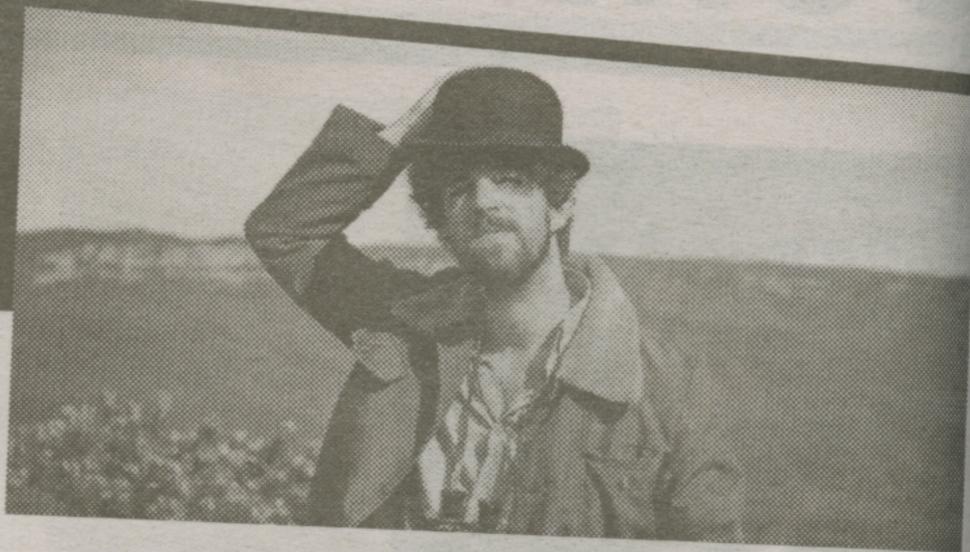


STATELY SOUNDS

NICK ARGYRIOU WRAPS HIS HEAD AROUND THE MUSICAL MOODS OF AIDAN ROBERTS, AKA THE MAPLE TRAIL.



Aidan Roberts is on his way home to the Blue Mountains via train when we connect, then disconnect and then connect again. He's just come off, and is about to launch back into more shows, on the latest Lanie Lane tour. The man's third solo release under The Maple Trail moniker has just been freed and his production workload is as hectic as always. Then there's Tubular Bells For Two, the musical project Roberts shares with Daniel Holdsworth. Through Tubular Bells For Two the pair interpret the classic '70s Mike Oldfield record, *Tubular Bells*, in a multi-layered sonic spectacular that finds two men playing over 20 instruments to realise its sound. He's clearly got a bit on his mind, so downtime is crucial.

"I'm really looking forward to getting back home tonight because I feel like I'm always running off somewhere," he laughs. "I mean between Lanie's stuff [Roberts plays guitar], Tubular Bells, Belles Will Ring [his original band] and The Maple Trail, I'm pretty much full to the brim these days." Pulling together all of this incredibly assorted back-catalogue of genre and melodic activity has placed Roberts in good stead, with his creativity now flourishing more than ever. *Cable Mount Warning* is a wonderfully textured, dreamboat of a release that recalls the works of Nick Drake and Oldfield to name a couple and, as Roberts explains, the effort expended crafting the album was as graceful as the resonances we hear on the finished product.

Time spent writing the album spanned some 18 months and took Roberts to New Zealand, the Blue Mountains with Belles Will Ring bandmate Liam Judson who mixed *Cable Mount Warning*, as well as to Roberts' urban home-studio in Stanmore in suburban Sydney. "I remember hiking a lot through New Zealand and because I find remote places really inspiring – it gives my brain room to be creative – ideas and words started coming together," he says. Carrying his notebook around the abundant NZ landscape, Roberts would pace himself mentally before heading back to New South Wales to begin piecing the puzzle together.

"*Cable Mount Warning* came from all of these thoughts I had that were bubbling away from the other bands I'm in and from all the travel," he explains. Old songs have resurfaced and been re-written, new songs have evolved and now The Maple Trail headspace is clear again. "I was constantly committed to things every night and living in a loud area and I felt like I needed to get back to a quieter existence I once had when living in the hills [Blue Mountains]," he informs. That said, the actual recording took place in Stanmore, yet Roberts still managed to streamline the sound of the record into a calmer mode.

Writing in the restful mountains before laying down the tracks in urban Sydney, planes buzzing overhead, would be Roberts' principal challenge, but he made it work in his favour. "In the record you can sometimes hear aeroplanes so I decided to embrace it; like doing an acoustic-guitar take then a gigantic jumbo [jet] would come over, but I liked it because it gave the record a sense of place," he says. Moving back to the Blue Mountains in the middle of 2011 allowed Roberts to complete the recording in the "nice timber house" he rents from his mother.

Finding whatever acoustic instruments were strewn about the place at the time, Roberts was all of a sudden shaping an almost entirely barebones soundscape. "I hadn't planned it that way but acoustic parts were coming through more and more: pots and pans, distorted acoustic guitars, the violin bow," he explains. Intimate, wintery, sparse and stately, Roberts has no doubt generated 2012's most intellectual Australian folk album thus far. Get on board.

WHO: The Maple Trail

WHAT: *Cable Mount Warning* (Broken Stone)

WHEN & WHERE: Tuesday 24 April, Gasometer