

CHRIS ISAAK LIVE IN AUSTRALIA

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Perhaps it's a mutual love for the ocean and music – or for the spirit of both. Whatever it is, Chris Isaak and Australia are a match made in heaven. So it's perfectly natural that the San Franciscan singer, songwriter and guitarist would choose to make his first ever live album in front of an Australian audience.

Don't even get him started on the long list of things he loves about Australia. It starts somewhere with the Aussie sense of humour and friendliness and moves through to wide open spaces, unparalleled beauty, the best beaches in the world and echoes of California in the 50's when there were not so many people around.

Chris Isaak – **“Live In Australia”** is the 17-track recording during his Best Of Tour in 2006 which supported the album of the same name. It shows an artist at the top of his game and totally comfortable with the place he has carved out. Isaak combines that smooth, dusky baritone and tender falsetto with an effortless brand of stylish retro-cool. He's a storyteller of life, heartbreak and longing and each song is told with such an aching sincerity you believe every word of it.

Touring Australia has been magical for Isaak and you can hear the audience feed off the band and they in turn deliver. It's a party with a preacher who forgives the audience their peccadilloes, at least as far as “Baby Did A Bad Bad Thing” goes and is perfectly contrasted with the sweetest of odes in “Waiting” and “Blue Darlin’”.

Chris Isaak's first ever live album caps off what is already a stellar two-decade career: nine extraordinary albums, twelve singles, two Grammy nominations, multi-millions in sales, acting credits and his own critically-acclaimed TV series. Throw in the fact that he can also sketch, loves to surf, wonders if board wax can be a genuine tax deduction and has a penchant for flashy suits.

Isaak's shows are much talked about affairs – love affairs, which draw audiences back again and again. **“Live In Australia”** is no less intoxicating with its mix of humour, good times and great songs.

Like his Best Of album, **“Live In Australia”** effortlessly showcases Isaak's different musical personas: the rockabilly rebel (“Dancin’”, “Lonely With A Broken Heart” and “Baby Did A Bad Bad Thing”), the broken-hearted crooner (“Wicked Game” and “Somebody's Crying”) and the breezy acoustic storyteller (“San Francisco Days” and “Let Me Down Easy”).

Add in “I'll Go Crazy”, a song he dedicates to anyone having a tough time and the lovelorn ballad “Only The Lonely”, a constant tribute to his hero Roy Orbison. What live album would be complete without an incendiary extended drum solo? This one is on “San Francisco Days”.

“The reality of when you play live is that anything can happen. On the nights things go wrong it's the scary part and the fun part,” says the musician who likes to change his set list nightly. “I wanted to give people a feel for what it's like at my live shows – it's not just about a collection of songs.” That's why you'll find Blue Darlin' on the set list, one which Isaak rarely performs. But that's the nature of a show he says, offering the opportunity to go just about anywhere he pleases.

"I listen back to this record and I am sure I could go into the studio and hit everything perfectly. I didn't go back and re-do and change any vocals because it's about the night. This sounds just like what it is: exciting, fun and like we had a party."

Accompanied by his longtime band Silverstone – drummer Kenney Dale Johnson, bassist Rowland Salley and guitarist Hershel Yatovitz – together they have entertained a legion of fans for over two decades. More recent Silverstone members now include keyboardist Scott Plunkett and percussionist Rafael Padilla.

What catapulted Isaak into the spotlight back in the early 90's was when director David Lynch used the moody and eerie ballad "Wicked Game" from Isaak's third album, Heart-Shaped World, in the film Wild At Heart. The song went Top Ten in 1991 and the video, a steamy Herb Ritts-directed clip featuring the singer rolling around on the beach with a topless Helena Christensen. It made him a star.

"Wicked Game really put us out there," he says. "We were on the road at the time and got to ditch our van and get into a bus. For the first time in years, we got some sleep!"

There are numerous other songs which have become part of the Chris Isaak lexicon, like the south-of-the-border-flavoured Grammy-nominated ballad "Somebody's Crying" which was written in a closet at a party.

"I had just broken up with someone and hadn't been out of the house much," he remembers. "A friend of mine was having a party and as soon as I arrived I realised I didn't want to be there. The house had this big walk-in closet in the hallway, so I went in, shut the door and sat down underneath the coats. There was a guitar leaning against the wall in the back. I started tuning it up and wrote "Somebody's Crying"."

"Live In Australia" also wouldn't be complete without the smouldering bluesy rocker of a trademark in "Baby Did A Bad Bad Thing". Sexy as all get out, it also featured in Stanley Kubrick's 1999 film Eyes Wide Shut starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. The director asked Kidman what music she wanted to rehearse the movie's striptease scene to. "Nicole had been listening to the track and brought it in to run through for her rehearsal," Isaak recalls. "Stanley said 'I love it' and put it in the film. I owe Nicole Kidman a full body massage."

Isaak attributes the longevity of his career to never following the trends. He does what feels right for a song – both live and in the studio – and it carries him through, often giving his music an air of timeless elegance.

Every night that Isaak and Silverstone go on stage, he considers it an audition. Each one, in front of a new audience you're intent on wooing. Proud to have never missed a gig in his entire career, Isaak takes the job of entertaining his audience very seriously.

"I have a tremendous commitment to having the show go well and I think about what I am going to do on stage. I show up on time and they have to drag me off stage. After a show I often sign merchandise and get to meet a lot of fans.

"I've been so lucky because the guys I play with are not only great musicians but they enjoy playing live. We're all good friends and it shows on stage. You would be surprised how many musicians wish there was no one to watch them.

"We have to have fun because the fun starts with us and moves into the audience. You can't fake that. I tell my band 'you have come to party and will never stare at your shoes while on stage'. Live shows should be fun."

He's right. It's a key ingredient to "Live In Australia" and you can feel it at every turn across the 17 songs.

"Live In Australia" marks the debut outing for Isaak with his new label Universal Music Australia. He's recently wound up his latest American tour, finished filming a new series of the Chris Isaak Hour television show and is putting the finishing touches to a new album, which will bring Isaak and Silverstone together to tour the new music in early 2009.

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"LIVE IN AUSTRALIA" TRACKLISTING:

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL
LET ME DOWN EASY
(INTRO)
I'LL GO CRAZY
GO WALKIN' DOWN THERE
WICKED GAME
LONELY WITH A BROKEN HEART
(INTRO)
BABY DID A BAD BAD THING
THIS LOVE WILL LAST
WAITING
BLUE DARLIN'
(INTRO)
ONLY THE LONELY
ONE DAY
SOMEBODY'S CRYING
BLUE HOTEL
SAN FRANCISCO DAYS
DANCIN'
BLUE SPANISH SKY

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