

Voices in the shed

Hiding away in a secret rehearsal retreat gave Franz Ferdinand space to formulate their latest album, **Sally Browne** writes

GLASGOW band Franz Ferdinand's rehearsal space is a bit like a Secret Seven club shed.

You have to sneak round the back, find the secret door and lift a metal shutter to get in.

And that's after you find the unassuming building in an industrial part of the Scottish city.

"From the outside you wouldn't know that we were in here because all the windows are boarded up and there's no natural daylight," says bass player Bob Hardy.

"It's kind of like a big cold, old town hall. It's got garish carpet and flock wallpaper and disgusting curtains. But we like it."

Inside is where magic is made and where the band have been working on their third album, *Tonight: Franz Ferdinand*, due out in late January.

Earlier this year the sacred space was infiltrated by a German fan who managed to take a short video from the mixing desk. The band didn't seem too perturbed, though, posting

the video on their own internet blog. They still feel much safer in far away Glasgow than the incestuous music hub of London, where "all the bands sound the same".

"I think that's quite important to separate yourself from that stuff," says Hardy.

Franz's new record has been a long time coming. Their last release *You Could Have It So Much Better* came out in 2005. But after three years recording and touring their first two albums, the band decided they needed some time off before regrouping in their secret shed to record their new record, which Hardy describes as "groovier" and "sexier".

"It's got a disco feel to a lot of it, and the palette of sounds is much broader," he says. "We've had a lot of vintage synthesisers lying around in the studio for a few years, but never had a chance to play around with them."

The single *Ulysses* is getting a good workout in the UK.



Australian fans will hear the new tunes when the band tour in January, including a stop at the Sunset Sounds festival at Brisbane's Riverstage.

The two-day festival, in its first year, shares much of its line-up with the unique Falls Festival, held in Victoria over New Year's Eve.

Also on the bill are The Hives, The Kooks, Tegan and Sara, and Gomez, along with Aussie favourites such as The Cat Empire and The Grates.

Franz Ferdinand are one of the most intriguing and creative bands to arise from the fertile UK territory over the last five years. Named after

the Austrian archduke, their influences are literary as much as they are musical.

Hardy swears they're not bookish, saying rather that alcohol is the main uniter in the band.

But the former art student did start a book club on the band's website during their previous tour.

Hundreds of suggestions were sent in by fans and Hardy eventually chose *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Nobel-prize winning author Gabriel Garcia Márquez.

"I feel guilty. I really should do another one," he says. "We're going

on tour this week, so it's good timing."

Hardy is looking forward to hitting the road with his fellow bandmates, singer Alex Kapranos, guitarist and keyboardist Nick McCarthy and drummer Paul Thomson.

"It's kind of like having three other housemates that you're with constantly," he says.

Franz Ferdinand play Sunset Sounds on January 8.