

BALLS-OUT ROCK'N'ROLL

With Melbourne's music community stronger than ever, **THE COMMUNITY CUP** is a celebration of the city's spirit. Or is it? **SAMUEL J FELL** talks tensions and backstabbing with Espy Rockdog **DAVE LARKIN**, RRR/PBS Megahertz co-captain **MADDY MAC** and local rock veteran **NICK BARKER**. Pics by Kane Hibberd.

On a Wednesday afternoon in late May, we convene at a pub in Melbourne's inner-north to talk about football. It's the quintessential thing to do at this time of year in this town – a slew of cold beer, the fire behind us crackling away, friends old and new trading stories and recollections of a game wrought with honour and tradition, a game that unites even the most staunch of enemies under the same banner, both on and off the field. Or so I thought. "You'd be surprised how everything changes the minute that first siren sounds," laughs Dallas Crane and Gun Street Girls frontman Dave Larkin. And he's right, for we've not convened to talk about any ordinary game of football here.

In a couple of weeks, pitting friend against friend, band member against broadcaster, the Espy Rockdogs will take on the RRR/PBS Megahertz in the annual Community Cup, a no-holds-barred game of footy the likes of which the AFL wishes it had to showcase on a weekly basis. Tensions are raw, nerves exposed, nothing is forgotten. "I'm still not happy about last year's outcome – one point," mumbles this year's Megahertz co-captain, Maddy Mac, presenter of PBS's *Homebrew*, who is, incidentally, wearing a PBS football scarf. Along with Mac and Rockdog Larkin, Nick Barker, who will be playing at the event with his reunited band The Reptiles, makes up the trio roped in to sit with me at the Grace Darling on Smith Street today. And so before me I see a combined total of five appearances in the Cup, with Larkin about to don his third guernsey, Mac her second. The pride and competition are palpable.

"You should give Plugger a show on RRR," Barker notes, causing the other two much mirth, highlighting the camaraderie prevalent between members of both teams prior to the start of the game. "I'd like to re-enact what Dave did to me last year," says Mac, getting up to highlight the lack of camaraderie that happens once that siren sounds. "He takes the mark over me and comes straight down, with his elbows, onto my shoulders."

"I'm really sorry, I feel terrible about that," smiles Larkin.

"See, there's no such thing as a social game of footy; people don't see anything except for the opposition colours," notes Barker. "I've never played a Community Cup game that hasn't ended with me sitting somewhere with ice on me. Whether that's just old bones or whatever. I think it's half and half, one half from the game, the other from failing hardware."

Barker won't take a place on the field this year, but will play a part in the musical festivities that have become integral to the Community Cup, re-forming the seminal Nick Barker & the Reptiles. "Yeah, that'll be my contribution, we're playing after the game, should be good," he explains. "We haven't had a rehearsal yet. We're just gonna do 40 minutes of our heaviest pub rock." I guess if you're not going to make an on-field appearance, this is the next best thing. "I can't play because The Reptiles used to drink for two and a half hours before every show, so that's what I have to do," Barker smiles. "So I can't play, I just have to sit there and drink as much as I can to get myself back to 1988."

Along with Barker & The Reptiles, this year's musical

Eyes on the ball: Rockdogs captain Dan Sultan and Megahertz co-captain Jacinta Parsons



contingent will include The Living End, The Blackeyed Susans, Little Freddie & The Pops, as well as youngsters Money For Rope, who join the bill as winners of SYN FM's Free Kick competition. This year's musical theme is The Clash, each band taking one song from the seminal London band's repertoire and giving it their own twist. "Well, we have to do one that has harmonica in it, so we're gonna do *Should I Stay Or Should I Go*, I think," says Barker. "With a ten-minute

harmonica solo, it'll be like Broadford '89."

But back to the game, for there are a few changes this year. Firstly, making his debut appearance for the Rockdogs, and in the exalted position of captain to boot, is none other than Dan Sultan. "He'll dazzle you with his teeth," laughs Barker. Sultan replaces longtime captain Tim Rogers and will no doubt be heavily marked, particularly by the female members of the Megahertz. "I think there have been women on both teams who haven't

really been acknowledged," muses Mac on why her and RRR's Jacinta Parsons are co-captains this year over Jon von Goes and Mohair Slim, before adding, "But I think you've thwarted our attempts to be serious by putting Dan Sultan as captain, sending hearts fluttering."

It's at this point that Larkin heads over to the bar to replenish the jug, and so with no current Rockdogs within earshot, I ask Mac who'll star for the Megahertz this year, who's their secret weapon? "Well, I've actually only seen the ladies so far," she confesses, although the fact the Megahertz women have already started training should be worrying for the 'Dogs. "They're doing pretty well. It's looking pretty good, but I think it's always more popular than the station manager would like, but it's probably better to have more people. None of us are athletic so it's probably better to have a large team." Mac is tight-lipped, not wanting to let anything slip, and fair enough: this year is the year the Megahertz must step up. After all, a year's worth of bragging rights are on the line.

"We're just looking at it one game at a time," says a faux-serious Larkin when he returns from the bar, diverting talk back to the 'Dogs. "We're not talking about premierships yet, just one quarter at a time. Those Megahertz, they're showing a bit of form, so we can't go in taking 'em lightly." Once the laughter has subsided (which, to be honest, it barely does throughout the entire hour and a half we're sitting here), I put the tough question on Mac and Larkin – who's going to win?

"I reckon the Megahertz by 14 points," predicts Larkin somewhat controversially, tongue firmly in cheek.

"I reckon a draw and then a time-keeping discrepancy," laughs Barker. Someone then says something about the Melbourne Storm, I think salary caps are mentioned, I can't really be sure, the tape is somewhat garbled, perhaps the beer is taking effect. "To answer your question, we're not thinking about the victory. We just wanna get through quarter by quarter – premierships not on our minds at the moment," smiles Larkin. Indeed, this is a serious game.

Community Cup co-founder and perennial Rockdog, Jason Evans has been quoted as saying, "As Joe Strummer once famously said, 'This is a public service announcement with guitars'. This is a public service announcement with footy." He's hit the nail on the head there, and also encapsulated why these three are in such form, why the game itself is so important. In a day and age where live music is becoming somewhat of an endangered species, an age where music and radio are playing second fiddle to the internet and downloads, this is a game that not only raises money for charity (ReLink, in this instance), but a game that brings together a community, one which so urgently needs this sort of co-mingling to survive, indeed, to thrive.

While the Community Cup is a fine excuse to drink beer, heckle, kick the footy with your mates and indulge in some fine tunes, it's also a time to take stock and realise that what we still do have – this scene of ours – is more than worth it. On and off the field, we're united under the same banner – the game of footy is merely a bonus.

WHAT: The Community Cup

WHEN & WHERE: Sunday 27 June, Elsternwick Park. Bands from 11am, bounce at 2pm. Visit communitycup.org.au for more info.

THU 17 JUN
'GREENS BENEFIT' FEAT.
MISTA SAVONA,
ELF TRANSPORTER'S LO2's FLEET
AND SPECIAL GUESTS
\$20 AT THE DOOR ONLY

SAT 19 JUN
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
THE GIN CLUB
w. **EAGLE & THE WORM**
AND JOEL SILBERSHER & THE BAGGAGE HANDLERS
AND THE ROCKETS/SMITHS
\$18 + BF

FRI 25 JUN
(EP LAUNCH)
INTERNAL NIGHTMARE
w. **HUMONIC, CONTRIVE**
DELIVERANCE WE PREY, METICULOUS DESPOLIMENT (TAS)
AND SCAR THE SURFACE
\$12 + BF

SAT 26 JUN
ZOOPHYTE
W. THE HAPPY ENDINGS, TOM TUENA
AND KATE GOGARTY (NSW)
\$12 + BF

THU 1 JUL
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
DOG TRUMPET
W. JVG GUITAR METHOD
\$15 AT THE DOOR ONLY

FRI 2 JUL
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
DEATH AUDIO
w. **EYE OF THE ENEMY**
HOUSE OF THUMBS AND FEED HER TO THE SHARKS
\$12 AT THE DOOR ONLY

SAT 3 JUL
(SINGLE LAUNCH)
GANGA GIRI
W. SPECIAL GUESTS
\$15 + BF

SUN 4 JUL
REGURGITATOR
W. OUCH MY FACE & THE PRESS
SOLD OUT!

THU 8 JUL
THE SOFT PACK (USA)
W. SPECIAL GUESTS
\$35.20 + BF

FRI 9 JUL
THE LITTLE STEVIES
W. BEN WELLS AND THE MIDDLE NAMES
\$15 + BF

SAT 10 JUL
THE DEAD SALESMEN
W. GLENN RICHARDS (AUGIE MARCH)
\$20 + BF

SUN 11 JUL
(EP LAUNCH)
LEFT ON WELLINGTON
W. WHO NEEDS ENEMIES AND THE MOONS
\$10 AT THE DOOR ONLY

THU 15 JUL
(SINGLE LAUNCH)
BLACK CAB
W. GRAND ATLANTIC (QLD) AND DJ JONATHAN ALLEY
\$12 + BF

FRI 16 JUL
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
THE WILSON PICKERS (QLDVIC)
W. CHRIS ALTMAN AND THE WOLFGRAMM SISTERS
\$17 + BF

SAT 17 JUL
THE NATION BLUE
w. **A DEATH IN THE FAMILY**
RAISED BY WOLVES AND FOLLOWING SEA
\$15 AT THE DOOR ONLY

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SUN 18 JUL
(SINGLE LAUNCH - MATINEE SHOW)
STEVE LANE & THE AUTOCRATS
W. JESS RIBERIO & THE BONE COLLECTORS
\$10 AT THE DOOR ONLY

FRI 23 JUL
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
THE HARD-ONS
W. SPECIAL GUESTS
\$14 + BF

SAT 24 JUL
(SINGLE LAUNCH)
INNERSPACE
W. INTO THE WOODS, THE RUN RUN AND HOLLJAWA
\$12 AT THE DOOR ONLY

FRI 30 JUL
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
LLOYD SPIEGEL
(2 SETS)
W. SHAUN KIRK
\$13 AT THE DOOR ONLY

SAT 31 JUL
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
THE TRANSATLANTICS (SA)
W. ELECTRIC EMPIRE AND DJ CHRIS GILL,
KANO & PIERRE BARONI
\$10 + BF

SUN 1 AUG
ARDIJAH (NZ)
W. SPECIAL GUEST
\$30 + BF

MON 2 AUG
(SPLENDOUR IN THE GRASS SIDESHOW)
THE DRUMS (USA)
W. THE MOTIFS
\$38.50 + BF

WED 4 AUG
(SPLENDOUR IN THE GRASS SIDESHOW)
BAND OF SKULLS (UK)
W. SPECIAL GUEST
\$44 + BF

FRI 6 AUG
'SADDLE UP AND GO FAREWELL TOUR'
PUTA MADRE BROTHERS
W. THE RED BRIGADE, THE TOOT TOOT TOOTS
AND THE UKELAIDES
\$13 AT THE DOOR ONLY

SAT 7 AUG
(SINGLE LAUNCH)
ME
W. SPECIAL GUESTS
\$12 + BF

FRI 13 AUG
GLIDE w. TOBY MARTIN
W. SPECIAL GUESTS
\$18 + BF

SAT 14 AUG
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
ASTRIAL (QLD)
W. SPECIAL GUESTS
\$15 AT THE DOOR ONLY

SAT 28 AUG
(ALBUM LAUNCH)
CORDRAZINE
W. NICK BATTERHAM
\$20 + BF

FRI 3 SEP
XIU XIU (USA)
AND **HIGH PLACES (USA)**
W. KYU (NSW)
\$35 + BF