

# SUICIDE SWANS

Over the last six years the QLD town of Toowoomba has been echoing to the strains of Suicide Swans and their fascinating blend of folk, cosmic country and psychedelic rock. On their latest album *La Jungla* they've expanded their sound into new musical terrain.

Kyle Jenkins is the principal songwriter and driving force behind Suicide Swans and he's clearly fuelled by a restless creativity, given his admission that the band are already looking ahead to September when they plan to record a new album called *Reservations* - one of three they have ready to be recorded. That willingness to embrace and pursue their muse is reflected in the approach they took with the recording of *La Jungla*.

"This was the first album we did outside of our studio. We went to this amphitheatre hall and set up with carpets and makeshift baffling and just tried it out and little things like that made it super interesting," Jenkins enthuses. "We wanted to have that space between each other to reduce the bleeding of sound but not too far apart that we couldn't see each other and nod and wink when changes were happening," he explains. "We'd played a bunch of the songs over the last few months so we recorded them first but the band hadn't heard the rest of them, I showed them to the guys on the spot and we did those ones first take. Essentially the whole album is only one or two takes and we literally did it in a day. We started and 14 hours later we had an 84 minute album. We didn't really think about the economics of producing a double vinyl album though!" laughs Jenkins.

The length of some of the songs on the album and the band's sense of freedom to let the songs unfurl at their own pace are a hallmark of *La Jungla*. "We wanted to try and encapsulate someone like Crazy Horse and that spontaneity. It was also about accepting that if there were bum notes or mistakes then that was just what it was. We didn't want to go back in and re-record bits," stresses Jenkins.

The songwriting approach that Jenkins took on *La Jungla* was a new one where he let the lyrics dictate the form and flow of the music. "As soon as I came up with the idea of the album and saw the songs I wanted to use, I saw a linear narrative that would lend itself to that more expansive feel. I was more open to having songs that were longer in form and unfolding over multiple minutes rather than a more traditional verse/chorus structure. I decided to allow the lyrics to govern



where the changes in the songs were going to be. Some of the narratives are more autobiographical or about people I know. Many of them started out as short stories or pieces about things in my life, so it's more diary-based. It's kind of like Crazy Horse playing Townes Van Zandt songs."

With three fifths of Suicide Swans based in Toowoomba there can be both benefits and disadvantages to being outside a major city, yet Jenkins is overwhelmingly positive about where they live, after spending a decade in Sydney. "Being in a semi-rural, semi-small city environment gives you the space to create, compared to chasing time and forking out money in Sydney. Having more energy and mental freedom has really allowed me to explore more narrative storytelling in the songs and freed me up. It comes down to not being drained. If we were a Sydney band we couldn't afford to have our own studio."

CHRIS FAMILTON