



INDIE SUNSHINE

RYAN MCPHUN MAY BE HIS REAL NAME, BUT THE BRAINCHILD OF INDIE/POP BAND THE RUBY SUNS IS TAKING HIS MUSIC SERIOUSLY. MONIQUE ROTHSTEIN CATCHES UP WITH THE NEW ZEALANDER WHILST HE ORDERS A CURRY.



After being back in Wellington for four days, Ryan McPhun sounds far from it. I annoyingly ask the musical mastermind to repeat his sentences, as the hustle of the Wellington food court clouds his answers. "I'll have a water. I mean, actually, I'll have a lemon lime and bitters, I guess. Maybe the green curry," he asks his present company as I patiently wait on the line, politely suggesting he go with the satay instead. "We just got back from Meredith Music Festival and it rained like crazy," he tells me, "we got wet tents even though we prepared and had gumboots and those shitty plastic rain pocket things that don't really work – well they do work, kind of, but not really..." says McPhun, trailing off. Enough about rain, I say, as I try to move to the topic of pure indie sunshine, which has circled itself around the strangely unique two-piece, The Ruby Suns.

Since July, the band has been touring as a duo rather than their trademark trio, and McPhun warns future audiences against the expectations of three folks playing ukuleles. "The way we're presenting the songs now is almost like we're an electronic band. It's scaled back in some ways, but it sounds the fullest it ever has as far as how many sounds are happening, with all the samples and loops and tracks... you can tell them that's what to expect," says the slightly underwhelmed 'kiwi'.

McPhun perks up, however, when discussing his affection for a new live track called *Don't Touch The Dusty Fruit*. A

project created by Bruce Parry, star of the groundbreaking BBC series *Tribes*, Parry teams up with some of the world's brightest music minds to create a fundraising album for Survival International; the human rights organisation for tribal people. "We were given samples of recordings done in different parts of the world, and the idea was to incorporate the recordings into an original song. The one that I chose had these guys playing flute... but I cut up some bits of it, turned it into a melody and wrote some songs around it. I sampled stuff for percussion and I did it in a small amount of time, basically while we were touring, so I was doing in vans and on planes, which was a fun experiment in itself." The song features on the fundraising compilation album called *Amazon Tribes*, along with artists such as Jason Mraz, KT Tunstall and Brett Dennen.

With a passion for nature and unique cultures, a well-travelled McPhun is suited for the task. Having moved from LA to New Zealand almost six years ago, the self-proclaimed kiwi spent a large part of his youth visiting his dad in the vast country of New Zealand. "I have a kiwi passport so it was the only other country I could work and live easily without doing paperwork... oh, and I had a kiwi girlfriend," he explains, justifying his move to the land of sheep. "I was living in LA going to university and wasn't really enjoying the university or living in Los Angeles and wanted a change basically..." he continues.

What better change than the other side of the world, where "there is plenty of weird indie stuff happening," McPhun informs me. "Sometimes it feels quite indifferent or whatever... for example, we had a homecoming show two weeks ago in Auckland... the turnout was really bad and we were so disappointed, but it was a reminder that, without being depressing, nobody *really* cares. It sounds really mean, but that's one of the good things in NZ – you have to do it on your own accord, which means that people make whatever music they want to make because there's not a whole lot to gain in New Zealand really." At least they have good green curry, right?

WHO: The Ruby Suns

WHEN & WHERE: Perth Festival – Saturday 7 March, Beck's Music Box, Perth