

BY KATE CARROLL

AUSSIE ROCKERS

For Australians, it was almost love at first sight, but it took a little longer for Eskimo Joe to endear themselves to the tough US market. With three albums under their belt and a little inspiration from Aussie rock gods INXS, they seem to have done it. Meet the Perth trio, along with Brisbane rockers Powderfinger and Grammy-winners Wolfmother.

ESKIMO JOE

It's nearly ten years on since the trio from Freo (that's Fremantle for Perth locals) first stepped onto the national stage winning the Australian National Campus Band competition in 1997, and with it a host of Aussie fans.

After winning the competition, the trio of Kavyen 'Kav' Temperley (bass/vocals), Joel Quartermain (guitar) and Stuart MacLeod (guitar) were given a slot at Livid Festival and a session in a recording studio. The resulting track 'Sweater' EP received much airplay on Triple J and as a result made it into the 1998 Triple J *Hottest 100*.

Since then, the trio has become one of Australia's most loved bands, with their first two albums *Girl* and *A Song is a City* going gold and double platinum respectively.

But it was not until the release of their most recent album *Black Fingernails Red Wine* last year that Eskimo Joe finally made inroads into the US market.

"I had it in my head, 'Right, I'm going to go away and write a total rock record. If I'm going to do it once in my life, this is going to be the time,'" Kav says.

Coast, formerly owned by INXS bass player Garry Gary Beers.

The album also has a dark edge and according to guitarist Stuart MacLeod, this was something that appeared naturally in the first couple of tracks they wrote and was deliberately followed through.

"We've always strived to have a cohesive thread or tone through our albums," says Stuart. "The first couple of songs we wrote seemed to have a bit of a feel to them; they were darker and had a bit of a dramatic, almost theatrical edge. So we continued that through the rest of the songs."

Their debut single in the States is 'Black Fingernails Red Wine'. It was released on 14 August, 2007 and was followed up with their first US tour through the American Summer and Autumn. Meanwhile at home, they are releasing a special edition disc featuring remixes of six *Black Fingernails Red Wine* tracks.

On a global scale, the Eskimo Joe boys have also aligned themselves with some serious international issues. On 7 July 2007, Eskimo Joe played at

"I always think of things in a concept-record kind of way. So I wanted to make a record as if we were a stadium rock band," Kav says. "If we were like INXS, what kind of record would I want to write?"

And then seemingly paradoxically: "And with the whole record, we've tried really consciously to not be self-conscious in our songwriting. It's really easy to want to play it cool – and as soon as you do, the songs always suffer."

With quadruple platinum status in Australia, *Black Fingernails Red Wine* is the band's first official release in the US, signed by Rykodisc, a subsidiary of the Warner Music Group. The stadium rock sound of this newer album has been favourably compared to INXS and is believed to be more accessible to an American audience than previous albums. Kav admits to using INXS as inspiration for making the album.

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Interestingly, the band recorded *Black Fingernails, Red Wine* at the Grove Studios on the NSW Central

the Australian leg of the Live Earth concert, a history-making event aimed at raising environmental awareness worldwide. They are also the only Aussie band to feature on the recently released album *Make Some Noise - The Campaign to Save Darfur*.

The boys said they were thrilled that their version of the John Lennon classic 'Mind Games' was included on the international edition of the album. The album is part of Al Gore's global music activism project, with Yoko Ono personally approving all songs on the album and donating the music publishing royalties from the CD. In the meantime, the band is continuing their US Tour playing at notorious venues like Mercury Lounge in New York, The Kyber in Philadelphia and The Viper Room in Los Angeles.

LEAD SINGER OF ESKIMO JOE, KAV TEMPERLEY (CENTRE), USED INXS AS INSPIRATION FOR THEIR NEW ALBUM.

BERNARD FANNING (CENTRE) SAYS POWDERFINGER'S NEW ALBUM IS "MORE ATMOSPHERIC AND LESS FRENETIC" THAN THEIR PREVIOUS ALBUM.



POWDERFINGER

After an 18-month break to pursue individual projects, Powderfinger has re-united this year to record their new album *Dream Days at the Hotel Existence* in the legendary Studio 1 of Los Angeles' Sunset Sound.

With five studio albums already under their belt, this was the first recorded outside Australia and lead singer, Bernard Fanning, calls the LA experience an "eye-opening" one.

"The romance of fabled wealth and excess of the world's entertainment 'capital' was blunted by the obvious poverty of the

underclass that lives literally hand-to-mouth on its streets," says Fanning.

"And here we were recording in one of rock music's most famous studios, in the shadow of the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, The Doors, Prince and dozens more."

And there's little doubt LA is a long way from home for a band that started out in 1989 as a high school cover band. After several changes in the first couple of years, the current line-up of Fanning (vocals/guitar/keyboards), John Collins (bass guitar), Ian Haug (guitar/backing vocals), Darren Middleton (guitar/keyboards/backing vocals) and

Jon Coghill (drums/percussion) has remained intact since 1992.

And it's one band that Australians can't seem get enough of. The commercial success of Powderfinger's second album *Double Allergic* in 1996, with hits like 'Pick You Up' and 'DAF', signalled the beginning of the Australian public's love affair with the Brisbane boys. Since then, the next three albums – *Internationalist*, *Odyssey Number Five* and *Vulture Street* have all gone to number one on the charts, winning ARIAs for Album of the Year in 1999, 2001 and 2003. But despite overwhelming success on home soil and some

success in the UK and Europe, recognition in the US has mostly eluded them, a fact that on the whole doesn't really seem to bother them.

For their new album, Powderfinger enrolled the skills of producer Rob Schnapf, known for his work with bands such as The Vines and Beck. According to Fanning, he helped the band mould a "brighter and less dense sound", which he believes is a step forward.

"Most of the dry, punchier rock songs that were featured on *Vulture Street* have given way to ones that are more atmospheric and less frenetic," he says.

If any Aussie band has cracked the US market recently, it's Wolfmother. The first band to win a Grammy award since Men At Work 25 years ago, the Aussie trio took out the award for Best Hard Rock Performance earlier this year for their single 'Woman'. Probably just as tellingly, their song 'Love Train' is being used by Apple for an iPod commercial.

It seems Americans love Wolfmother's blend of psych rock, which has been compared (not always favourably) to the work of Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. And on

their recent US tour, they sold-out shows across the country.

But before US adoration, Wolfmother had to crack the Australian market. Until the band was conceived in 2000, vocalist/guitarist Andrew Stockdale, bassist/organist Chris Ross, and drummer Myles Heskett, were pretty much "jamming in anonymity" until releasing their independent EP in September 2004. Appearances at high profile music events, such as Homebake and Big Day Out, and consistent radio play on Triple J followed, pathing the way for their success at home.

In 2005, the band headed to Los Angeles, working alongside producer Dave Sardy (of Marilyn Manson and Oasis fame), to record their self-titled debut album, released in October 2005. Their first single (a double A-side) debuted on the Australian music charts at number 29, and the album itself at number three. Their Australian success was sealed when they achieved a record breaking six songs in the 2005 Triple J Hottest 100, breaking the previous five-song record held by Powderfinger, Queens of the Stone Age, Silverchair and The White Stripes.

A string of promotional appearances on US television in 2006 including Late Night with Conan O'Brien, the 2006 MTV Movie Awards and The Late Show with David Letterman went a long way to determining a similar fate for the band in the US. The deal was sealed when while covering Led Zeppelin song 'Communication Breakdown' for the legendary band's induction to the hall of fame in November 2006, lead vocalist Robert Plant turned to guitarist Jimmy Page and famously remarked: "These guys are pretty good."

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THE WOLFmother BOYS ARE
"JAMMING IN ANONYMITY" NO MORE.

WOLFmother

