



Interview by James Gaden

**A fiery Hard Rock act from Australia, Electric Mary are renowned for their no-frills, high octane music and powerful live show, which has impressed audiences when they have opened for the likes of Alice Cooper and Whitesnake. Their new album 'Mother' has just landed and Fireworks talked to vocalist and founder Rusty to hear more...**

**We'll start with a little background. You formed the band in 2003 – what had you been doing prior to that?**

I was the bass player in a band with Irwin Thomas – he's a singer who was known as Jack Jones when he fronted a band over here called Southern Sons. Irwin and I started Electric Mary and we basically swapped over; I went on lead vocals and he played guitar. We had been up to the Electric Ladyland Studios and were shown around by a lady called Mary Campbell who was managing the place at the time. Her email address was 'electricmary', because everyone there was electric something: Electric Mike, Electric Dave...y'know. I just thought, 'Wow, cool name for a band!'

**It's interesting you mentioned Irwin Thomas as I love Southern Sons. When they split up I Googled what else he'd done and it said he was in Electric Mary. So I bought the 'Down To The Bone' album as a result and expected he'd be the singer. Instead it was you and there was this real ballsy Hard Rock style, way harder than Southern Sons were, and it blew me away. 'Down To The Bone' is a classic, it would be one of my desert island discs.**

That's brilliant – Irwin's back using the Jack Jones name now and he's just been doing some shows playing the first Southern Sons album and he did a covers album with Rick Price recently.

Irwin lived in a rural area and being called Irwin Thomas Whittridge III was probably not the most Rock 'n' Roll name to go by!

**When you put Electric Mary together did you have a specific style in mind and recruited guys accordingly, or did you put a band together and just see what the sound was like?**

A bit of both. The first person I asked to join was not Irwin, it was Pete Robinson. We were talking about music and I knew I wanted to start a band. We had three things in common which a lot of Australians don't share, which were The Sweet, Status Quo and Queen. It's a bit different with Queen now, they're massive again because of the new film, thank God, but The Sweet and Quo aren't as well known. Pete is actually English, he's from Southport and he came over here when he was 6. Having those three bands in common, I asked him to start a band with me – but a band like when you were 16, not when you're 25 and you're looking at demos and how to pitch to this person or that label. Just start a band like young kids do and write songs, doesn't matter if they've got a big guitar solo, just play music you like. And if people come, hallelujah. If not, whatever. We still have that mentality now. We don't write songs for the radio as we aren't going to be played. We had 'Let Me Out' and 'Sweet Mary C' from our back catalogue get a little bit of airtime but nothing serious.

We don't care, we're a live band. We want the instant gratification, we love to play live.

**I always thought the albums sounded mostly live anyway, you don't sound like you've overdubbed much or polished it to death.**

We don't. I'd say 85% of what you hear was done right there and then. Sure, if there's a solo we don't like we might swap it, but I sing everything in one go and if there's something I don't like, I'll sing the whole song again. All drums, bass, a lot of the guitars...it's recorded live. That's why a lot of people at our shows say we sound better live than on record. That's where we are at home, they're in the moment with us. It's hard to capture that in a studio with no audience at 11am in a morning!

**You've supported Deep Purple, Whitesnake, Alice Cooper, Glenn Hughes, Judas Priest...did you have a favourite tour?**

Our first main shows were with Whitesnake and I love David Coverdale... and Glenn Hughes. Deep Purple were my band when I was younger, especially their line-up. We'd asked the tour manager if we could meet him ahead of time but we were told no, so we went on and played our set and he came into our dressing room afterwards and you'll know what his voice is like, he just stuck out his hand and said, "Fucking great show gentlemen!" That

was a pretty magical moment for me. Glenn Hughes was too. I was actually his driver for a while, I drove him around all day and he was going to a radio interview. His manager at the time was an Australian guy and he said, "Aren't you Rusty from Electric Mary?" I said yeah and he said 'Does Glenn know you're the driver?' I'd not said anything so Glenn came out and asked how come I never said who I was. I said, "You know what man, to be honest with you, I'm a massive fan and I'd have chewed your ear off so, I was happy just to drive you around." He said he was going out for some dinner and asked me if I wanted to come. I said "Fuck yeah!" and it was great, he was telling stories all night. He had been texting David Coverdale at the time because they're still really close, it was when Coverdale and Joe Lynn Turner had that online spat; Glenn was playing peacemaker. I was watching and I thought 'Wow, you're just like me, you might be this amazing singer but you're just sat in the car texting your mate.' It just so happened they were my idols. I used to hold a hairbrush in front of a mirror and pretend to be Glenn and now he's in the back telling me he's texting Coverdale about Joe Lynn Turner. Pretty surreal!

**Onto the new album. As you record mostly live, do you jam songs out like Deep Purple?**

For most of the time I've written 95% of our music and lyrics and then gone over to Pete's and done demos. This time however Pete started four out of the eight songs and then the

whole band jammed out the rest, and it's the first time we've ever done that. That was because previously we didn't have the money or the time – nobody in this band is 18, living at home with their parents. We all have lives so when we get together, it's for nothing other than Electric Mary. We don't hang out with each other every day, so when we do get together, it's for a reason – to make Electric Mary music.

**'Woman' is the single. Who chose that?**

It was a band choice. Pete wrote most of that and I drove around with a CD of it and sang a whole bunch of different melodies over it until I found one we both liked. We don't have a label, we just have distribution so the record is all us, all the decisions are us, good and bad. But it's better that way. When I write a lyric, I have a rule: would I want to sing that in ten years time? If the answer is no, I'll dump it. I'll tell you this, I played 'Down To The Bone' a few weeks back and I really liked listening to it. I've played this new one to death. That tells me something, I think there is more depth musically and lyrically here.

**Do you have a favourite song on it? I like all of them but my two standouts are 'Hold On To What You've Got' and 'Sorry Baby'.**

'Yeah, 'Sorry Baby' is my favourite. With 'Hold On To What You've Got' I struggled a little bit because I already had a chorus and I changed the melody just before mixing. I went back into the studio and sang a completely different melody for the verse

and now it works. It was bugging me, it just didn't feel right. Everyone else was like 'No, it's cool' but it came back to the ten year rule. It didn't feel right. Now I changed it I'm so happy and the new lyrics I wrote for the verse made more sense.

On 'Sorry Baby' the intro music is Brett and Pete, they wrote that. The rest of the song was mostly me. When we were in pre-production Alex played a wrong note and it changed the song so much, the feel of it, I thought 'Wow, that's the direction it should go.' We were recording and I said "Play that back." The guys thought it was fine as it was but I said, "No, no, that is it." Alex didn't realise but we changed the whole middle section because of that and it's so much better. The original idea is on Youtube with me doing it acoustically but the album version is the definitive.

**Finally, why is the album called 'Mother'?**

We were going to call it 'Woman' because I associate that with strength. Mums run families, Dads think they do but they don't, the mum holds it together. Blokes call their cars or their boats 'she', it's always 'she's a beauty.' Alex does the artwork for the band and when he came up with that cover shot I thought it looked like we were on the moon. Then there was a comment that it was really Mother Earth and we thought that was a cool name for the album. It's strong and simple. Look out for us, we've got a bunch of shows here in February but we'll be over in Europe around November. Hope to see you there!

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