



Think inside the Box

Another eclectic line-up rocks Beck's in next year's festival, says **Simon Collins**

An extraordinary gathering of Australian musicians will join the original members of Perth pop-rock band The Triffids for three nights of music celebrating the songs of late frontman David McComb at next year's Perth International Arts Festival.

The Church's Steve Kilbey, Nick Cave sideman Mick Harvey, Youth Group singer Toby Martin, Melanie Oxley and members of McComb's other band, the Blackeyed Susans, plus Alex Archer and Brendon Humphries of local outfit the Kill Devil Hills will be among the talent to grace the Beck's Music Box stage from February 20-22.

After stunning performances at the Sydney Festival earlier this year, the show, *A Secret in the Shape of a Song* will be one of the highlights of the Perth festival and form the centrepiece to another eclectic and tantalising line-up at the Music Box, which returns for its second year on The Esplanade.

The five surviving Triffids — Jill Birt, Martyn P. Casey, Alsy Macdonald, Rob McComb and Graham Lee, who produced the show in collaboration with PIAF — and guests perform for three hours at each of the shows, which are seated, with a capacity of 600 people. After the epic performance, video artists VJzoo will screen Triffids family photos set to a soundtrack compiled from McComb's mixtape collection.

Another homegrown highlight of next year's Music Box will be the two shows from ARIA award-winning blind indigenous musician, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, on March 3 and 4 (both seated).

The performances will be Yunupingu's first in Perth (he will

also play the Nannup festival) and are sure to sell out.

PIAF program manager of contemporary culture Kristy Pinder contacted Yunupingu's label Skinnyfish Music earlier this year after being "brought to tears" by his music and was pleasantly surprised to discover his management was holding off on touring Perth until there was an offer from the festival. Thus, Ms Pinder was able to lock in one of the most in-demand acts in the country.

The international acts coming to the Music Box represent a range of music from world to indie rock to dance to jazz to post-rock. Swedish Grammy award-winning indie folk singer Jose Gonzalez opens the Box on Valentine's Day with his first Perth performance with his full band, before Glasgow's Optimo DJs — famed for their club nights that have featured the likes of Franz Ferdinand, Hot Chip and Sons & Daughters since launching 11 years ago — rev up proceedings.

Scottish sounds bookend the season, with post-rock maestros Mogwai playing the closing night on March 8. The Glaswegians recently unveiled their sixth studio album, *The Hawk is Howling*.

Last seen behind the decks after Feist's awesome concert this year, Dan Deacon returns for the finale. Both Gonzalez and Mogwai's shows are standing, with a capacity of 1300

Other highlights include French/Irish chanteuse Camille O'Sullivan (February 16 and 17), who vamps up songs from the likes of Nick Cave, David Bowie, Tom Waits and Jacques Brel; the return of Sydney jazz-pop merchants d.i.g.: directions in groove (February 19); madcap American indie popsters of Montreal (February 28) and Canadian space rockers Black Mountain (March 1).

The Box hosts an off-the-wall

dance party on February 26 and 27, when South Africa's House of the Holy Afro bring their tongue-in-cheek, high energy and high camp mix of dance, cabaret and poetry to town. Featuring all-African dance theatre troupe Third World Bunfight, performance poet Odidi Mfenyana and DJ Dino Moran, who hosts the after-party, House of the Holy Afro are the personal choice of PIAF artistic director Shelagh Magadza.

Fans of less extravagant world music will be glad to know that the Music Box will also feature Senegal's Seckou Keita and his quintet for seated shows on February 24 and 25; classical Indian music from U. Shrinivas and Anuradha Kuber on March 2 and Afrobeat drum genius Tony Allen on March 5. Seckou Keita and Tony Allen are both also performing at WOMADelaide.

The Music Box season will also showcase emerging talent, with the Australian premiere of songwriter/producer Marc Bianchi's *Her Space Holiday*, backed by seven-piece orchestral pop outfit 4 Bonjour's Parties from Japan plus special guests Tenniscoats (also from Japan), on February 18. Another night of new sounds arrives on March 7, when Auckland's The Ruby Suns, US duo High Places and the Architecture in Helsinki DJs deliver an evening of indie electronica.

The WAMi Awards won't be held at the Box in 2009, with the WAMi Festival shifting to the quieter month of May.

The Music Box opens at 7.30pm with the main concerts beginning at 8.30pm, after parties from 10.30pm. The full list of after parties, which are free, will be unveiled next month. Visit perthfestival.com.au for the full guide.



High energy: House of the Holy Afro will bring their tongue-in-cheek high camp to an off-the-wall dance party.



Tribute: Surviving members of the Triffids will celebrate David McComb's songs.



Madcap: Popsters of Montreal.