



FROM LITTLE THINGS...

KEV CARMODY'S IMPACT ON AUSTRALIAN MUSIC IS LEGENDARY, AND HE'S NOW SET TO GARNER THE TRUE RECOGNITION HE DESERVES COURTESY OF STAR-STUDED TRIBUTE SHOW CANNOT BUY MY SOUL. BEN PREECE CAUGHT UP WITH THE HUMBLE MAN HIMSELF TO TALK ABOUT IT. PHOTOS BY KANE HIBBERD.

The music of Indigenous Australian singer/songwriter Kev Carmody can touch on anything, flipping between blunt protest songs and poetic ballads. In 2007, another Australian music legend Paul Kelly pulled together a bunch of Australian singers to contribute to a Carmody tribute called *Cannot Buy My Soul*. The talent lent to the project was truly incredible (Bernard Fanning, John Butler, The Waifs, The Herd, Tex Perkins, Missy Higgins, Augie March and many more all cut versions of Carmody classics) and now all of these and more will come together for a very special tribute show at the Brisbane Riverstage in one of the highlights of the 2009 Queensland Music Festival.

"It makes you feel very humble and proud," Carmody says. "I've never considered myself a singer anyway, just a songwriter, but to get those magnificent bloody musicians and songwriters in their own flaming right, I mean, I'm calling them my musical family now. When we put the show at the Sydney Festival last year, oh man the vibe was phenomenal and off the flaming planet. And this time we've got Bernard [Fanning] as well as Johnny Butler, Archie [Roach] and Troy Cassar-Daley. A lot of them had to shift their damn touring schedules to participate – Missy [Higgins] had to and so did Troy and somebody else had to move their plans which is fantastic because they love doing it so much.

"When you get that younger generation like Last Kinection and The Herd and whacking it through hip hop and rap, that's fantastic: changing the words, keeping the theme and another generation takes it on in a genre that the young ones relate to. I mean it's that real old heritage tradition from thousands of years of aural culture: I mean, it's not Kev Carmody's music, it's everybody's music."

Carmody's definition of "everybody's music" stems from generations of Aboriginal teachings that were passed on to him at a very early age. He speaks respectfully and proudly of this and feels that a show like *Cannot Buy My Soul* transcends today's more commercial music models.

"It's just a different type of music," he explains. "I just knew they'd put it in a category and I knew it'd never get commercial airplay. I call it 'E Three Music', you know the three E's: entertainment, economics and bloody egos! If there's a concept of reconciliation, then this is when it happens – when people get together to do a show like this. I just hope the mainstream mob widen it out a bit instead of regurgitating the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. The whole *Idol* concept, I mean, geez... they tell you what to sing, when to sing it, how to look when you sing it – it's so bloody destructive it's unbelievable.

"My family were drovers through the 50s and 60s and that was our huge connection to the outside world in about 1952 – my old dad bought a wireless and man, that changed us," he continues. "In the morning you'd hear what we called hillbilly music, that was before the concept of Nashville country came along and then in the night-time you'd hear these magical Beethoven symphonies and stuff. Coming from that droving tradition, a lot of people couldn't read and write but shit they could relate to that music. I can't remember a time when we didn't have music." But despite a life of highs and lows, collaborating with others is what Carmody lives to do. He doesn't see the show and the record as a tribute necessarily. Instead it fits in with his

“everybody’s music” theory and calls these new relationships a life highlight.

“From the Aboriginal standpoint, it’s sharing of the music. I mean, you get Johnny Butler sitting beside you while you’re doing a song or get Missy Higgins in on it and it just adds another dimension. I don’t know, I never had this individual concept of music. To me, you pick up ideas all the time, you bounce off each other. I mean someone like Tex Perkins, you’ll be bouncing all the time with that man. There’s a challenge there – anything goes! Highlights? I don’t know – Paul putting this album together and this collective, this musical family. I hope it’s done with other people, we get together and even write songs together, you know?”

With a high profile cast of characters, the Cannot Buy My Soul show will be unlike anything you’re likely to see this year. Carmody is revelling in the preparation stages and hopes that everybody will find something to embrace.

“I suggested from day one this be a twilight thing so older people and young people can come,” he explains. “We’ve got a musical director so the thing is I will be used as an MC. There’s no pecking order – no big stars. It’s divided into three sections and there’s a visual aspect to it as well with big screens. The great thing is nobody knows what will happen. There is a running order but anything could happen beyond that – Jim from Midnight Oil is playing in the band itself and Dan Kelly will run on and play with The Drones and The Drones will play with someone else – they’ll just walk on because everything is plugged in. A lot will be ad libbed.”

WHO: Kev Carmody

WHERE & WHEN: Cannot Buy My Soul, Brisbane Riverstage Saturday Aug 1

PAUL KELLY SPEAKS...

SPEAKING FROM THE SET OF OUR EXCLUSIVE TIME OFF COVER SHOOT, PAUL KELLY EXPLAINS TO BEN PREECE WHAT DROVE HIM TO PAY TRIBUTE TO KEV CARMODY.

A couple of years ago Paul Kelly was inspired to put together a group of Australian singer/songwriters to pay tribute to Kev Carmody with the album Cannot Buy My Soul. Now he’s preparing to take part in a special concert experience spawned by the success of and interest in the disc.

“It’s kind of out of my hands now,” he says proudly. “I was the person who organised the record and out of that comes the show and the shows have been the work of many hands. The show was shaped a lot by Brendan Fletcher the director, who is a filmmaker and also theatre director.”

Kelly’s relationship with Carmody dates back many years. The two have played together umpteen times and was most publicly acknowledged when they co-wrote the song ‘From Little Things Big Things Grow.’

“I’ve known Kev for a long time and worked with him over the years,” Kelly explains. “I knew he had a lot of great songs and I thought they should be more widely known. Kev was known in some circles but his records weren’t widely available and I thought his songs were so diverse and would suit a variety of singers and voices. In a way, I wanted to shine a light on the songs for people in general but new generations as well.”

The show was staged for the Sydney Festival last year and was well-received by critics, the public and all involved and all who witnessed the event.

“It’s a really good show and there is something about this particular group of performers,” he says. “I thought the performances on the record were strong but people seemed to bring

something different to the show. You really want to see the whole show – The Drones really set it up, Dan Sultan, this is the first time John Butler will be in the show.”

And, for the most part, garnering interest in the project was relatively effortless for Kelly.

“Everyone said yes pretty much straight away which was great,” he explains. “The very first cab off the rank was Tex Perkins. I ran into Tex when I was still thinking of the record idea. I explained to Tex and he just said ‘Darkside’. He knew the song he wanted to do right away and that was like just turning a little key – I’ve got one, I needed 15 more. Someone like John Butler had worked with Kev and done a few shows with him but others knew of Kev but didn’t know his songs. Other people like Last Kinection and The Herd all knew his songs. Tara Storer didn’t know his songs or Missy but I sent them a few that I thought would suit. It’s a bit of a mix but everyone was very enthusiastic from the start so that made it easier.”