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Ward is up for the count

CALLAN Ward will tonight follow through on his pledge to attend the Western Bulldogs' best and fairest count.

While Tom Scully and Phil Davis — other defectors to Greater Western Sydney — shied away from their major club functions, Ward remains comfortable enough to rejoin the Dogs' fold for one last time.

It is understood the Ward family bought a table of 10 for the event at Peninsula, Docklands.

Ward is expected to be a strong finisher in the award.

But as he is unlikely to finish top three, Ward would not have to address the 900-strong crowd.

He walked out on the Dogs last month after an offer worth at least \$4 million over five years.

Mark Stevens



KASABIAN

BY CHRISTINE LAN

It's neither a mystery nor a myth that Kasabian are an audacious, brazen and assured band. But with the release of *Velociraptor!* - the Leicester group's fourth album - Kasabian have left an enduring imprint by evolving into a thrilling, eclectic rock entity with both the craft and the execution to warrant their arena-sized audiences and swaggering bravado. "The shows we're playing at the moment... the reaction and the energy in the air - I've never seen anything quite like it," states chief songwriter/lead guitarist Serge Pizzorno. "I think, a few months down the line, it's gonna be the greatest rock 'n' roll show on earth..."

"It's a massive statement, but I truly believe that," he proclaims. "You'd be hard pressed anywhere to get anyone doing what we do - when we hit it... when you see us on form, there's no one better."

If there's a line between self-belief and arrogance, Kasabian have clearly rubbed it out and penned their name in its place. From evaluating the reception towards their third album, *West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum*, Pizzorno determined that it takes about a year for an ambitious record to "embed into people, where they're like 'wow, this is unbelievable'". Kasabian's fourth album isn't as experimental as its predecessor, but it's apparent - after

many listens - that *Velociraptor!* is the English quartet's most cohesive, accomplished and rewarding album.

While Kasabian's insatiable self-titled debut album (2004) and epic sophomore album, *Empire* (2006), possessed bigger hits, it wasn't until the release of their boldly adventurous third album, and now their beautifully eclectic fourth LP, that Kasabian succeeded in obliterating early comparisons and established themselves as an impressive and ambitious arena-sized rock entity rather than merely showy, electro-rockers with cool hair and club-thumping hits.



Not that *Velociraptor!* is devoid of indomitable hits - it's just not defined by them. *Switchblade Smiles* is Kasabian's heaviest song to date and threatens to unleash havoc upon its opening strains. "This amazing thing happens in the studio when things go well and you play it back through the speakers," Pizzorno asserts. "When we played that tune especially, we instantly knew we had something that had never been heard before as far as our band [is concerned]. "The energy in the room was quite electric - I mean, we were head-banging in a tiny bedroom," laughs Pizzorno, who still records in a bedroom in his house. "We were kicking off like we were watching Black Sabbath or something - if you can get that reaction just from that room... when the fans are gonna hear it, it's gonna be wild, you know. We're playing it in the set at the moment and it's gearing up to be one of the biggest moments."

Pizzorno describes Kasabian's *Velociraptor* as being like a jukebox record; for him, the goal of making an incredible record - a classic album - became an obsession. Despite the intensity of the goal, the process was surprisingly fluid. "You know what - in a strange way, it sort of happened really fast," says the softly-spoken songwriter. "Setting yourself a task of writing an album like an incredible jukebox that just spits out tune after tune and weaves between different styles of music is sort of insane, and probably is not recommended, you know."

"But it kind of happened so quick that I don't really know how it was done. It wasn't that intense - it was hard work and I worked every day, but everything happened really quickly, so it doesn't really feel like we'd been away for that long. At the first gig, it was like, 'shit, it feels like we were here yesterday'. It was all a bit of a blur, really, but in a great way, though... in a way that it must have been good because there was no torture there - it just kind of flowed out."

Radiohead's *OK Computer* was one of the classic albums that drove Pizzorno during the creative process. "Beauty inspires me and something like that... an album that is that good... you've got to set out to make something that incredible," Pizzorno ascertains. "Not comparing to it in any way and not that it sounds anything like it, but you try and

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find new territory."

Most bands would struggle to follow up an expansive concept album such *West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum*, but there doesn't seem to be any sense of fear on Kasabian's fourth album. "I think the only way is to not think about it and certainly don't analyse any part of your life - you just gotta get on with it," says Pizzorno of his mental preparation going into the creative process. "The more you think, the more it freaks you out."

"You kind of have to retain that innocence that you had when you first started a band - you just write tunes or play them live because you love it. You don't think 'we've got to be better or make it this or make it that' - you just retain that thing you had when you first started a band and remember it."

And that's exactly what makes Kasabian as invigorating as they are: they're not only shamelessly adamant about being one of the world's biggest bands - they pursue that goal

with tenacious ambition and audacity.

Pizzorno only took about two weeks off after a massive two-year world tour for *West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum* before thrusting himself into the writing of LP4; reasserting further his constant itch to write new music. "It's like, 'I have to write a tune; I have to write a great song'," Pizzorno explains. "Not even Paul McCartney could tell you how it's done - no one really knows, so when they are there- you wake up, pick up your guitar and record it. You get it down there and then, so you don't forget it. That was sort of happening quite a lot - before we knew it, it was just, 'Wow, we've got an album... let's go and record it!'" The birth of Pizzorno's first child, Ennio, left a profound impact on the making of *Velociraptor*, and led to some rather surprising realisations. "Sleep deprivation is a far bigger trip than actual absinthe itself," declares Pizzorno.

"I reckon the whole writing and recording process, I was out of my mind not getting any sleep; in a weird way, it was more psychedelic than acid, so in that way it helped, you know what I mean," he chuckles. "There's a part of you that's like 'wow, how is this going to affect' 'cause you don't know, but it had a massive, positive effect on me. And I found that it's sort of therapeutic, and being a dad is pretty great... I'd just put him to bed and get on with it in the studio."



Writing the score for *London Boulevard* (a film based on Ken Bruen's novel, featuring Colin Farrell and Keira Knightley) while working on Kasabian's fourth album proved a challenging but complimentary venture. "I've always wanted to do it, and it just came about at that time and was sort of a last minute thing - the director (William Monahan) needed someone to help him out, so I just stepped in," Pizzorno enthuses.

"It was a lot of fun and the right film - if anything, it again shows that anything is possible. Writing scores are sort of what people who went to real music college and can read music do, so it shows you that 'yeah, you can sort of go anywhere you want; you just gotta crack on!'"

When considering the most distinctive and impressive track on *Velociraptor!*, it's difficult to bypass *Acid Turkish Bath* (*Shelter From The Storm*) with its mesmeric fusion of Arabic-influenced string arrangements, flamenco guitar rhythms and choral harmonies. "I've got all these Turkish-type records and they're sort of wild - it instantly takes the album to a different place and you can be transported to somewhere completely different," Pizzorno conveys. "I'm fascinated on the whole with the set - a lot of the melodies or the lines are those half steps - that sort of Eastern sound. It kind of reminds of Can, but then it's got a real

sing-along chorus, which is a nice combination, I think."

And what does Pizzorno make of frontman Tom Meighan's statement that the title track is Kasabian's *Smells Like Teen Spirit*? "It's like if in 1992 The Prodigy were making a punk song, it'd sound like that in a weird way," laughs Pizzorno. "I think it evokes the same sort of energy as Nirvana; the way that the song brings you up at your feet."

Now that he's drug-free, a father and clearer than ever of his musical vision, Kasabian couldn't purport to be better equipped for longevity as a result of Pizzorno's stronger sense of purpose. "I'm completely consumed when I'm recording... it takes over everything," says the charismatic songwriter. "It sort of sends you insane, but it's worth it in the end 'cause when it's all said and done, all that's left is the tunes - the music you put out - so you've got to put everything into it."

Kasabian's fourth album - *Velociraptor!* - is out now through Sony. They play the Debit MasterCard Priceless Music Series at Peninsula, Melbourne Docklands, tonight (sold out), and will return to our shores as a headline act for Big Day Out 2012.

