

Gutter



Electronic Press Kit

Gutter is a melodic/prog-rock band which has the distinction of having – at 36 years - the longest gap between studio albums in the southern hemisphere and the eighth longest in the world. The band is a global entity as its members and collaborators are located on several different continents and record remotely. It comprises Mark Stewart (Australia), Tony Huggett and Paul Howard (South Africa), and other close collaborators (UK).



First formed in 1973, Gutter transformed from a schoolboy dance band to a chart-topper in the '80s. Their debut album *Cabbages and Kings* was released in 1984. A gap of 36 years was followed by its second album release in July 2020 called *Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax*. Now operating out of four studios on three continents, the band is currently recording and producing its third album.

In the seventies and early eighties, Gutter progressed from being a schoolboy band playing parties and dances to becoming a proficient and capable recording outfit with a number of top ten singles to its name.

Important milestones were achieved when Adam and the Ants was knocked off the number one spot on the Zimbabwe charts and Gutter

entered the South African top ten. This phase of the band's development concluded in 1984 with the release of its first album, *Cabbages and Kings*, which was a collection of its greatest hits.

As was the case with many bands of the time, achievement in the charts did not necessarily mean financial success. Band members felt the pressure to finish their education and Gutter split up to enable university degrees to be completed and marriages and careers started.

Over the next quarter century the friendships endured, but even with successful individual careers, the nagging regret of a job left unfinished remained. A wealth of creative material was unrecorded and unpublished and could potentially vanish without a trace. Finally, some

25 years after the release of the first album it was decided action was needed.

The members of Gutter were by then located worldwide so the traditional approach of recording together in a recording studio was impossible. Fortunately, with the advent of rapid internet connectivity and affordable digital recording technology, it was theoretically possible to set up satellite studios on three continents. Individuals would record the various parts remotely, collate the parts and produce them centrally. This was made possible with a high-end computer, modern DAW (digital audio workstation) software (supplied by Cubase) and technical expertise.

The final critical factor required was the members being convinced that this would be a worthwhile endeavour given that it would take up most of their available spare time with all of them holding down demanding day jobs. Paul Howard was both persuasive and tenacious and after several test demo projects, the process looked like it could work. It seemed that high-class quality music could be created without the need for the band members to be together in one place. It was not going to be easy and it wasn't going to be quick, but it was possible.

The back catalogue of songs was brought to life and stand-out songs selected. Before the first note was recorded the entire album structure had been decided. The working title of the album, 'Shoes & Ships and Sealing Wax' was chosen as a suitable sequel to the 1984 album 'Cabbages & Kings'. The linking theme was Lewis Carroll's poem, 'The Walrus and the Carpenter.' Shoes & Ships and Sealing

Wax is not an unconnected collection of songs, it is an album carefully constructed to take the listener through a range of emotions being love, hate, denial, despair, regret, hope, anger and nostalgia. The fact that most of these songs were written during the band's formative years belies the fact that the band members were seemingly much too young to have understood and invoked such a range of complex emotions. The 36-year gap between composition and final arrangement has added a depth and finesse to the final production that arguably would not have transpired had the compositions been recorded at the time.



Remote collaboration has had its challenges and constraints but it also has had many unanticipated benefits. The tried and trusted method of rehearsing an arrangement prior to studio recording could not practically be done over long distance and so the band had to work out its own method of developing an arrangement and moulding the songs into a coherent form. This involved putting down a structure, usually bass, drums and a rhythm instrument and allowing each player to develop their own parts independently. These would then be mixed down in a central location and critically assessed. These parts would then either be accepted in principle and iteratively refined or re-worked.

This kind of step by step refinement has led to arrangements that are well thought through, deliberate and well defined. Every note of every instrument has been included with a specific purpose and contribution to make and this has led to a strong and refined result. The old constraints of restricted studio time and limited instrumentation are no longer an issue but considerable amount of discipline is required to settle the arrangements timeously.

Adding to the complexity the band decided to enlist the remote services of UK mastering engineer Paul Ward to do the final mixes and mastering finishes. Paul's involvement has been the masterstroke and his input at the end of the process has added a special element to each song.

Gutter's genre is not immediately obvious. Some have described it as progressive rock, melodic rock and even pretentiously as intelligent rock. While the music may well be described as intelligent, it is most certainly rock with strong melodies and arrangements which have finally breathed life into some deserving songs.

Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax is available on the band's website www.originalgutter.com and on Spotify, Amazon Music and Apple Music. Gutter is also active on Facebook and Instagram.

For further information please contact Paul (Pinkie) Howard (Punkbjort@gmail.com) (tel/: +27 82 787-8438), Tony Huggett (huggetts@iafrica.com) (tel: +27 82 807-4385) or Mark Stewart (markstewart074@gmail.com) (tel: +61 43 891-5160)