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ENDURING SPIRIT

Cold Chisel are back and that has rock icon Jimmy Barnes thinking about the past, the future and the friend he lost. **James Wigney and Paul Donoghue** report

THE January night before Cold Chisel drummer Steve Prestwich was scheduled to have surgery, Jimmy Barnes sent his old friend a text message.

"Steve and I were mates but we weren't emailing and texting every day," says Barnes, 55. "But the night before the operation when he was in hospital I was compelled to text him to say 'Steve, I am a better man for knowing you - I love you'. He replied saying 'I love you too Jimmy'."

Barnes and Prestwich were "brothers"; through 38 years of friendship, they had fought and made up many times, left or been kicked out of the band and shared countless stages - and drinks. Those text messages were the last communication they had. Prestwich died two days later in surgery to remove a brain tumour. He was 56.

The re-emergence of Cold Chisel, whose entire remastered catalogue is in stores this week, has been in discussion for the past 18 months.

There have been only sporadic performances during the past eight years. After a one-off concert in 2009, the band started to think about making another record and doing a tour. Barnes says the decision to bring the band back now has been made with Prestwich in mind.

"Probably more than anybody, Steve was the guy who was pushing for the band get back and play. I just wish he was there to do it," he says.

Barnes says the dynamic in the reunited band has changed since the passing of its original drummer.

"You could have John Bonham there and it wouldn't be the same," Barnes says. "At first it was like walking around in a pair of the wrong shoes but once we got over the initial shock of that, Charley Drayton, who is going to play drums for us, is a fantastic drummer."

You could argue that a band like Cold Chisel, and a frontman like Jimmy Barnes, have nothing to prove. In more than 30 years, the band has sold more than three million records. Barnes has sold about the same on his own. Cold Chisel are a band imbued with the traditions of home - proudly Australian and working class, they're our country's answer to Bruce Springsteen. But is there a chance he will ever leave his day job? "Not really, I just love doing it," he says. "I love playing and I love singing. If people didn't come and see me I would do it on my own. But I am glad people do come and that I still have something to offer."

On Tuesday, shortly after speaking with *U on Sunday*, illness forced Barnes to cancel a run of solo dates next month. A spokesman for the singer said the cause was not heart-related. Barnes had heart surgery in 2007 to correct a genetic defect. Barnes has learnt to savour his health.

"One of the only positives... (after) Steve's death was that you don't take your mates and the ones you love for granted," he says.

For your chance to win tickets to a Cold Chisel concert, go to uonsunday.com.au. The complete remastered Cold Chisel catalogue is out now. They play concerts across Queensland from October 19 to November 1. See ticketek.com.au for details.



Cold Chisel's Jimmy Barnes with Phil Small and Ian Moss.



MATERIAL WITNESS

They say that you should never meet your idols, but talking to them on the phone isn't half bad, writes **Sally Browne**

At the dawn of Britain's musical revival of the 1990s, just before Britpop exploded across the world, before Tony Blair became Prime Minister and Union Jacks suddenly became the coolest flags to wave, a band from a small town south of London began making an impression.

They were called Suede and they marked their patch as a darkly glamorous band, singing songs about the romantic and tragic sides of life in the forgotten corners of London.

Brett Anderson was their figurehead, who penned the lyrics to guitarist Bernard Butler's compelling tunes. Their music created a sense of community for fans across the world, including one young wannabe music journalist from Australia... who had a big crush on their lead singer.

While she may not have known much about the gritty side of London life, she certainly knew what looked good in a leather jacket. And of course, she loved the poetry of their lyrics and the romanticism of their music. Reading every British music magazine she could get her hands on, she wondered what it might be like to interview this man... and maybe marry him.

But the band split before she ever got the chance. (Mumble) years later, it finally happened. The interviewing part anyway. Suede are on the phone and on the radar again, back together after seven years as they release a series of reissues of their five albums, as well as a best-of, and tour across

Europe. It's the perfect excuse to interview someone I've admired (and fancied) for years.

Speaking from his home in London on a typically cool summer's day, Anderson is the perfect gentleman. "Good, good," he says, when I explain, hopefully without giggling too much, that I'm "a fan".

Anderson understands the sense of belonging music can bring. Growing up in a nowhere town south of London he listened to punk as well as to his sister's collection of classic rock. But it was acts such as David Bowie and The Smiths who really spoke to him.

"The band grew up in those very tribal times," he says. "I can remember at school you were either a punk or a heavy metal kid or a two-tone boy. And I think all my favourite bands since then have had that weird thing of kind of creating a little world around them."

"I always loved that. I'm always someone who found their way in the world through music. And I loved the idea of a club."

"I always feel it's so much easier for people nowadays because of the internet. If you're a fan of stuff that nobody else is now, you can just disappear online."

Suede have been recreating the fan experience by trawling through their own back catalogue, collecting material to include as special extras for the reissues of their albums. It's been an interesting experience.

"Oh God, it took forever," Anderson says with an amused sigh.

"I literally have spent the last six months looking through boxes of old photographs and going to old studios, seeing if they've got any of our tapes knocking around in some dusty storeroom. And emailing people who I knew were at early gigs and saying, 'Do you have ticket stubs or video?'"

It brought up a lot of memories that sent him "tumbling down the rabbit hole".

"There was a lot of stuff I hadn't heard since the day we recorded it. For example, the extended version of *The Wild Ones* - I can remember where I was sitting when we recorded that."

Not all Suede's memories were happy ones. While the band enjoyed early success, being splashed across the covers of magazines, they soon went into creative meltdown making their "difficult second album". Anderson and Butler split acrimoniously and didn't reunite until 2004 when they formed a new band, The Tears.

After the split, the band surprised all by hiring young gun guitarist, 17-year-old Richard Oakes, who'd never been in a band before. Oakes stayed the distance and it's that incarnation of Suede that is touring now.

Butler did put his hand into helping the band find rare material for the reissues, though. He is now a producer, best known for his work co-writing with Welsh star Duffy.

"He brought over a whole selection of tapes - now, we're talking cassettes because that's how we used to write," says Anderson. "He'd record something on cassette and I'd ruin it by recording my vocals really loudly over the top."

The Suede story has always been a poetic and dramatic one. From blistering fights to releasing singles that record companies begged them not to, they never took the easy path, says Anderson.

"And I think it shows. There's a kind of grit and a difficulty and a drama to the band. If I were to go to the therapist he might say as a band we're addicted to the drama, to the highs and the lows."

The highs were plenty, of course. He got to meet his idols, including Bowie, a "fantastic" experience.

So what stories will he tell the grandkids?

He pauses. "One of the reasons for doing the reissues was I wanted something that I thought summed the band up," he says. "So I'd probably sit them down with all five albums and lock them in a room for a week with bread and water and say, 'All right, that's what I did.'"



Darkly glamorous Suede (facing page) are drama addicts, says lead singer Brett Anderson (above, in Suede's heyday in the '90s).

GIG GUIDE

ROCK EISTEDDFOD 2011

The great school extravaganza, Rock Eisteddfod, is back. Thousands of students around the state have put in countless hours working on their acts. See the result at 6.30pm, on August 4 and 5, Brisbane Entertainment Centre, Boondall. Tickets through ticketek.com.au or 132 849.

THE 4 WALLS FESTIVAL

This small festival, organised by Youth Music Industries as part of the Queensland Academy of Creative Industries, showcases Brisbane's up-and-coming musical talent. Headlined by Last Dinosaurus, it features The Oceanics, Montpellier and many more. Saturday, August 6, at The Queensland Academy for Creative Industries, Kelvin Grove, 2pm. \$12 presale, \$15 at door. See mosstix.com.au

BRITISH INDIA

This Brit-rock inspired band, who hail from Melbourne, have developed a keen following across the country after three solid albums. Catch them in Toowoomba, supported by The Oceanics. Friday, August 12, 8pm. The Spotted Cow, 296 Ruthven St, Toowoomba. Phone 4639 3264.

THE LIVING END

One of the biggest rock bands in the country returns with a national tour and a new album. Thursday, September 1, 8pm. The Tivoli, Fortitude Valley, \$69. Tickets on sale now through Ticketek on 132849 or ticketek.com.au

LEE KERNAGHAN

Australian country star Lee Kernaghan has sold more than two million albums in Australia and had 30 No.1 hits, so his recently released *Ultimate Hits* collection seems fitting. He plays the Gympie Muster next month. August 25, Gympie Muster, Gympie. Info: muster.com.au

LIAM FINN

Son of the legendary Neil Finn, Liam Finn is a multi-instrumentalist with his father's knack for penning great songs. His new album, *FOMO*, marks a new high in his career. Catch him in Brisbane at The Zoo, August 27. See oztix.com.au or phone 1300 762 545.

SOUNDWAVE REVOLUTION

Soundwave is a festival of head-banging and this year it won't disappoint. The bill reads like a rock 'n' roll royalty list: Alice Cooper, Van Halen, Bad Religion, Danzig and Machine Head. Saturday, September 24, RNA Showgrounds, Gregory Tce, Fortitude Valley. Tickets \$163.20 through ticketek.com.au

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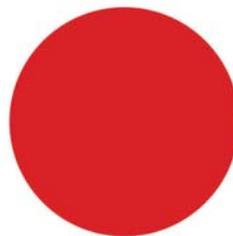
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