

## WINNING LOTO

There's a depth of angst only fourteen year olds can plumb.

Perhaps that's why *Between Birth and Death*, the Gold Coast's own Sunk Loto's widely-anticipated second album, lacks much of the darkness of *Big Picture Lies*, its first. Written largely during early adolescence (although not recorded until a couple of years later), *Big Picture Lies* distilled the essence of teenage despair, while *Between Birth and Death* maps a ripening and deepening of the band's material that reflects their new maturity. The powerful messages are still there, but with less angst, and a rougher edge.

'This album's a lot heavier,' Dane, the drummer, tells me. 'We did what we really wanted to do, which was to push our musical ability and get away from the predictable verse/chorus format. It was challenging, but we wanted to play new music so we wouldn't get bored.'

But what did their record company think of this change of direction? Dane remembers: 'They were freaked out at first because it was such a huge change, but we've kept a lot of melody in our music, and in the end they started warming to it.'

With the choice of producer being crucial to an album's quality, Phil McKellar (renowned for his work with heavies like Grinspoon, Silverchair and Spiderbait) was enlisted to lend production assistance to the recording of *Between Birth and Death*. How did Sunk Loto feel about working with Phil? 'We started having a panic attack, thinking "is this guy going to want to come in and change it all?'" Dane recalls, 'but once we got down to production, not a lot was changed. It was cool working with him, and we were really happy with the sounds he pulled.'

With production complete and the tour about to kick off, it's hard to believe there was a time when it looked like *Between Birth and Death* might never be finished. But Sunk Loto weathered creative differences, rehearsal space problems and the theft of all of their musical gear bar the drum kit to get to this point, and have emerged triumphant, keen to take their new music on the road. 'There were some big issues with this album,' Dane tells me, 'but we drew on that as inspiration; it just made us try harder.'

Do their lives feel a little surreal at times? 'No,' says Dane. 'We're all so used to it; anything else would feel strange. And it was always a dream of ours to do this, so it's pretty cool.'

And does it ever stop being fun? Dane's answer is no surprise: 'It can get stressful at times, but you've just got to remind yourself that you wouldn't be doing anything else.'

With *Between Birth and Death*, Sunk Loto has indeed come of age.