

Paul Kelly

ways & means → a note from Paul Kelly

A lot of the songwriting for my latest album, *Ways & Means*, goes back to August of 2002 when drummer Peter Luscombe and bass player Bill MacDonald along with guitarists Dan Luscombe (hereafter referred to as Danel), Dan Kelly (Dank) and myself began jamming once a week in a rehearsal room. Dank and I were sharing a house and had a few co-written tunes already up and running. Everyone else brought in ideas and by early 2003 we had a stack of music recorded on ye olde trusty beat box.

I did a lot of walking around the neighbourhood over the next few months pounding out lyrics for the tunes to my brain. By June we had enough to start work with Tchad Blake who came over to co-produce. We recorded 24 songs over three weeks and drank around 50 bottles of wine. Then in July, Tchad and I mixed the record in the lovely west country of England. For trainspotters, Dank's in the right speaker, Danel in the left and Peter, Bill and I are in both.

While we were waiting for the record to come out the five of us, now known as The Boon Companions, collaborated on music for a film by Aikinos Tsilimidos entitled *Missing Tom*. We also recorded a theme song and nine tracks for *Fireside*, a new television series currently screening on ABC TV.

Ways & Means was released worldwide in mid-February and we'll be touring all over the place throughout 2004 going to as many countries as we can.

An updated book of lyrics, *Don't Start Me Talkin'*, published by Allan & Unwin, came out in March. It contains all song lyrics written up to this point including the latest album.

Some notes on the new songs...

Guanamatta: Is a long surf beach on Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. Can get wild and nippy. Sharks too. Started from a riff brought in by Danel then worked up by all of us.

The Oldest Story In The Book: I've always wanted to write a Tom, Dick and Harry story. Tom gets the girl but Harry gets the song. Dick's just glad to be on the road, playing guitar in a band. June and the moon star in the same song which is probably as close as I'll ever get to rhyming them.

Heavy Thing: The tune and the riff are Dank's. I nicked it offa him before his own band could get hold of it and took it down to Farmer John's.

Won't You Come Around?: Inspired way back by Bowie's version of *Sorrow*. Not the only song on this record singing of a hard-headed girl.

These Are The Days: I love Peter's jerk groove on this tune. It's great fun to play live when we're feeling it right and nail our falsetto chorus.

Beautiful Feeling: Every now and then Peter comes into rehearsal with a scrappy cassette of a nasty Casio keyboard line over terribly recorded drums and says, 'do you reckon we can do anything with this?' Yeah, how about we write a song for your wedding to Nat'. So we did. Muddy Waters and Omar Khayyam help out with the lyrics to the fourth verse.

Crying Shame: Made it up one night, all of us, after a Vietnamese meal in Richmond near where we rehearse. Danel's trying to figure out what noise the groove box makes. The lyrics dip the lid to legendary New Orleans singer Roy Brown.

Sure Got Me: Bill's bassline sets this one up with a little bit of *Miss You* in the bridge. Tony Mahony, video director, made us dress up in matching beige suits and vests and learn synchronised dance steps for the film clip.

To Be Good Takes A Long Time: Vika and Linda Bull covered this song sweetly a couple of years ago but we didn't have the sweetness in us on this occasion. Bruce Haymes guested on the honky tonk piano and Dank sawed away on the fiddle.

Can't Help You Now Darling: Started from a Dank riff. Continuing the late-70s Stones vibe.

Nothing But A Dream: New Zealand timber takes the place of Norwegian wood.

"Vika and Linda Bull covered *To Be Good Takes A Long Time* sweetly a couple of years ago but we didn't have the sweetness in us on this occasion. Bruce Haymes guested on the honky tonk piano and Dank [Dan Kelly] sawed away on the fiddle."

Little Bit O' Sugar: Sitting out the back of the house with Dank in summer. His friend Ollie came by with some wine. Couldn't be bothered writing any more words.

Forty-eight Angels: Been carrying this tune and the angels since *Punt Road* in the early '80s waiting for some words to stick. Vaguely remember seeing Elvis singing about 48 angels backstage in some documentary. Other sources - pictures of Our Lady & Holy Child with the angels in the corner, *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, *The Go Between's* *Cattle & Cane* and Serge Gainsbourg singing at the end of *Je T'Aime* what sounds to me like, 'moi non plus' which I've translated as, 'me no more'. Graham Lee played the pedal steel just like he did on the previous tune.

Your Loving Is On My Mind: According to Aboriginal myth in some parts of the country the sound of the curlew (native bird) signifies death. This is a desert song dreaming of the sea.

You Broke A Beautiful Thing: Wrote this tune for Renée Geyer a while back and it's taken me this long to build up to singing it myself. We approached this record as a kind of country soul album and this song fits the bill.

My Way Is To You: Bill's boss is a dark pond the rest of us glide in.

Carly Red: Love song to a red-headed girl with careless habits.

King Of Fools: There must be a hundred songs called *King Of Fools*, but this is mine.

Young Lovers: Dank kept bugging me to stop laughing and just finish the lyrics to this one. I'd thought I was the first person to get 'sit down to take a piss', into a song until Tchad played me Randy Newman's last record. Danel put in the fancy chords.

Big Fine Girl: A letter in the family archives written by my great grandfather, James, describes his bride-to-be, my great grandmother Kate, as a big, fine girl. I've seen photos and she was. The story goes that they did their courting under the pine trees of the Sevenhill rectory in the South Australian town of Clare. Apart from that the song is fiction.

Let's Fall Again: We decided to bookend the album with another instrumental by the sea. Imagine a couple of empty-nesters on a resort holiday, lying by the pool sipping drinks with large umbrellas, getting a bit of a glow on for each other as the sun sets to the sounds of the Hawaiian style band crooning in the corner. I did.

Paul Kelly and his band play *Her Majesty's Theatre* on Wed May 5 with Dan Kelly & The Alpha Males. *Ways & Means* is out now through EMI.



Paul Kelly

15th April 2004

Rip it up.

COMPETITION

Thanks to EMI, we have five copies of the recently updated Paul Kelly lyric book, *Don't Start Me Talkin'*, which now includes the lyrics to the songs on *Ways & Means*. To win a copy, simply e-mail <robertdunstan@ripitup.com.au> with Paul Kelly Book Competition as the subject header and let him know which beastly Melbourne musician is credited with the drawings featured in the first edition.