

INXS

THE NEWLY REJUVENATED INXS IS BACK ON THE ROAD WITH NEW LEAD SINGER, CANADIAN J.D. FORTUNE. ROCK SCHOLAR AND MUSIC COMMENTATOR, GLENN A. BAKER, CATCHES UP WITH THE BAND ON THE EVE OF THEIR NEW WORLD TOUR.

“We’re a whole band again, it’s fantastic,” enthuses Kirk Pengilly, INXS’ personable sax and guitar player. “J.D. fits in like we’ve been together for 10 years or more. We’re playing good-sized venues to really enthusiastic crowds again and it’s such a great feeling.”

A great feeling for both players and audience. From the launch of their world tour back in January at the Queen Elizabeth theatre in Vancouver, where almost 3,000 tickets were snapped up in less than five minutes, they have stymied cynics and garnered glowing reviews. As the Toronto Sun’s Jane Stevenson marvelled, they, “Never played a false note; the crowd went nuts from the get-go for the combination of the handsome homegrown singer and the familiar INXS back catalogue.”

After a pared-back near-acoustic show in London a couple of months later, songwriting keyboard player Andrew Farriss – one of the three siblings who formed the band as The Farriss Brothers in 1977 – told an interviewer: “Everyone there was happy and dancing and having a good time, which is ultimately what INXS has always been about. We’re not trying to save the world, we just like playing music! We really surprised lots of people by simply hanging in there.”

And hang in they have, doggedly determined to preserve their extraordinary alchemy as a unit of musicians. “After Michael’s death [in 1996] I think we were trying to find out who are INXS’ fans – what we’ve lost and what we’ve gained,” adds Andrew.

There’s no questioning that the Rock Star reality TV audition was a risky venture. It copped no small amount of derision as it was announced, but by the end was commanding six million viewers an episode. More than a few tunes had been changed over its run. “The television show was extremely stressful,” bassist Garry Beers admits. “So many things could have gone wrong but thankfully, it didn’t. We tried it with a few other singers but they were established and it was a bit like Us and Them. So we figured if we’re going to take the gamble, let’s take the biggest gamble of all, and, against all odds, we got exactly the guy we needed. We sit back and think,

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