

Faster Louder.com.au

The Triffids @ Beck's Music Box, Perth

International Arts Festival (20/02/09)

Gig Reviews by raciroo, 24th February, 2009



Beck's Music Box on Friday 20 February played host to numerous talented and passionate musicians, as part of **The Triffids** reformulation for their performance called **A Secret In The Shape of A Song** at the Perth International Arts Festival. This performance first debuted last year at the Sydney Festival. Whilst unable to compare the two, one would assume this was a most special occasion, because of the home town location and because of the timing – this performance was a tribute to singer/songwriter/guitarist **David McComb**, who died in February 1999, so the shows were close to the tenth anniversary of his death. It was a veritable love-in with all involved adding a little something to the mix, and with the audience captivated and reminiscing throughout.

The performance was more than just a concert. MC **Handsome Steve Miller** provided droll banter between performers and was a perfect tonic at some points with his light hearted humour and affectionate jabs at oncoming performers, but by the end of the evening we became aware of how much he felt for McComb and the band, with his attempts to have the performers come back on stage for as long as possible, well after the 3 hour mark had gone by, to the point where the performers behind him had to coax him into letting go.

This was just one example for the love of Dave McComb on display that evening. This could be evidenced in all performers, including The Triffids' members and those they invited. **John McComb** gave a touching and enlightening look into his younger brother's childhood. This included reciting an early poem McComb had written about a toilet seat; talking about their family dynamic and the physical landscapes that were an influence; and talking about some of the early history of how The Triffids formed. Throughout John's speech beautiful images of all around Western Australia and some family snapshots were on display in the background. This gave the audience an insight into McComb's songwriting and allowed us to place some of his lyrics.

The most striking feature of this event was the strength and versatility of McComb's songwriting. The show involved many performers in the singing role, all paying respect to McComb's songs and all gracious and honoured to be doing so. Each singer brought their own person into the mix, showing a different feeling, a different sound, a different quality, and different strengths. Whether they were male or female; young or old; or rough or gentle, McComb's songs adapted because of their story-telling force. The references to Western Australia were prominent, especially early on in reference to the Perth summer which was most appropriate due to the balmy night. The stories being told were proven to be

relevant to the now and were dealing themes universal enough to be able to be transferred from singer to singer.

**Rob Snarski** from **The Blackeyed Susans** had a sublime vocal that was at once sweetly laced with vibrato without removing any masculinity from the tones. **Mick Harvey** was another guest singer bringing a more bluesy feel to a few numbers. **Mark Snarski** and Miller's introduction to his appearance brought some more humour to the evening as he suggested raising a toast, or if you were out of a glass simply toungeing your neighbour. **Jill Birt** brought a certain feminine vulnerability to her vocal; with **Melanie Oxley** giving more of a soulful feel. 18 year old Perth boy **Adrian Hoffman** sang just one but brought a youthful exuberance to his upbeat rock number. **Brendan Humphries** from **The Kill Devil Hills** with help from **Alex Archer** on violin and **Matt De La Hunty** on egg brought a mournful tone to their performance. **Steve Kilbey** was the most emphatic singer and gave a powerful rendition of a few songs, including *Wide Open Road*. **Toby Martin** was the last guest singer and delivered his vocal with resolve and respect.

It wasn't just the lyrics that were impressive. Musically the collaborators brought life to the songs with some songs involving multiple instrumentals, others were simply grand piano and vocal. Different songs highlighted different instrumentals without having set solo breaks or breaking up the songs. Often there were multiple instruments on songs – like two drummers, three keyboards, multiple guitarists etc. The depth of sound was undoubtable and each song was made fuller with the passion each onstage participant brought to their instruments.