



# Sunny pair backed by world of sound

**MARISA AVELING**

According to the Ruby Suns' MySpace profile, the New Zealand two-piece make music that sounds like a burrito — not the most accurate label, apart from any world music connotations it may draw.

Led by adopted Kiwi (by way of America) Ryan McPhun, the Ruby Suns have found their place as spruikers of psychedelic pop spritzed with global rhythms and melodies borrowed from African to Polynesian traditions.

The band formed in 2004 when

McPhun moved from California to Auckland and found like-minded musicians to help transmit his sunny sonic messages as Ryan McPhun and the Ruby Suns.

“The quality of life I feel is considerably different to that in the States and things are a little less bureaucratic with everyday stuff,” McPhun enthuses. “For example, the post is really quick here.”

In 2006, the band dropped the “Ryan McPhun” part of their name,

despite his position as master and commander of the outfit. The Ruby Suns released their debut album a year later and last year came out with *Sea Lion*, recorded by McPhun alone in his basement and released to general acclaim.

While the line-up has fluctuated over the years with 14 members coming and going,

the Ruby Suns will play at the Beck's Music Box next month as a duo.

Since July last year, the band has consisted of McPhun and his New Zealand girlfriend Ameer Robinson.

“The set-up now is closer to an electronic band than it is to a live rock band,” McPhun explains, adding that it's a simpler way to go about things, using samplers to trigger what he describes as “prepared sounds” that he creates on his computer.

“I don't have to try and teach a drummer all my drum parts and all that stuff. It's more immediate in a way — we can potentially prepare a song a lot quicker,” he says.

The stripped back line-up also makes it easier for the Ruby Suns to tour, particularly seeing as they attack such things with a DIY approach. With no manager or tour manager, McPhun and Robinson look after themselves. On their last US tour, the pair travelled alone, taking turns to drive across the country.

The notion of the musician's life is a romantic one, but McPhun laughs at the idea. “Hell no. No way. It's about sitting in a vehicle for hours and hours every day and then the only thing you get free at the end is sometimes some food, but mostly just alcohol.”

But the thing is, like most musicians you speak to, he wouldn't give it away. “There are moments where you think this is amazing . . . It's a lot of work and a bit of a slog. But it's fun.”

**The Ruby Suns play Beck's Music Box on March 7. Tickets from BOCS.**



**Fresh air: The Ruby Suns**