

determination plus Jordan Reyne



AT AGE 10, WELLINGTON SINGER/SONGWRITER JORDAN REYNE WAS TAUGHT A HANDFUL OF CHORDS ON A GUITAR BY HER SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER.

Later that year she bought her first album, "it was Kiss." And with a head full of her parent's record collection (Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan, Steeleye Span), Reyne decided to become a musician; "I knew at 10 years old that it was what I wanted to do, but I was always taught, 'that's not a real job.' I was told that I'd fail at music, but I reckon a lot of it is having the guts to keep going."

Today, having exhibited saint-like patience for much of the past year, Reyne is celebrating the launch of her first album, *Birds Of Prey*. *RiptUp* initially talked to Reyne last January, when the release of the album was pending. Eight months later, with the record finally out, Reyne notes; "I'm not a good clairvoyant — it has taken a very long time to get the album released.

I've been tearing my hair out, and waiting has totally stressed me out. At the time, I was really angry, but the wait has helped my music — it hasn't done anything for my state of mind — but it's helped my music a lot."

In her teens, Reyne was penning original material and performing solo and with a band. Later, while attending Victoria University, she messed around with career options before reaffirming her notion that music was the right choice.

"I realised that I shouldn't be wasting my energy trying to be something else in case I'm not a musician, and that I wouldn't ever know if I can do it unless I give it 100 percent effort — that's what I'm doing now. It's one of the hardest things I've ever done,



FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS NOW, THE NEW LOUNGEHEAD'S BLEND OF CAFE-JAZZ SUAVE AND DANCE GROOVES HAS BEEN A CONSTANT PRESENCE ON THE AUCKLAND LIVE SCENE. THEIR RHYTHM-STEERED INSTRUMENTAL APPROACH HAS SEEN THEM DRAW ELEMENTS OF THE ROCK AND DANCE CROWDS, WHO WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE INTERESTED IN WHAT IS PREDOMINANTLY A JAZZ BAND, TO THEIR SHOWS.

Last month, their first single, "Cloth" (featuring Deepgrooves labelmate Sulata on guest vocals), appeared, and now the quintet are poised to release their self-produced album, *came a weird way*. Like the single, it may confound expectations and surprise quite a few members of their live audience.

"We didn't want people to listen to the album in the way they would live", says drummer Isaac Tucker. Guitarist and co-founding member Dan Sperber agrees. "An album should take you somewhere different than a live show. Live, we've had big production — lots of dubbing, with big sound systems, but the album is the songs in a naked, slightly rawer form."

Although Tucker explains that there is a chance that the album may still cross over into the live domain. "One reason we kept it bare was the possibility of remixing it. Keep it as simple and non-effects ridden as possible, so it's totally stripped, and ready for DJs to restructure."

The New LoungeHead's music has already proved quite versatile and open to interpretation. "Cloth" was a song that had been played live for awhile before Sperber wrote lyrics, and brought Sulata in to sing on it. Perhaps that was a good move, as presumably it's quite difficult in New Zealand to release an instrumental single.

"It wasn't that cynical but there was an element of that. It's fine for people who are switched on about your music, but as for Joe Egg out in [suburbia], how often are you gonna meet those people? In order to breach those boundaries, [Sulata's vocals are] something to allow people to connect with the music a bit better.

"We have been conscious of having songs on the album, not just instrumental workouts. And arrangement wise, it's quite poppy."

This album should also finally lay to rest the 'acid jazz' tag the band have been previously unable to shake, says Sperber.

"Most of that stuff is just so sexless and white. Once you reintroduce rhythms, and different directions, it appeals to more to people's ears."

TROY FERGUSON

and it freaks me out that people are so convinced it can't be done. People think that being a musician or an artist or a dancer is not 'real work', they're so entrenched in the 'get a real job' idea, and they think you've got to do something that's hard slog, that you hate, to be a valid person. If you choose to believe what

other people think is right for you, you'll never go out and do what you want, but if you realise that you don't have to play along, then the only thing stopping you is yourself."

Armed with a tape of demos recorded with money from her student loan ("Thanks, Lockwood!"), Reyne made herself known to every major and independent record company she could locate an address for. In addition to a slew of rejection letters, Auckland label Deepgrooves appeared casually taken by Reyne's music.

"They seemed interested but they weren't doing anything, so I hitch-hiked up to Auckland, and I went in and played my demo to them. They released a single [Wilt] and I got signed after that."

Reyne recorded *Birds Of Prey* in Auckland over a week in April 1996. Far from being your standard acoustic songwriter's album, *Birds Of Prey* boasts the striking presence of rhythm loops, sampled sounds, and dark industrial noises, that blend subtly with Reyne's stark guitar melodies and dramatic, husky voice.

"I love industrial music, and I thought it would be cool to put

acoustic guitar with industrial stuff. I tend to write songs in my head before I put them down, and the songs that were going around in my head had all these weird noises in them, so using samples ended up being the best way to convey the feeling of a lot of the songs."

Reyne also believes the use of electronic wizardry makes her less likely to disappear into the crowd.

"There's a lot of really good singer/songwriters out there, so it's hard to stand out. You've got to have some alternative aspect that makes you slightly different or conveys what you're doing on a different platform."

Reyne shifted to Auckland last February to assist in the promotional activities surrounding *Birds Of Prey's* release. When it became clear the launch of the album would be postponed, she returned to Wellington in July, to enrol in a creative writing course at varsity. Due to the delays, Reyne's contract with Deepgroove's has lapsed, but under the terms of the original agreement, the label was bound to release *Birds Of Prey*. With Deepgrooves no longer having ties with Reyne, she's "not confident it will get the big push", but having moved mountains to see it on record shelves, Reyne is staying optimistic.

"Understandably, I'd like it to make enough money so I could live until the next one comes out, and not be on the dole. I'd like to be able to play gigs and have enough of an audience so I don't have to worry about working shit jobs, so I can spend 100% of my time being a musician. That would be ideal, but basically, my only goal is to enjoy myself."

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