



## **CROWDED HOUSE - *Intriguer***

This is a biography for Crowded House in the year Twenty Ten in which I will attempt to provide a bit of history, lay out the facts surrounding the making of our upcoming record and to signal our intention for new shows and extracurricular activity thereof.....right then.

This is Neil talking. The whole thing started with Split Enz. In 1972 I watched it unfold in real life as a glassy eyed teenage brother, became immersed in it and then at the age of 19, that was 1977, I got to be part of that mighty and mental New Zealand invention. We took it to every corner of the globe, stumbling from one opportunity to another. I wrote some songs along the way, "I Got You," "Message To My Girl," "One Step Ahead," "History Never Repeats," they helped to give the band a bigger audience but that early music will always stand tall for me, original and uncompromising, my inspiration...check out the album, *Mental Notes!* Respect to brother Tim, Eddie, Noel, Phil and the others for blazing the trail. After all, they started it. I was invited in. It was intense and truly excellent.

Paul Hester (drums) and I (singer / guitar) went onwards from Split Enz to Crowded House; we wanted to be in a 3 piece band that could fit into one rental car. We found our bass player Nick Seymour, fresh from the catwalk, clearly loving the attention. We liked how he wore his bass low, had aspirations to funk and after a while we let him paint our suits with Masonic symbols. Despite all that and along the way we became a really good band. I think we tried to make ourselves even smaller by turning to acoustic, bass, snare drum, 3 part harmonizing our way through lounge rooms and restaurants, busking, unplugged, whatever they ended up calling it on MTV. It made us very interested in our audience and we learnt how to draw them in, to sing together like it's a party. That became our way of doing things, wishing for accidents, showing artifice and awkwardness the door.

Four albums later, praise be, we had a lot of songs that a lot of people liked to sing along to, like "Don't Dream It's Over," "Fall At Your Feet," "Better Be Home Soon," "Something So Strong," "Weather with You," "4 Seasons In One Day....." We were grateful to all of them, and to the special people that helped us bring the songs forward, producers Mitchell Froom and Youth, mixer Bob Clearmountain. It was a blessing beyond belief but it also messed with our minds as only success can do.

I remember Nick wanted us to be the biggest band in the world and was convinced that it was right there and we should take it. He was probably right but I didn't really like the attention that much and so I pulled away from it. I dyed my hair one too many times and worried about it all far too much. Paul built up a layer of contempt for the whole circus and after a while just couldn't find the joy in it.

He wanted to go home and watch telly, he even got a tattoo of TV's on his arm, and then he left in the middle of a U.S tour, Atlanta it was, but we carried on undaunted until .....can't exactly remember what made me break up the band. I was just over it. That was 1995.

For 10 years thereafter I had a great time lovingly making records at a more modest level, working with wonderful collaborators, did some good stuff with brother Tim. Best of all I tuned in to my family, watched my sons grow into fine young men.

When we lost Paul it was like someone pulled the rug out from underneath everything, a terrible jolt out of the dark blue. He was the best drummer I had ever played with and for many years, my closest friend. I thought our history was good, how could it have ended up in this place? Later that year I started making music with Nick again, and it felt right somehow that we put another chapter in the book, the motive was simply to exist again and put our belief into it, reconnect with the kindred spirit.

Enter Matt Sherrod on drums, knowing nothing of Crowded House and in no one's shadow, he gave Crowded House a new anchor, proving a good foot and a big smile goes a long way. Welcome back Mark Hart, the keeper of knowledge with his giggling fits and his daily devotion to the piano. *Time On Earth* was released in 2007 and the tour that followed turned us into a great band again, much more than nostalgia, it gave us the scent of something new.

And so the 4 of us Nick Seymour (bass), Mark Hart (keys/guitar), Matt Sherrod (drums) and I Neil (singer, player) began our new record, *Intriguer*, last year at Roundhead studios in Auckland with Mr. Jim Scott as our producer ally. Some of these 10 songs were first played at a little gig north of Auckland, The Leigh Sawmill, back in Feb 2008. They have been worked over on the road and transformed a few times, some all the way back to square one; it's a good place to return, from time to time.

That was the case with the song "Twice If You're Lucky," we played an alternative version, more complex and mysterious on tour then deconstructed back to original simple form in the last week of recording. I am inclined to circle the songs, looking for any bit of advantage I can find, a verse, a chord or a word to change. It's sometimes unsettling for the band but it's my way and I'm sticking to it.

There's always a possibility of transformation. It was a wonderful moment when the song "Either Side Of The World" took off on a Samba groove at last rehearsal. "Isolation" travelled a twisted pathway too ending up as a hybrid of 2 songs, its folk origins now obscured by some deep tremolo guitar and my wife Sharon's ethereal singing. "Saturday Sun" was awash with guitars until mix day when I went to town with a Korg Microsynth, a gift from a friend that arrived that day.

There were other fine contributors too. Our friend Don McGlashan, helped us lay down tracks adding, percussion, acoustic and horns. Lisa Germano took to "Archers Arrows" and "Even If" with

her extraordinary violin playing. Jon Brion added layers of sampled voices and mashed up guitar to "Twice If You're Lucky." My son Liam took to "Falling Dove" and the coda of Isolation with psychedelic guitar. James Milne aka Lawrence Arabia provided manly voices to *Intriguer*.

Jim Scott mixed the record back in L.A and we caroused and held up the bar in his very well appointed studio/ den within sight of Magic Mountain. The late evening playbacks at maximum volume are my favorite part of the whole process and Jim mixes an excellent cocktail as well. ....It's so important to have a good time making music.

And yes, the tour will follow, from the Byron Bay Blues and Roots Music festival to The Isle of Wight, May/ June theatres in The U.K and Europe, late summer in the U.S and maybe a few far flung cities, new destinations, we could turn up anywhere. The intention is the same as ever to get the people involved, to hit some heights and leave the songs hanging in the air....

*Intriguer* is exotic in parts, traditional in origin, through many a twist and turn we fashioned some drama and intrigue. You will find some threads that go back through all that history and some new discoveries as well that will need to be followed up. Its part of the continuum and it may just be the best thing we've done .....till the next one.

See You Later .....YOU GENIUS .....This year.