

Murray Bramwell's Reviews

Appeared in - The Adelaide Review

The Finn Brothers
with Missy Higgins

Entertainment Centre

There is a sense of full circle here. Who said our beginnings never know our Enz ? Neil and Tim Finn are touring a new album, ripe with harmony and turbid with memory. On stage at the Ent Centre, the flickering home movie of squinting kids on the front porch in Teasdale Street, Te Awamutu sets an expectation, but it is certainly not nostalgia. The Finns have a lot of history and, in middle age, they are starting to sift through it.

They have called the album, *Everyone is Here* and that includes a ghost or two as well. Even the cover photo, by the legendary Marti Friedlander, tells a story. Siblings looking uneasy in a familiar landscape - the Waikato River behind them, steely under a louring North Island sky. These songs, like the little Super 8 film which opens the show, document a particular time and place but, unlike their previous 1995 collaboration, the puckishly parochial *Finn*, *Everyone is Here* is - like the best of Paul Kelly, the Oils, Mutton Birds and others - regional art for a world audience.

The Finns are match fit for these Australian shows, having just come off a tour of the UK and New Zealand. *Anything Can Happen* is, suitably, the opener - Neil on electric 12 string, Tim at the Steinway. The signature vocals merge like elements in a compound as Neil's open-hearted tenor infuses with Tim's more studied, ambitious harmonies. They may be brothers but there are two bandleaders here, as well as a six year gap in age. Neil has inhabited his considerable fame with a degree of indifference but it is clear that Tim is glad to be back in the light. *Won't Give In*, with its faint echoes of *Little Help From My Friends*, seems to sum it up and Tim's vocals soar - "I'm coming round today/ to gather up the pieces."

After a tetchy moment when Tim gives the front row photographers the flick (it is Neil who finds the soothing joke) they greet the Adelaide crowd with recollections of past visits; the Enz in 1975 and Neil on the *Try Whistling This* tour. The bloke in the audience who had helped out with the words for *Pineapple Head* that time, is in again tonight, as is a contingent from Whyalla. The show is mellowing, there is even fleeting comment on the cricket.

Review by Murray Bramwell

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With thumping rhythm from bassist Tim Smith and drummer Jeremy Stacey, Tim picks up a tambourine and leads a rain dance for *Poor Boy*, much to the crowd's delight and reminding us that those Split Enz maniacs can do strobe dancing even without strobes. But the new work is strongly evident - a vibrantly sung *Edible Flowers*, very much a Tim song, the rather puzzling *Nothing Wrong With You* and *All the Colours*, a tribute for their late mother to whom the new recording is also dedicated. Another strongly personal composition, *Disembodied Voices*, about brothers whispering in the dark, is a duet with acoustic guitars and the stage lights blacked. It is a perfect Finn song, beautifully sung, with just a flicker of sentiment and more impact than you expect.

With such a large repertoire to call on, the choices are interesting. *Dirty Creatures*, Tim's account of his battle with depression, is played with new buoyancy - Neil going with very a different kind of funk and lead guitarist Paul Stacey, brilliant all night, doing wonders with the effects pedal. Other favourites bubble up for the latter part of the show - Crowdie classics like *Distant Sun* and selections from the 1991 *Woodface* album .

There have been hopes that the new CD would match that lucrative burst of Finn invention but, listening again to the show's encore hits - *It's Only Natural*, *Weather With You* and, turned into a wonderfully rambling community singalong, *Four Seasons in One Day* - there is a sense that those sunny harmonies, like the dada pop of *I Got You*, are a part of simpler and younger times. Showcasing a layered, meditative, accomplished new album, the Finn Brothers can now think of *Woodface* as their *Rubber Soul*. Good songs come harder-earned these days. Tim Finn, hunched over the piano, his badger-grey hair falling forward in Wildean tangles, sums it up with his own celebration of keeping on - " I was ready for another try /` But I needed you to set me free / must be *I'm the Luckiest Man Alive.*"