

# THE next imove

The new double interactive CD, *The Chess Set* (Shoestring SR 60) from PAT DRUMMOND has been variously described as ambitious, provocative, political...even theatrical.

**B**ut does it really represent a huge change in direction for the 52 year old Country/Folk singer- songwriter or is it just an extension of what has already been a fairly long and innovative journey by its composer through Australia's national psyche.

As a long-time PAT DRUMMOND fan from my initial discovery way back of the compelling commentary and reflections in *Tales From The Local Rag*, I was determined to cover this new project, but the more I looked at the context and complexities of this release, the more I realised that the only person qualified to talk coherently about the project was the creator himself.

So I tracked down Pat at The Pub in Tamworth during his recent visit to Country Music Capital to find out what all the fuss was about, posed some seemingly relevant questions, and let the tape roll!

**CNEWS:** *The Chess Set* is obviously a big project - 2 CDs of new material, a major interactive which is actually a reasonably good sized book on-line of editorials, graphics, lyrics, videos and reflections. You've described it as a major work. What were you hoping to achieve with all of this?

**PAT:** Well, I guess that I've become well known over the last fifteen years for trying to construct albums which were a snapshot of where Australia was at any given moment and seeking to do so by gathering stories of individual Australians which were particularly selected because they gave us some sense of who were as a nation and what it was that we stood for.

**CNEWS:** So in essence you're really talking and writing about social history at some level?

**PAT:** Yes, sort of, but it was also a statement of direction. Those albums were a conscious and deliberate search for the ethical base upon

which Australians were attempting to build their communities and to that extent they also represented an attempt to articulate a mythology that we could jointly aspire to.

That was why it was so important that I established the authenticity of the people about whom the songs were written and why I went to such great lengths to identify them and the places in which they lived in the discographies.

**CNEWS:** But those previous albums were fundamentally different from *The Chess Set*. For a start we had only one character - the 'Local Rag' Reporter. *The Chess set* has two. *The Black Knight* and *The White Knight*. And they seem to view Australia from very different perspectives. What is that all about?

**PAT:** I suppose more than anything *The Chess Set* tries to look very seriously at the big divisions that have now developed among Australians as we struggle to find a set of ideals that will allow us to face this new and rather frightening century with some degree of confidence. And on another and more personal level it explores the gulf between Anger and Acceptance that seems to mark so much of the debate.

**CNEWS:** What do you mean by divisions?

**PAT:** Well, at one level, I mean the simple divergences of opinion about how we should handle issues like globalisation, foreign ownership, refugees, foreign policy etc.

On quite another and more disturbing level, however, I mean the growing gulf between the traditional values that Australians have espoused in the last hundred years and what we now actually seem to be doing in our national and civic life.

If you like, the growing gap between what we say we stand for and what we practice. I created the two characters in *The Chess Set* to be the protagonists in that debate.

**CNEWS:** What point of view do they each represent?

**PAT:** The bearded bloke in black on *Vol.1 The Age Of Dissent* is fairly angry at Australians over what he perceives is wide spread hypocrisy and self interest. The clean shaven bloke in white on *Vol.2 The Descent Of Age* has a somewhat unshakeable optimism that Australians are pretty much decent folks and that peace is most likely to be found within and by learning to accept the world the way that it is.

**CNEWS:** Is it a Good versus Evil confrontation then? Your dark side against the light?

**PAT:** No, it's definitely not that. On the contrary the Black Knight consistently takes the high moral ground... even if he often does it in an overbearingly self righteous way.

No, I'd have to say that it's really more of a struggle for the soul of, not only the nation, but folk and country music in general.

**CNEWS:** How does that play out within the structure of the albums?

**PAT:** As a Chess Game. The Black Knight's opening gambit, *The Keepers Of The Flame*, is essentially a diatribe about the way that art and music should aspire to loftier ideals than being a sound track for getting laid and partying. He clearly is less than impressed by the proposition that music is merely escapist entertainment. He views it as vehicle for social change and harks back nostalgically to the Protest Music of the 60s and 70s which sought to be just that.

The White Knight claims that on the contrary, music, and in particular country and folk music, has always chronicled social celebrations and love. Bush dances and traditional dance forms were all about social celebration. Most country music is about relationships, contemporary family life and courtship. Music is for the celebration of life.