

Silverchair is happy to be back on top

By Pat Reavy

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Quick quiz: what act has collected the most ARIAs (the Australian equivalent of the Grammys)?

If you said INXS, AC/DC, Midnight Oil, Crowded House, Little River Band, Kylie Minogue or even Men at Work, you're wrong.

The correct answer is Silverchair.

Last month, Silverchair dominated the ARIA awards in Sydney with five wins, including album and single of the year. "We didn't expect anything like that," said bassist Chris Joannou. "It was one of those nights we'll never forget."

The five awards gave Silverchair a total of 19 for its career, one more than the all-time record previously held by . . . drum roll, please . . . John Farnham, best known for working with Little River Band.

Speaking to the Deseret Morning News by phone from Los Angeles on the eve of a short U.S. tour that will bring Silverchair to Salt Lake City for the first time in 10 years, Joannou was suffering a little jet lag after flying in from Australia. But he said he is excited to know that three of the band's first four shows are sold out. "The reaction to the songs so far has been overwhelming. It's such a long time to be out of the public eye, especially in America where everything moves so fast. Actually, we're seeing a lot of faces from fans

we saw years ago."

Most Utahns probably remember Silverchair (Joannou, Daniel Johns and Ben Gillies) as long-haired kids who burst onto the music scene in 1995 with the album "Frogstomp" and the post-grunge radio hit "Tomorrow." All three band members were 15 or 16 years old at the time, and were billed by some as the next "big thing."

Critics, however, said the band had nothing original to offer and were simply riding on Seattle's coattails. Some even made comments about lead singer Daniel Johns' Kurt Cobain-like looks. "In the beginning I think we were all pretty naive to a lot of that kind of (pressure). We enjoy playing live and it was all fun. The pressure didn't catch up until a little bit later on." At that age, you think you're invincible. Once 'Frogstomp' was finished, that's when we started to notice more pressure. We were really fortunate to have good families and good management. We've had great people around us all the time."

Following "Frogstomp," the band released "Freak Show" with the hits "Abuse Me" and "Cemetery." That was followed by "Neon Ballroom" in 1999 and "Diorama" in 2002.

Despite the release of albums, Silverchair started to drop out of sight for American concertgoers. Johns announced he was battling

anorexia, which he documented in the hit, "Ana's Song." Health problems continued to plague Johns in 2002 when he suffered what was called a severely debilitating case of reactive arthritis, a condition which kept Silverchair off the road.

Today, Johns, who is married to Natalie Imbruglia, is completely healed. "He's totally back to 100 percent healthy," Joannou said. "He just had to do a lot of treatment to get over (the arthritis). He's fitter now than what he was before."

After taking a five-year break, Silverchair returned in 2007 with the album "Young Modern" and the big single "Straight Lines," a pop song that leaves the grunge roots far behind.

Joannou said "Straight Lines" was just a natural progression from what the band had done on its previous records. But for those who only remember Silverchair as the long-haired screaming teen rockers, "Young Modern" may seem like a radical departure. "A lot of people missed a few pieces of the puzzle. It's kind of almost like this time around we're re-educating people to what the band's about and how much we've changed."

"This has always been a constant evolving thing. Listen to (all the albums) consecutively and it all starts to make sense."

If you go . . .

What: Silverchair

Where: In the Venue,

219 S. 600 West

When: today, 6 p.m.

How much: \$20

Phone: 467-8499,

800-888-8499

Web: www.smithstix.com



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Silverchair's Chris Joannou, Daniel Johns and Ben Gillies.