



# An unconventional marriage



## MATT GILES

As any polygamist will tell you, the keys to maintaining an open relationship are communication and understanding. It's these two qualities that enabled the members of Canadian indie rockers Black Mountain to take a break after burning out while promoting their hit self-titled album in 2005.

"We started doing some writing in January 2006," bassist Matt Camirand recalls. "We thought it'd be good because we had been touring together for so long, but it was the opposite. We played what we had recorded back and we agreed to ditch it, and we decided to play in other bands for a year."

Usually when members of a band form side projects they inspire talk of breaking up, but Black Mountain itself began as a side project. Singer and guitarist Steve McBean and drummer Joshua Wells wrote the band's first album together then brought in Camirand, keyboardist Jeremy Schmidt and singer Amber Webber to record the album and tour when it became popular.

All the members were in other bands playing around Vancouver, Black Mountain's home, and all bar Schmidt played together in McBean's other major project, Pink

Mountaintops. Exchanging the experimental soundscapes of Pink

Mountaintops for more direct riffage, Black Mountain soon became the prime concern for all the members.

The band's second album, *In the Future*, took three years to make but spared no time in resurrecting the rabid interest in Black Mountain. Like its predecessor, *In the Future* references 70s psychedelic metal in buckets, its fuzzy guitar fringed by McBean's Ozzy-esque vocals and Schmidt's tremulous organ.

The differences lay in the writing process, which this time included

all members of the band.

"In the second sessions everyone wanted to be there," Camirand says. "For the first one, I'd just do my part then go home. In the second one we were at the studio 24 hours a day. It was really productive, we'd order food, sleep over, it was just like being with friends at camp."

Whereas the self-titled album was more restrained and required attentive, repeated listening, *In the Future* commands attention from the very first bar. First track *Stormy High* builds to two or three climaxes before finally releasing its well-constructed tension; the beat

of third track *Tyrants* gallops alongside an intense wall of sound; *Stay Free* provides a soothing country reprieve and *Bright Lights*

fits a bit of everything — abstract noise, sexy licks, playful silences — into its 16 minutes.

Yet the album never gets out of control, staying enthralling throughout. Far from being the result of careful sequencing and even more careful writing, Camirand says its cohesion is the result of instinct.

"We actually wrote half of it two days before recording it. No arrangements, we just jammed out some parts, said 'yep, fine' and moved on," he says. "You get used to it when you've played for a long time together."

Camirand says *In the Future* couldn't have sounded as good if the members of Black Mountain did not play in other bands, including his own project, *Blood Meridian*.

"It extends the longevity of the band," he explains. "It's not natural to spend that much time together. It works because when we started we all had bands that were important to us, so when Black Mountain's not working you'll find us in other bands."

"And when it is working, we dedicate all our time to it."

**Black Mountain play at the Becks Music Box on Sunday, 8.30pm. Tickets from BOCS outlets or [perthfestival.com.au](http://perthfestival.com.au)**



Open relationship: Black Mountain with Matt Camirand second from left.