

Go for the doctor

Aliens and far-flung planets make up a modern Muse, SALLY BROWNE found

MUSE lead singer Matt Bellamy could be mistaken for the new Doctor Who. Well, they do look kind of similar and they both talk an awful lot about aliens.

Bellamy laughs at the comparison. He hasn't had a chance to catch the series starring David Tennant, what with all the touring they've been doing since the release of their fourth album *Black Holes and Revelations*.

And it's going to be non-stop until they touch down at the Big Day Out next year.

Black Holes and Revelations pretty well sums up the two key topics on the album. Muse may have been orbiting the subject of other worlds in the past, but now they've finally landed. The band known for their atmospheric soundscapes, this time take listeners from the Zeta Reticuli star system to Cydonia on the surface of Mars.

If there was going to be a band to headline Mars, it would be Muse (perhaps supported by Brisbane's the Red Paintings). Just listen to these lyrics: "As conspiracies unwind/ Will you slam shut/ Or free your mind/ Or stay hypnotised/ When the Zetas fill the skies/ Will our leaders tell us why".

There's obviously a lot going through Matt Bellamy's mind and he talks flat out, as if he's just about to enter warp speed.

"There's a star system called Zeta Reticuli and some beserkers out there believe that's the most likely place that has a star like the sun, which potentially does hold life on planets nearby.

"I've always been interested in that kind of stuff, really.

"There's a guy called Wayne Herschel, who's come up with this new theory where he's basically looked at all the pyramids, especially the Giza pyramids, and he's realised that if you look at



Out of this world: UK band Muse (from left) Dominic Howard, Matt Bellamy and Chris Wolstenholme

them from above they make this perfect kind of star map, and one of them is a signal, he thinks, to the one we actually came from.

"The same star system can be applied to a region of Mars called Cydonia."

This isn't just an album about far off planets, however. *Soldier's Poem* takes the point of view of a soldier in Iraq. *Take a Bow* is an open letter to a Western political leader.

"It's kind of the feeling of a per-

son that's waking up to the powers that are manipulating them," Bellamy said. "Maybe in the real world that's something I've only become aware of in the last couple of years — to the extent how much our news and our history is manipulated to make us fit into a certain way of thinking.

"Obviously our government as well, in England, especially in the last couple of years, it's just been openly lying about certain things. It's been quite jading that people

are used to that now." Bellamy, originally from Devon in the UK, now calls Lake Como, Italy, home. That's where his girlfriend is from. George Clooney is one of his neighbours.

"I've seen him cycling up and down the main street and I've also seen him on his boat a few times, but I haven't actually said hello."

Black Holes and Revelations was mostly recorded in Chateau Miraval studios in the south of France. But there's another flav-

our on the album, which has its influences firmly in New York. This includes the danceable single *Supermassive Black Hole*, a Muse song which wouldn't be out of place beside a Scissor Sisters track at a nightclub. Did the words Muse and danceable just appear in the same sentence?

At first, the band was dismissive of the riff.

"It sounded like a relatively classic rock riff, a quite cheesy blues riff and for that reason we weren't that into it, really," Bellamy said. "We knew that if we were going to make that song work we had to record it in a strange way or spice it up somehow."

The song wriggled its way to the forefront when the band hit New York.

"When we first went to New York we hadn't been out for a few months so we were going out quite a lot to bars and clubs and kind of letting loose. And New York is a city where you can work hard and play hard quite well.

"I have a friend out there who was trying to teach me to DJ, which I'm not very good at. I kind of gave it a go. I saw what people were responding to and what people were dancing to. That was one of the reasons we tried to bring a groovier element into the rhythm section of some of the songs."

The album was finished off at Electric Lady Studios, Greenwich Village, and even one-time space cadet, now space captain, David Bowie dropped in for a visit. They didn't talk about aliens, however.

"I should have struck up a conversation about that. He was talking about John Lennon a lot. He was telling a story about how he recorded a song called *Fame* with Lennon because that was the last time he was in Electric Lady Studios. He was a nice guy. He was pretty laid back. He listened to a few of our tracks. He liked *Invincible* a lot. We were thinking of asking him to play a guitar or tambourine on it but I think we kind of backed out at the last minute because we think it would have been a bit rude."

Music notes with Ritchie Yorke



Yorn again

→ CULT US singer/songwriter Pete Yorn has an affinity with the Dixie Chicks but has never performed on the same stage.

That will change on Saturday night when he supports the controversial Texan trio at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre.

Yorn, who has won a strong Australian following with his albums *The Day I Forgot* and *Musicalmorningafter*, will perform

selections from his new studio effort *Nightcrawler*.

The 31-year old troubadour may not have played with the Chicks before but lead Chick Natalie Maines backs up on two of the new album's tracks, *The Man* and *It Don't Mean Nothing*.

"I've only sung with one girl singer before (Liz Phair on a cover version of *Suspicious Minds*) but I knew that those two tracks needed some girl background vocals.

"Natalie was a friend and I thought her voice would be perfect so I called her up and asked her to do it. It worked out great."

Yorn and Maines were songwriting collaborators on the Chicks' album, *Taking the Long Way*.

Yorn thinks his combination with the Chicks will be "a good fit". If you can't catch him on stage before the Chicks, he is doing an in-store performance at Skinnys in Elizabeth St, Brisbane, at 1pm on Saturday.

Trio out of studio

→ AFTER finishing recording an album, the John Butler Trio is embarking on a tour taking in Brisbane's Tivoli (Saturday, December 2), Empire Theatre, Toowoomba (Dec 3), Great Western Hotel, Rockhampton (Dec 5), Mackay Entertainment Centre (Dec 6), Bombay Rock, Townsville (Dec 7), Kuranda Amphitheatre (Dec 9) and The Shed, Maroochydore (Dec 10). Details: www.johnbutlertrio.com



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