

# e guide

## Xavier Rudd: Dark shades of blue



XAVIER Rudd needs no introduction. The Australian born alternative musician is still defying categorisation a decade after his first album release. Vanessa Almond caught up with Xavier from the road to chat about his new album and his touring plans.

*Vanessa Almond: You're currently performing in Canada. You've just*

*played in the UK and Ireland, and you have 22 US dates to play next month, then your Australian tour in October. How do you stay balanced on the road?*

Xavier Rudd: At this point in time, it's a matter of being used to it, and after ten years of touring, I know how to manage it. I do enjoy seeing so many new places and I love playing live, but I do need

to keep balanced so I do a lot of yoga. You can do it anywhere and it really helps to keep me focused and calm.

*VA: Your new album Dark Shades of Blue is your eighth full length work, are you close to your ideal music-wise?*

XR: I feel like I've come to where I've been trying to be for a long time. This is my favourite album out of all that I've made. The thick tonality is something I've been trying to achieve for a long time. I had music just coming through me at the time and I still do.

*VA: You recorded this album in Byron Bay, which is the first recording you've done in Australia in several years. The vibe obviously agreed with you?*

XR: It did. I was so stoked to be back in Australia. I'd just toured before the CD release in the American winter and it was very, very cold so it was such a relief to be back home. I was surfing in the morn-

ing, recording in the afternoon and relaxing at night. The past two years have been my busiest ever and I just couldn't wait to get home and just be.

*VA: What stands out about your music is that the production is simple and the sounds are largely man made. That's a brave move in this time of electronica, but it continues to pay off for you.*

XR: Yeah, it's so cool. A lot of the instruments are handmade from wood and they feel almost alive. We run them through these beautiful vintage amps that give them a texture you just can't get from modern equipment and that really shines through in the music.

*VA: You have an uncanny knack of mixing modern and traditional sounds in a way that just works.*

XR: My instincts are strong in that way. It's almost like I have a spirit coming through me. Like the music comes from somewhere else and I'm just the vehicle for it.

*VA: 'Dark Shades of Blue' was mixed by Joe Barresi, who has worked with Tool and Queens of the Stone Age. Did this enhance the more assertive feel of the album?*

XR: It did. Joe is good at taking thick tones and translating them into a mix that sounds heavy and live, and that is what I felt had been missing from my recordings. When Joe saw us live in America he loved the show and he saw that the true energy wasn't reflected in the studio recordings. He felt he

could fix that and he has. *VA: The cover art by your wife Marci Lutken-Rudd is stunning. Did you brief her about the album before she painted it?*

XR: It's funny, we were apart and really missing each other, but we didn't collaborate consciously. It just happened. I was working on *Dark Shades of Blue* and she was painting at the same time. Her work is like the visual representation of my music, made real so you can actually see it. We're very connected in that way and it was amazing

how we produced such similar works in our different fields at the same time.

*VA: So what's next for Xavier Rudd?*

XR: Well, the US tour starts tomorrow, then more music, more songs, more of the same! I don't like to plan too far ahead. Things are going so well at the moment and I'm happy for life to just happen.

■ See Xavier Rudd live at the Coffs Ex Services Club on November 11.