“To Travel On” CD Review

By Ross Bruzzese



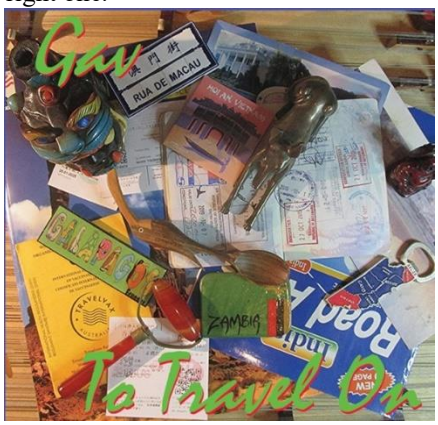
(Ross and I played in the originals band, Velvet Road, along with Peter Thompson who sent a mini email review which is at the end. I’m eternally grateful to these two guys who supported my music for 15 years through many, many venues. I’m also extremely grateful both took the time to listen and critique my latest album – some of the songs we used to play in Velvet Road. One day we will have a reunion! If our health problems allow it!

All of my solo albums, including “To Travel On”, as well as the Velvet Road album, “Saturday Morning”, are available online at ***Gavsta60.com*** *)*

“To Travel On” is Gav’s fourth solo album as I recall it, spanning eighteen years since his 2008 solo debut, ***“Just”***. Since then, he’s released ***“Another”*** (c. 2016), ***“Road”*** (c. early-2020s) and now in 2026, ***“To Travel On”***. On the sleeve notes Gav writes of his love of travelling and that each song on this album is a journey, a road to travel on. To the listener, that may well be so, but another interpretation of this is that the core twelve tracks on the album are, for the most part, distinctly Australian sounding as propulsive and classic Oz Rock, perhaps more so than his previous albums. But that’s the beauty of songwriting and the listening experience: we all have our subjective interpretations and impressions, so that every impression or feeling garnered by each individual listener is the right one.



On my first listen of ***“To Travel On”*** I couldn’t help but wonder if Gav should’ve considered another co-producer and studio than **Stewart Havill** and **Sound Dog Recording Studios** and featured some seasoned country/blues musicians behind him. This is a moot point of course, as time and money are always the primary considerations here. But as I kept listening to the album I came to appreciate that Stewart has possibly created his best work in producing Gav on *this particular album*, and that these two have forged a tight and intuitive synergy through all their years of working together - Gav as songwriter/guitarist/singer/keyboards & bass, Stewart as arranger/drummer/co-producer/instrumentalist. To my ears, I believe ***“To Travel On”*** is their most musically cohesive work, with both Gav and Stew giving this recording their very best in forging a clean, focused, driving sound, and no doubt assisted by **Don Bartley**’s brilliant mastering (**Benchmark Mastering**). Gav is singing his best vocals on this album, and his guitar playing is exemplary throughout. And it’s worth saying at the outset of this review - every song is good, every song is a cracker.



The opening track of “*6:30*” is where I first wondered if a swampy, sparse arrangement could’ve suited this song better - listen to Don Walker’s solo albums - but the more I listen the more I’m grabbed by the punchy chorus and drilled-in drums. I believe this song could’ve been inspired by the real-life story of 19-year-old Rebecca Bernauer’s murder in Kings Cross back in 1997, although ‘Jenny’ is cited in the spoken sections in the middle of the song. Nice guitar licks to close off the song. Hard-hitting swamp country-blues - this is what Gav’s all about! Terrific opener.

“*Crisis Call*” is produced with a tight and snappy funk-jazz backdrop and features some tasteful, choppy jazz-based rhythm guitar along with a chorus that sits on a pleasing, chromatic guitar run fusing jazz, rock, and other flavours. The middle eight ventures into something totally different, “a holiday” as Gav liked to quote from one of those songwriting teachers, akin to the Style Council groove and sound. Gav’s customary impactfulness shines through the inventive progressions and arrangements.

“*Don’t You*” (aka “*Don’t You Waste My Time*”) is Gav writing about one of his pet predilections, a man whose time is of the essence. This features straightforward rock verses that burst forth into incredible choruses: “don’t you... waste my time...” . It’s a simple chorus, but it’s totally inspired, and so to the listener, it’s rousing. It has the Sunnyboys written all over it, and you can almost *smell* 1979 on this track. This song really transports you back to the late 70s/early 80s. Excellent stuff.

“*Sing The Blues*” is one of Gav’s classic blues numbers and features James Englund on harmonica. This is classic sandshoe Oz blues rock. If you imagine the late 1980s and walking into a pub to hear a band playing blues rock, this is what it would sound like. Gav sounds like his having great fun extemporising the vocals over his blues lead parts as the song comes to its conclusion, and Englund’s closing harmonica licks adds to the live pub feel. Gav is many things, but one of these is a bluesman, and with the blues he’s as natural as sun.

“*Dry Drought Road*” is a swampy outback travelogue song, uniquely Australian sounding, featuring phrases such as “...dead fly on the windscreen...skeleton dead in the paddock”. This reminds me vividly of Don Walker’s solo material; the former

Chisel songwriter favouring sparse country-blues on many of his subsequent solo recordings. Again, Gav's singing and country-blues guitar playing are most commendable.

"*Two Feet*" is quirky and infectious blues rock with the phrase "two feet" beginning each line; again, this is classic Aussie sandshoe blues rock. Gav's guitar really shines when he's soloing blues rock. The song reminds me of Elvis Costello's "*Radio Sweetheart*", which is an outtake of his own 1977 debut *"My Aim is True"*.

In sound and influence, "*Now*" harks back a bit to some of Gav's previous recordings with discernible 'vintage' influences such as, faintly-speaking, Pink Floyd, The Kinks, and Oz new wave generally such as Australian Crawl. Expertly composed and crafted with the song pivoting around the phrase "...Now" when that's sung, both in the verses, and in the uplifted choruses. '*Now*' is something of an understated classic.

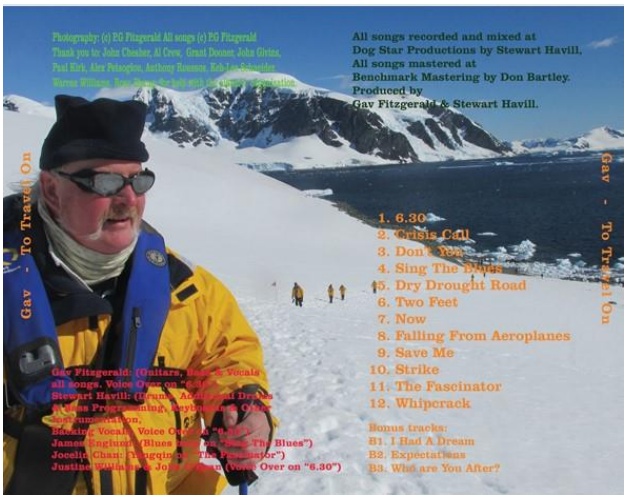
Gav rarely, if ever, called me up during working hours, but I distinctly recall Gav calling me up one afternoon back in 2010, or 2011 to tell me excitedly that he'd just written his best ever song, "*Falling From Aeroplanes*". Well, it is a good one, and I played this song with Gav when we used to play in a band together. This track has been produced with a lot of thought, and having the drums come in fully towards the middle of the song is a clever arrangement technique. It's an evocative and emotional song, both musically and lyrically, and I especially like that line in the middle eight "...looking back at the permanent past". One can't help but think you're in a plane looking down.. at this 'permanent past'. I feel that a backing vocal could enhance the song - and not just because I sang one many years ago (anyone will do!) - but I still hear the bass notes/roots being held one or two octaves up while Gav sings the verses particularly as the song progresses, denoting being "in the air" or some such effect.

"*Save Me*" features Gav's tight rhythmic guitar over a rock-skiffle beat; again, the key phrase "save me" becomes a catchy earworm which is a feature of Gav's work. The song is driven by that shuffle and propulsive guitar work. "*Save Me*" segues nicely into "*Strike*" which again features an impactful chorus of "You have to strike", accentuated by Stewart's tom-drum pattern that follows the song's main line, reminding me a bit of early Hoodoo Gurus, like "*Leilani*". It's a song, like many, that screams to be played loud and live. The synergy of Stewart's drumming and engineering - and Gav's delivery, vocals and guitar - comes through clearly here, as they create Oz rock at its very best.

"*The Fascinator*" is one of Gav's most popular songs as I see it. It features a tremendous build-up with lashings of verve and Gav-style humour, housed in terrific, rousing rock, enhanced by some of Gav's volubly best lyrical phrasings. There is a constant guitar phrase that answers each vocal line which enhances the spectacle of it all. It's a song that is best experienced and needs to be played loud and live. "*The Fascinator*" is as much an *event* as it is a song, brilliant stuff!

"*Whipcrack*" is a "working for the man" song, and has a Hunters & Collectors influence, notably with the horn section accentuating the choruses - a clever piece of arranging. "It's a, it's another whipcrack" is another terrific Gav-rock earworm and closes the album proper with verve and spark.

The album has three bonus tracks that I felt, at first, were either unnecessary additions or should've been merged into the set-proper, until I realised after repeated listens that they are quite separate in sound and production (and possibly mastering). And they're good songs too. Ironically, given the album's title and sleeve notes, the first bonus track "*I Had A Dream*" is the most 'travel-sounding' song on the album to my ears, particularly with the sitar-like riff that underpins the song's entry, middle and close, and the somewhat oriental move of the melody, reminding me of Roger Waters' early songs for Pink Floyd.



For those of us who know Gav, the worst thing you can do is to pin expectations on him, and so he writes a song about it! Gav writes "*Expectations*" fully and with feeling underpinned by a reggae-meets-rock beat, and Gav's tight and flavourful guitar riffing. The final bonus track is "*Who Are You After?*" which is another classic example of 'Gav-rock' with its humour and quirk, an infectious chorus that rises in pitch, and the "holiday" middle-eight.

So whereto for Gav now? With four solo albums, one band album and one band EP under his belt, and all of a very high standard of playing and songwriting, he should be going places. In an ideal world he'd have a name for himself and would be touring successfully, not necessarily with bands he's played in before, but with a solid group of three or four rocking blues-country musicians behind him. "Gav-Rock" is consistently terrific, and only Gav does it. Gav should have a name for himself in the pantheon of Oz-Rock, and deservedly so, his work speaks for itself. It's amazing. Now's the time. Gav - go do it!

“To Travel On” CD Review

By Peter Thompson

(Pete sent me an email about his favourite songs from the album so I thought I’d also include them along with Ross’ extensive review along with some comments from me.)

“Thanks, heaps, for your new cd. I am really enjoying it. A few comments:”

1 “*6:30*”. A tribal feel, nice riff. Who is Jenny? *Ross is right it was influenced by that 1997 murder but I didn’t know the girl’s name. In my teens I fell in love with two girls named Jenny even naming one of my electrics after them. That’s why I used the name!*

2 “*Crisis Call*”. A nice jazzy, Steely Dan feel. Contrast between smooth sounding music and very serious lyrics about a crisis! *This came from a friend in the 90’s who used to ring me all the time, each time with a new crisis I couldn’t solve.*

4 “*Sing The Blues*”. A nice driving blues riff. *I love the Blues and it influences a lot of my music. Sometimes you just have to write about it!*

5 “*Dry Drought Road*”. Reminds me of Bowie‘s *“Jean Genie”. Maybe it’s the stomp feel, but the again that could be a Slade influence? “Slade Alive” I still consider to be one of the best live albums out there.*

6 “*Two Feet*”. Nice middle 8 lead playing. *Thanks, Pete, this is based on the fact I love seeing women walk and they have two feet to do that.*

8 “*Falling From Aeroplanes*”. Flash back. *Yeap, Pete, we had a good time playing this in Velvet Road. I’d written just before I flew to my India tour in 2012 and it was influenced by my slight fear of flying. That might sound crazy as I’ve been to 55 countries, but I like challenging myself!*

11 “*The Fascinator*”. Love this song. more a driving beat with the bass drum than I used to play. *Its nearly everyone’s favourite song although I do get a bit sick of playing it at times. It’ll probably be a major hit then I’ll have to play it for the rest of my life! I wanted it to have a slight dance feel so that’s the reason for the driving beat.*

B2 “*Expectations*”. Gavin rap at its best. Sounds a bit Stevie Wonder. *Its funny a lot of people like this song as it’s a different musical journey for me. However, I do get frustrated when people put me into little boxes of their expectations – hence the song from the album “Just” called “Classify”.*

“The album is really well produced with a great instrument balance, I reckon. Your voice is the best, too.”

Thanks Pete as a lot of people have raved about the album, saying it’s the best yet.