

## HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR A COUPLE OF FATEFUL EVENTS, ERIC BOGLE MIGHT NOT HAVE RECORDED HIS LATEST TREASURE, **A TOSS OF A COIN**.

**I**t was the album he hadn't planned to record, but the sudden loss of a much-loved pet prompted an outpouring of emotion.

"It was engendered by my wee doggie getting knocked over and killed by a car," Eric said.

"Carmel and I had two miniature schnauzers and I was more upset than I thought I'd be at the loss of, my wee pal, Ranger ... we've since lost our other little mutt, Radar to illness as well.

"Anyway, it got me thinking about the nature of love, and loss, and how love can come from many different sources.

"You've got to accept it when and where it happens, don't question it; just take it where and when it's offered, and from any source, be it a dog, a cat, a budgie another human being, whatever ...

"So I wrote *A Toss Of A Coin* about that and it unlocked something. I hadn't written a song for about a year and before I knew it I had almost an album's worth.

"Radar was a nice, wee fella. We had him for 12 years, so, not for the first time in my life, music helped me cope with some heavy emotional burdens. It's better than drugs and a lot cheaper."

He talked it over with musical colleagues John Munro and Pete Titchener and decided to go ahead with the album, which was recorded at Pete's Folk House Studio in Adelaide.

It's a rarity for Eric to record someone else's songs. You could probably count on one hand the works of other writers he's put down on disc, but this album is the exception.

He's not only recorded two songs – one by Mike O'Callaghan and the other Pete Titchener/June Harrison, there are also two John Munro songs on which John takes lead vocal.

John's *Absolution* is a song of forgiveness, while *Glory Days* is a rollicking romp about the joys of "old farthood".

As Eric writes on the liner notes "I guarantee there aren't many songs out there extolling the virtues of growing old, senile and tottering on the brink of extinction. But somehow, Mr Positive, aka John Munro, found a few."

*When An Angel Appears*, the Mike O'Callaghan song, sounds almost as if it could have come from Bogle's pen.

Welshman Mike is the third member of MOT, a trio of John Munro, Mike O'Callaghan and Pete Titchener.

Mike was also in Colcannon with John Munro for many years and for the past 40 years, has been a member of Country Express with John Munro and Brent Miller.

"It's only in the last couple of years Mike started writing

songs," Eric said.

"He's my age – a late bloomer. MOT made a CD late last year and when I heard this song on the CD I loved it.

"I always hesitate to record other people's songs, but only because I'm concerned about my vocal ability to give others' songs a fair shot. It's the one I spent the most time, vocally, on, as I wanted to get it as right as possible."

Pete Titchener's song, *Don't Throw Away Your Dreams*, isn't your typical Eric Bogle song, but he really liked the song and wanted to record it.

"It has a nice, melancholy, reflective tone about it and I like what Damien [Steele Scott] did in the bass and piano on that one," Eric said.

"Pete is happy with the result and hopefully it will start him writing more songs ... I'm surrounded by songwriters!"

The meat and potatoes, for this writer, were the Bogle-penned treasures I'd heard in concert before and the ones I was about to discover on the new disc.

*Roll Call*, written for the children of Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, is a prime example.

Twenty children and six adults were murdered by a 20-year-old gunman on December 14, 2012. Again, it's a song he deliberately didn't set out to write, as he'd already written *One Small Star*, about the Dunblane Primary School massacre in Scotland in 1996.

"Like everyone else, I read about in the newspapers, but I thought I would not revisit that particular field again, musically speaking that is," Eric said.

"What I was trying to do at the time was write a song about the day I arrived in Australia, what it was like sailing through Sydney Heads on a beautiful winter morning way back in July 1969, and seeing a city of gold spread before me; what it was like then, and how it is now, that sort of thing.

"So the song I had originally started writing somehow then became *Roll Call*. I'm not a fanciful person, but it was meant to be, it was probably my conscience nagging away at me.



"I started writing that song but I was really not involved in it, and before I was even conscious of it, I found myself writing the *Roll Call* song instead; I just couldn't stay away from it.

"Anyway, I thought, who bloody cares about my first day in Australia? *Roll Call* was the last song I wrote for the album. It's a fairly intense and confronting song, and the song I originally was going to write would have been a lot more light-hearted, but then it's not my job to make other people feel light-hearted, every human being is in charge of their own hearts."

The opening song, *Ashes*, was written after a visit to Strathewen, Victoria, 10 weeks after the Black Saturday bushfires of February



# DUNROAMIN'

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2009, in which 173 souls perished.

It's a tribute to now-retired Captain Dave Magahey of the Arthurs Creek and Strathewen Fire Brigade, and to his teams who fought the fires alongside him.

Another story he came upon at that time was Reg Evans' *Cradle*, a wonderful song of hope among the ashes of Black Saturday, and was told to him by the grandmother of the infant who slept in the cradle in Canberra, far from Black Saturday's flames.

*Song For James* is a haunting tune, about a 19-year-old Irish lad who was knocked over and killed by a truck in 2000.

In memory of his son, James Nash Sr now tends the Kilworth Graveyard in County Cork, which had fallen into disrepair after the church was deconsecrated and turned into an arts centre.

*Home Is The Hero* was commissioned by Houses For Heroes CEO Peter Minshall, and it typifies Eric's expertise in looking at the other side of the war and asking why.

Likewise, *In Flanders Fields*, a poem written by Canadian Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, to which Eric penned a melody, captures the solemnity and beauty of this

World War I epic. Emma Luker's beautiful cello work is the perfect accompaniment.

Eric blames John Munro's new domicile of Darwin, for his "romantic flight of fancy" – *By The Arafura Sea*. The ukulele-laced tune about a long-ago romance with a Tiwi girl, is pure fantasy, Eric professes.

Eric said his days of overseas touring are now a thing of the past, although he still receives regular invitations to return.

He reckons his and John's last four-and-a-half-month stint in the UK with 92 concerts took them both three months to get over.

Fortunately, he's still doing select Australian tours, albeit brief and infrequent ones.

Had Julia Gillard not called a federal election in September, he would have been touring with good companions John Munro, Pete Titchener and Emma Luker during that month to promote the new album. Instead, the tour now starts on October 9 at Lizotte's, Kincumber, followed by the Capitol Theatre, Tamworth the following day.

His Newcastle, Byron Bay, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and other dates up until Maldon Folk Festival on November 2 and 3 are all listed on [www.ericbogle.net](http://www.ericbogle.net)

With the centenary of World War I next year, he's had several offers to tour the UK, but is inclined to stay at home.

"I've had enough of travel. It's always been the 'dark side of the force' where this job's concerned," Eric said.

"I'll stay at home for a while anyway. I have a few projects to keep me occupied where I don't have to leave home, which suits me just fine."