

DARREN HAYES

There are a few basic facts that you probably ought to know about Darren Hayes. Darren was the singer in Australian pop duo Savage Garden. He was the writer and singer of the kind of evergreen worldwide smash hits that will be played as long as AC has a spot on the radio's dial. They were neither fashionable nor critically feted, but Savage Garden was an enormously popular operation. From the four albums that he has crafted so far – two with Savage Garden, two solo – Darren Hayes has sold more than 27 million records. He broke the record he himself set with Truly, Madly Deeply as most played record on adult contemporary US radio with the further release of 1999's 'I knew I loved you'. There is not a country in the world that enjoys English speaking pop music that he has not had a hit in. Darren Hayes has dined with Madonna and duetted with Pavarotti. He is the third most popular Australian musical export of all time. Only INXS and Kylie trump the pop Midas touch.

Darren grew up in the working class suburbs of Australia's Brisbane. Like most popstars or rock gods he was on the run from something. In Darren's case it was an alcoholic and physically abusive father – the influence of which propelled him to become one of the biggest musical stars his country has ever produced. Hayes literally became a superhero to reinvent the world he was raised in.

Fast forward and at 37 years of age, and after the numerous accolades of success with Savage Garden and his first two solo albums Hayes finds himself at full creative throttle. Darren has just completed his third solo record, This Delicate Thing We've Made. This daring, theatrical, wise, wounded and wonderful epiphany represents his true maturation as an artist. After 12 years in the public eye, Darren Hayes has turned into just the pop star he always wanted to be. Himself. Who knew that that would sound like the lost younger brother of Kate Bush, the one who eschewed his sister's whimsical folksiness in favour of a chrome-plated, 80s driven pop edge.

The finding of his creative feet did not come without struggle. Hayes, who had been signed to Columbia records since 1996 – happily exited his contract recently and has no plans to sign to a major in the near future. "I'm not Justin Timberlake. I think there was a part of me that thought three years ago that I was a contender for that role. Whatever it is that conspires to make a big, mainstream, male superstar, I thought I wanted it. Letting go of that was essential to this record. What I realised with this record was that I didn't really want it at all."

In early 2007 He began hatching plans for *This Delicate Thing We've Made* by himself, with the aid only of a programmer, in Phoenix, Arizona. It was released on Darren's own record label, Powdered Sugar, and came as a double set, defying all pop logic and reason. The funny thing is? It's worth it. *This Delicate Thing We've Made* sits at odds with cookie cutter mainstream radio and yet offers up pop masterpieces that are as infectious as anything he's ever done before. The difference perhaps, is that this accessibility coincides with no commercial decisions. It is furthermore no accident that the record is his first to embrace the redemptive power of love and comes with such a real upbeat edge.

He has never sounded as on fighting form as he does on the *I Feel Love* indebted *Step Into The Light*, the brilliant, cerebral white funk strut *Me Myself and I* and particularly first single, *On The Verge Of Something Wonderful* (it should come as no surprise that all three double up as accidental yet potential ecstasy anthems). Elsewhere the kaleidoscopic pop triumph ventures into more abstract arenas, whilst still retaining the pure, joyous release of what a great pop hook can and should do. The central crux of the record – *How To Build a Time Machine*, *A Hundred Challenging Things A Boy Could Do*, *The Future Holds A Lion's Heart* and *Waking The Monster* – were first fashioned at the Phoenix sessions. Darren didn't know that what he was going was lunacy or bravery. "I phoned [his partner] Richard up and said 'I've either completely lost my mind or I've made possibly the most exciting thing that I've ever been involved in.'" The rest was completed at the famous Mayfair Studios, West London.

The signature sound of the record was made using a temperamental Fairlight synthesiser that the singer had acquired off eBay. Unsurprisingly, the standout tracks, *Time Machine*, *Verge*, *Casey*, *Me, Myself and I*, *The Only One*, have a warmth and beauty to their pre-digital age sonic construction. There is meaning to the loosely conceptual time travel theme at the heart of the record, as the hero travels back to the 80s with respectful, modern sincerity. "My attachment to the 80s and its music has got a lot to do with my life and childhood at that time being quite horrific and so my imagination was automatically vibrant. Music and fashion all chimed together for me to become this release".

If you can listen to this audacious and brilliant, epic and widescreen album without feeling a wealth of pathos towards its protagonist, you're made of sterner stuff than I.

Adapted from an original press release written by Paul Flynn