

The Pointed Sticks tell it bluntly

PIONEERS: They've done all they set out to do and have no plans — but never say never

In concert

Pointed Sticks

Where: Rio Theatre, 1660 E. Broadway St.
When: Saturday, all-ages show at 2:30 p.m., licensed show at 8 p.m.
Tickets: \$15/\$20 at Red Cat, Zulu and Scratch

BY TOM HARRISON
 MUSIC REPORTER



After playing some of their best songs, The Pointed Sticks will put their feet up. — SUBMITTED PHOTO

Never say never.

The Pointed Sticks thought they'd never play together again, never again produce their melodic power-pop. Almost 30 years later, Nick Jones, Bill Napier-Hemy, Gord Nicholl, Tony Bardach and Ian Tiles were not only together, but they were in Japan on a successful tour.

Three years after that, Pointed Sticks recorded a new album, *Three Lefts Make a Right*, and this Saturday will play some of its songs, along with older favourites such as "What Do You Want Me to Do?" and "The Real Thing." Beyond that, the reconstituted band has no plans.

But never say never.

"This is it," insists Bardach. "We've done everything we set out to do. We don't have any plans or aspirations. It's so nice that we don't have a plan. Nothing really matters."

That's a totally different climate from when The Pointed Sticks emerged at the end of the 1970s.

Back then, the initial singles, "What Do You Want Me to Do?" and "The Real Thing" led to a disappointing EP on the U.K.'s hip Stiff label and then, on the rebound, the independently released *Perfect Youth* album. Punk ethos was still raging in Vancouver and The Pointed Sticks were eager to show their solidarity with punk. They said the right things, did the right things, but their rock instincts were different and created what seemed to be internal strife and a lack of sure direction. By the early 1980s, The Pointed Sticks were no more. Ostensibly.

Years later, with all the various

members now engaged elsewhere, DOA's Joe Keithley mentioned Pointed Sticks' name to Japanese promoter Toshio. The enthusiastic promoter was aware of Pointed Sticks' legendary status in Japan and arranged a tour. Suddenly, The Pointed Sticks were a viable entity once again but in a place that had none of the pressure. Little did they know that they had made an impact. They weren't expecting it to be in Japan, but they had made a lasting impression.

"Absolutely, 100 per cent for me," says singer and frontman Jones of the sense of validation the tour brought so many years after the band broke

up. "I think it was hardest for me. I put everything I had into the band for three years. At 21 years old, you take everything very seriously."

Thus free of any expectations, Pointed Sticks made the album that would close the book on a career that was left hanging unsatisfactorily after *Perfect Youth*.

"It was just us doing it," Jones observes. "We had the time and freedom to do what we wanted. There was a lot of freedom. We had freedom because we never expected to make another record."

"Even if we never made another record, we wanted to make this re-

cord," he continues. "We definitely wanted to make this record what *Perfect Youth* was not. We, as a band, always wanted to move ahead."

The new album has the spark of a younger band but the maturity of age. A song such as "Sentimental Fool" was written by someone who has reached a point in his life where he doesn't care what the world thinks, he's going to say what he has to say. Conversely, "Anytime" deals with the ravages of heroin. Neither extreme would likely have fit into the *Perfect Youth* world.

"I've got to take some of the credit for the album," claims Tiles. "Not being a songwriter, I insisted we have some new songs."

So, challenged to write, Jones teamed with Nicholl to create most of the album's songs and the album was recorded in analog at Nicholl's Paramount Studio. No punk rock dogma snapping at the heels of power-pop ideals. All agree that making the album in this atmosphere was refreshing.

"We never thought about doing it," Bardach says. "We just did it the way we always did it."

And this is where it lies. The band has surprised itself by getting back together, touring and making an album. "There are no plans past these dates," Tiles repeats.

"We weren't waiting for the call when it came," Bardach says. "We're not waiting for the next one."

The next one probably won't be 30 years later, but never say never.

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Be imbued with real meaning of the Christmas spirit

BY JOHN P. MCLAUGHLIN
 MUSIC REPORTER

In concert

The Vancouver Cantata Singers: A Christmas Reprise

Where: Holy Rosary Cathedral, 646 Richards St.
When: Saturday at 2 p.m.
Tickets: \$15 at 604-730-8856 or the door

There is a moment at the end of the Vancouver Cantata Singers' current Christmas program when the dozen men in the choir stand in the centre aisle of Holy Rosary Cathedral and the dozen women flank them on either outside aisle as they perform Franz Biebl's paradisiacal "Ave Maria (Angelus Domini)." Mouths fall agape. Hair stands on end. Eyes tear up.

All the goony bustling around and the shopping and eating and drinking too much typical of this season fall away in a flash. Such is the power of music and the human voice raised in harmony.

"Yes, it works very well," says the choir's artistic director, Eric Hannan. I bet.

The Cantata Singers celebrated their 50th anniversary last year and it's certain no other artistic director has come to the job with quite the skill set Hannan can boast.

He grew up here studying classical piano before chucking it all to go play rock 'n' roll six gruelling nights a week in an '80s bar combo called

the James Younger Band. To this day Hannan bears a loathing for bars.

After a year or two of that scene he developed tendinitis in both arms, which cut short his rocker career, but he eventually was well enough to get into the UBC music program where he studied composition and went on to graduate studies in Illinois. He's also been teaching at Douglas College the last 16 years.

He never expected to wind up so heavily involved in choral music at first but, coming from Vancouver, it's a good thing he did. For some unknown reason we are big — really big — on choirs.

Nevertheless, if you happen to be a great talent you'll still have to leave Vancouver to follow your dreams. Baritone Tyler Duncan has worked with Hannan in various choirs but is now based in New York and travel-



Eric Hannan and the Vancouver Cantata Singers have another concert at Holy Rosary Cathedral all lined up. — SUBMITTED PHOTO

ling the world with various orchestras and opera companies. And there's Ben Hepner, another Cantata Singers alumnus.

Their Christmas Reprise concert packs out the Holy Rosary Cathedral.

And this year the show features the Pacific Ring Hand Bell Choir. Together they'll fill that church like I'm sure the resident priests only wish they could for regular Sunday mass.

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