

TAKE THEM APART



BRISBANE INDIE ICONS SCREAMFEEDER ARE CELEBRATING TWO DECADES TOGETHER AND ALSO THE FACT THAT THEIR UPCOMING CELEBRATION COULD BE THEIR LAST GIG TOGETHER. BASSIST AND VOCALIST KELLIE LLOYD TAKES STEVE BELL THROUGH THE BAND'S ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER.

Local indie legends Screamfeeder are celebrating their 20 year anniversary as a band this year, but this incredible achievement has been tempered somewhat by the news that their impending gig celebrating the milestone will indeed be their last performance together for the foreseeable future, perhaps even their last together as a group. The trio which constitutes the ‘classic’ Feeder line-up and which has been together for roughly three-quarters of their two-decade existence – co-frontpersons and songwriters Tim Steward and Kellie Lloyd and drummer Dean Shwereb – will be split asunder by Shwereb’s decision to relocate indefinitely to the UK, leaving the band’s future somewhat precariously in the balance.

“It’s still all up in the air a bit,” Lloyd offers of the band’s current status. “Instead of saying the break is definite – because Dean doesn’t know exactly what is future plans are, he’s just leaving indefinitely – Tim and I talked about it and we don’t want to get another drummer in again, we’ve already done that once and it sucked, so we want this gig to celebrate 20 years of us being together and also the fact that it’s our last gig for the foreseeable future. I don’t know that we’ll ever play again, and I don’t know if we’ll ever record again.”

While all three members have been involved in other projects in recent times – including Tim and Dean’s duo The Whats, Tim’s project We All Want To and solo sojourns from both Tim and Kellie – the thought of the Brisbane music landscape without Screamfeeder is resoundingly strange.

“It’s such a weird feeling; to say that we’ve been going for 20 years is mind-blowingly weird, because it doesn’t feel like that,” Lloyd continues. “I think because in the last few years we’ve done so many side-projects and spread our wings, I think that’s been really liberating – strangely five years ago I would have been really devastated even talking about a Screamfeeder split, because I felt really defined by the band, but when we all went off and did other things we all grew. Those things didn’t force us apart either – they made it awesome when we returned to each other, and we’d go to the practice room and it was like we’d never been apart. We all just get along so well and we know how to tour so well and we have our own language, so it’s really sad that this could be the last show that we could play in years, but on the other hand it’s liberating to know that you don’t have that responsibility for a while as well.

“There’s always ebbs and flows, but because we stopped playing so much, and we were only playing select shows, mainly festivals and bigger shows like 90s reunion gigs, I started to feel like we were becoming a nostalgia band, and I never saw us as being that: I always felt we were really vital. I don’t know, it’s hard when you’re right amongst it to be objective...”

The band who have been such a staple of our scene and released six acclaimed albums, numerous compilations and of course a steady stream of infectious singles had, like many other bands both before and since, a rather innocuous start, morphing out of the remains of Steward’s Townsville band The Madmen.

“I moved from Toowoomba to study film, and I went to QCA,” Kellie recalls. “I’d been in bands since I was 15, so when I moved to Brisbane I brought all of my stuff with me. I actually wanted to concentrate on study, but in my second year I had to make a filmclip for a band, and I’d heard of The Madmen and heard their first single, so I wrote Tim a letter asking if he’d like a filmclip, and that I’d do it on 16mm and it would be free and part of my assessment. A week later I got a letter back and I was like, ‘Oh my God!’, because he was like a rock star to me even then! They’d put out an EP and two singles at that point! I was in a band called November Bled, and Tim said, “I heard you guys have a really great practice room and we’re looking for one, can we share it?” It was my lounge room where we practiced so I was, like, ‘Sure! Come on over!’ and they ended up practicing in my house for a year. Then they had a big fight with their bass player one day, and because I knew all of their songs and would go on tour with them and do merch and stuff, they asked me if I’d play because they had a gig that weekend. I was, like, ‘Cool! I’ll do that!’, so I was always going to be temporary, but then I became irreplaceable – that’s my story and I’m sticking to it!

“From there it happened really fast. We played a show as The Madmen – I think it was at The Story Bridge Hotel – and then we changed the name. We were recording [Screamfeeder’s 1992 debut album] *Flour* at that stage already, and then we were going to break up, because Tim had had enough of it and it wasn’t working out the way that they’d thought. Then somehow – I think through some demos having been sent off ages before – we signed to [indie label] Survival in Sydney, and then we started touring and it all went nuts! We toured for years and years – we’d always come back, because [original drummer] Tony [Blades] had a day job – but we were always in the car, we’d drive everywhere, every weekend for years. We put three or four records out and were getting bigger and bigger each year, and then triple j picked us up and we were doing national supports with huge overseas bands. Lots of stuff happened, and we got to go overseas; it was a crazy ride!”

Every band dreams of touring overseas, and for Screamfeeder these opportunities came quite early in the piece.

“We went to Europe early on with The Screaming Tribesmen and a WA band called The Chevelles,” Lloyd marvels of the first sojourn. “It was a little debacle-ish as you’d expect, but we were travelling around in this old coach driven by this old German dude – it had previously

been owned by Motorhead! – and we were just driving from city to city and country to country just playing shows and getting giant riders and playing and drinking and smoking hash and then getting back on the bus and driving to the next place. It was the middle of winter and it was freezing and there was snow on the roads but it was amazing, such a crazy experience. We were really young, and it was incredible.

“Then we went to the States in about ‘94 and we played South By Southwest and we played in New York and LA and Silver Lake; we were just playing all these shows with Australian bands, it was so weird. But it was a great experience, just even driving through the streets of New York and seeing all of the steam coming out of the streets like on *Sesame Street*, I was just excited beyond belief. We’ve been really lucky with all of the things that we’ve done, we’ve always stayed with awesome people that we’ve never met before and just ended up meeting really amazing people. Like we met Eric Erlandson from Hole, and we went to his house and he was teaching us how to do Buddhist chanting – just random stuff like that. Plus we played in places like Singapore, New Zealand and Japan, great times.”

Reaching the 20 year mark as a band – as well as recently releasing 40-track rarities and b-sides compilation *Cargo Embargo* into the digital realm – has allowed the Screamfeeder team pause for reflection, and they’re justifiably proud of what they’ve achieved over the journey (so far).

“I’m so proud of everything that we’ve done,” Lloyd admits. “Over the years I’ve kind of been really modest, I didn’t really talk about it to anyone: it was weird. If I started a new crappy job I wouldn’t tell anybody what I did, and when they’d inevitably find out I’d play it down, like it was no big deal. I didn’t listen to our records very much. I don’t know how to describe it; I loved it, but I didn’t think that people really liked Screamfeeder as the years were going on. I’d had a bit of embarrassment about it because I used to be in hardcore bands and a couple of people blamed me for them breaking up when we started [Screamfeeder], and when we had a bit of success I felt ostracised and didn’t want to talk about it. It’s only the last couple of years that I’ve been able to embrace it and talk about the whole thing openly, but I’m completely proud of what we’ve done, and now I can go back and listen to the records and really appreciate it. I think we’ve done some really cool stuff.”

WHO: Screamfeeder
WHAT: <i>Cargo Embargo</i> (Independent)
WHERE & WHEN: Woodland Thursday Dec 1

TIM’S MOST MEMORABLE SCREAMFEEDER GIGS

Screamfeeder’s frontman **TIM STEWARD** took time out to list his favourite ten gigs from the band’s inimitable 20 year history.

THE LIBRARY GIG, SINGAPORE 2002
Kellie and I played an acoustic show in the main city library, and in between songs we talked about our favourite books which we’d picked out from the shelves earlier. The audience were really quiet and polite. It was serene.

THE SICKNESS GIG, SINGAPORE 2002
We were playing in this nightclub, I could feel the sickness coming on big time. I had to abandon the stage twice during the set, and stumble around the underground car park of the venue looking for toilets. Found them, unleashed, then returned to the stage and finished the set.

THE BACKYARD GIG, APPLECORE, MELBOURNE 2011
In which the promoter proposed to his girlfriend during our last song while half the crowd was dancing and singing on stage with us. Pouring rain leaking on all the gear couldn’t stop the party.

THE FIRE GIG, HOMEBAKE SYDNEY 2003
Brought some lighter fuel and an old guitar along to Homebake, no one was hurt or burned.

THE INDIE ROCK GIG(S), AUSTRALIA 1993
First Pavement tour – we got main support nationally. They were the coolest guys and we got to know them really well, whilst playing some great gigs to fantastic crowds. Everything locked into place.

THE PARTY GIG, ADELAIDE, NEW YEARS EVE 1998
We’d tour to Adelaide five or six times a year, and at the end of the year it was The Austral beergarden where drink-drinking and glass-throwing was the order of the night.

THE DAMAGE GIG, ADELAIDE 1999
We played before Something For Kate on a stage in Rundle St, and did our standard (for then) “damage the gear” thing at the end of the set. It’s on YouTube. Dean then climbs back on stage with a crazed look in his eyes and proceeds to pull the entire hire kit down, and smash my very solid Music Man guitar, sending chunks of wood towards audience heads. Alarming.

THE EMBARRASSING GIG, MARYBOROUGH 1998
Played a very under-attended festival. Very drunk, very obnoxious. Got in trouble from the word go really, playing too loud, stealing crockery and apparently seducing the Mayor’s underage daughter. On the drive home the next morning we had a little talk to ourselves and decided that one of us should actually keep it together at every gig. That rule came into effect for about a year, and that person was to be called the Gympie. No prizes for guessing why.

THE WHERE IT ALL BEGAN GIG, BRISBANE 1991
Back before punk rock broke we played a self-organised show at the Wickham Hotel, with Magic Dirt, Budd and Midget. It was small and DIY and everyone was really pure and un-jaded, in it for all the right reasons and totally ready to rock.

THE COOL RANDOM GIG, AUSTIN 2004
We arrived at Cheapo Discs at 10am for our instore gig, with one guitar case each and some cymbals. There was a country band who lent us all their gear; some really random stuff too. We managed to have an awesome gig to some mildly curious local folk. Overseas gigs have a much higher hit rate than domestic ones, I think you put up much more of a fighting spirit, because no one’s heard you before and they don’t know who the hell you are.