

# Alkhimiya's Night at the Kasbah

By Warwick Fry

'A Night at the Kasbah' was a fine follow-up performance for the band Alkhimiya and the Nomads belly-dancing troupe, after their coruscating performance, 'The Beautiful Night', in September.

If 'The Beautiful Night' was a night to remember, 'A Night at the Kasbah' certainly buffed up the glow on those memories.

The event was organized by the Tumble Falls primary school fundraising committee, who also made the delicious middle-eastern food, partly as a way of farewelling teachers Brenda Crosby and Jane Mari, and welcoming new staff members for 2006, Paul Solk and Matthew Nicholls.

The night featured local belly dancers including Medita and members of the Gypsy Monsoon troupe, as well as the Nomads, to

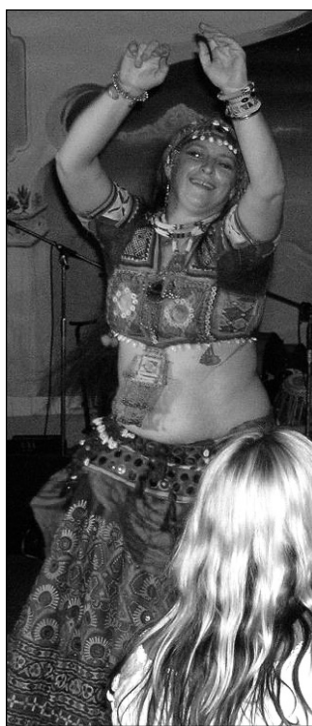
the accompaniment of the amazing Alkhimiya.

While the core of the group remains unchanged (Ren on percussion, Steve on Oud and Szaz, Gerard on Cello) Alkhimiya is still evolving as a band. Family commitments meant that the extraordinary violin of Elvis, who featured on 'The Beautiful Night' was absent, but on this night Layla's haunting voice held the vocal line, and later in the evening Debbie sat in with yet more interesting vocals.

A high point of the evening was guest artist Yuval Ashkar, an Israeli musician, who delivered a brilliant performance on drums and Oud. A telling demonstration of the transcendence of music over ideology and nation.

As an evolving group, Alkhimiya has demonstrated a capacity to adapt and develop; accommodating other artists while constantly refining their style and technique. I can still remember the first rehearsals of what has become their signature tune "Sultan". Every time they play it in public it sounds tighter, sharper, more interesting. Particularly when the Nomads dance it.

Like Alkhimiya, the



Nomad belly-dancing troupe seems to excel with time and experience. The Nomads and Alkhimiya would seem to be made for each other. The belly dancing elicited wonderful nuances in the music, and the dancers responded to the precision and controlled passion of the sounds.

The night ended, as is usual, with enthusiastic audience participation; extraordinary displays of creative dancing, freestyle jamming and a GoodTimes spirit.

Organising committee member Biskit said, "It was a wonderful end-of-year celebration. Everyone was blown away by the quality of the dance performances and the music, and the food!"



Middle eastern delights. Alkhimiya in full flight, Biskit performing (top)

## Up and coming surprises

It was a great gig at the Sphinx Rock café on New Year's Day. Well over a hundred guests enjoyed the recently installed shade sail and were entertained by a duo called Two Colour Mountain who sang and played songs reminiscent of the Indigo Girls/Tracey

Chapman. Both are young and have already won awards for their creative talent, both individually and together. The vibrant friendly team at the Sphinx Rock café was kept busy producing great food and the Iced juice Frappes, new on the beverages list, were selling

fast. Live entertainment will continue on Sundays, with a top-line program throughout January: 8<sup>th</sup> Murray Kyle's CD Launch, 15<sup>th</sup> Virginia Flame & Martin, 22<sup>nd</sup> Toshimi, and 29<sup>th</sup> Gypsy Rollers. Proprietor Jon Squire is committed to developing the café as a live performance venue, and now even puts out a gig guide! Keep an eye open for an all-day music Festival in March featuring children's workshops, indigenous dancing, storytelling, not to mention at least ten well-known acts with a few surprises. (Yes we can still get surprised out in the bush!!). Check out Sphinx Rock café, and be surprised yourself.



Two Colour Mountain

## Royal Scam bring Steely Dan to Nimbin

by Peter Hanson

With the guitarist and keyboard player from 10cc, namely Rick Fenn and Alan Park, plus local homegrown talent like Scott Hills from The Flood, Peter Roberts of Stylus and Geoff Wright ex-Max Merritt Band, you just knew this was going to be a great night.

The Royal Scam played 25 classic Steely Dan songs over 2 ½ hours, all for \$15! That's 60 cents a song. Absolutely value plus, in my book.

Their selection covered the band's heyday, with standouts including "Do it Again," "Dirty



What a band! Peter Roberts belting it out (top), Rick Fenn (left) and Geoff Wright.

Work" and "Midnight Cruiser" (1972), "Ricky don't lose that number" (1974), "Deacon Blues" and "Josie" (1977).

"We're all huge fans of the music," explained Geoff Wright, a top Melbourne



session guitarist who has recently moved to Byron Bay. "I met all these amazing musicians with pedigrees to die for, and discovered we were not only fans of the music but we had all had a nibble at working out some of the material in the past," he said. "So we decided to knuckle down and face the daunting challenge of getting a show together."

The Bush Theatre was a great venue for it, but only about 20 lucky people got to hear this truly amazing

performance. I took my farmer mate from down the road, an avid Steely Dan fan, and we were both gobsmacked! We knew all the words, all the tempo changes, and we were smiling all the way through their two delightful sets.

But you didn't have to be a die-hard fan. What you got for your \$15 was a really tight, funky, international line-up that really loves playing Steely Dan compositions.

Singer Peter Roberts had perhaps the most challenging role in the band, given the range required for the vocals. A renowned Jazz/Soul vocalist and Melbourne's number one session singer, he gave his own interpretation of these classics, showing great familiarity with the material - he even named his first-born Rikki.

At one point after a song, Peter said, "Gee that was good." Donald Fagen and Walter Becker would have agreed.

## Chalk one up for Coral

From the musical metropolis of 'steel city' Newcastle comes young singer-songwriter Coral whose debut EP "House on a Hill" was launched this month.

Amidst the tide of diverse sub-cultures on display after dark on the coal coast, Coral springs from the depths of the dockyards, clinging vicariously to various styles; blues, jazz, rock, pop.

Her music blends Celtic stylings, while traversing the globe from Americana to African finger-style guitar.

She is joined onstage by Heath Wild on bass guitar and Chaz Webb on the kit. Her recording was a collaborative Novocastrian effort with stellar local musicians joining her in the studio in a house on the hill in Newcastle.

From a young age Coral was exposed to truly global sounds, her parents following the various music festivals around the country. Osmosis occurred in these formative



years, it wasn't long before she was tapping the ivories in imitation.

Living in Sydney, she started out learning the classical piano and in her later primary school years studied the guitar. In 2001 she moved to Newcastle to find many other musicians and started singing in a funk band, playing percussion in various groups and writing her own songs.

Her name is scrawled on the side-walk out the front of her terrace house where she writes, records and teaches guitar, in a flowery decorative hopscotch style. And, she was a top five finalist in the Folk category of the ABC Newcastle Music Awards.

### Catch Coral Live!

Touring with Newcastle's "Red Deer White Wolf," on:

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January:

Rainbow Cafe, Nimbin

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January:

Lu Lu's Cafe, Mullumbimby

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January:

Federal Hotel, Bellingen

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