

## Firin' Reyne

Ever since he burst on to our TV screens on *Countdown*'s 'How to Make a Record', James Reyne has been a constant of Australian entertainment.

We've spent hours debating the lyrical content of *Beautiful People*, and admired his depth and vocal range in *Hammerhead* and *Motor's Too Fast*. And if you've never cried into your beer to the strains of *Downhearted*, chances are you've never been in love.

Now he's back. In between projects as diverse as writing the musical scores for *The Postcard Bandit* and a forthcoming production of *Twelfth Night* for The Bell Shakespeare Company, James has written and recorded a new album, *Speedboats for Breakfast*.

'I think *Speedboats* is easily the best thing I've done; not only musically, but in the whole production process,' says James. 'Recording the album was a great experience – it was done with friends; it was a very stress-free environment; and we worked when we needed to, or felt like it. It really was great fun.'

Widely hailed as charting a new direction in James's musical style, *Speedboats for Breakfast* also marks a welcome return to his musical origins. 'To me it sounds like the sort of record Australian Crawl would make if we were still going,' he says. 'It's the type of album I've always wanted to do, the old "if I knew then what I know now", this is the record I would have made.'

The Reyne of yore is unmistakably there in tracks like *Glamourpuss* and *Hooray and Hallelujah*, that marry lethal guitar riffs with the confrontingly satirical lyrics James is so well known for. 'The folly of affectation and people's hollow aspirations never ceases to amaze me,' says James, 'and it's great material for songs.' My approach to that sort of thing has probably evolved as I've got older and learned more about the world, and about myself, but I still see it all around me. And I really enjoy word play; I find that once I start writing something I go off on little tangents, thinking: "wouldn't that be fun?" Sometimes I just can't resist it.'

And on the subject of going off on tangents – who else would serve us up a punk version of *Have you Never Been Mellow*, cleverly listed on the sleeve simply as *Mellow*? What was behind the decision to record the song with such a different treatment?

'Brett Kingman, who plays guitar with me, heard the song on the radio and suggested it might be fun to record a punk version,' James explains. 'So we tried it and found it worked well; the song really suits that particular treatment, and I like the way the lyrics go "have you never been mellow" when it's done with thrashing guitars. But since we're of the punk generation, we feel we can make real punk records now we're in our forties. We're the genuine punks; it's just that we're punk dads now.'

So how does this punk dad feel about forming the old guard in the realm of youth? 'I'm honestly enjoying the whole thing more now than I ever have,' James says, 'because I feel more relaxed about it, and everything feels easier. I'm a better singer and songwriter now than I've ever been, because as with any craft, it takes time to develop your strengths and learn from your mistakes. You get wiser about what's going on around you, and you become more confident. Right now I'm at a good place in my life, and I'm really enjoying it. This is a good job to have.'