

MUSIC

WITH
SALLY
BROWNE

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PLAYLIST



ROCK

TAKE IT TO THE STREETS

The Angels



Frontmen stamp their authority on most bands. So it's the enigmatic Doc Neeson out, Screaming Jets frontman Dave Gleeson in. No doubt Gleeson is a quality singer, but respectfully, his inclusion does not enhance the band or the brand. Predictably, the Angels' first album in yonks will polarise fans. Opener

To The Streets is unexpected - mid-tempo and melodic with acoustic guitar weaved in. For those wanting something a little angrier with those trademark Brewster brothers' guitars, it arrives in *Wounded Healer*, a moody tale that grinds in the right places.

Scott Podmore



INDIE

THEATER IS EVIL

Amanda Palmer and the Grand Theft Orchestra



Diehard Dresden Dolls fans have funded ex-frontwoman Amanda Palmer's latest music venture with the Grand Theft Orchestra. Having raised more than \$1 million via website Kickstarter in only 30 days, the band have given their followers an eagerly awaited and entirely fan-funded release made to order -

original music that isn't spoiled by selling out to a label. Venturing again into the dark world of cabaret rock, Amanda Palmer and the Grand Theft Orchestra's second record, *Theater Is Evil*, is an album about lost loves, ideas, places and people. This edgy album is truly remarkable.

Tianna Nadalin



POP

SHE'S A RIOT

The Jungle Giants



Rapid-strummed jangly guitars, staccato handclaps, falsetto vocals and crisp, summery melodies come together as a winning package for Brisbane band The Jungle Giants' second EP. The songs are well written, carefully crafted and truly infectious. Twitchy opener *She's a Riot* instantly telegraphs the style

and pace to follow, and *Don't Know What Else To Do* and *Back to the Start* are almost a match - stop-start pop pieces with shades of Interpol and the Strokes. *You've Got Something* and *Way Back When* provide some breathing space. A knockout album can't be far off.

Graeme Hammond



POP

THE MIDSUMMER STATION

Owl City



Thank goodness for Carly Rae Jepsen. Probably not a statement uttered often about the *Call Me Maybe* singer, but it's one Owl City should adopt. Jepsen brings a *Good Time* to the new release from the famed Fireflies singer, aka Adam Young. Her cameo on the album's infectious hit single adds

much-needed spark. As for the rest, there are some decent dance tracks, notably *Shooting Star*, *Dreams and Disasters* and *Gold*. Blink-182's Mark Hoppus also lifts *Dementia* with distinctive punk-pop vocals. But for the most part, it's a little too run-of-the-mill to be unforgettable.

Samantha Landy



ICING ON THE CAKE

A No.1 record on the US Billboard charts guarantees untold riches, right? Well, that wasn't the case for DIY-styled band Cake, writes Sally Browne

Last year, the band Cake broke a record - their album *Showroom of Compassion* became the lowest-selling No.1 record in the United States.

It's a dubious honour, but one that seems fitting for this alternative, DIY-styled band from California, who have made a name for themselves with songs such as *The Distance*, *Short Skirt/Long Jacket* and *Sick of You*.

"I think it was perfect for a band like us to set a record for lowest No.1," frontman John McCrea says. "I mean, if we think about what we're about culturally, what all our songs are about, I think it is excellent. And it's also paradoxical, which I like."

The record, which they released on their own label, shifted 44,000 copies in its first week and became the band's first Billboard No.1.

"To us, it was a lot of copies," McCrea says. "It's all in your perspective."

"I mean, we're not a band that's supposed to sell millions and millions."

Having not released an album for seven years - their last record was 2004's *Pressure Chief* - the band wasn't sure anyone would still care about them, especially in a climate where record sales

were "going down the toilet".

"After that many years and, well, let's just face it, really bad years for musicians' ability to make a living from recorded music, we actually ended up selling the same number of records (as before)," McCrea says.

While it may be a win of sorts for Cake, it's a troubling sign of the times.

"It shows how grim it is really, especially for artists that don't want to tour or sell T-shirts - songwriters, specifically," he says.

"I wonder whether we're going to have Irving Berlin or Cole Porter type of songwriting if we can't figure out a model that supports those kinds of artists, but that's another subject."

It seems live music is the only real way bands can make money these days, and fortunately for fans, Cake are on the road again and will be heading to Australia in November to play the Harvest festival.

There they'll be strutting their stuff alongside Beck, Sigur Ros, Grizzly Bear, Mike Patton's Mondo Cane, Ben Folds Five and The Dandy Warhols. It's some pretty cool company.

In fact, McCrea has been cool from day one. He was born in 1965 into the bohemian



Picture: Robert McKnight

Too cool: John McCrea (far right) and his Cake bandmates will play in Brisbane.

landscape of Berkeley, California, the hub of beatniks and hippies. It was an interesting time to be a kid.

"A lot of people were realising they could change things, their society, and culture, and use that power for the first time, en masse," he says.

"It was kind of crazy and I think a lot of times with power comes a lot of mistake-making and there was certainly a lot of gratuitous, excessive, self-indulgent behaviour as well as some really important civil rights advances, but at the same time, it was a weird time to be a child."

Nowadays, there's a new cultural revolution to be had as artists, writers and musicians must take things into their own hands as traditional ways of making money are failing in a digital age where everyone expects everything for free.

For McCrea, that's a big concern.

"Here in the United States, we've lost 25 per cent of our working musicians in just 10 years. And yet the tech industry is feeding the story to the press that everything's fine, it's better than ever. It's not better than

ever. I know important musicians who are learning to become bricklayers."

In terms of taking things into their own hands, Cake are certainly walking the talk.

For their latest album, the band took their DIY aesthetic to its logical conclusion – extracting themselves from their record label and creating their own solar-powered studio at their home base of sunny California.

They were inspired or "shamed" by a visit to cloudy Germany – the world's No. 1 producer of solar energy.

"It was an old house that we found in a sort of a bad neighbourhood.

"We started converting it into a studio and, as we were going, we realised that we were living in California where there's a lot of sun."

Now they get a little bit of money back from the grid – enough to buy a sandwich or two, McCrea says – just what a hungry

musician needs. But the band can also take pride in having subsisted on their talents for 20 years.

So is it cool to be in a band for 20 years?

"Well, I don't know if cool is the word that I would use," says McCrea. "I think it's sort of surreal.

"I've tried really hard to not let it make me into sort of an effete poodle and I think I've done a fairly good job.

"I'm sure it's not perfect but I've definitely seen other artists who've sort of turned into weird creatures of rock and I seriously tried to avoid that kind of cliché.

"That said, I have no idea. It's impossible to really know what you seem like to other people."

In the United States, we've lost 25 per cent of our working musicians in just 10 years

Cake play the Harvest Festival, City Botanic Gardens, Brisbane, November 28.

GIG GUIDE

DIESEL

Kings Beach Tavern, Burgess St, Caloundra, today, dieselmusic.com.au

JOSE FELICIANO

The Tivoli, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, today, premier.ticketek.com.au

LIVE IN THE CITY: CONSERVATORIUM OF JAZZ WEEKEND

Queen Street Mall, Brisbane, today, bncity.com.au

LIVEWIRED

Brisbane Powerhouse, finishes today, brisanepowerhouse.org

GRIGORYAN BROTHERS

Brisbane Powerhouse Theatre, September 4, brisanepowerhouse.org

THE BRAND NEW HEAVIES

The Hi-Fi, Boundary St, West End, September 6, thehifi.com.au/brisbane

KATCHAFIRE

Kings Beach Tavern, Burgess St, Caloundra, September 6, kingsbeachtavern.com.au

LIVE IN THE CITY: BLUES WEEKEND

Queen Street Mall, Brisbane, September 7-9, bncity.com.au

AMERICA

Twin Towns, Tweed Heads, September 15. Phone 1800 014 014

MACY GRAY

Jupiters Hotel & Casino Theatre, Gold Coast, September 19, jupitersgoldcoast.com.au; QPAC September 20, www.qtix.com.au

KELLY CLARKSON

Brisbane Entertainment Centre, September 25, ticketek.com.au or 132 849

KINGDOM OF LITTLE EMPIRES

Turbine Platform, Brisbane Powerhouse, September 29, brisanepowerhouse.org

LIVE IN THE CITY: REGGAE WEEKEND

Queen Street Mall, Brisbane, October 6-7, bncity.com.au

THE BLACK KEYS

Brisbane Entertainment Centre, October 26, ticketek.com.au

MATCHBOX TWENTY

Brisbane Entertainment Centre, October 27. Supported by INXS. ticketek.com.au