

ROCK & ROLL

PAUL KELLY'S SOUL SESSIONS

but the first where the many voices in his songs are literally matched by guest vocalists. Like the band leader of an old-fashioned soul revue, Kelly has assembled a handful of talented singers to front his songs; on 11 tracks he makes just three vocal appearances.

"I should have done more of it years ago. I've been wondering why I put out so many records with just me singing," notes Kelly, who plays rhythm guitar throughout the record. "On one hand it was more relaxing because I was just part of the band, but they are my songs so I'm listening to everything very carefully, including the singer."

If Kelly is singing less he's organising more: the album was due for release in February, but the only time the five guest vocalists were all available to tour with him was January. Because he wanted the album out before the shows, so fans could be familiar with the material, *The Merri Soul Sessions* was brought forward to December 12th, the usual home of Susan Boyle and Human Nature.

Soul music, along with gospel and R&B, was part of Kelly's musical upbringing in Adelaide in the 1960s. Motown singles were on the radio and older siblings had a compilation album that introduced him to Sam Cooke and Wilson Pickett. A few years ago, when regular backing vocalist Vika Bull began "tearing the roof off" at his shows with her take on his classic single "Sweet Guy", Kelly began to

think about recording the song and finding some companion pieces.

A songwriting session with Dan Sultan yielded a song for Vika's sister, Linda, and an invitation for Sultan to perform another co-write. Kelly was then tipped off to young Melbourne vocalist Kira Puru, while Clairy

like you're meant to be there. That's a very special thing to feel."

Sultan's lead track, "Don't Let a Good Thing Go", is steady snare drum and a classic melody, very 1964; Puru's "I Don't Know What I'd Do" is a torch song with a modern neo-soul vibe; and the closing

"Hasn't it Rained", with Kelly and the Bull sisters sharing the mic, is a rousing vintage gospel celebration. The album is a joyous assemblage, which should easily carry over into the shows by the 10-strong touring party.

"We did an all-day photo shoot, which for me is usually like pulling teeth, and even that was great fun," says Kelly, who turns 60 at the start of the tour and is coming off a "gap year" where he stopped touring and instead travelled, sometimes with his two twentysomething daughters, through Greece, Turkey, India and

the Kimberleys.

Kelly effectively acknowledged and cleared his storied past with his 2010 autobiography *How to Make Gravy*, followed by *The A-Z Recordings* box set and then Ian Darling's successful 2012 documentary *Paul Kelly – Stories of Me*. He's excited by whatever comes next, and his unexpected burst of falsetto on *Merri's* "Thank You", like the album itself, suggests he's still got a few surprises at hand.

"I've been working on my falsetto for 35 years, but everyone looked around and went 'woah' when I sang it," recalls Kelly, laughing. "I had to pull something out to show that I've still got it with all those other great singers around." ©



Kelly and his *Merri Soul Sessions* collaborators hit the road in January

"I've been wondering why I put out so many records with just me singing," says Kelly.

Browne and her producer, Steve Schram, became involved because Kelly was a fan of their single "Love Letter". A fortnight of studio sessions – rehearse in the morning, record live in the afternoon – produced the entire record.

"Paul has a real intensity to him, but he speaks very softly. It's how he gets such great performances from other musicians and other singers," explains Sultan. "He's the kind of person that if he's got you on board to be a part of it, you're made to feel



ZOË KRAVITZ ESCAPES DAD'S SHADOW

Having made her mark in film, Kravitz Jr. has turned to music

Sunk into a large seat in a Sydney hotel room, 25-year-old Zoë Kravitz is completely calm, despite her new role as front-woman for electro-dance trio Lolawolf coming with a double whammy of internet troll bait: she's now an actress-turned-singer, and entering a field that

her father Lenny has already staked a claim in. "People are like, 'Oh, you think you can just fuckin' do that because you're this person?'" she scoffs. "The music is good and different enough – if we put out an album like *Let Love Rule* it would be a different story."

Formed with James Levy and Jimmy Giannopoulos in 2013, Lolawolf recently released their debut *Calm Down* and opened for Miley Cyrus on

her Australian tour. Kravitz also attended to some film work while in town: "I'm doing voice recording for *Mad Max: Fury Road*", she reveals. Kravitz has also wrapped on *The Divergent Series: Insurgent*, and is eagerly awaiting Max Rockatansky's return: "I've done two *Divergent* movies since finishing *Max*, and it still hasn't come out yet! I can't wait – it's basically one long car chase. It's gonna be awesome." JAMES JENNINGS

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