



GOIN' IT ALONE

BY SUSAN JARVIS

It's a daunting step to move away from a successful band in order to record a solo album, but STEVE PASSFIELD has never been afraid of the unknown.

Life is full of unexpected events and turns, good and bad, and I've always had the attitude that the glass is half full — that whatever happens, something good will come from it," Steve said.

So after a decade and a half as the driving force behind popular Sydney band **HANDPICKED**, Steve decided to fulfil a long-held dream and record a solo album.

The result is the aptly titled *Goin' It Alone*, a dynamic, diverse collection of great original songs, performed in a distinctively Australian style that Steve has made his own.

The album was produced by **ROD McCORMACK** - unquestionably one of Australia's finest producers - who clearly had an instinctive understanding of what Steve's music was all about.

"I wanted the songs to reflect who I am, both personally and musically, and for each of them to take on a life of their own," Steve said.

"Rod has done a wonderful job in achieving that, and I'm very proud of the way the album has turned out."

The album's title track explores both Steve's decision to launch himself as a solo artist, and a series of major events in his life leading up to the decision to record this album.

"It's about self-belief and self-confidence — digging in and having a go when challenges get thrown at you, and we've all had those," Steve said.

One challenge faced by Steve almost two decades ago was when his second child, Micah, was diagnosed with Down Syndrome. Micah is

now a happy, productive adult, and Steve has penned a profoundly moving song inspired by his son titled *Acceptance*.

The song was recently used widely to mark World Down Syndrome Day, on 21 March, and Steve is hoping he can use it to raise funds for the many organizations that have helped his family, and others like them, over the years.

"We need more than tolerance of people who are different, we need acceptance," Steve said.

"This song is for Micah, his 'disabled' mates and anyone else who may not make it on to the cover of the pretty people mags. We really do need to be more accepting of each other."

The musical influences on *Goin' It Alone* are incredibly diverse, from the gentle sounds of *Acceptance* and *Lady Of The Top End* to the rockabilly groove of *Trouble*, the bush ballad style of *To Sing With Slim*, the folk-inspired Australiana of *Botany Bay - Captain Johnston's Jig* and *Phillip Cunningham*, and the wonderful swing sounds of *Broke*.

Steve enlisted the help of a few of his musical mates to make the album. As he says, **THE FERAL SWING KATZ** came on board for *Broke* because "no one swings like the Ferals", and they've come up trumps on this track.

All the songs on *Goin' It Alone* are Steve Passfield originals, though the evocative *A Man Will Risk It All* was co-written with

Rod McCormack and *This House* with **KEVIN BENNETT**.

Australia's history and pioneering spirit has always fascinated Steve, and there are several songs on the album that reflect this, including the passionate *Australian Spirit*, *Botany Bay — Captain Johnston's Jig*, and *Phillip Cunningham*, about the Battle of Vinegar Hill.

"I performed at the Vinegar Hill Woolshed for many years, so this one is actually quite personal," Steve said.

And Steve's tribute to the great **SLIM DUSTY** has already attracted considerable attention from the industry and fans. Titled *To Sing With Slim*, it's a slightly different take on the influence Slim has had on Australian music.

"The fact that Slim came from my home valley (near Kempsey in NSW) made it really important for me to write this song. It's my tribute to the King," Steve said.

Steve stresses that *Handpicked* will continue to perform as a band, but he's currently focusing firmly on the new album, and is planning to tour as a solo artist as much as possible in 2007.

"I've wanted to release an album of my own music for a long time, and now I've been able to do so, I'm determined that as many people as possible will hear my songs," Steve said.

www.stevepassfield.com