

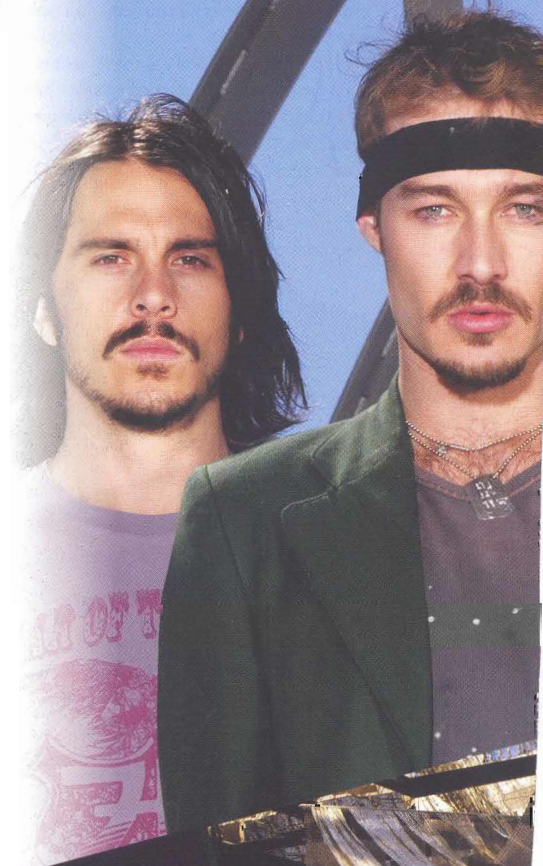
## silver

NOT AS YOUNG,  
BUT STILL MODERN

by Jason MacNeil

**a**ustralian rock trio Silverchair are icons in their native land, but when the group ventured out for a brief North American trek in early 2007 behind their latest album *Young Modern*, they were a bit ruffled at the reaction on this continent.

“The response has been really weird over in America actually,” drummer Ben Gillies says from his Australian home. “In Australia and in other places around the world, there are people who have really moved forward with us and have come on this musical evolution with us.”



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Photography by Nabil Elderkin and Martin Philbey



"But in America they're still asking us about *Frogstomp*. And for us it's so weird, because we've done so much since then. And they're still so far behind us. With some of the American audience they're still finding it hard to realize where we are now as opposed to ten years ago."

That time lapse should be corrected with *Young Modern*, a rather stunning display from a group still in their twenties but musically mature far beyond their age. Based around the lyrics of singer and guitarist Daniel Johns, songs like "Straight Lines" have a rich, slow-building feel while "Reflections of a Sound" and the Beatles-tinged "If You Keep Losing Sleep" are pure highbrow pop gems.

The blissful sound might be a result of the happy place Silverchair are currently enjoying. Following the release of 2002's *Diorama*, Silverchair went on hiatus, with Johns working on The Dissociatives side project while Gillies and bassist Chris Joannou remained busy with other projects.

"I think every record that we've ever done, we think that it might be the last," Gillies says. "A lot of it has always been Daniel questioning whether he wanted to be the front man in Silverchair anymore. I think it was important for us to take a break, because we had been doing it since we were twelve."

The devastating 2004 tsunami in south-east Asia had Silverchair reuniting for a special one-off

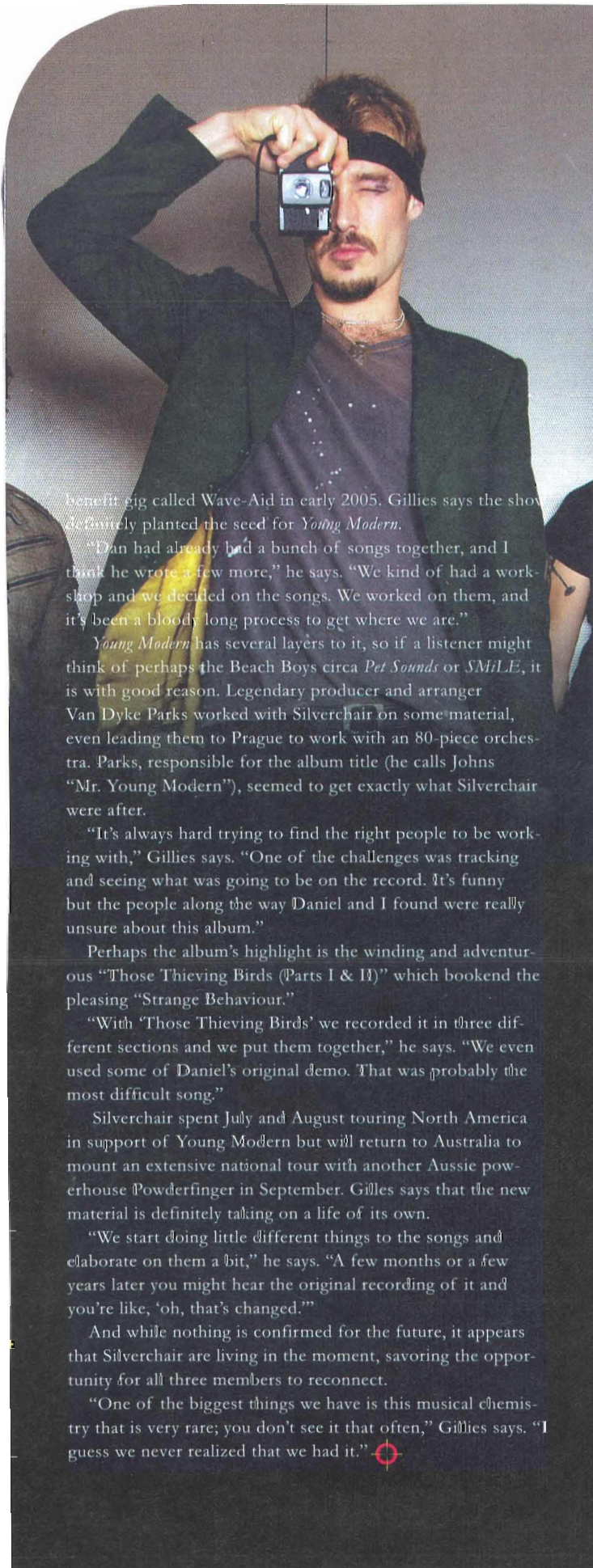
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benefit gig called Wave-Aid in early 2005. Gillies says the show definitely planted the seed for *Young Modern*.

"Dan had already had a bunch of songs together, and I think he wrote a few more," he says. "We kind of had a workshop and we decided on the songs. We worked on them, and it's been a bloody long process to get where we are."

*Young Modern* has several layers to it, so if a listener might think of perhaps the Beach Boys circa *Pet Sounds* or *SMiLE*, it is with good reason. Legendary producer and arranger Van Dyke Parks worked with Silverchair on some material, even leading them to Prague to work with an 80-piece orchestra. Parks, responsible for the album title (he calls Johns "Mr. Young Modern"), seemed to get exactly what Silverchair were after.

"It's always hard trying to find the right people to be working with," Gillies says. "One of the challenges was tracking and seeing what was going to be on the record. It's funny but the people along the way Daniel and I found were really unsure about this album."

Perhaps the album's highlight is the winding and adventurous "Those Thieving Birds (Parts I & II)" which bookend the pleasing "Strange Behaviour."

"With 'Those Thieving Birds' we recorded it in three different sections and we put them together," he says. "We even used some of Daniel's original demo. That was probably the most difficult song."

Silverchair spent July and August touring North America in support of *Young Modern* but will return to Australia to mount an extensive national tour with another Aussie powerhouse Powderfinger in September. Gillies says that the new material is definitely taking on a life of its own.

"We start doing little different things to the songs and elaborate on them a bit," he says. "A few months or a few years later you might hear the original recording of it and you're like, 'oh, that's changed.'"

And while nothing is confirmed for the future, it appears that Silverchair are living in the moment, savoring the opportunity for all three members to reconnect.

"One of the biggest things we have is this musical chemistry that is very rare; you don't see it that often," Gillies says. "I guess we never realized that we had it." 