



space oddity

One-man indie act Her Space Holiday has dropped the electronics to play with real-life musicians. By ALICIA BRIDGES

MARC BIANCHI IS AS REFRESHINGLY sincere in conversation as he is in song with his musical act, Her Space Holiday.

The Californian songwriter lives in a small town just outside San Francisco, where he writes, records and edits his music.

He is best known for producing pure indie pop, electronically and alone.

Songs such as *Japanese Gum* and *Sleepy Tigers* made Bianchi a favourite with indie listeners, but six albums after creating Her Space Holiday in 1996, he grew tired of the convoluted editing needed for electronic music.

Exhausted and demoralised, he took a holiday with a friend, whose advice gave life to XOXO Panda, a new era of music for Bianchi.

He released an album in Japan under the Panda moniker, but still works in the US and Australia as Her Space Holiday.

"The XOXO Panda part was about when I went to Spain to visit my friend," he says. "I was telling her I was thinking about

quitting music, (and) she brought up getting back to the basics.

"She would always call me Panda for some reason, and when I would send her the songs I would always sign the letter 'XOXO Panda'.

"I just used that (name) because that was where all the songs kind of spawned from."

Bianchi says he also took the time to contemplate his motives as a songwriter.

A decade after the creation of Her Space

Holiday, and longer since he hit the music scene as part of the Californian emo band Indian Summer, he took a step back to consider the purpose of penning lyrics.

"(XOXO Panda is) not so much an alter-ego per se, but it was definitely getting back to the basics and why I made songs," he says.

"When I started using electronics it was because I was recording on my own and I wanted to get a larger sound.

"But I was getting so lost with each record, just spending so much time on editing and programming.

"So I kind of relearned the process of songwriting in the simplest form, just on a piano and a guitar."

In the past, some critics have attacked Bianchi for writing too depressively.

Song titles such as *Home Is Where You Hang Yourself*, *Sleeping Pills* and *Manic Expressive* certainly give that impression.

But in contrast to these titles, tunes such as *Sleepy Tigers*, *The Boys and the Girls* and *The Year in Review* are joyous pop.

In Bianchi's eyes, XOXO Panda is more optimistic than his previous work.

When he plays at Beck's Music Box as part of the Perth International Arts Festival this month, he will share the stage with 4 Bonjour's Parties, a nine-piece from Japan.

With a whole team of musicians on stage, he is confident the show will brim with enthusiasm.

"It definitely gives us a much broader sound than we normally have live," he says.

"There are a couple of older songs in there, but we are going to focus on the new stuff.

"It is definitely going to be like a dysfunctional children's symphony."

Her Space Holiday with 4 Bonjour's Parties. Beck's Music Box, Perth Esplanade. Wed, 8.30pm. Tickets \$35 from PIAF on 9484 1133 or www.perthfestival.com.au.



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