

**I grew up in Brisbane's northern suburbs.** The area was a swampland until they dumped a whole lot of dirt on it and ironed out the suburbs. It was a cool place to live because the bushland and creeks were an adventure – I had a Huckleberry Finn thing.

**I didn't fit in with the other kids.** I made my own fun, which wasn't entirely tragic or anything. I just never found anybody I connected with until I moved to Sydney when I was 17.

**Although I was in the school choir, I had no musical leanings back then.** I was in it for the privileges – such as getting out of class. My siblings had a huge influence on my musical appreciation. My two older sisters and two older brothers had varying tastes, so I had quite an eclectic education.

**As the youngest of the family, I was spoilt and tortured.** My sisters treated me as the baby, and my brothers made sure I paid my way in humiliation.

**I blame my bad bits on my Catholic boys' school education.** Back then, you could do what you liked to kids, especially in Catholic schools. A teacher could slap you or grab your hair; violence was rampant. Now they'd be charged with assault.

**I was a real stirrer.** I felt, if that was authority, it needed to be undermined and questioned. I can't think of anything I brought with me from school, apart from thinking I'd never let anybody treat me that way again. I don't consider myself an angry or violent person, but if anyone messes with me or anyone I love, I do have that ready to go.

**I have a tendency to take the piss.** Comedy and laughter sit above music, as far as tangible things that make people feel better. Music can be moving and give you an emotional release but, at the end of the day, I'd prefer to be laughing.

**I call my mum every couple of weeks.** I live just out of Byron Bay [with partner Kristyna Higgins and daughters Scarlet and Ede May]. It's close enough that we're expected to attend family functions, but too far away for anyone to babysit – all the commitment, none of the benefits.

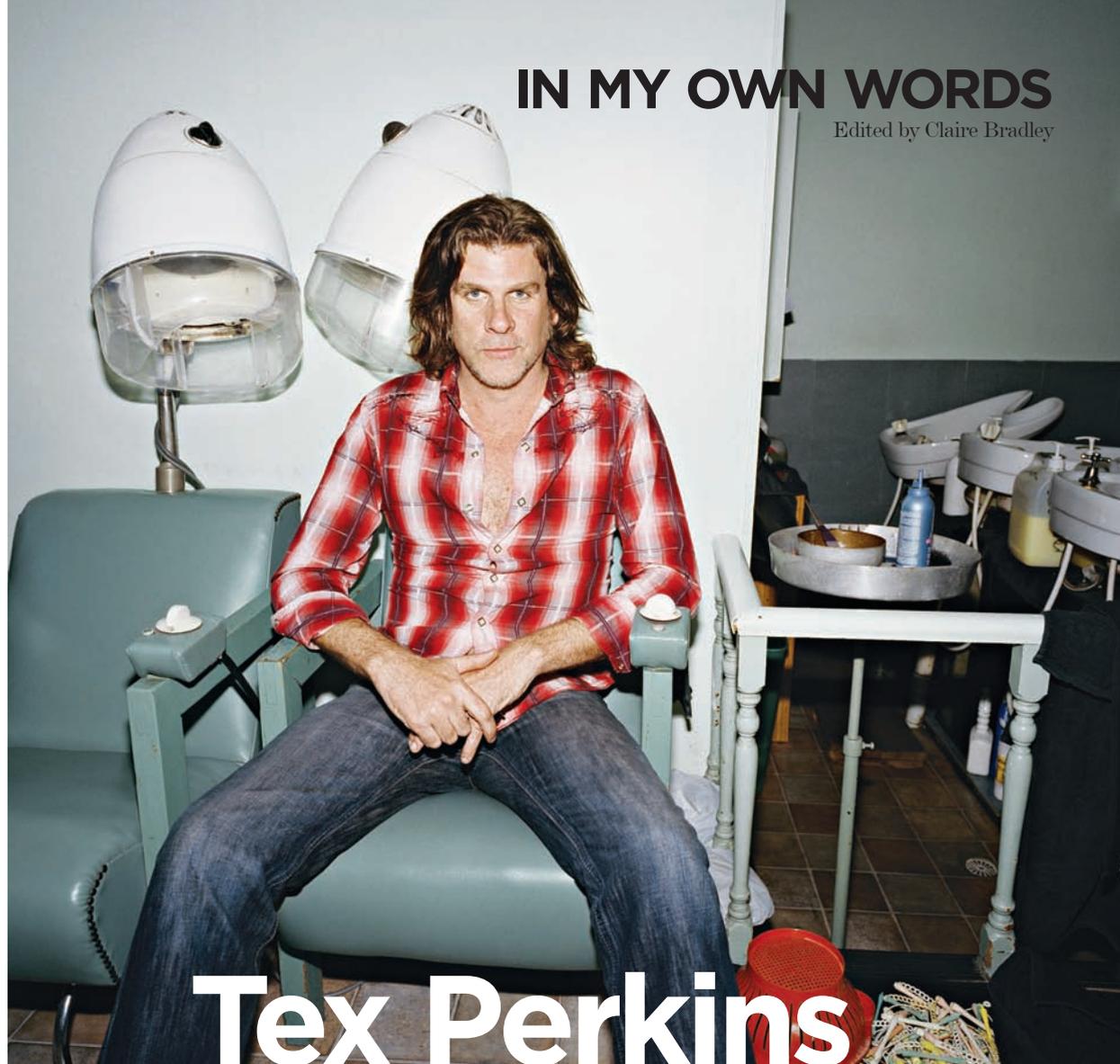
**I was quite young when my first daughter, Tuesday, was born.** I was very much into touring and music, and the rock'n'roll life, so my relationship with her mother, Amber, didn't work out. But there's no animosity between Amber and Kristyna. It's very harmonious – a true family. When all the girls get together, they pick on me, but I prefer that to the constant juggling and negotiating you can have with an ex.

**After playing music for eight years, I decided to go off the dole and take it seriously.** It was 1990 and things picked up a bit. I'd become a father and had someone to support – that's good pressure. Somehow I've made it work ever since.

**Some of us weren't in the right headspace for *The Cruel Sea's* success.** We didn't strive for it that much, so we didn't respect it. With *The Honeymoon is Over* [1993], we'd decided to make a commercial album – we polished it and made an effort to present it as an album that would sell, and it did. It was a bit too easy for us.

At that stage, to cross over and be successful in the mainstream was pretty foreign. It was weird to suddenly be accepted as family entertainment, so we dismantled the whole thing.

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## Tex Perkins

Tex Perkins, 42, made his mark on the Australian music scene when he first fronted *The Cruel Sea* 20 years ago. But there's no ego in this rockstar who's happy to trade his grungy grooves for a daggy love song

**We wanted success on our own terms.** We sold 200,000 records, which was huge for us, but we wanted it at a level where we could handle it and where it felt as though it really belonged to us. Our following album, *Three Legged Dog* [1995], was kind of dirty and grungy compared to the sparkling crispness of *Honeymoon*, and it pretty much halved our audience. If I had my time again...

**I do things in a cycle.** I play with *Beasts of Bourbon*, which is physical and primal, then I do something completely different, such as *Dark Horses* or my latest album of love-song covers with the *Ladyboyz* – a band of friends who were gathered around me at the time. I put everything into a project, but when I've seen it through, I stop. Then, three or four years later, I'll think, hmmm, I had a rock band somewhere. I might fire that up again.

**No 1's & No 2's is probably the most fun record I've ever made.** Covering songs you don't respect is great, because if a song's already fantastic, what do you do with it? I have a fondness for all the songs on the record. We've kind of put hair and teeth on them.

**Career-wise, I feel fortunate.** I'm in a position where I can go on a horrible morning TV show one week, and go onstage with a punk/rock band at a pub a week later. Right now, I'm composing music

for Rachel Ward's directorial debut feature film, *Beautiful Kate*.

**Bottom line, I'm an entertainer.** There's nothing better than writing a decent song and seeing it through. But I'm not the kind of songwriter who sits down at his desk with a pen and thinks, OK, let's write a song. I have to wait for the feeling.

**Fatherhood has broadened and improved me.** There's more of me; my heart's bigger. You realise how big your heart can be, and all these areas inside it that you've never used before come awake.

**I'm happiest when I'm home.** It's hard to go past reading the girls a Dr Seuss book in bed at night. It's difficult to say there's anything better than the real, simple joy of happy, sparkling children. If I could achieve anything by the end of my life, it would be raising happy kids.

**I fear any situation where my kids could lose their connection with me.** Being able to talk is vital. I can wag the finger, but I'm not really one for laying down life lessons. I have fun with them. I think that's the most important thing, to instil the idea you should enjoy life as much as possible.

RACHEL SMITH

*Tex Perkins & His Ladyboyz' album, No 1's & No 2's (Universal), is out now. Catch him at the Australian Tennis Open's Spiegelworld tonight. For more information, visit [www.australianopen.com](http://www.australianopen.com).*