

## gig guide

**Barry Charles** Blues. George St end of Queen Street Mall, Brisbane City. Today, 11.30am, 12.30pm, 1.30pm. Free.

**Big Arvo** Brisbane's best acts, including I Heart Hiroshima, Sunflower and The Frets. The Caxton, 38 Caxton St, Petrie Terrace. Today, from 3pm. Free.

**Marky Ramone's Blitzkrieg** Punk/rock. The Step Inn, 186 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Tuesday, 9pm. Tickets: \$60. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

**Easy Star All-Stars** New York reggae musicians. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Wednesday, 8pm. Tickets: \$48-\$50. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

**Little Bushman** With Band of Frequencies. Psychedelic/roots. Troubadour, Level 2, 322 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley Mall. Thursday, 8pm. Tickets: \$12-\$13.50. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

**The Gonzo Show** Indie/rock. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Thursday, 8pm. Tickets: \$8. Door only.

**Miguel** Jazz. Zuri, 367 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Thursday, 8pm. Tickets: \$15, free before 7.30pm. Bookings: 3257 4999.

**The Tokyo Electro Invasion** Featuring Aural Vampire, DJ Sisen and Gpkism. The Globe Theatre, 220 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Thursday, 8pm. Tickets: \$37.50-\$40. Tickets: 1300 762 545.

**St Mark Passion** Operatic drama with soulful contemplation.

Tasmanian and West Australian symphony orchestras and Queensland Orchestra. St John's Cathedral, 373 Anne St, Brisbane City. Friday, 7.30pm. Tickets: \$21.50-\$38. Bookings: 13 62 46.

**Teleprompter** Indie/rock. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Friday, 8pm. Tickets: \$10. Door only.

**Giants of Science** Rock. The



**Pop sounds:** Brisbane soprano Emma Dean will play at The Zoo

**Troubadour**, Level 2, 322 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley Mall. Friday, 8pm. Tickets: \$16-\$17.50. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

**Lair Eon** Indie. The Globe Theatre, 220 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Friday, 8pm. Tickets: \$11.50. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

**Tim Gaze** Rock/blues. St Bernard's Hotel, Alpine Club, 101 Alpine Rd, Mt Tamborine. Friday, 8.30pm. Tickets: \$15. Door only.

**Lost Valentinos** Indie. Elsewhere Bar, 23 Cavill Ave, Surfers Paradise. Friday, 9pm. The Globe Theatre, 220 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Saturday, 8pm. Tickets: \$13.50-\$15. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

**Dingo Creek Wine, Jazz and Blues Festival** At 265 Tandur Traveston Rd, Traveston. Saturday, from 11am. Tickets: \$60-\$65 day pass, \$110 weekend pass, under-14 free. Bookings: 5485 1731.

**The Dream Tour: Cliff and the Shadows and the Big O** Tribute. Main Theatre, Gold Coast Arts Centre, 135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise. Saturday, 8pm. Tickets: \$52-\$58. Bookings: 5588 4000.

**Popera Classics** Gold Coast popera tenor Daniel Mallari. Sampaguita Restaurant, Shop 13, 2468 Gold Coast Hwy, Mermaid Beach. Saturday, 7pm. Tickets: \$50 (includes banquet). Bookings: 5526 1874.

**Emma Dean** Elastic pop. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Saturday, 8pm. Tickets: \$19.50-\$20. Bookings: 1300 762 545.

event@thesundaymail.com.au

# Back in fighting Mode

The core of this pioneering techno outfit have resolved their demons and are out to win a new generation of fans, writes **Sally Browne**

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IN AN era when so many bands of the 1980s are re-forming or, as Suggs from Madness put it, "standing on every corner with their caps in their hands", Depeche Mode are an outfit that never really went away.

From the bouncy new romantic pop of the early '80s to the dark, bluesy, chain-gang rock of the '90s and their trademark edgy electronica that has survived until today, the UK act has continued to produce top-selling records with its core membership intact.

Dave Gahan as the compelling voice and fierce frontman of the group and Martin Gore as the lighter-haired and lighter-voiced occasional singer and lead songwriter have proved an enduring duo.

Their partnership has weathered the storms of ego and drug addiction, archetypal rock star fatal flaws worthy of Shakespearean characters.

Gahan even "died" for a couple of minutes in an ambulance on the way to hospital in 1996, after overdosing on a cocktail of heroin and cocaine.

But those days are far behind them. Gahan, who lives in New York with his wife and two of his three children, is now 12 years into sobriety, and Gore, who lives in the unlikely Depeche Mode haven of Santa Barbara, California (surely it's far too sunny?), joined him by quitting drinking three years ago.

Although there are still egos to keep in check, Gahan says they are more on the same page than ever.

Now, together with long-time member Andy Fletcher, they're back with their 12th studio album, *Sounds of the Universe*.

The record is heralded by new single *Wrong*, which sounds like an already forged Depeche Mode classic. Written by Gore, it's Gahan's distinctive baritone chant of the song's title that captures attention like a kick in the pants.

*Sounds of the Universe* also will be followed by a "Tour of the Universe" which is likely to reach Australia, though no dates have been announced yet. Dates have been set for stadium venues around Europe and the US until August, although Gahan says they will be on the road until early 2010.

Depeche Mode will play venues such as Madison Square Garden in New York and London's O2 Arena, which few electronic acts can match. Not bad for a band that started pressing buttons in youth clubs in Basildon, Essex.

*Sounds of the Universe* features three tracks written by Gahan, who since producing two solo albums, *Paper Monsters* (2003) and *Hourglass* (2007), has stepped up to the plate as a songwriter.

Gahan first started writing tracks for Depeche Mode for their 2005 album *Playing the Angel*.

Since then Gore, as the band's hitmaker for the past 25-plus years,

has had to shift over — slightly — to allow him room.

But whereas feathers may have been ruffled for *Playing the Angel*, for *Sounds of the Universe* there was a lot more camaraderie.

"It was a lot less a painful process in actually coming forward with the songs," Gahan says, "and I think I just felt a lot more confident, especially after doing *Hourglass* as well."

Three of the four or five demos he brought forward ended up making it on the album, so Gahan was pleased with the result.

*Miles Away* was inspired by a friend struggling with demons familiar to Gahan, and *Hole to Feed* is a sarcastic look at the human need to fill a void.

"Quite often nowadays when I stop for a minute I realise there isn't really anything outside of myself, and everything that I really need to find is right here at my fingertips and it's not something that a person or a relationship or anything, that's going to make me feel better about myself. Of course, all those things work temporarily ... alcohol, drugs, relationships, life, politics. A lot of it as well was inspired at the time because there were the big elections going on in the States. There's nothing like watching a politician, once they open their mouth, to inspire some food for thought," he laughs.

The album was recorded in both Santa Barbara and New York and



Next wave: Depeche Mode are about to release their 12th studio album

produced by Ben Hillier (Blur, Elbow), who also worked on *Playing the Angel*. "I do prefer New York, I've got to say," Gahan admits. "I just feel it's much more inspiring to work. Santa Barbara's beautiful, but after a couple of weeks it becomes a bit *Groundhog Day*-like."

So is working with Gore again a bit like getting back with the ex-wife? "It can be," he allows. "I wouldn't say we've ever been, any of us, best of friends, but there's a brotherly love that goes on that sometimes works and sometimes doesn't work. It's a family. We've been together close to 30 years now, so there's a lot of life that's gone on personally and within the band throughout those years. It's a relationship that's stood the test of time somehow."

"And I think it's something that Martin and I are able to do together that works. Sometimes it's a bit of a struggle, but this album we found ourselves on the same page creatively, with the ideas and where we wanted to take the songs and arrangements."

"Martin's just incredibly creative. It constantly surprises me, the quality of the songs that he continues to write, to be honest, after all these years. I think that Martin is a really loyal, kind person, that's one of the things I really like about him. One of the things I really hate about him is, it's very difficult to actually get to find out what it is

he's really thinking. I'm like, the complete opposite."

"I'll keep yabbing on about anything and Martin will sit there very quietly. If he likes something he usually doesn't really respond that much, and at the same time it's hard to read him when he really doesn't like something as well."

"That did change on this record quite a bit. In the last few years Martin has really joined me in sobriety. Martin stopped drinking a few years ago, and that has enabled us to find some common ground and get a little closer because we both are kind of a lot clearer."

Outside Depeche Mode, these days Dave Gahan is very much a family man. He'll spend the mornings getting the children off to school (he has a nine-year-old and a 16-year-old in New York and a 21-year-old in London). Occasionally he might run into his famous neighbour, Michael Stipe of REM.

"I often holler out to him, 'Hey Mickey, what's up?' but he just ignores me," Gahan laughs.

Apart from his real-life paternal duties Gahan, whose unique voice, character and presence has certainly made up for his lack of songwriting over the years, is the

godfather of a scene, or perhaps several, as electronic, '80s-inspired, dark-wave and industrial bands count Depeche Mode as a core influence.

"Years ago it used to be a bit of a dirty word, electronics in music, and now it's so normal that what we try to do in the studio is do the opposite of that," Gahan says.

While their progeny have taken that where they will, Depeche Mode themselves have not stopped creating and inventing. *Sounds of the Universe* also will be released in collectors' editions with bonus material and demos, also available on iTunes, for diehard fans.

And there are legions of them throughout Europe, the US and the rest of the world.

"There are a lot of stories and there's a lot of stuff that's happened between us over the years," Gahan says. "It's still a bit of a mystery. But I like that about the band. It can be really frustrating at times, but there are things about what we do together that I still don't really understand. It's almost like a sense of duty."

***Sounds of the Universe* is out on Friday.**

It used to be a bit of a dirty word, electronics in music, and now it's so normal we try to do . . . the opposite of that

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