

Enter the Hayes

Words: Sarah Blinco

Thanks to the vibrant sounds of Savage Garden in the late '90s, Brisbane boy Darren Hayes became a popstar - but these days he is so much more, and I had the opportunity to discover what he is like now, following fame, fortune and many personal triumphs and trials.

DARREN HAYES is beloved by many Aussies who have been fans of his song-writing and musical artistry for over ten years. He now resides in the UK but is back here this month to promote the brilliant new double-CD, *This Delicate Thing We've Made* with the country-wide *Time Machine Tour*.

He says of *This Delicate Thing We've Made* that "it is very much a personal record that is a lot happier than people might be used to me sounding in the past few years. It's almost theatrical - a pop record but a lot of it is autobiographical. I talk about growing up, going back and revisiting the past; there are songs about escapism, being a kid in Queensland and about how the radio in our old car was my best friend," he says.





Darren explains that the album reflects all kinds of change we encounter. "Our lives are complicated and fragile. The album-cover features a diagram of bird made of paper (origami). If you unfold the piece of paper you see the creases - those are things that shape our lives, whether good or bad, and that's the point of the album. I had a year where extraordinary things happened - I met my husband David and some of my friends had children, but at the same time I attended my first funeral for a friend who died of cancer. These things blatantly reminded me that good and terrible things can happen to us in a moment. Life is delicate."

He goes on to say that the first single release, *On The Verge of Something Wonderful* sums up where he is in his life now: "It's about taking the road less travelled and not being afraid," he says. The follow-up track from his new album is scheduled to be *My Myself and I*, and in true Hayes style explores the idea that "maybe our soul mate is just around the corner but that we just missed them... sometimes timing is just not quite right," he smiles.

In recent years Darren has endured a roller-coaster ride of ups and downs, including being dropped by his record label and being unfairly criticised by the media. He dusted himself off however and has launched his own label which enables him to have more control over the entire writing, recording and promotional process. He admits that it's very hard work but that the long-hours are paying off. Darren spends at least two or three hours a day blogging and liaising with fans via his MySpace presence.

"This process is extremely important to me. I have blogged every day since we started the recording process. I have a reputation for being real and accessible and the internet is crucial in allowing this to happen. We also had the number 1 pre-ordered album in the UK in August for *This Delicate Thing We've Made* and I believe that kind of publicity can be largely credited to the MySpace interaction."

Darren is a naturally gifted musician but attributes his development to a passion for music. "I love listening to music. Writing

songs is like dancing - some people have rhythm, they can move on the dance floor and not be arrested," he laughs. "Same thing with song writing - if you have a natural love and affinity with music your talent gets better with time".

Of all his musical successes though, Darren says he is proudest of his personal growth: "I've tackled many problems, fixed myself and other things and am proud that I've managed to get this far without getting thrown into rehab," he jokes.

misrepresented his affinity with 'home'. "I have no problem in sticking up for myself and that article was based on a lie. I am very much a Brisbane boy, in love with my city and roots. In terms of local industry, I'm always supporting local talent - half my team are Australian!"

He is also warm towards his long-time fans, saying he often recognises people in the front rows at his shows and loves the fact that people interact with him on the internet, at instores or concerts. "I love it. It's so nice to know that



"I'm really just like anybody else who has a job they love, that requires a lot of dedication and hard work. I've moved to a point in my life where I now feel respected and loved despite all the things that are wrong with me. I was a bit of a Prince for a couple of years, but in my defence most of it was a big distraction from sadness. I embraced the attention and fantastical qualities of being successful because it meant I didn't have to deal with other things. I think these days I have a healthy view of where I fit in. I look at it all a bit like a funny flea circus. When I was younger I was probably terrified of it (fame). I was fiercely private and protective. I'm more relaxed now".

The *Time Machine Tour* is somewhat of a reflection for Darren - "a look at life as it is now and then a journey back to fix what is broken. On the surface it has a 'science fiction' theme, but essentially it's a show about human condition - stories and forgiveness."

Darren is ever the Brisbane boy who fiercely defends a recent local editorial which

there are always some people there to catch you when you fall."

Darren admits to only just starting to feel 'normal' in his life now. "I'm not the kind of person who would ever turn up to a restaurant and claim the best seat in the house or say 'don't you know who I am'. On our honeymoon, David and I even felt very out of place (in a nice way) at the most exotic place we've ever been - Ravello on the Italian Riviera. It is absolutely stunning... the view, incredible Italian food. Sensational."

Talking to Darren Hayes is surreal because he is just as sincere, insightful and eloquent in conversation as conveyed in his song lyrics. There is a definite calm in his persona now, and a sense that he has grown up through the mad haze of fame, PR, record executives and media, to become a positive and content artist who has discovered true happiness. He has no plans for the years ahead, but charmingly quips: "The future is uncharted but it's got a grin on its face".