

STEPHEN CUMMINGS



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"This album is the culmination of everything I have learnt so far packed together on one record," says Stephen Cummings of his new album **LOVE-O-METER**. "It has some slick pop and rock songs and some funky things, not forgetting my trademark twisted bittersweet ballads."

Stephen Cummings' 2004 album, *Close Ups* was a highlight of his incredible career. It is an acoustic reworking of some of his best known and favourite songs, going right back to his first EP with The Sports. Few artist catalogues have been revisited and reinvigorated with such imagination. *Close Ups* prompted Stephen to try some different styles and flavours on **LOVE-O-METER**. The textures are rich with a depth of sentiment that can only be garnered from experience.

The Melbourne singer-songwriter first experienced success when his band, The Sports clocked up three platinum albums and broke into the US and UK Top 40 Charts. Since then he has concentrated on solo albums, most of which investigate the complicated pathways of love and contain a terrifyingly high irony quotient.

**LOVE-O-METER** is Stephen's 15th solo album and received a kick-start when Cummings was granted Project Fellowship funding from the Australia Council.

**LOVE-O-METER** charts the course of a romance. "It has a sort of story format to it," Stephen explains. "It's about the idea of romantic love and, you know, lost love and lost love found again and dealing with all the clichés and pitfalls of romance... Originally I wrote and recorded a series of monologues and conversations that linked the songs, but ultimately decided that listeners might find this distracting."

The album starts with "I Need You Tonight", an infectious pop song with a massed fuzz tone and vocals worthy of ELO. There are hints of glam rock in "Punch Drunk", "Crying Over You" and "I Want You Back", and psychedelic themes running throughout **LOVE-O-METER**. The song "Once Upon A Time We Were Mad For Each Other" flaunts a taste for acoustic funk. "I was having a drink one evening in Sydney before we played The Basement and I heard something on the jukebox," Stephen recalls of "Once Upon A Time We Were Mad About Each Other". "Shane O'Mara said it was Jack Johnson and it's massively successful. I'd never heard of him, but I liked the timeless airy pop feel of the music - very Sydney I thought - I can write songs like that... at heart I am a pop singer!" Stephen also demonstrates a concern with redemption and dignity that steers him clear of other singer-songwriters on such songs as, "Simplify My Life" and "If You Wish To Be Loved".

Ultimately **LOVE-O-METER** is a story of two adults finding love, losing it and finding it again. "I like happy endings," says Stephen. "I won't go to a movie unless I know it has a happy ending."

"**LOVE-O-METER** completes the cycle of love songs that I've followed since recording *Lovetown*." It heralds the beginning of a new era in songwriting for Stephen Cummings.

The album was recorded with Stephen's favourite musical allies - Shane O'Mara on guitars, Bill McDonald on bass and Peter Luscombe on drums with a heavily featured guest appearance by Garrett Costigan of Tex Don & Charlie fame on pedal steel.

#### What the papers have said:

*"Alongside Nick Cave and Tim Rogers, I would nominate Stephen Cummings. He is easily one of our great storytellers, capable of creating lives in miniature."*  
- **Bernard Zuel, The Sydney Morning Herald**

*"Apart from Paul Kelly, no other Australian solo artist has managed to sustain a recording and performing career at such a high level of artistry for as long as Stephen Cummings."* - **Shaun Carney, The Age**

*"Debonair, romantic and sensitive, Cummings owns a voice that allows vulnerable yearning qualities as much space as an authoritative voice of experience."*  
- **Lauren Zoric, Rolling Stone**

*"...in a year rich in fine albums from singer-songwriters as diverse as Bob Dylan, Ron Sexsmith and Lucinda Williams, this is one of the finest."*  
- **Larry Schwratz, The Sunday Age**

#### Some background

- Formed the legendary rockabilly band, the Pelaco Brothers in 1974.
- Started The Sports in 1976. Recorded the *Fair Game* EP and received rave reviews in the NME - the first Australian independent release to do so.
- The Sports signed with Mushroom in Australia and Stiff in the UK.
- Toured with Graham Parker, Elvis Costello, the Buzzcocks and Blondie.
- Scored a Top 40 hit in the US with "Who Listens to the Radio?"
- Signed with Arista in the US.
- Disbanded The Sports and started his solo career in 1983. First solo hit, "Gymnasium".
- ARIA Award for Best Adult Contemporary album in 1990
- Recorded 15 solo albums.
- Written 2 books (*Wonderboy* and *Stay Away From Lightning Girl*. His third, *Sweet Things*, to appear in 2006)