



THE TRIFFIDS Born David Devotional

A Secret In The Shape Of A Song will gather the surviving members of The Triffids, together with a star cast of guest musicians and vocalists to showcase and celebrate the music of singer/songwriter, David McComb, who passed away 10 years ago this month. BOB GORDON speaks with Triffids pedal steel player/custodian Graham Lee about the music and emotions behind the event, to be held at the Beck's Music Box from Friday-Sunday, February 20-22.

Back in November the folks at the Perth International Arts Festival held their program launch at the Octagon Theatre at the University Of Western Australia.

Announcements were made detailing the feast of music, theatre, visual arts and more (happening right now, mind) and were greeted with due respect, but the Octagon filled with gasps when it was made known that The Triffids would perform in a celebration of the music of their beloved singer/songwriter, David McComb. It was a moment of recognition; a moment when time stopped a little and people who attend such announcements for a living reeled at what they had just heard.

(Western) Australian music lovers – and fans worldwide – have mourned the loss of McComb since his passing on February 2, 1999. A decade later the idea of hearing this group of people and like-minded friends play this music is nothing short of compelling.

It's 10 years down the track. It's not too soon. The Triffids are ready to play and people are ready to come and hear it...

"I think you're right," says Graham Lee, who for the last few years has been responsible for the re-release of the remastered Triffids albums. "It probably wouldn't have worked much earlier than when we started on it. When we started doing these shows it would have made more sense in some ways for us to have gone to

Perth first (*A Secret In The Shape Of A Song* was first staged 12 months ago at the Sydney Festival).

"But looking at it with the benefit of hindsight it's good that we did other things before we got to Perth and it's very good that we are in Perth at this time. It would have been a bit silly to be anywhere else if things had been reversed, it wouldn't have been

quite right. But that's purely with the benefit of hindsight, without going to the nth degree this has been a pretty much organic process. I'm really pleased with the way that it has worked out."

Having gone through the custodial/historical process of Triffids re-releases, the Sydney Festival appearances and an ARIA Hall Of Fame induction/performance it does seem like it's time to bring this new chapter in The Triffids oeuvre back on home.

"Well it's not my home," Lee laughs, "but it certainly feels like it sometimes! I was quite taken aback by the immediate reaction to the shows. I mean, they sold out in a matter of hours. Nothing like that has happened anywhere else. In Sydney we had good crowds and everything and the shows sold out, but they didn't sell out in hours. In Perth there seems to be a real enthusiasm for what we do. I can understand it and I'm very pleased that it is working out like that. It just makes us really look forward to doing the shows."

It's a prescient time to be taking place in Perth. McComb's 10th anniversary was on February 2 and indeed, this interview took place on what would have been his 47th birthday – Tuesday, February 17. Events have had an unusual, solemn nature in recent days.

"It wasn't something that we planned in any shape or form, but we did a Hamer Theatre show in the middle of a really bad heatwave," Lee says. "We just snuck in the show in because Roberta Flack, who was playing the next night, had to cancel because of power outages - and now she's doing another show at Hamer Hall which is a bushfire benefit. It's all a very strange period.

"Then we went up to do the Leonard Cohen shows. At the second show Leonard actually gave The Triffids a special mention from the stage. *'I'm honoured to be sharing the stage with The Triffids'*. I was standing out at the front thinking, *'...wow'*. We were doing it really, *solely*, because we knew that Dave would have loved to have done it.

"I stood there thinking, *'I'm so glad we did it'*. Then we flew back the next day - some to Sydney, some to Melbourne, some to Perth - on the 10th anniversary of Dave's death. Now we're flying to Perth the day after what would have been his 47th birthday."

Of course these shows were scheduled in terms of personnel and venue availability, but the timing does add a tangent to what will already be an amazingly poignant series of shows.

"Seriously, it's just how it happened," Lee says. "The shows will be emotional enough for us without thinking



about the chronological significance of things. I'm sure it will be quite emotional for the audience, too.

"It's not a normal gig, we're not just getting up there and playing the songs... we're actually getting up there specifically to remember Dave through his music. For that reason it wouldn't matter how many times we did the show or played the songs, there's still that emotional clout within us and within the people in the audience as well."

The Triffids - Jill Birt, Martyn P. Casey, Graham Lee, Alsy Macdonald, Rob McComb - will be joined by and friends Alex Archer, Mark Dawson, Mick Harvey, Bruce Haymes, Brendon Humphries, Phil Kakulas, Steve Kilbey, Toby Martin, Ricky Maymi, John McComb, Handsome Steve Miller, Melanie Oxley, JP Shilo, Mark Snarski, Rob Snarski, Julian Wu and Youth Group. The three shows have sold out.



David McComb, The Triffids