

= Tea & Sympathy (Bernard Fanning album) =

Tea & Sympathy is the debut solo album by Australian musician Bernard Fanning . It was released on 31 October 2005 by Dew Process records while Powderfinger ? Fanning 's main band ? were on hiatus . Contrary to Powderfinger 's usual alternative style , the album blends alternative and country @-@ folk music . Most of the record was written after the cancer related death of his brother in 2002 . His brother 's death coincided with the end of Fanning 's twelve @-@ year relationship with his partner and both events were instrumental in his move away from his typically political and socially lyrical subject matter .

Fanning recorded four songs at his home studio in Brisbane and the rest at Real World Studios near Bath , England . Fanning worked with producer Tchad Blake in both sessions . To support the album 's release Fanning toured Australia twice and performed across North America and the UK .

" Tea & Sympathy " topped the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) albums chart and won three awards at the 2006 ARIA Awards , as well as an APRA Award and a J Award .

= = Background and production = =

After the 2004 release of Fingerprints : The Best of Powderfinger , 1994 @-@ 2000 , Powderfinger took a hiatus , and several members played in the side projects Drag and The Predators . Fanning decided to work independently and acted on direction he felt unable to explore as a member of Powderfinger . Some of his inspiration was derived from a will to see if he was capable of recording a solo album , considering what he viewed as his limited guitar playing abilities ; compared to bandmates Darren Middleton and Ian Haug . The distance from the band , coupled with the more relaxed writing process for Tea & Sympathy helped Fanning to unwind from the stress leftover from 10 years working recording and touring with Powderfinger .

Fanning wanted to create a politically oriented album with which he could attack then Prime Minister of Australia John Howard , following Howard 's 2004 election victory over Mark Latham . However , the death of Fanning 's brother from cancer in 2002 , coupled with the end of a twelve @-@ year relationship saw him steer the album in a different direction . Fanning explained that after going through " a pretty weird time in the past twelve months " , he did not intend to talk about his experiences , but to express them through music . The motivation for some songs came from the 2005 Big Day Out ; disappointment with the antisocial nature of the event and the heavy metal music played spurred him to " make music that was the opposite of that " .

Fanning worked with producer Tchad Blake and was funded by record label Dew Process . Sessions for the album began in February 2005 when Fanning and several other musicians recorded tracks at Blake 's Brisbane studio . Four of these ? " Not Finished Just Yet " , " Believe " , " Wash Me Clean " , and " Hope & Validation " ? appeared on the album after being mixed by Blake . The other tracks were recorded and mixed at Real World Studios near Bath , England . In Bath , Fanning worked with musicians including Jerry Marotta , Keith Duffy , and John Bedggood . While writing Fanning listened to music of guitarists Lightning Hopkins , Tom Petty , and singer @-@ songwriter Gillian Welch , who all influenced his work . " I 'd love to play guitar like that , but I simply don 't have the skill to do it " , said Fanning of Hopkins ' work .

The album 's title comes from a saying which Fanning explained to The Age as " you offer someone tea and sympathy , you sit down with them , have a cup of tea and you just talk . " He noted that there is a credit on an album by The Rolling Stones for the provision of " tea and sympathy " . The album cover photography and album inlay photography is by Ami Barwell

= = Touring and promotion = =

Fanning toured much of Australia to support Tea & Sympathy . Prior to the launch of two major tours , Fanning held a number of low @-@ key album launch shows . These drew praise from critics ? Time Off 's Ben Preece reported , " The chemistry between the Powderfinger frontman and his band (nicknamed The Gap Jazz School Choir) is excellent and their constant in @-@ between

song banter is hilarious . Then , of course , there ' s the music . " He commended the multiple genre changes during the 90 @-@ minute performance , as well as Fanning ' s vocal showcase .

The Which Way Home ? tour , named after the album ' s sixth track , was announced on 2 December 2005 , and lasted from through February to March 2006 . Fanning performed in Sydney , Canberra , Adelaide , Melbourne , Hobart , Perth and Brisbane . He was joined on tour by Perth band The Panics and Brisbane singer Andrew Morris . On 11 August , Fanning announced that tours across the United States and Canada would follow the album ' s 8 August North American release . An 11 September UK release was also announced with Dew Process revealing that numerous London shows had already been sold out .

Performances in London attracted much expatriate support ; Fanning joked , " I think I have about 14 English fans " . The performances were received positively ; musicOMH ' s Barnaby Smith rated his 4 September showing at London ' s Arts Theatre four stars , commenting on Powderfinger @-@ esque " loud , anthemic , guitar @-@ driven rock in a ' 70s vein " , and praising Fanning ' s utilisation of the piano and guitar as part of his performance , as well as his dedicating the song " Give It All Up " to the recently deceased Steve Irwin .

= = Album and single releases = =

Tea & Sympathy was released in Australia on 31 October 2005 , in North America on 11 August 2006 , and in the United Kingdom on 18 September 2006 . The album peaked at number one on Australia ' s ARIA Albums Chart and number 11 on New Zealand ' s RIANZ Albums Chart . The Australian Record Industry Association has since certified Tea & Sympathy platinum five times over for sales in excess of 350 @,@ 000 units .

" Wish You Well " was the first single released from the album . Although it did not chart in Australia , it peaked at number 24 in New Zealand , and topped the Triple J Hottest 100 , 2005 . The inspiration for the song came to Fanning when he woke one morning , " and ' Wish You Well ' just arrived in a splurge . There were swallows flying around . I was in an unusually positive frame of mind . " musicOMH ' s Barnaby Smith described " Wish You Well " as reminiscent of Daryl Braithwaite and a " basic song with [a] catchy chorus you might sing round a campfire " . The online release " Songbird " was the album ' s second single . The song was broadly popular , and contributed to Fanning ' s winning " Songwriter of the Year " at the 2006 APRA Awards . " Songbird " won " Most Performed Blues and Roots Work " at the 2007 ceremony and was nominated for " Most Performed Australian Work " . The single did not appear on the ARIA Singles Chart , but peaked at number 11 on the Australian national airplay charts . It also reached number 14 on the Triple J Hottest 100 , 2005 .

" Watch Over Me " was released as the final single on 24 June 2006 . All proceeds from the single were passed on to Australian charity Youngcare . Fanning also toured with Kasey Chambers , again giving proceeds to the charity . Fanning said that " the aim of this show and the single release is to raise money for Youngcare but also to raise awareness of the terrible situation that these young people face " , referring to children forced to live in aged facilities . " Watch Over Me " spent eight weeks on the ARIA Singles Chart , where it peaked at number 16 . The song was performed by Fanning , Chambers , and Clare Bowditch at the 2006 ARIA Awards .

= = Music and lyrics = =

I realised about three songs into writing it how insulting that was to people who write country music ... someone like me trying to make a country record .

? Bernard FanningOn why he abandoned his plan to make a purely country record .

The country @-@ folk @-@ alternative blend on Tea & Sympathy formed a stark contrast to Powderfinger ' s last work , Vulture Street ? the band ' s heaviest work yet . Initially intended to be a purely country album , Fanning abandoned the prospect shortly into the writing phase because he did not think he was able to make music of the quality he had expected . He thus turned to an amalgamation of country , rock , and folk elements . Fanning considered Powderfinger music to "

always [have] a song that just kind of grabs you " but doubted his album had similar elements ; instead he focused on an album that as a whole would move the listener . The album is primarily acoustic ? " Which Way Home ? " a notable exception ? and features fiddles and mandolins for backing music . The album centres on themes of love , in the context of the recent end to Fanning 's relationship . Only three songs on the album exceed four minutes , while four are less than three minutes long ; Fanning was critical of the " convention that a song should go on for 3 [and a half] , four minutes " .

Opening track " Thrill is Gone " was written by Fanning as a joke about a hypothetical ending in his relation with rock music . The song is reminiscent of 70s country / folk Led Zeppelin , setting the mood for the rest of the album . Numerous songs on the album are influenced by Neil and Tim Finn ; " Believe " , " Sleeping Rough " , " The Strangest Thing " , and " Wish You Well " all have comparisons drawn to the brothers . " Not Finished Just Yet " and " Songbird " , meanwhile , are reminiscent of Neil Young ? a long @-@ term Powderfinger influence . " Wish You Well " , " Not Finished Just Yet " , and " Yesterday 's Gone " were noted as examples of " Fanning frankly prodding and probing matters of the heart " by dB .

On " Wash Me Clean " , Fanning aimed to imitate Nick Drake ; songs that " you to sleep because they 've got so much air and space in them " . This came as a contrast to the louder , more vocal Powderfinger work he was accustomed to . " Watch Over Me " , released and promoted in support of Australian charity Youngcare , was one of the slowest and most emotional songs on the album ? The Age 's Daniel Ziffer described it as " emotionally wrenching " . It was written alongside " Believe " following the 2005 Big Day Out . Sometimes construed as a relationships @-@ based song , " Watch Over Me " was written by Fanning after watching Pope John Paul II 's funeral . " Down To The River " was equally slow in portions , mixed in with sections of " searing , heart @-@ rending pleading " ? praised as the best song Fanning had written by musicOMH 's Barnaby Smith .

= = Reception = =

Tea & Sympathy was awarded " Best Cover Art " and " Album of the Year " at the 2006 ARIA Music Awards ; it was also nominated for " Best Blues & Roots Album " and " Highest Selling Album " . " Wish You Well " won " Best Video " , while " Watch Over Me " was nominated for " Single of the Year " . " Wish You Well " topped the Triple J Hottest 100 , 2005 , and was the most broadcast song on Australian radio in 2006 . Fanning won " Best Male Artist " for his work on the album , and as part of his acceptance speech challenged fellow Australian musicians to write protest songs ? something they had been criticised for a lack of by ARIA Hall of Fame inductee Rob Hirst . Tea & Sympathy was nominated for the inaugural J Award in 2005 , and Fanning won " Songwriter of the Year " at the 2006 APRA Awards . MTV Australia named Tea & Sympathy " Album of the Year " at its 2006 Video Music Awards .

Tea & Sympathy 's critical reception was moderate . It was generally seen as being less entertaining than Fanning 's Powderfinger work ? The Age said Powderfinger were a " rock band ingrained in the national psyche " like Cold Chisel , but that Tea & Sympathy showed little resemblance to Cold Chisel frontman Jimmy Barnes 's groundbreaking debut album , Bodyswerve . Barnaby Smith of musicOMH said the album was not " a work to suggest [Fanning 's] solo career might better Powderfinger " . The BBC 's Jenna Bachelor wrote that the album is " pleasant enough without pulling up any trees " .

Despite Fanning 's claims he could not write a country song , the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and BBC drew comparisons to Neil Young and supergroup Crosby , Stills , Nash & Young . The ABC said Tea & Sympathy resembled the band 's work , " though without the hippy , drippy lyrics " , while the BBC observed a " harmony porch style sound " highly similar to that of Young . Allmusic wrote that " Fanning 's influences are strictly old school " , noting Manassas ' self @-@ titled album and Elton John 's Tumbleweed Connection as similar .

Fanning 's vocals drew praise ; Allmusic 's Andy Whitman said he was a " fine , soulful singer " whose " vocal presence alone merits attention " . Other aspects of the album , though , were seen in a more negative light. musicOMH said songs like " Wash Me Clean " " simply lack a strong enough

melody " , while the BBC wrote that Fanning " might have to be happy with ' straight in at 101 , ' in the UK " despite topping the ARIA Albums Chart . The Age concluded its review by calling Tea & Sympathy " a low @-@ key but worthy personal offering " .

In October 2010 , Tea & Sympathy (2005) was listed in the book , 100 Best Australian Albums .

= = Track listing = =

" Thrill Is Gone " ? 3 : 11

" Wish You Well " ? 2 : 31

" Not Finished Just Yet " ? 3 : 17

" Songbird " ? 2 : 36

" Believe " ? 3 : 07

" Which Way Home ? " ? 3 : 21

" Wash Me Clean " ? 2 : 37

" Hope & Validation " ? 3 : 09

" Sleeping Rough " ? 4 : 34

" The Strangest Thing " ? 3 : 14

" Further Down the Road " ? 4 : 41

" Down to the River " ? 4 : 13

" Yesterday 's Gone " ? 2 : 34

" Watch Over Me " ? 3 : 31

" Weekend of Mystery " (iTunes bonus release) ? 3 : 26

= = Personnel = =

= = Chart performance = =

= = Chart procession and succession = =