



7th album FIASCO out now through Shock Records

Rave reviews for the triple ARIA winners' distinctive blend of 'pop noir'

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My Friend the Chocolate Cake are an intensely colourful and ruthlessly honest musical mirror to Australia's complex national character. The band with the strings, the piano and the big tunes are celebrating their 21st anniversary with a 7th album release FIASCO and a sold out national tour. Singer/songwriter and pianist David Bridie, alongside the glorious strings of Helen Mountfort's cello and Hope Csutoros' violin are high in the curious collision of elements that have made MFTCC a failsafe concert draw, triple ARIA winners and a vivid presence on countless film and TV soundtracks these last two decades. Their seven-album history is a multi-dimensional mural of modern Australia that illustrates its geography, its political mores and its predominantly suburban identity — all by the kind of stealth that makes the most haunting, exhilarating and enduring music... Prepare for a head-on collision with the quiet achievers of Australian pop.

"Abounds with beauty and life... exquisite, serene instrumentals from cellist Helen Mountfort."
(Sunday Herald Sun)

"They proved you can play together for two decades and not only like each other (I've rarely seen a band so consistently engage with such obvious fondness) but keep relationships and the music fresh, as two sets dominated by their most recent album showed. They proved you can play pop music with lead guitar replaced by cello and violin: Helen Mountfort and Hope Csutoros provided pathos in the typically elegant ballad The Centre Cannot Hold, scene setting in Sister Berenice and humour and zest in Vadorlo. They proved you can be affectionate, pointed or downright funny about suburban Australian living, thwarted dreams and religion without succumbing to mockery: Home Improvements still nips at your dancing heels; new song Everything We Need catches you unawares; Pentecostal Girl still makes you laugh; and the prettiest pop song, A Midlife's Tale, has never lost its ability to seduce you into feeling while you're thinking. They proved there is an audience for erudition and compassion - whether it's for the blunt force of Foreigner or the devastating, but understated, The Gossip - who can still have their faces creased into smiling whenever My Friend the Chocolate Cake kicks up metaphorical dust. I think they made their point."
(Live review, Sydney Morning Herald, 5th June 2011)

"Beautiful, creative, sorrowful, masterful music by a bunch of lovely people..... Front man David Bridie cut a wry and sardonic figure, slagging off Kerri-Anne Kennerley, quoting Barry Humphries.....it's a well-known fact that those who truly know excellent Australian music when they see it all support the Cake. The band certainly justified their cult following with this excellent performance - right from opening number 'The Centre Cannot Hold' from their most recent album, MFTCC commanded a rapt and reverent hush from the heaving Basement crowd. You could have heard a pin drop throughout the whole song."
(Live review, Live Guide, 6th June 2011)

www.mftcc.com

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www.soundcloud.com/mftcc/sets/mftcc-fiasco

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RECENT REVIEWS FOR FIASCO

The Australian

6 May 2011

Another piece of Cake By Iain Shedden



Cellist Helen Mountfort provides the noir while co-founder David Bridie dishes out pop in My Friend the Chocolate Cake's unusual musical melange. Picture: David Geraghty Source: The Australian

DAVID Bridie has taken up the mantle of the music critic by trying to describe in just a few words his band of the past 22 years, My Friend the Chocolate Cake.

It's not an easy task, which is why it has been thrown his way. The Melbourne singer, songwriter and composer tries on "big-sound acoustic act" for size, before settling on "pop noir". It's a term well-suited to the Chocolate

Cake catalogue, to which a new, sixth, album, Fiasco, has just been added. The pop comes mainly from the pen of Bridie. The album features several hook-laden pop songs, such as 25 Stations, Great Expectations and Everything We Need. The noir in the equation comes more from the cello of the band's co-founder, Helen Mountfort, and from violinist Hope Csutoros and double bassist Dean Addison.

This unusual melange is what has helped the Cake survive for the past 22 years. "Having the cello and violin and double bass can layer the songs quite a bit in terms of a string section sound, but the double bass can also work well with drums as a rhythm section thing," Bridie says.

My Friend the Chocolate Cake's continuing career is all the more surprising considering the busy careers of its individual components. All six members are involved in other music projects, writing, playing or both. Bridie divides his time between the Cake, a solo career and composing for the screen. When they do get together it's not in a half-hearted manner, he says, and an Australian tour, which begins tomorrow, backs up his assertion that they take the band seriously. "We didn't want to just go through the motions with this album," Bridie confirms. "I know some bands who have been around for a while will put something out just so they can tour. I think we were keen on doing a record that pushed our artistic case further, something really strong."

My Friend the Chocolate Cake formed out of the remnants of Bridie and Mountfort's previous outfit, Not Drowning Waving. The new band's hybrid of folk, pop and classical influences immediately garnered praise for its self-titled debut album in 1991. Further plaudits came for the follow-up, Brood, which also earned the band an ARIA Award in 1995. Since then a succession of studio, live and compilation albums have kept the Cake in business.

The new album marks a change of personnel, with mandolinist and tin whistle player Andrew Carswell dropping out. "Andrew is a quite extraordinary musician, so the balance has changed," Bridie says. "It's not so folkie now. He was also the one that made sure there was beer in the fridge after a show. Someone will have to pick up that slack. It's a very under-rated skill in a band."

Bridie isn't short of skill, either. His CV is divided into several sections. The one that has taken up most of his time in the 21st century is screen composing. His credits for film and television include soundtracks for movies such as The Man Who Sued God and TV shows The Circuit and RAN: Remote Area Nurse. As well as his Cake commitments, he has several composing projects on the boil this year, including director Catriona McKenzie's feature film Satellite Boy, which begins shooting in the Kimberley in August. He's also writing music for an SBS drama series, The Straits, working with co-producers Penny Chapman and Helen Panckhurst and a team of scriptwriters that includes Louis Nowra. He enjoys equally the pop world and the discipline of composing, while recognising that they are completely different. "Film is very much a collaborative process with another art form," he says. "Making records is a collaborative process with the musicians you are working with." He admits that getting it right with a soundtrack is a considerable high. "A good film soundtrack, when you believe in the vision of the director and he [or she] respects your musical approach then it is a fantastic process," he says. "It's not limiting artistically. At the worst end of it - and luckily I haven't experienced this too much - is doing a soundtrack that you don't necessarily believe in. That can be difficult. "It's a bit like playing in a reception band, where it's a means to an end."

For the moment, however, Bridie's mind will be on Cake and hitting the road. "After months of intense work in a studio on a film score I'm dying to go out and play live," Bridie says. "It's cabin fever. "You miss all of that interaction with the audience."

Fiasco is out now through Shock. The My Friend the Chocolate Cake tour begins tomorrow in Canberra and runs until June 18.

Read this article online [here](#)

Sydney Morning Herald

20 May 2011

Fiasco My Friend the Chocolate Cake (Shock)

By Bernard Zuel



Herein is the state of the nation as observed by David Bridie, Helen Mountfort and their fellow travellers in the most unlikely popular Australian group.

My Friend the Chocolate Cake are both pop and kinda not, what with the cello and violin leads instead of a guitar and chamber pop instrumentals such as *The 5 Thing* or sombre closer *Slow for Alice* as vital a part of the make-up as any catchy hooks.

They're both serious and kinda not, with songs addressing weighty issues sitting alongside the jocular *25 Stations*, featuring comedian Greg Fleet and droll lines such as "she sits next to a slick young man/he dresses how he votes" and the jaunty, grinning *Great Expectations*, where Curtly Ambrose, *Looney Tunes* and a man as happy as a pig in mud somehow add up to a guide to living better.

Whatever you call them, they feel so of Australia: the good and the bad and, in *Foreigner*, the ugly. In that song the "other" is scorned, feared, dismissed or just plain hated and no amount of celebrating mateship wipes away the stain of truth in it.

Read this article online [here](#)

The Age EG

27 May 2011

The next tasty little morsel By Darren Levin

Still brimming with joie de vivre ... the eccentrically named My Friend the Chocolate Cake.



A band that eats together stays together - or so it is for Melbourne stalwarts My Friend the Chocolate Cake, who've survived some 22 years on a steady diet of friendship, wine and good food. Their double bass player Dean Addison even brings a pasta maker on tour.

"Having good food and wine around music does work," says singer David Bridie, who formed the sextet with fellow Not Drowning, Waving member Helen Mountfort in 1989.

"Dean and [drummer] Greg [Patten] are right into Italian cooking, they're a bit like the Two Fat Ladies. Half the time they'd lock into conversations about what's the best olive oil, or whether you put too much basil in your tomato sauce."

The band have been a fixture since their first residency at defunct Melbourne venue Madigan's in the early 1990s but Bridie himself is on the move. He's in the process of packing up the Enormodome, the Northcote home studio he's occupied for 12 fruitful years. It's birthed a slew of solo and soundtrack projects and the past three Chocolate Cake records: 2002's *Curious*, 2007's *Home Improvements* and *Fiasco*, released through Shock last month.

"I might have to set up a mini-studio and stick the grand piano in storage," he laments. As for where he's going next, Bridie isn't sure.

"On the date that the settlement comes through, I'm up in Queensland for a month," he says. "I can't look for anywhere because I'm on tour every weekend. They do say moving house is one of the most stressful times in your life."

Not that it's reflected on the latest record. Though it's prone to some darker moments, such as Mountfort's mournful instrumental *Sister Berenice*, the hip-hop informed *Madang Panic Attack* or the deep groove of *Black Ice*, *Fiasco* brims with the effortless joie de vivre of six mates playing in a room.

"I think we've stretched a bit on this record but it seems to make sense to us," Bridie says. "The live show, as well as the record, is this kind of trajectory of moods. The flippant or brighter stuff stops it from getting too dark and the darker stuff stops it from getting too twee."

Bridie likens *Fiasco* to a series of distinct vignettes that are "part of the same vision but from a different angle". The album also features a uniquely Melbourne feel, especially on tracks such as *25 Stations*, which uses a train stopping at all stations - except East Richmond - as a metaphor for life.

"As a kid, we used to live in Park Orchards and I used to take the train in [to the city] and it'd stop at all stations except East Richmond. Poor old East Richmond," he laughs.

"We were using it as a metaphor for life but it was a lot about conversations on trains. People are in their own worlds and not particularly sociable on trains. Sometimes you get someone who's got a mental illness who'll be yelling out a story, or someone speaking really loudly. They're actually the most fascinating people on the train."

My Friend the Chocolate Cake was initially birthed as an unplugged "hobby project" by Bridie and Mountfort, who wanted a break from the more technologically dependent *Not Drowning, Waving*. But even Bridie is surprised they've outlasted their main gig, which played its final show in 2006.

"It wasn't supposed to last four weeks, hence the stupid name," he says. "We were only supposed to do four gigs at Madigan's, which was perfect for us because it had a grand piano and an open fireplace and op-shop furniture."

Fiasco will be launched tomorrow at the Art Centre's Fairfax Studio at 6pm and 8.30pm. The band also plays tonight at Meeniyah Town Hall, on June 11 at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and June 25 (just announced) at the Thornbury Theatre.

Read this article online [here](#)

Sydney Morning Herald

7 June 2011

Bridie and friends find an eloquent way to prove a point

By Bernard Zuel

Delicious ... My Friend The Chocolate Cake.



"WE WANT to prove those f---ers wrong." It was a comment directed at the previous management of this venue, which had decided My Friend the Chocolate Cake weren't suitable for this room. (Why, when they all but sold out a Saturday-night slot? Maybe because the band wasn't one of those tedious, classic-artist-cum-money-spinner "tribute" nights the Basement has lived off for a decade.)

Nonetheless, there was something wider and truthful about David Bridie's line: there are more than a few people MFTCC have proved wrong over the years, up to and including their first Basement show 21 years after forming as a side project meant to play only four gigs.

They proved you can play together for two decades and not only like each other (I've rarely seen a band so consistently engage with such obvious fondness) but keep relationships and the music fresh, as two sets dominated by their most recent album showed.

They proved you can play pop music with lead guitar replaced by cello and violin: Helen Mountfort and Hope Csutoros provided pathos in the typically elegant ballad *The Centre Cannot Hold*, scene setting in *Sister Berenice* and humour and zest in *Vandorlo*.

They proved you can be affectionate, pointed or downright funny about suburban Australian living, thwarted dreams and religion without succumbing to mockery: *Home Improvements* still nips at your dancing heels; new song *Everything We Need*

catches you unawares; *Pentecostal Girl* still makes you laugh; and the prettiest pop song, *A Midlife's Tale*, has never lost its ability to seduce you into feeling while you're thinking.

They proved there is an audience for erudition and compassion - whether it's for the blunt force of *Foreigner* or the devastating, but understated, *The Gossip* - who can still have their faces creased into smiling whenever My Friend the Chocolate Cake kicks up metaphorical dust.

I think they made their point.

MY FRIEND THE CHOCOLATE CAKE @ The Basement, June 4

Read this article online [here](#)



Liveguide.com

7 June 2011

Reviewed: My Friend The Chocolate Cake

Saturday 4 June 2011 - The Basement, Sydney

By Liveguide Contributor - Tom Hoare

Beautiful, creative, sorrowful, masterful music by a bunch of lovely people.

The Basement in Sydney's Circular Quay area has long been the site of album launches and tour stops for those who truly know where to find good music in this city. Saturday night's gig was no different, as **My Friend The Chocolate Cake**, the eclectic world / ambient / soul / jazz / blues / classical sextet that have been recording for over twenty years, took to the stage of the cramped and intimate

underground venue to promote their recent album, *Fiasco*.

In those twenty years the band has won two ARIA awards, for Best Adult Contemporary Album in 1995 for *Brood* and in 1997 for *Good Luck*, and whilst they may not be at the forefront of mainstream contemporary musical consciousness, it's a well-known fact that those who truly know excellent Australian music when they see it all support the Cake. The band certainly justified their cult following with this excellent performance - right from opening number 'The Centre Cannot Hold' from their most recent album, MFTCC commanded a rapt and reverent hush from the heaving Basement crowd. You could have heard a pin drop throughout the whole song.

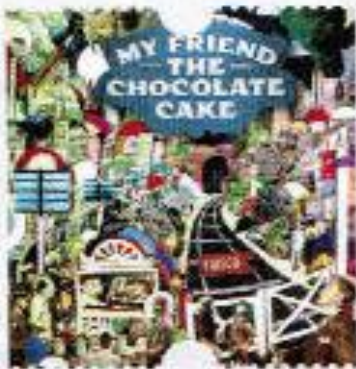
Front man David Bridie cut a wry and sardonic figure, slagging off Kerri-Anne Kennerley, quoting Barry Humphries and speaking of his desire to "*prove the fuckers wrong*" who had originally deemed the band as 'unsuitable' to perform at The Basement years before. He also went into great detail describing the story and origin behind many songs, which gave the gig a candid and confessional feel.

Throughout a MFTCC gig, you get a feel for the band's staggering versatility; they're a band that performs many different types of song, from rollicking and grandiloquent ballads ('Black Ice') to jaunty toe-tappers ('Home Improvements') to funky two-steps ('Foreigner'). 'I've Got A Plan' was a tender and feather-soft moment, showcasing Bridie's excellent song writing ability. Not many bands use phrasing like 'therein' and 'chagrin' in their lyrics - there's something almost Morrissey-esque about the front man's choice of words.

The band continued delighting the faithful with alternately mournful and enthusiastic tunes. Despite their versatility, the band manages to take in a lot of influences without subscribing to any particular stylistic or musical aesthetic - it's almost as if they're consciously trying to avoid being compartmentalised or categorised, which one could cite as pretentiousness. However, the band's brand of emotional truth set to a wide range of musical backdrops is just so darn wonderful to listen to that it's hard to quibble with, even if they might be striving a little too hard for individualism.

From 'Sister Berenice' to closing track 'Nanny's Farewell', the gig took in the odd overly-indulgent violin solo, but overall the musical performers were brilliant, particularly the snappy percussion and Bridie's stylistically diverse piano playing, moving from Van Morrison-esque bouncy blues chords to the same sort of quasi-classical twinkling peddled by Ludovico Einaudi. This is a band that clearly knows how to make excellent and satisfying music and, as was blatantly evident on Saturday, delight a crowd.

Read this article online [here](#)



My Friend the Chocolate Cake

Fiasco

(Shock)

There's a great moment on here, near the beginning, and it defies the veteran Melbourne band's (who turned 21 this year) adult reputation. That moment is in second song 25 Stations, a self-described metaphor for life using the image of a suburban train line, and at the end the band breaks down from a fiddle frenzy into a Lou Reed pastiche - "I'm ... waiting for my train." Then, to kick along the gag, a sample of the platform voice: "Mind The Gap". Yet David Bridie (Not Drowning Waving) is a political songwriter, so it's not all hilarious japes. Foreigner is an astute, bitter polemic in favour of wider immigration, wrapped in sweet melodies. Take This As Read is in the 21-year classic Chocolate Cake mould, built on Bridie's pensive plans and wonderful string playing.