

Feeling upbeat fourth time round



PHOTO: NATHAN BROWN

by Justin Latif

One of New Zealand's favourite rock bands, The Feelers, will release their fourth album later this year. Amongst the tranquil surrounds of James Reid's Titirangi home he has been crafting the new album. The lead singer has written 40 songs from which a selection will be chosen for the August release.

The band will be recording most of the album here in New Zealand but will also head over to Los Angeles or London to polish it. Reid believes doing some recording overseas is important as it gets the band "out of their comfort zone".

Since bursting onto the music scene in 1998, James Reid and the band have experienced huge success in New Zealand. The Feelers have won numerous awards including Songwriter of Year, Band of the Year and Album of the Year in 1999. Since their last album the band have had a busy touring schedule right across New Zealand.

With the new album coming out, nerves are no longer a factor for this veteran of the New Zealand rock scene.

"It's just fun doing it," says Reid. "Art is never a failure. It's just abandoned."

"We have given a lot more thought to what we write; we're more aware of our responsibility and that people are listening."

"We're experimenting with

new material," he adds. He goes on to explain how his songs will be discussing more of the important issues that are going on in the world.

Having been around the music scene for a while now Reid doesn't see a time when he'll stop.

"You look at the Stones or U2, they're an extreme of how long you can go for. But there is no time limit with the music industry. Neil [Finn] is still going. Actually I think he is recording a new album."

Reid believes there is still much for the band to achieve. "We started off as dreamers – you start having bigger dreams, higher than you achieve. But there is still a lot I'd like to achieve, like to get more into Europe and the US."

In the immediate future he sees the band carrying on as they have for the last few years. "I plan to keep writing and making good music, keep touring and have an organised team where we structure the year into blocks of recording and touring."

"The cool thing about the music industry is there are so many different facets; recording, touring, business – I really enjoy this side of it; the law, organisation and planning."

Despite being recognised on the streets, being a celebrity hasn't stopped Reid from staying grounded. "It happens, but it's not that important. There aren't really any real celebrities in New Zealand."

PASSION ON STAGE: Reid is looking to tour more around Europe after releasing the band's fourth album.

Local talent aiming for international heights

by Aimee Nicholls

New Zealand is full of young fashion designers with creative ideas trying to find their niche in the industry.

But their road to success is not an easy one.

Every year young designers tempt fate as they see if they have what it takes to be the next Karen Walker. But few succeed.

"It is a very competitive industry," says Jan Collins, who has been involved in New Zealand's, and more specifically Auckland's, fashion industry for 30 years.

"So much is about branding. Vast amounts of money go into advertising and branding now. The major labels are all about branding," she says.

And New Zealand's major labels are proving successful internationally.

Trelise Cooper, Karen Walker and Zambesi are all well known overseas and becoming increasingly desired, helping New Zealand's fashion industry gain respect on the international circuit.

But Collins believes young designers are also proving themselves within the industry.

High-end label Mala Brajkovic is achieving huge success in High St, one of Auckland's top fashion centres.

"It has taken extremely hard work, industry and media support and amazing financial

backing," says young designer Mala Brajkovic. "But everyone has been really supportive and we are succeeding."

Brajkovic, who has spent four and a half years in the industry and three studying design, began her own label in January 2005 and opened her shop four months later.

While her style might be "unique", she has found competition within the industry, especially from chain stores.

"It's hard because they turn the trends in seconds and sell them for a quarter of the price of boutique stores so it is quite cut-throat," she says.

"Although it is not so noticeable between high-end labels," she says. "Workshop and

"It is my childhood dream. Fashion is all I remember wanting to do."

Zambesi across the lane from my store have been so supportive.

"And everyone is doing something slightly different. New Zealand is so small it is not a case of every man and his dog having a label."

She still admits reaching the high street of fashion is very hard work.

"I would hate to put someone off realising their dream by sounding too pessimistic, but it is really, really hard. You have

to be pretty dedicated."

Dedication to fashion is a quality young designer Sera Lilly has applied her entire life.

"It is my childhood dream. Fashion is all I remember wanting to do," says Lilly, now 22.

The talented designer won the ASB Glam Slam Young Designer Award in 2005, winning \$3000 and allowing her to create her own label, Sera Lilly.

"The award opened the door for me. Everything took off from there. It made people notice me."

Now Lilly has opened her own shop on Auckland's Ponsonby Rd, selling her own designs.

She says it has taken a lot of hard work and long-term investment to get there, but she would not have wanted anything to be different.

So far, so good.

"The people in Ponsonby are lovely, and the customers seem to love the clothing," she says.

And this young designer sets her sights high.

"Hopefully Fashion Week next year. Go nationwide... then international! It is hard work, but I love it."

With amazing responses to New Zealand Fashion Week 2005, hopes are high international recognition will only get stronger, and include some of New Zealand's talented young designers.

"For our size, we have some talent, that's for sure," says Brajkovic.



PHOTO: AIMEE NICHOLLS

LILLY: New kid on the block.