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Tim Farriss, Kirk Pengilly, Jon Farriss and Andrew Farriss of INXS

PHOTO BY MARK METCALFE/GETTY IMAGES

# **INXS Guitarist Tim Farriss Talks Wembley Show, Partying With Queen & The Band's Legacy**

On the heels of their concert film "Live Baby Live" returning to theaters for one night only, the INXS guitarist looks back on the Aussie rock favorites' famed 1991 show

**INXS** fans are getting a royal treat on Monday, Dec. 9. The band's famed Wembley Stadium show from July 1991 in front of 72,000 fans—released back then as the CD and concert film "Live Baby Live"—has been upgraded to high definition, with audio remixed by **Giles Martin** and **Sam Okell** at Abbey Road Studios, and it **will be screened in theaters** across the country for one night only. For longtime fans and new converts, it will be a vivid trip back in time when the Australian sextet was at the peak of their musical powers, with late singer Michael Hutchence leading the charge.

It's been a pleasure for guitarist/co-founding member Tim Farriss as well. "What blew me away is I'd never seen my band like that before," he tells the Recording Academy of the HD reissue. "I'd seen it on television and computer screens, but I'd never seen it on a big screen. It was extraordinary. The band started back in '77, but I'd never had that experience before."

A bonus on the new "Live Baby Live" is the inclusion of "Lately" from the album *X*. It was recovered through former band manager/Petrol Records founder Chris Murphy's decade-long search for the original 35mm film cans which were found in Australia. From Farriss' recollections, an audio glitch, likely from tapes being switched in the middle of the song, kept "Lately" from being used back then. Through the wonders of modern digital technology, that problem was fixed. Farriss and his bandmates—brothers Jon and Andrew, Kirk Pengilly and Garry Gary Beers—could not tell when watching the new version. He adds that the three standout performances for him are "Lately," "Hear That Sound" and "The Stairs," and that "Who Pays The Price," "Lately" and "Hear That Sound" only received a very short run in their touring career.



Interestingly enough, the opening song "Guns In The Sky" blasts off from an extended jam resulting from drummer Jon Farriss running out on stage, while the band was

finishing their champagne, to get the groove going. It was neither planned nor rehearsed and shows how comfortable INXS were as a unit. Their exuberance and love for playing together clearly shows.

"The attitude we had was, 'Let's have a good time, guys,'" remarks the guitarist. "We didn't start with a hit. We started with the first song off the last album, then went into playing songs that a large percentage of the audience wouldn't have known because we were promoting a new album. We were doing what we normally did in a club—try out the new songs."

While "Live Baby Live" features plenty of hits like "Suicide Blonde," "Need You Tonight" and "Never Tear Us Apart," the set is unusual in that it comprises mostly two albums, *Kick* and *X*, which were their most recent studio offerings at the time. Nothing is featured from their first three records including *Shabooh Shoobah* (not even "Don't Change"), and *The Swing* and *Listen Like Thieves* are represented by only one track apiece. Farris says that this was not a conscious decision towards commercialism. The band just wanted to play the songs they connected with most emotionally and musically. "The version of 'Send A Message' is so different from *The Swing* version, and 'What You Need' was always fun to play live," recalls Farris. "Then Michael went into the audience singing a part that went for much longer than it normally would. We just had a really fun time playing that show. We didn't want it to finish. The who's who of our friends all wanted in on the Wembley Stadium show. It was just a great party."



The new triple vinyl, double CD, and digital reissues of "Live Baby Live" represent the Wembley show, as opposed to the original CD release which collected tracks from different concerts on the tour and was criticized for being inconsistent and not sounding

very energized. The new package comes with fresh liner notes by the band and by broadcaster Jamie East who attended the show.

Farriss says one of his fondest memories from playing at Wembley was recalling their previous engagement there opening for [Queen](#) during their 1986 European tour together. He remembers how approachable and friendly they were.

"They would go out for dinner together," he says. "In fact, they invited us to go to dinner with them in places like Belgium. We suddenly realized that there was this amazing similarity with how they were amongst themselves and how we were." While Farriss felt that some bands they had toured with were lacking in great personal chemistry, Queen "seemed like genuine friends."

On one special night in Montreux, Switzerland, Freddie Mercury had the presidential suite at the Grand Hôtel Suisse-Majestic. He invited Hutchence, Farriss, his brother Jon and their tour manager Gary Grant to party there.

"Freddie had his personal assistant there, and he had a big stereo system and a microphone in his room," says Farriss. "We were partying up there, just the five of us, and Freddie's playing us this stuff. He's got Michael singing into this microphone with Freddie holding the microphone. They had their noses about an inch apart, and they're both belting it out to some new music for Queen. I was sitting on the sofa with Jon going, 'Hey, this sounds pretty good.' At the time it was just fun. Now I look back and I think, 'Holy sh\*t, if only I'd had an iPhone then.'" (That said, he is glad INXS came up at a time when people actually watched concerts live without holding up their phones.)

Farriss hopes that the "Live Baby Live" re-release will attract a younger generation of fans to the group. While there are two video screens flanking the stage (but barely visible on film), the Wembley show features just music and pure adrenaline emanating from the band.

"There were no dancers or backing vocals, there was no grand piano wheeled out for the ballad," says Farriss. "There were no pyrotechnics." It is an organic experience that feels anathema to the multimedia overload of today. "I see young kids today loving vinyl, and I think that they'd love a band of guys that do it tough together and grow up in front of everyone and stick it out. It gives everyone hope, you know? That's the one thing that we hung onto and that worked out for us. I think every young person deserves to have that."



*INXS at their Wembley Stadium show in July 1991  
Photo courtesy of Eagle Rock Films*

These days, many classic rock icons have been getting their due with accolades. One can hope that INXS will get long overdue recognition from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The 2014 Australian television mini-series about the band, "Never Tear Us Apart" (which has not aired in the U.S.), was the highest rated of all time Down Under, although, despite having consulted on it, Farriss did not feel it accurately captured the group. A proposed Broadway musical is reportedly in the works, although Farriss is more excited about the possibility of a full-length documentary. The Michael Hutchence documentary "Mystify" is being shown in U.S. theaters for one night on Jan. 7. While Farriss and his bandmates participated in the film, he does not want the INXS story to end there.

The guitarist says that while "Mystify" director and longtime INXS music video collaborator Richard Lowenstein "was a great mate, it's a story about Michael. It's not just about INXS, it's about Michael from the time he was a child and delves into a lot of what really happened to him after the accident. There's stuff in it that we just didn't know about at the time of the mini-series, and to be perfectly honest, I don't think that would have made as good television either."

Farriss adds that there has not been a comprehensive documentary about INXS. The iconic Australian band won six Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) awards, have sold an estimated 60 million albums globally, won five MTV Music Video Awards and were nominated for three GRAMMY Awards.

"A television series is one thing, but there hasn't actually been a blood, sweat and tears documentary," stresses Farriss. "And it shouldn't finish with Michael either. It needs to go on to post-Michael because some of the stuff we did after Michael passed [in 1997] makes him all the more relevant, and as well shows the depth." He feels that the album they made with singer JD Fortune, 2005's *Switch*, was fantastic, and that making that record with producer Guy Chambers, plus doing the "Rock Star: INXS" reality show

where they procured *Fortune*, was an intense experience. "It was so different for us as opposed to just album-tour/album-tour/album-tour."



*Michael Hutchence of INXS*  
*Photo courtesy of Eagle Rock Films*

Farriss is also open to doing a book as he feels his perspective is different from anybody else. "Looking back, the whole idea of the six of us getting together was really my doing," he declares. "And being the person who did 85% of the publicity with Michael, I had a pretty good gauge on where he was at, sitting in limousines going from radio station to radio station or television station to television station, just having a whole day of media. It was exhausting. All that stuff could be used in a documentary. I quite enjoy that doco side of things, so that's something I'd really like to get my teeth into."

Until recently, the world has not heard much from INXS. Their last album, 2010's *Original Sin*, offered re-recorded and reworked greatest hits with different singers. They released the new songs "Tiny Summer" (studio track) and "We Are United" (live) with singer Ciaran Gribbin through the internet in 2011. The last time they played live was 2012 when they announced their retirement from touring.

Many years ago, Farriss opened a recording studio and recently slowed down with that, but he wants to get back to making music, particularly as he wrote songs for *Switch* that he inexplicably did not offer up. "I've got this catalog of material," he reveals. "I feel like now's the time to go there again and maybe get into writing some more."

When asked how his left hand is doing—his ring finger was severed in a boating accident in 2015, then reattached, but he cannot play with it—Farriss says solemnly, "It's pretty f\*\*ked. It's painful emotionally. It's painful psychologically. It's painful just as in nerve pain." But that's not stopping him from writing new music.

Indeed, if there is anything that has defined INXS beyond music throughout their career, it is persistence and passion. When asked about advice he would give to younger musicians, Farriss replies, "Keep it fresh. Keep it real, keep it fun, and always be positive. Even if you're feeling like you want to be melancholic, do it in a positive way."

That ethos served INXS very well and will cascade from the Wembley stage into theaters this week.