

I'LL BE GONE

MIKE RUDD, SPECTRUM, ARIEL AND
HOW ONE SONG CAPTURED THE
ZEITGEIST OF A GENERATION

by CRAIG HORNE

I'll Be Gone is not just the story of an accidental masterpiece, a song written by Mike Rudd and recorded by his seminal Australian band 'Spectrum' in 1969. It is also the story of a time of unprecedented political and cultural upheaval and promise both in Australia and the Western world. But most of all, *I'll Be Gone* is the story of a unique Australian artist and his unerring artistic vision, often in the face of immense personal hardship and sorrow.

I'll Be Gone tracks Mike's musical career from its New Zealand origins in Christchurch fronting the wild rhythm and blues band *Chants R&B*, followed by a stint with Ross Wilson and Ross Hannaford's avant-garde outfit The Party Machine in Melbourne.

We then examine Mike's defining, counter-cultural band of the era: Spectrum/ Mertceps, through its line-up changes, its scatological playfulness, its marketplace struggles and its final demise at a triumphant concert at the Dallas Brookes Hall in Melbourne.

Next came the wild disorder and failed promise of Mike's next band Ariel and their groundbreaking album *Strange Fantastic Dream*. The album, hailed both here and abroad as a twisted masterpiece, led to a contract with EMI and the chance to record at the famous Abbey Road studios in London at a time when Britain was in flames courtesy of striking workers, rioting National Front racists and a terrorist bombing campaign carried out by the IRA.

Back home Australia had changed, the cultural militancy and societal promise of the early 1970's had been replaced by the crass commercialism and artistic commodification of the 1980's, a time that was unkind to an quixotic polemist like Mike Rudd. Besides he had other things on his mind, his much-loved wife Helen was dying and his severely autistic son Chris demanded attention. This was a tragic decade for Mike, a time of loss, heartbreak and despair.

However Mike triumphantly emerged from this dark, unremitting trauma with his trademark wit and originality firmly in place. He threw himself into a successful musical

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renaissance, supported by his longtime friend and collaborator Bill Putt. Mike Rudd's now lives a happy and fulfilled life with his second wife on the fringes of Melbourne secure in the knowledge that he is widely acknowledged as one of the most loved, original and imaginative musicians this country has produced.

The Author

Craig Horne is a Melbourne based writer and musician who has been part of the fabric of the local blues and roots scene for over 48 years, most recently as the singer songwriter for The Hornets. Over the years Craig has performed alongside some of Australia's most respected musicians including, Jeff Burstin, Bruce Haymes, Chris Tabone, Yuri Pavlinov, Sam See, Paul Williamson, Mike Rudd as well as Ross Wilson, Wane Duncan, Gary Young and Ross Hannaford from Daddy Cool.

Horne has also written a number of books, also published by Melbourne Books: *Daddy Who?—The inside story of the rise and demise of Australia's greatest rock band* and *Roots—How Melbourne Became the Live Music Capital of the World*.