The Sleevehearts: putting it out there

The Sleevehearts are a combination of old friends and talented musicians who now play music for the love of it. Photo: David Owen.

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[author_info]Welcome to *Soundcheck*: a look at the local live music scene with Lee Nicholson.
You can contact Lee at editor@the-terrier.com[/author_info]
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very album has the essence of personal experience, but for one of Warrnambool's newest trios, The Sleevehearts, it's an

intimate journey that has reunited these experienced musicians.

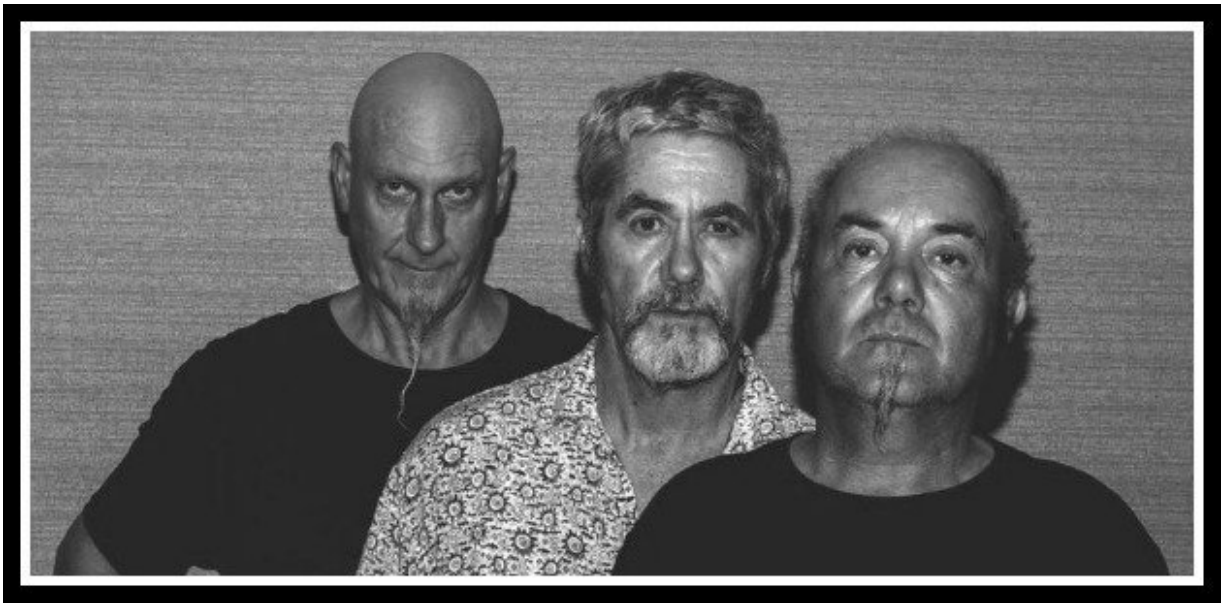
The Sleevehearts – Charles Leslie Box (aka Bryan Keillor-Reed guitar, vocals), Tony Peel (bass, vocals) and Martin Lemmens (drums) – is a product of very recent events.

“A couple of years ago I lost my life partner (Jennifer),” Box says.

“Some dark days came hot on the heels of that and about two months after she died, these songs started trickling up.

“During this process, this guy came along called Charles who – at the time – was a better part of me who tended to orchestrate the songs.

“They became a flow and I had to put a tap on it because they just wouldn’t stop, it was great.”



Charles Leslie Box (aka Bryan Keillor-Reed), Tony Peel and Martin Lemmens pulling their scary, serious faces, but behind the look is a lot of fun making good music together. Photo: Tal Lemmens.

Some 60 songs in 60 days later, Box had more than enough material to lay down an album.

Enter Peel and Lemmens who had played with Box, as Keillor-Reed, in some legendary Warrnambool bands such as The Feelers, Breathing In, Breathing Out, Liberty Theatre and Hot Tamale Baby.

“It’s a process,” adds Lemmens.

“Tony and I ended up mucking around on projects for the past five years or so with another guy and it just petered out a bit and then Brian just popped up and it was just a natural progression.”

And what this trio has forgotten about gigging in and around Warrnambool and district is more than some people can remember.

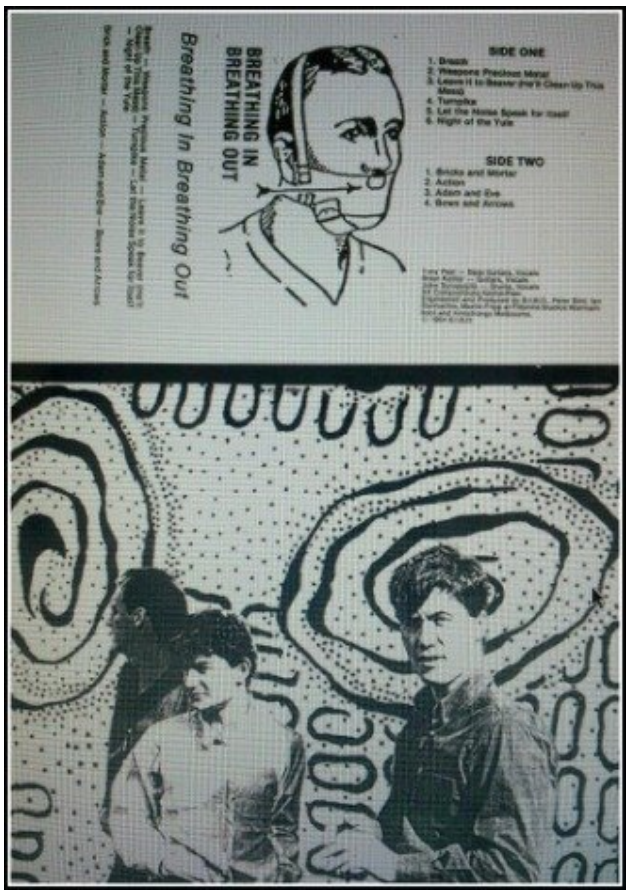
“It really is liberating to play with two guys that I feel totally comfortable with,” says Peel.

“There’s no pop star aspirations or anything like that, it’s about us and if people like it that’s a bonus and if they don’t, well it doesn’t really matter to us because we’re doing it for us.”

Says Box: “It was really good because I felt really supported, there’s a real musical future here and I was a bit excited.

“The songs were part A of getting through (bereavement). Part B was linking up with these two guys and that’s an absolute joy.

“Coming together with these guys, they’re like brothers (to me).”



When we all had dark hair: Remember Breathing In, Breathing Out? Image supplied by John Sycopoulis.

That ease in which all three gel is evident and is easily heard in their clutch of new songs released under The Sleevehearts title.

“We call ourselves The Sleevehearts: we must be honest and we wear our hearts on our sleeve,” says Box.

The three return to The Loft this Friday night (24/3) six weeks after the launch of The Sleevehearts’ first album, *Tantamount*, recorded at Peel’s Motherlode Studios.

“It comes together really quickly,” Box says.

“The recording part of it was easy.

“What I find fascinating is people who comment on it like to say I like this song or that song, and it’s always a different

one.”

Adds Lemmens: “We’re a bit more relaxed.”

So how does the album sound?

With a strong rock beat throughout, I think *Tantamount* is the perfect antidote to re-energise the evening or to slip into the car stereo to keep you perky on a long road trip.

Tantamount has given an old sound – which will be familiar to large chunk of the “mature” Warrnambool audiences – a bit of maturity.

All written by Box and arranged by Keillor-Reed, Peel and Lemmens, the songs on *Tantamount* are very much autobiographical, even raw, and I kept harking back to the trio’s previous material under different ensembles, but this album has overlaid a 21st-century edge to it.

The album has been recorded and produced with a fullness and final sound that appear to give the music a lot more layers

than from just three individuals.

Of all the tracks, I keep coming back to *The Other Hand* (track 5 of eight songs), somewhat surprising as the song has been built around Box's lyrics spawned by anxiety and depression.

But that is the juxtaposition of this album which touches on some deep issues, but eases the pain by being backed with some good solid rock.

Tantamount tracks:

1. Tantamount
2. EBCar
3. Inside of U
4. When Amy Sings
5. The Other Hand
6. On My Watch
7. 2 Fixed Points
8. Melt the Guns

[box]The Sleevehearts, supported by Blackbelts, will perform at The Loft, Liebig St, Warrnambool, Friday evening, March 24.[/box]