



Photo: James Looker

## XAVIER RUDD WORLD BEATER

BY DAVID MORRISON

According to the dictionary I use, the word "superstar" is defined thus: "A person, as a performer or athlete, who enjoys wide recognition, is esteemed for exceptional talent, and is eagerly sought after for his or her services." In which case, categorically checking

each box, there's a bona fide superstar living in Courtenay. That said, this one is in such demand that he spends as much time traveling the world as he does at home. You could therefore be forgiven for not having spotted this distinctive individual going about his daily business.

Married to a Canadian with whom he has two young sons, Australian-born multi-instrumentalist and singer-

songwriter Xavier Rudd is really popular. Like, really. He effortlessly sells out venues from Dublin to Montreal, Amsterdam to Seattle, and all points between in any direction. His September, for instance, is consumed by a ten-country European tour. Upon winding that up, the relentless schedule that commenced in June continues unabated when hitting the land of his birth for twenty-nine shows, the last falling in December. As Australian tours go, that's one major jaunt for an artist of any level

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of popularity, with barely a noted population centre overlooked.

Still in his twenties, Rudd enjoys not only the adoration of fans worldwide that dictates such a full calendar, but also the considerable respect of his peers. His amalgam of rock, folk, pop, reggae and world beat blends to produce a winning formula that's drawn praise from – and led to alliances with – luminaries such as Ani DiFranco, Michael Franti and fellow surfing fanatic Jack Johnson.

It seems natural that these particular artists are impressed by Rudd, as all operate in a similar field to bring a range of socio-political messages to their respective audience. Rudd is a determined eco warrior, also greatly concerned with the ongoing injustices imposed upon the indigenous population of his homeland. His involvement with these affairs understandably makes for thought-provoking lyrical fare, a contributory factor to his finding a welcoming platform on the politically sympathetic alternative festival circuit, where he cut his teeth and sealed his reputation as a brilliant live performer. In fact, such is his onstage prowess that three of his seven album releases to date document powerful live shows – all, incidentally, recorded in Canada.

Musically, he courses all over the map, though wandering within the parameters of a distinctive style of his

own. Utilizing guitar, didgeridoo, banjo, djembe drums and more to embellish his conscious lyrics, he can sound like Bob Marley, Ben Harper, Paul Simon or Dave Matthews, both musically and vocally, depending on what he needs to deliver. It's a sound that saw him snapped up for the American market by the Anti label, where he claims legends Tom Waits, Solomon Burke and Merle Haggard amongst his label-mates.

Rudd's lengthy world tour comes in support of his most fully realized offering to date. Released in June, *White Moth* (Universal) was recorded at The Farm Studios in Gibsons on the Sunshine Coast, and co-produced by Rudd with celebrated studio whiz Dave Ogilvie, who's worked with David Bowie and 54-40 amongst many illustrious clients.

This is the album seen by those in the know as potentially the one to make a major commercial breakthrough for Rudd, possibly as a "sleeper" hit that could explode at any given moment. The simple reason for this is that it's the recording that gets the closest yet to effectively capturing his potent live sound. About all that's missing is the extraordinary sight of the man himself,

surrounded onstage by a bewildering array of instruments.

The issues that provoke Rudd's ire are expectedly present in such songs as *Footprint* (global warming) and *Better People*, his tribute to the millions of tireless environmental activists around the world who put themselves on the frontlines each day in attempting to prevent another part of our planet from disappearing or forever changing for the worse. There are also lesser raging themes examining relationships and familial matters that give *White Moth* a lovely balance. And as ever from Rudd, the musicianship is exemplary.

As predicted by some and hoped for by so many more, this certainly could be the big one to propel Xavier Rudd further towards household name status, so mirroring his popularity as a live act. Just don't expect to see its superstar creator back in the Comox Valley until, ooh, at least mid-December, when I'd have thought he'll be in need of a breather. ~

## THE BETTER PEOPLE CAMPAIGN

"There is freedom around us, we have everything we need. I will care for you, 'cause you care for me and we all have opinions yes, some of them get through but there's better people, with more good to do." ~ Xavier Rudd

(From "Better People" - White Moth album) [www.xavierrudd.com](http://www.xavierrudd.com)

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