

Back to the couch

A new generation are discovering egalitarian 1980s pop stars Tears For Fears, writes **Sally Browne**

A SINGER, a rabbi and chimpanzee walk into a library. It sounds like the start of a joke but it's a rough translation of what happens in the video for *Head Over Heels*, the hit single from legendary 1980s band Tears For Fears.

The video recently got a 21st century makeover when a bunch of fans on YouTube redubbed it for a so-called "literal version".

The internet craze has seen users re-recording versions of songs by acts including A-ha, Bonnie Tyler and Red Hot Chili Peppers, but, instead of the original lyrics, they sing precisely what is going on in each frame of the (often absurd) film clip.

Whether you would like to call it a tribute or mockery, it's a nostalgic trip down memory lane but one that Roland Orzabal, of Tears For Fears, isn't sure he wants to take.

"Oh God! I hate it," he says down the phone line from his home near Bath, UK. And then he breaks down laughing.

"Well, put it this way, I tried watching it. But it makes me feel so embarrassed.

"I hate the video anyway, and I scripted it. So it's my own fault.

"But the literal version, that's hilarious. But I can't stand it. The guy sounds just like me."

Tears for Fears are back on the radar for a number of reasons. Not least of which is a tour that will see them joining fellow 1980s legends Spandau Ballet on the road in Australia. It will be Tears for Fears' first visit here in 25 years.

After splitting acrimoniously in 1990, the band reunited for one album in 2004. Now, from their bases of Los Angeles, where Curt Smith lives, and Bath, they tour only when they want to.

"We're both sort of family guys keen on being around for our kids and so we (tour) when we like. And when the offer came up for Australia, we said 'wow, fantastic'."

Touring with Spandau Ballet also seemed a good fit.

"It wasn't an alien concept. It wasn't like touring with Duran Duran, which we would never do," Orzabal jokes.

"We never, ever said yes to any '80s revival tours or anything like that.

"But this one came along and I thought, I know the (Spandau) guys and they've hated each other more than Curt and I have hated each other, so sparks could fly."

After 22 million album sales including five top 10 records, Tears for Fears could well rest on their laurels.

At the height of their success they held the world's attention with inventive and unusual songs such as *Everybody Wants to Rule the World*, *Shout*, *Mad World*, *Sowing the Seeds of Love* and *Break it Down Again*.

They were even able to break down the iron

gates of the US with a No.1 album, *Songs from the Big Chair*. At that time Tears for Fears hysteria was in full swing and fans couldn't get enough of them.

"We were massive," Orzabal says as a simple statement of fact. "It depends on your personality how you deal with it. And I found that my egalitarian instincts took over. I wanted to speak to the fans and treat them as equals, and the hysteria sort of washed over me really."

Smith and Orzabal go way back.

They met as 14-year-olds, in one of the picturesque town of Bath's few council estates. As the middle sons of three boys, and both "from what you might call dysfunctional families, without sounding too tragic", they found they had a lot in common.

But that friendship broke down at the end of the '80s when the band split and Smith moved to Los Angeles.

It was band paperwork that got them talking again and led to the record *Everybody Loves A Happy Ending* in 2004.

They also found themselves on the public radar again when a cover of their song *Mad World* became a worldwide hit after featuring in the movie *Donnie Darko*. The pared-down acoustic version, by singer Gary Jules, takes the song back to its simplest roots. Orzabal says it's now one of the songs he's most proud of.

"I probably enjoyed that more than all the hard labour of making your own record," he says. "When someone else records this beautiful little gem, you have to shake yourself because you think, 'What, I wrote that? I love it. I absolutely love it.'"

Although they knew their way around a synthesiser, Tears for Fears have never been part of the '80s pack. Their songs were poppy, yet deep, moody, but catchy, bringing in all the elements that a 1980s studio had to offer. Lyrically, Orzabal was inspired by psychology – namely the work of Arthur Janov, who developed primal therapy. It's where the



Dreamers: Roland Orzabal (left) and Curt Smith

sation closes by discussing one of Orzabal's memorable dreams. It was around the time he split with Smith. For any Psychology 101 students, the implications are telling.

"I was in a lake, and my accountant and my lawyer were in a speedboat and they were looking at me and there was this dragon's tail in the water. And I was speaking to my accountant and my lawyer and saying 'Look, look, there's a dragon's tail in the water.' And they said 'Roland every time you move, the dragon's tail moves. It's your tail.'"

"I've had loads of dreams. (To quote *Mad World*) The dreams in which I'm dying are the best I've ever had."

Tears for Fears and Spandau Ballet play the Brisbane Entertainment Centre on April 27. Tickets: ticketek.com or 132 849.

band's name comes from. Now he says he's embarrassed about wearing his heart on his sleeve.

"I would never do that (now)," he says. "And I don't know why I did it. Other than the fact that I think was influenced a little bit by Joy Division. And that kind of blackness. I got very depressed when I was in my teens. And I think in those days, you were allowed to express those feelings. They were almost fashionable."

On the subject of psychology, our conver-

Still rocking the boat with passion

Music and vegan food keep Chrissie Hynde up front, writes **Sally Browne**

SHE may have grown up in America's mid-west, but Chrissie Hynde has long had a love-affair with London.

She moved there as a 22-year-old following a trail of bands such as The Beatles and The Stones, got a job at music mag *NME*, then went on to form her own influential band, The Pretenders.

So it seems appropriate the band's latest release, *Live in London*, would be recorded there.

The CD and DVD, recorded at the Shepherd's Bush Empire, shows off the band's current "tasty" line-up.

"What I remember about gigs are usually things that happen in the audience. Some crazy guy in the balcony dancing or some-

thing," Hynde says. "To me a rock show has to be very personal. It's kind of like a secret between the audience and a band."

Hynde (pictured) admits she was a bit of an anglophile growing up in Ohio, where she bought outdated copies of *NME*. When she arrived in the UK she took odd jobs, scoring a gig at the *NME* after discussing an album in a pub one evening.

"Brian Eno was my first interview. And I interviewed Tim Buckley, Mose Allison – some of my heroes. But I wasn't really a good writer. I was just blagging it really. I found in rock 'n' roll that's all you had to do. We're sort of a self-taught bunch."



Recently Hynde has returned to her hometown of Akron, Ohio, where she has started a vegan restaurant, The VegiTerranean.

She is passionately vegan. "I personally think about slaughter houses and factory farms every day so that keeps me

on edge all the time and engaged in what I consider a war."

She started the restaurant, she says, so she would have somewhere to eat when she went home to Akron and to show meat eaters there is an alternative.

She likes simple food, though, and her favourite vegan dish is beans on toast.

Now, as well as the Pretenders, Hynde is working with singer-songwriter John Paul Jones on a collaborative record due out this year.

She's enjoying the process and says nobody has asked her to make a record with them before.

She's also planning to return to Australia this year for another tour of the wineries with *A Day on the Green*.

"(It's) one of the stand-out tours of all time," she says.

The Pretenders Live in London CD/DVD is out now.

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