birds – a new project featuring Kav Temperley (Eskimo Joe), Kevin Mitchell (Bob Evans, Jebediah), Steve Parkin and Josh Pyke – and the recent Monsters

NEW BAND

of Folk project from U.S. luminaries Conor Oberst, Jim James, M. Ward and Mike Mogis. Four talented songwriters, brought together by a mutual love of Sixties

folk – and drinking – for a project that explores musical avenues that their main artistic outlets might otherwise have missed. Like Monsters of Folk, the Aussie collaboration draws heavily on the sound of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, but Basement Byrds may not be a bad name as well – now where is that 12-string Rickenbacker?

“The songs first came about when I was on tour with Josh, and Steve was on tour with Bob Evans, resulting in a healthy gentlemanly songwriting competition,” says Temperley. “I worked out a time when Josh would be in Freo [Fremantle] and over a bottle of whiskey we came up with two songs called ‘Ghosts’ and ‘Reasons’. In

the meantime Steve and Kev came up with ‘Waiting For You.’”

According to Mitchell, the project's seeds were sewn as far back as 2006 when Steve and Kav conjured up the idea. “Probably over drinks in Freo at the Norfolk,” says Mitchell, “where most ideas of ill-repute are hatched.” The results of those initial discussions will be released in three song bundles fortnightly on iTunes from June 22nd, a distribution method that is an Australian industry first.

With all members co-producing the project, there was potential for all the problems that come with ruling by committee to arise, but Pyke said that wasn't the case. “We all had equal [Cont. on 14]

BASEMENT BIRDS

[Cont. from 13] say in producing this record, and tried to divide up the time and duties evenly," he said. "For example, when a drum track was being developed, we'd appoint only one of us to go in and work with Mal [Malcolm Clarke - drummer from the Sleepy Jackson] to get the part right, which meant the rest of us would have to accept the part that came out."

Then there was the songwriting. How do you get four prolific songwriters to work as a team without ego and old habits getting in the way? Mitchell admits that when he thinks about the project in terms of four songwriters working on songs together it sounds like a disaster. "But it works," he adds, "because when we bring in an idea or a song, we let go of it and give it away to the other guys to pull apart and turn inside out and change. Because we've been happy with the results even from early on, we've been able to trust each other more as we go along."

According to Pyke, the songwriting process entailed each member bringing the bones of a song to the group, who would pull it apart and put it back together. "For 'Waiting', for instance, Kev and Steve had been working on that one, but then we wrote our individual verse lyrics, and all added our own harmonies," Pyke says. "We also wrote our own guitar parts or bass parts, so once we had a proper structure, we'd all just jump in on whatever instruments were lying around the studio."

Parkin says he brought "Skin of the Sky" to the guys in a "kinda slow waltzy 3/4 time and Josh sped it up, put it into 4/4 and made it heaps better".

The project was recorded at Temperley's home studio in Fremantle using a collection of vintage instruments and recording gear sourced from the stashes of Eskimo Joe, Josh and audio engineer Andy Lawson.

"I've got an old '67 Hoffner bass guitar [Beatle Bass] which sounds perfect for the sound of this band," he says. "I also have been using a new Warwick Star bass [which looks like a Gibson 335] as well as my old Cole Clark, Maton acoustic and Gibson Jumbo guitars."



BIRDS OF A FEATHER Temperley, Parkin, Pyke and Mitchell (top, from left) recording their debut album in Temperley's Fremantle studio.

Pyke played whatever Kav had lying around. "I played bass on one track, quite a bit of electric guitar, banjo on 'Bus Stop', percussion and simple piano lines on a couple of tracks," he says. "I think we all had similar experiences of jumping onto whatever was around and seeing what sounded good. If we all liked it, it'd make the record."

Although they tried to be authentic, a few tricks were used along the way, with Mitchell playing "a little mandolin guitar which sounds like a mandolin and has the body of a mandolin but the neck and tuning of a guitar". He also played a "cheater's banjo". In that spirit, the one point that comes across strongly from all involved is that while the project was meant to produce some quality music, it was above all meant to be fun.

"It was a really healthy fun project to do in that all aspects -

sonically, arrangements, lyrically, harmonies - were all worked out in such a way that the end result was somehow what we all wanted," explains Pyke. "And perhaps not what any of us would have thought of on our own... which is an exciting thing to be part of."

Mitchell claims it became more fun every time they got together, while Temperley was more than happy to make his house and studio the central location.

"The songs, since October, have mainly come together with all of us sitting around my back porch with a glass of wine in hand, harmonising and throwing in wise cracks," he says. "It's a fine way to spend a day and a night."

Parkin likened the experience to going into space camp, which isn't too far out of place, given the mixing console the Birds used was the one used to mix the original *Star Wars* movie. "It's been, like nerds go to space camp, music nerds go to song camp," he says. "Four buddies, a studio, sweet instruments, lots of beer, and we can all cook."

The Basement Birds are concentrating now on releasing this album and possibly touring, then going back to their own projects.

"I think we're all hoping that it might see a repeat performance in the next few years," Pyke says, "but it's pretty hard to get the four of us in a room together at the same time, let alone do a whole other album." **RS**

Record Store Day Scores Big With Old School

Basement Birds have gone digital, but not everyone is giving up on physical forms of music

Some sectors of the industry might be taking the digital-only path, but indie record stores are a long way from dead. On April 17th, to celebrate International Independent Record Store Day, Jack White auctioned off his Copper Kid go-kart at the Third Man Records headquarters in Nashville. In the U.K., collectors queued from 3 a.m. to get their mitts on Blur's limited edition 7" single, "Fools' Day". Even *Saturday Night Live* did a skit in the day's honour.

Locally, EMI released the *John Lennon Singles Bag* - an individually numbered set of three 7" singles - and indie music outlets reclaimed their day. (When chain stores took over the event last year, Aussie indie stores were a little annoyed. This year, franchised stores took part in the



ON THE RECORD Soul singer Paris Wells performs at Melbourne's Discurio as part of Record Store Day.

Australian Music Retailers Association's World Record Store Day instead.)

Pat Monaghan, manager of Melbourne's Basement Discs, has been in the music biz for 28 years. "Our store is an environment where you can have an exchange of information," he says. "Every time we email a newsletter, which is once

or twice a month, we get an immediate response and people come into the store."

For those who claim the internet is killing indie stores, ARIA chart data for 2009 reported that almost \$9 out of every \$10 spent was on a physical product. "You know that law, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reac-

tion?" says folk-pop sweetheart Megan Washington, who performed in Melbourne as part of Record Store Day. "So for every person who goes, 'That's it, I am going only digital,' there is a person who says, 'Fuck this, I am going only physical'. I love to hold the music in my hands because music isn't tangible. Where is my music? I don't know... There it is, it's on a record."

Soul singer Paris Wells, who also performed on the day, stresses the importance of these stores for helping people find new music. "There are the people who have no idea [about music], they can't go online and look for something like trip-hop, sub bass, or whatever. [But] the person behind the counter will help them. It can sometimes change their life, you know." **ANGELA ALLAN**