

THE TRIANGLES: A TRAY OF SONGS

BEST OF AND UNRELEASED FAVOURITES 2004-2011

01. LET'S REPLACE THE CITYSCAPES
02. I'VE HAD EYES FOR YOU
03. APPLEJACK
04. THE BURNLEY THEATRE
05. MEAT BLANKET
06. VIRUS PIE
07. ANCIENT CITY
08. NORTH WIND
09. BRING IT ON BACK
10. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PILLOW
11. YOUR HEART
12. EXTRA HEARTS
13. I AM YOUR VALLEY
14. YOU GET ME ALL WORKED UP
15. MOLLY
16. WILL IT FLOAT?

THE TRIANGLES: Julie Conway (piano, accordion), Matt Gormann (guitars, vocals, banjolin), Eleanor Horsburgh (vocals, glockenspiel, melodica), Katherine Simpson (bass, vocals, recorders), Robert Simpson (drums, guitars)

GUEST APPEARANCES: Rowan Austin (trumpet and brass arrangement on Ancient City), Gordon Blake (flute on Will it Float?), Bob Firth (stylophone on The Burnley Theatre and Ancient City), Anne Makin (trombone on The Burnley Theatre and Ancient City), Ranil Rajapaksha (vocals on Your Heart), Laura White (melodica on Ancient City)

Tracks 6, 8, and 9 are from *The Night Lunch EP*, self-released in 2011 | Tracks 2, 5, 7, 10, 14, 15, and 16 are from the album *Seventy-Five Year Plan*, released through Half a Cow Records in 2007 | Tracks 1, 3, 4, 11, and 13 are from the album *Magic Johnson*, released through Half A Cow Records in 2005 | Track 12 is from the album *Red Panda*, self-released in 2004 | All tracks mixed by Greg Heaton and produced by the Triangles (tracks 6, 8, and 9 with Greg); All songs © The Triangles 2017.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRIANGLES

Bands sometimes like to say that they didn't belong to a scene – that they emerged from their own little private creative enclave. Such claims often turn out to be inflated, but it isn't much of an exaggeration in the case of our group, The Triangles. The following is a slightly long-winded account of where we came from and what we did. There may be a few fans of our music who find this interesting, but if nothing else it will be nice to have an account of all this written down before our memories fizzle.

The five of us were friends through the later years of school. Apart from Kath and Eleanor, though, none of us went to the same school. We knew each other through church and youth group. Matt and I had been at church together since we were kids, and Julie, Kath, and Eleanor all joined our church in the late 1990s.

Some bands with that background who are trying to make popular music (as opposed to overtly Christian music) affect an air of mystery about their religious background. And when this is handled the right way it can come off as kind of interesting. Someone like Sufjan Stevens, for example, was always able to wear his religious-indie-guy hat in an appealing way. But we really had no idea

about how to pull that trick. For better or worse, then, we tended to be pretty gauche in talking about our background. None of us wanted to mislead anyone about that part of our lives, so whenever the question came up we would just say straight-up that we met in church.

Apart from the odd publicist or some random person in a band, people seemed not to care. In retrospect our creative temperament might have been a little bit influenced by our religious background. The sing-along cheerfulness and swung rhythm of many of our songs had an echo of some of the worship music we'd been imbibing for years. And there was a spirit of joy and inclusiveness around the band that reflected certain strands of our church's ethos. But there was an odd mixture of other influences feeding in as well.

One of these influences was Wesley Willis, whose outsider pop songs played a role in the crystallisation of the friendship between the five of us before we started playing music together. Long story short: me and a few friends from school had heard a Wesley Willis song on (the late night Australian music video show) Rage, and we thought it was bizarre and wonderful. I knew Matt would think it was

great as well, because he and I already had shared tastes in music that was fun and weird. I thought maybe some of our peers at youth group would like it as well. It turned out that pretty much everyone really hated it, except for Kath, Eleanor, and Julie, who loved it. This was one of several early indications that the five of us were on a similar wavelength, not only in terms of our musical tastes, but more importantly, in terms of our sense of what kinds of creative expression and performance were fun, interesting, cool, etc.

As it happens, one of the first public musical ventures involving the future members of the Triangles had a Wesley Willis connection. Matt (on guitar) and I (on drums) played a cover of Wesley's song "Jesus is the Answer" after a youth group event one night, probably in 1999. Obviously we took out all the cussing. It went down surprisingly okay, if memory serves. Another early musical venture was me, Matt, and Kath, playing covers at a youth group event and calling ourselves The Cosy Sheldons. We played REM, Midnight Oil, and a bunch of others that I no longer remember. Again, it could have gone much worse.

One early musical endeavour that *did* go rather badly was when Kath and I, recently engaged as 20 year-olds, played covers at a house party at Matt's

brother's place. We performed as an acoustic folk duo and called ourselves The Horny Sluts. At this time we were still pretty heavily involved at church and everything. I really can't remember what we thought we were doing or how we rationalised it to ourselves at the time.

The Triangles started to coalesce out of these haphazard beginnings in 2002. I was living with two friends, Daryl and Bek, in a house in the neighbourhood of Boronia, in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne, which was the same neighbourhood where Matt and Julie both lived, and not too far from Kath and Eleanor. Kath and I were engaged, so she was around at the house all the time. Daryl had a beat-up old acoustic guitar and one day he showed me a few chords. The creative juices started flowing immediately, and within a few weeks I'd bought my own guitar from KC's Rock Shop in Boronia, and started writing dozens of terrible little tunes with names like "Stefan Schnepps", "Sinful Dog", and "Festival of the Simones". I'm grateful that none of these song-writing attempts was ever inflicted on the wider world.

Matt had been playing guitar since his mid-teens, and around this time - I think partly in response to my writing - he too began writing down his tunes and doing some basic recordings on a four-

track tape machine. Matt's songs were much better than mine at that point. He actually knew how to play his instrument, and he had a knack for word play that was smart and unusual without being too winking. He did a four-track demo of a song called "Like the Shadow" that sounded like it could have been off an early Iron and Wine record. The potential was obvious.

Kath joined in the creative free-for-all as well. She was a natural singer, and she'd had enough lessons on the guitar to pick out some sweet melodies. Her songs at that time were remarkably well-formed. They seemed like properly-written songs plucked from the ether. Of the first six or seven things she wrote *circa* 2001-2003, at least four or five still hold up as quality compositions. (A version of one of those songs, "North Wind", appears on this compilation.) All of my first six or seven songs were horrible, though I knew that I was tapping into some real creative energy and that if I stuck with it for a while I'd be able to produce some decent tunes.

Two important artists for a few of us around this time were the Moldy Peaches and Jeffrey Lewis. They were a reminder that what ultimately made music appealing was generally independent of technical prowess in writing and performance. What mattered most of all was the mood and energy and

spirit of the whole thing. I felt confident that we could write and perform songs with a bit of spirit about them. I knew that Eleanor and Julie both had musical ability – Julie could rock the keys, Eleanor was a great singer, who I'd taught to play a bit of drums as well. More importantly, I knew these people were, by a fair margin, my favourite people to hang out with. We all enjoyed the same ridiculous humour and mucking around. And we were all hanging out a bunch anyway, watching videos or shooting the shit.

So I proposed that we form a band. In fact, I think one day I kind of just declared that we were a band, as of right then. I mean, if anyone had resisted I wasn't going to twist their arm, but I remember thinking: "if we just decide that we are a band then by that act of collective will we will be a band." So that was that. I invited everyone around to the house on a Saturday in late 2002 and we had our first practice.

The next 12 months accelerated into a blur. Our first performance as the Triangles was for Kath's 21st Birthday in April 2003. We played at the Planet Café, a venue on Brunswick Street in Fitzroy that doesn't exist anymore. Julie and Eleanor weren't yet fully integrated into the live line-up – it was mostly Kath, Matt, and me that night, playing

a mix of each other's songs on three acoustic guitars – although the five of us had all been practicing songs together. I remember that night we played a version of one of my songs called “Dr Phil is the Antichrist”, which got a decent reception.

The first gig with the five of us all playing together – Julie coming in on keys, Eleanor alternating between drums and vocals – was in July, again at the Planet Cafe. We played with my uncle Tom Bolton, who was then performing under the moniker Sensible Tom. (He's still gigging around Melbourne as The Boltons, and has been writing and performing terrific songs for a solid 15 years now.) A woman named Kate Eve also played. I'm pretty sure all ten of our Mums and Dads were there, along with a decent-sized crowd of other friends and well-wishers. The sound guy was from a trendy post-rock band called This is Your Captain Speaking and he was nice to us despite being orders of magnitude cooler than us and (one would reasonably assume) not really caring for the music.

The template for our live show was laid that night. The music was simple: guitars, drums, keys, with lots of little chirpy instruments – glockenspiels, toy accordion, maracas, harmonica, slide-whistle – rattling around on top. With the vocals there was a

lot of shouting, all-in choruses, nonsensical interjections, and so on. We did “stunts” – essentially: half-baked Dadaist piss-farting around on stage during and between songs. We handed out food (mostly slices or lamingtons) to the audience during a quiet song in the middle of the set, usually performed by Kath solo. And we played absurd “covers.” For instance, at that first gig we played “the Kan Tong Jam”, which involved us shouting the words from an old television advertisement for stir fry sauce (“Mama's making Kan Tong, doesn't take long for the word to get around”) over a huge distorted guitar and a slow-pounding floor-tom, booming out on the back-beats. People appeared to be entertained. What was undoubtedly true, in any case, was that we were amusing the heck out of ourselves, having a super-fun time making these awful rackets that intermittently opened up into moments of musical fluency.

The stunts could be simple but effective. For instance, when we played our song “Margarine” Eleanor would sit up on my shoulders and belt it out while I plucked the chords out on an acoustic guitar. Kath played the lead break on a kid's toy guitar. One time we were playing on a stage with a low ceiling and a skylight cavity, and Eleanor's head ended up in the skylight, invisible to the audience. You had to be really committed grump not to find

it a little bit amusing. Some ideas for stunts seemed to strike a chord and we'd keep returning to them. One time Matt had a vision of himself standing on stage, dangling a very long piece of dowel – a long, thin, flexible wooden rod – out over the heads of the people in the audience. We eventually made this vision a reality at a gig in 2007, though I don't think the piece of dowel we used was as long as any of us had been hoping-slash-imagining. At another gig we painted a grinning face onto a watermelon using white-out correction fluid and a sharpie, and in a few of the songs Eleanor sang to the melon face. He lived in mine and Kath's fridge for a few weeks afterwards before the inevitable.

There were costumes too, though never with any thematic coherence. Kath would often wear a leaf of lettuce on her head, which was quite economical. Matt would gather sticks and leaves and attach them to his arms with elastic bands. I wore a tall cylindrical hat made out of silver cardboard. Eleanor sometimes wore high-visibility SES coveralls. Julie wore an old Stackhat on at least a few occasions. Packing our cars for gigs was a nightmare.

Anyway, it seemed like the audiences were having fun, most of the time, just because we were.

At some point during 2003 – by which point Kath and I were married and living together in the Boro-nia house – we bought a computer with some basic recording software and a not-completely-trash microphone. Me, Kath, and Matt pitched in some money for the gear, and we set it up with all our musical instruments in our main room. By the end of 2004 Matt and I had probably recorded about 100 demos, and Kath had recorded a few more on top of that. Because I'd spent a lot of time playing drums as a teenager, I had a basic understanding about how to arrange a drum track and build up rhythmic parts around it. This was probably the main reason why I ended up becoming the *de facto* producer-slash-recording engineer for any songs that had drums.

We rushed out our first album – a CDR of 14 songs called “Waterfive” around the same time as our first gig in 2003. In 2004 we put out another album – a CDR of 15 songs called “Red Panda”. We sent the latter to some radio people, mostly at 3RRR and PBS (the two big community radio stations in Melbourne) and some of the DJs started playing it.

Our recordings at this time were all over the place, but – much like our gigs – they were spirited, and we had just enough musical ability to occasionally

capture a really spot-on vocal take, or guitar solo, or to arrange a nice bass and drums groove. Plus Matt's lyrics were often really funny. Our instruments were all pieces of crap, and we were using a demo version of ProTools where you could only record eight tracks per session, so we'd bounce things down and multi-track on top of ourselves like it was the olden days.

The songs we recorded sometimes made it into the live set, but often not. Many songs we recorded were just excuses for some cheap laughs. The hardest I've ever laughed in my life might have been the night we asked our friends Karl and Ash to role play as a high school guidance counsellor and aimless student having a conversation in which Karl gave Ash advice about all the careers he might want to pursue after he left school. They ad-libbed the opening dialogue, and then all the careers being listed were ones that we'd written out for Karl to recite. Of course they were nonsense: "sprinter, statistician, owner, religious guru, racer, digger, sensei, violin-maker, vampire, biologist, undertaker, etc." Karl put on a goofy American accent and recited with gusto. We recorded it, chopped up the audio, and laid it over a drums-and-guitar track that I'd arranged, then the group sang a cho-

rus over the top about invading people's houses inside a "trojan egg". Obviously you had to be there. But I'm telling you, it was a pisser.

The foolishness generally worked in the live context as well. One track that often went down well at gigs was Matt's song Bats: "I noticed some bats / flying above me / they started chewing my flesh / and screeching that they loved me". By the end of the song we'd be group-chorusing the refrain "chewing and loving baby, chewing and loving" loud enough to shred our vocal cords for days.

Gigs around this time also often featured another one of Matt's songs that never got demo'ed, let alone properly recorded, called "Mr Holland's Opus". The verses contained a synopsis of the early 1990s movie "Mr Holland's Opus", starring Richard Dreyfus. The choruses went: "Mister, mister, Holland, Holland's, Ooo-ooo-ooo-opus." It sounds thin on paper, but the song was played at break-neck speed, and it opened with pounding toms, squalling guitar, and screeching recorder blasts, the combined effect of which was to make the whole room buzz with energy. One night we played a show to about nine people at the Terminus Hotel in Clifton Hill - at the time a dive bar (now a gastropub) - and somehow, opening with that track,

the vibe in the room transformed from “grim disappointment at another unattended gig”, to “rock and roll party”.

Our friends would show up and chuckle at this kind of thing, but we didn’t have a scene of like-minded bands. We hardly even knew people who played in bands, except Sensible Tom playing his Tim-Buckley-inspired folk rock, and Kath’s sister and brother-in-law who had a semi-defunct classic rock band. These connections were better than nothing, and we played a bunch of fun gigs with Tom. But the local bands of our age whose music we dug, and that we’d hear on the hip community radio programs, all seemed to live near the city around Fitzroy and Brunswick, whereas we lived an hour’s drive away, on the fringe of the suburbs. Also, the five of us spent most of our time going to church things, studying, or working at cruddy part-time retail jobs in suburbs like Ringwood and Wantirna, where you really felt a long way removed from the city’s creative energies. And our gigs were characterised by self-indulgent mucking around and silly songs like “Bats”.

So although we were having a great time blurting out our creative energy, it was tricky trying to find our niche and an audience. The first time I remember meeting other musicians that were really on

our wavelength was at a battle of the bands in 2004. Kath and Eleanor were studying education stuff at the University of Melbourne, and so we decided to enter a heat for the Melbourne Uni battle of the bands, where we knew we could encounter some cool groups trying do interesting stuff. Having said that, I think we were more or less prepared to be laughed off the stage.

One of the bands playing that night was called Cunt Brigade. They were playing super intense industrial screamo metal with song titles like “Eating an Anal Prolapse”. It seemed like we’d come to the wrong place. (For years afterwards, at band practices, if we were eating cake or playing down-ball, we’d get a laugh by speculating about whether the members of Cunt Brigade were doing the same, somewhere else in Melbourne.) Nevertheless, our set went well, and quite a few random punters seemed to dig us. The big surprise came after our set when a band called Unresolved Pudding took the stage. Silly antics and carry-on? Check. Ramshackle performance style? Check. Songs that mentioned food products more than seemed necessary or appropriate? Check. We had found some buddies. And we won our heat, though we eventually lost the final to a rootsy group called The Vasco Era, who went on to have some success.

The ringleader of Unresolved Pudding was a bloke in his early 20s named Bob. It turned out that he was a church guy as well. The rest of the band seemed to mostly be made up of people from the University of Melbourne juggling club. They were all big dorks and we got on well. Shortly after the battle of the bands Bob invited me to a party he was throwing for people to listen to the experimental Flaming Lips album “Zaireeka”, at Ridley Bible College, where his dad was a lecturer. Bob was evidently doing a better job than me at finding a middle ground between his adventurous musical interests and the buttoned-down world of religion.

Bob and another member of Unresolved Pudding, Anne, guested on some of our tracks over the next few years, and Bob ran a series of gigs for International Talk Like a Pirate Day in the years 2004-06 that we played at and which were the funnest thing ever. His pirate band was called Captain Wilhelm and His Men, and their version of ABBA’s “Dancing” Queen – rewritten with new lyrics as “Buxom Wench” – was a memorable highlight.

Although our (modest) achievements still lay ahead of us, these times from 2004 through to the Pirate Day gig in 2005 were really the heyday of the band. More than anything else, the point of The Triangles was an excuse to be silly and absurd with our

best friends, and then at gigs to try to pull other people along for the ride as well. At practices we’d sit around cracking each other up coming up with ideas for stunts, or stupid names for songs, and developing a kind of private joke language with a million different little references that linked up to each other but ultimately stood for nothing more than whatever elicited a giggle.

Because we were doing the band, it meant that we were constantly socialising. In the calendar year of 2004, for instance, we probably all hung out together on at least 150 occasions. And each time we hung out we’d be making costumes, brainstorming stunts, trying to conjure up amusing gibberish phrases, taking photos, and making posters or covers. And of course writing and playing songs as well. There was a style of fun that we were working together to create and refine, and the band was a focal point that provided structure for that. It was like the friendship was the object of the creative enterprise, along with the music.

Anyway, something surprising happened in 2005. After a few years of making demos and dossing about with home studio stuff, we had found a way to arrange our recordings so that they sounded decent, even with crap instruments and limited technical ability. If we took care to make the bass and

drums parts simple and synchronised, added guitar parts that didn't all just sit on top of each other, but weaved around each other a little bit and sat at different spots in the mix, sprinkled some tinkly glockenspiel or synth melodies on top, then got a few good vocal takes, it all sounded pretty sweet. If we added group back-up vocals in the chorus, it sounded even sweeter.

We'd been playing a lot of gigs by this stage, and this evolution in my abilities in recording and arrangement, and everyone else's abilities in performance – plus the bits and pieces of positive uptake that came along with our Red Panda record – made me think that if we recorded a dozen tracks to the very best of our ability, we might be able to put out something like a proper record.

Matt, Kath, and I demoed about 30 songs between us (each of us demoing our songs solo), and burned them onto a CD so that everyone could get to know them all and pick favourites, and also get a feel for the songs before being put on the spot with a microphone to record. That might sound like an obvious practical move. But for the first couple of years of making music I was so impatient to get songs on tape that when I wanted Eleanor to sing a vocal, or Julie to play a piano part, I'd get them around, give them the chords or lyrics on a sheet,

and then just hit record and start doing takes. Julie and Eleanor were always like: "I need time to learn how it goes!" And I was always like: "don't worry about it, let's just start recording takes and you can learn it as you go!" This time around they had a bit more time to get to know the songs which gave them a better chance to express their musical talents.

We ended up picking five of Matt's songs, two of Kath's, and five of mine, and set out to make a record of a standard where we thought it might possibly be played on the radio and sound like a proper band. One of Matt's demos which he called "Apples, Drumkits" had a really nice groove. It was just acoustic guitars and multi-layered vocals but I felt like it was an anthem in the making. I think I asked him if he'd be up for trying to arrange a version of it that was loud and rollicking, and he was. We added a big introductory build-up, Julie played a cool rag-time sounding piano part that was the backbone of the song, Matt layered guitars over the top, and then we drenched the whole thing with group vocals. We also put a weird pause and sound effect in the middle, and kept Matt's unusual double key change from the demo. When it was finished it was the best thing we'd recorded. We were fans of the Wes Anderson film *Bottle Rocket*, and

there was a minor character in the film called “Applejack”. I suggested that this would make a catchier title and it stuck.

Kath had demoed a lovely little track which didn’t have a title, and which sounded like it could have been by The Sundays or Aimee Mann. She nailed a jangly pop version of it and that became the second song on the album, “The Burnley Theatre”. My best demo was for a song called “Let’s Replace the Cityscapes”, another sing-along indie number that had a bit of a Belle and Sebastian vibe. Julie was starting to chime in as well; the music in the opening to “Your Heart” was her composition. And we were finding new ways to give Eleanor a chance to shine as the main vocalist in the group. Things were coming together organically.

“Let’s Replace the Cityscapes” was one of the first songs to be finished and we made a promo single and sent it out to radio and record companies at the start of 2005 to see if anyone might be interested in putting out our album. The single ended up getting played on the community radio stations a fair bit, and a few different label people got in contact with us. Of those that did, the one who gave us the best vibe was Nic Dalton at Half A Cow Records.

At the time I don’t think we really recognised Nic’s position as an influential stalwart of the Australian independent music scene. From our perspective he was just a sincere and enthusiastic lover-and-maker-of-music who liked our songs. We knew nothing about how contracts and copyright and all that business worked, but Nic had a keep-it-simple philosophy, and after meeting up with him some time in the Autumn I realised that, if we actually pushed the whole thing forward, we would be able to do a proper release that would result in our CDs appearing in shops!

It’s easy to be jaded and too-cool-for-school about this sort of thing, especially with the benefit of a decade’s hindsight. But if I’m being honest the opportunity to actually be “in” the musical scene was one of the most exciting and gratifying things that has ever happened to me. We never had any notion of making money or playing music as a job. We were passionate about the band, but just as a hobby with friends. Striking up a deal with an indie label didn’t change any of this. But it did mean that our musical endeavours had a level of visibility that made the whole thing feel more real and alive. And it helped us to meet loads more cool and interesting people than we were ever going to meet just by haphazardly gigging and hoping to encounter a few like-minded goofballs every now and then.

So I'll be forever grateful to Nic for giving us a go. It's been a great honour being a Half a Cow band, and a great pleasure knowing Nic all these years.

We finished recording probably around May 2005, and then spent a bunch of time mixing the songs with our mate Greg Heaton. Greg was a guy from our church scene who was also a big music-head. His tastes weren't really all that aligned with ours, but he was a good bloke and we generally trusted his judgement. He'd been mixing songs for us since 2003, and we'd sent him a lot of badly recorded garbage during that time. But the sessions that we'd recorded for the new record were of a higher standard, and that made it easier in turn for Greg to use his talents as a mixing engineer to make everything hang together nicely. He did a terrific job. We then got the record mastered by some bloke we didn't know, and Tom helped me put together the cover art.

The title of the record came out of a long and deeply frivolous brainstorming process. We called it "Magic Johnson". It wasn't meant to be some lewd play on words. Magic Johnson was one of mine and Matt's favourite basketball players, and I think we all thought it was funny and subversive naming an Australian indie-pop record after a world-famous American athlete. At any rate, it was

better than calling the album "Tiny Rodent Orchestra" or "The Frozen Bird" or one of those kinds of titles like all the indie bands were going with.

Some of the other titles that I remember being on the short-list for this album were "Sometimes the Beach Smells Awesome", "The Glow of Me", and "Sniffy Goddy". Matt was quite keen on "Ham and Drink". When we played some shows in Sydney and Brisbane later that year we called it "The Ham and Drink Tour", which ensured that the title didn't go to waste. I believe that the title "A Tray of Songs" appeared on that short-list as well. We finally have our chance to use it.

I'll speed up the pace otherwise this story will go forever. Over the next two years lots of cool things happened. "Magic Johnson" got some decent reviews and some publicity from moderately influential blogs so that it found a bit of an audience internationally in addition to the local scene. We played a handful of shows outside of the Melbourne circuit which didn't go as badly as we'd feared.

We did a bunch of radio performances and interviews, and our album launch show at Gertrude's in Fitzroy - a venue that's since been renovated and rechristened - had the biggest crowd we'd ever

played to, and ended up being super-fun and exhilarating. For a stunt, I decided to let Julie and Eleanor cut my hair on stage in the middle of the set, during a song, which got a rise out of the audience and resulted in some unexpectedly large chunks of hair being removed. At one point one of us (maybe me?) threw a biscuit into the audience and it hit one of our support acts, Jess – who went on to become the ultra-hip songstress “Jessica Says” – in the eye. She took it like a champ.

We received a bunch of radio play on The Breakfasters on 3RRR and some other shows, and we got to experience every band’s dream of hearing your own songs on the radio in the car driving to work. In the midst of all this Matt and Julie started dating and they eventually married so you would have to count that as a highlight of the period as well, I’d say. Half a Cow sold enough copies of our album to warrant a second pressing, largely due, I’m sure, to the excellent promotional work that was being done by the publicist he’d encouraged us to work with, Natalie Crupi. We played a ton of gigs through 2005 and 2006 and at the same time continued demoing new tracks and working on the follow-up record.

Now, fast-forwarding dramatically: that next record eventually came out in 2007. We called it “Seventy-

Five Year Plan”. The songs had evolved to become a little bit more subtle and minor key, and we’d learned some more tricks with recording and arrangement, and got some slightly better gear (though our instruments were still junk). The record came up pretty nicely, but I think we were all running out of steam, and when Matt told us that he was going to Japan to teach English for a year, it seemed like a suitable time to go on an indefinite hiatus. We were all still great mates, but we didn’t have the energy or ability to try to take the band to some next level of seriousness or professionalisation. Plus I think we were starting to run low on ideas for stunts.

By 2009 Matt was back in Melbourne but Kath and I had hatched a plan to move to the UK, so it seemed like that was really it for the band. But fate chose a funny time to intervene.

Karl Richter was someone we knew a little bit from him hosting a long-running show on 3RRR called Mousetrap. He used to play our songs a bit, and he’d invited us to be one of the live acts at the show’s farewell broadcast from the Cornish Arms Hotel in 2007. Karl had gone into music licensing, and his company Level Two had become one of the big players locally. He’d licensed one of our songs for a small advertising campaign in 2006

which gave us a bit of money to pay for recording costs and muesli bars and whatnot.

Now, in 2010 one of Karl's cronies in the European Music Licensing scene, Jesper Gadeberg, had been tasked with finding a cheerful indie song and a band that would be willing to fly to Spain with a few weeks' notice to appear in an advertisement for Estrella Damm beer. The people in charge heard "Applejack" through Karl and Jesper, and - without going into all the boring details - in the space of three weeks we went from being a semi-defunct indie band who hadn't played gigs for nearly three years and who lived on opposite sides of the world, to the centrepiece of a multi-million Euro advertising campaign. It was absurd.

We all got flown to the Spanish island of Menorca for a week to appear in the advertisement, with Jesper taking care of us. The actors in the advertisement all looked like supermodels, which made me, at least, feel like a troll. But everyone was nicer to us than we deserved, and the rest of the band carried themselves with grace and aplomb.

In the wake of this "Applejack" got picked up for some advertising campaigns in other territories, and we had loads of digital sales in Spain, so we decided we should try to restart the band while the going was good. Kath and I were still living in the

UK, so that made it basically impossible to organise a proper tour or anything. But we had a few weeks back in Melbourne at the end of 2010, so we booked some studio time to record some new songs, and organised a couple of gigs in Melbourne. It all went fine, but the geographical obstacles were too much hassle to overcome. This release is the first time the songs we recorded at that time have received any kind of official release.

I said at a few points that we never really belonged to a scene, but of course there were lots of people who helped us and encouraged us. Nic, Tom, Greg, and Bob I've already mentioned. They're all champs. We'll be in the debt of Karl and Jesper forever. Fee B-Squared from Triple R played us a bunch and helped us find an audience in our home town. Kath's Dad Collin came to literally every gig we ever played in Melbourne. I believe we played about 80 local gigs between 2003 and 2007 - less than many bands, of course, but still, that's a fair effort on Collin's part. And over time we linked up with a few other really great local bands like Duckdive, Vicuna Coat, and Kes Band that we got to play alongside multiple times and develop a bit of a rapport with.

Even if we had less of a scene than some, we had the good fortune to grow up on the outskirts of

Melbourne – a city with two genuinely amazing community radio stations, hundreds of venues hosting original live music regularly, and tens of thousands of people regularly going out to see unknown local bands playing original music in venues large and small. That happy accident of geography meant that our guileless creativity could be blurted out into public spaces, and this public access fuelled our creativity in turn. By the time the band was winding up in 2007 all of us had moved away from church. And while there’s a different story about that to be told for each of us, I’d say that one common thread was that in the band, and in the wider social ecosystem the band moved in, we had familiarised ourselves with another kind of world in which our shared ideals, such as they were – openness, creativity, joy, humour, inclusiveness, friendship – could be expressed and (at least sometimes) reciprocated in the people we met.

What’s great about the Melbourne music community, as I see it, is that for the most part bands aren’t trying to second-guess what’s going to be popular with a mass audience and then making their writing and performance fit that mould. Most bands are trying to make music that appeals to themselves and their cool mates (i.e. the ones who are likely to show up to gigs). This creates more breathing room for weird, fun, and unorthodox

styles. No doubt there are other music scenes in which this is the case as well, although I’d wager that Melbourne must be one of the biggest music scenes – in terms of the number of venues, bands, and punters – in which this ethos reigns.

Melbourne’s rank-and-file punters who make the whole scene viable by going along to gigs generally don’t seem to worry about how “ready-for-prime-time” a band is. And as far as I can tell there’s never really an expectation – even at the hippest bars and venues – that the people on stage will be trendier, better-looking, or more technically accomplished musicians than the people in the audience. The punters really just want to hear something with a bit of personality, and that’s not a dreary rehash of things they’ve seen before.

You might say that these are low standards. But they’re also the only standards that it makes sense to apply to popular music. At any rate, the standards were low enough that they allowed The Triangles to participate. If the total amount of fun that we generated for other people was equal to or greater than the amount that we generated for ourselves, then I reckon it was time well spent.