

Silverchair Rocks Again

Australia's Silverchair resurfaces with a new disc

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By Gary Carra

PHOTO BY NABIL ELDER

Platinum-haired and platinum-selling by the age of 14, singer/six-stringer Daniel Johns was sharing stages with the Smashing Pumpkins and the Chili Peppers while most his age were studying actual botany.

Some 13 years later, the *Advocate* caught up with the affable Aussie for a candid chat about holistic pills, Dr. Phil and just how and why he got Silverchair rockin' again after a five-year hiatus.



The new Silverchair, facial hair and all.

Advocate: Hey, Daniel, I appreciate you taking the time, particularly considering that I hear you are presently canceling some dates due to a throat infection?

Johns: Yeah, it's all good. I'm already feeling a bit better and don't plan on screaming too much in the interview.

A: Let's hope not. But I have to say, I was actually expecting to hear a lot more screaming on your new disc, *Young Modern*. My thinking was that after *Diorama* [Silverchair's previous effort, released in 2002], you seemed to have pushed things as far as they could go in terms of sounds and composition. Most bands return with a back to basics, straightforward rocker reminiscent of their early works at this point. But you didn't do that. *Modern* seems to have all of the orchestral flourishes and Bowie-esque embellishments of *Diorama*, yet is much more restrained, focused and, dare I say, more mature. Is that a fair assessment?

J: It's absolutely a fair assessment and exactly what I was going for! As you said, it would have been ridiculous to go even bigger and more bombastic. But all of the orchestral stuff, the rock, pop and even psychedelic influences is what I am into now, so I wasn't about to abandon that.

A: Surely you must have had some old-school rockers in you... and maybe even others that turned out to be too progressive for what you were looking for this go-round?

J: I did. In fact, I think I actually had about 52 songs worked up when we went into the studio. And to be honest, all the ones I chose for the

record weren't necessarily the most ambitious or even the best. But they made the most cohesive package, and I'm really proud of every song on it.

A: If I recall correctly, the major reason for shelving Silverchair after *Diorama* was your arthritis. I'm assuming with the reunion and all, you've found some relief in that area?

J: It was bad... I was in a wheelchair and taking all this medicine. They eventually wanted to up my dosages and I went, "No fucking way." I found a holistic doctor, rehabilitated with him and took about 80-150 pills a day, oxygen chambers and all that... and I feel great. Then we were asked to play this tsunami relief benefit, and between my health and the energy and reaction we got from that show, we all knew we had to give it another go.

A: The first time I heard this, I laughed. But after watching two or three more recent TV interviews you've done on YouTube, I have to ask. Did Dr. Phil have anything to do with your improved health or the band reunion?

J: [Laughs] Oh God, no! I was totally taking the piss on that one. I don't have a computer and don't understand any of this YouTube and such, but it's amazing how people can see things like that from all over the world in seconds. I think the technology is a good thing, but people definitely shouldn't take that seriously.

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