

CITYHEAT

City listings: your guide to what's hot in Sydney



The Coda showgirls bring 19th century Parisian bohemia to The Studio.

Touch the music

Nick Wales wants his audience to feel his music and energy – but not his showgirls.

By Emma Nicholas

Nick Wales is an artists' musician. He says he prefers to collaborate with visual artists, rather than fellow musicians.

"Coda's music is very visual, very cinematic," he says. "When there's a strong visual element to the show, you can create your own world in your head with the music."

Inspired by French composer, Eric Satie, Coda turns to late-19th century Parisian bohemia in *Music for the Eyes*.

Wales plays the viola and keyboards for Coda, which was formed in the 1990s by a group of classical music students at the University of Sydney.

"Satie said the circus and the cabaret were at the forefront of creativity," he says. "Working together in this very underground way is not about money – it's about creativity."

Wales says Coda wants to be beyond classification, appealing simultaneously to classical, rock, electronic and psychedelic music lovers.

"It's not about wow-ing people with big budget lights or sets – it's about beautiful ideas. Ultimately it's a celebration of human creativity."

Wales says he hopes the audience feels the creativity and energy emanating from the music.

"We don't have vocals," he says. "Our pieces are long, and we collaborate with showgirls."

"Satie was outside the box, and so are we." ■

Coda

Where The Studio, Sydney Opera House

When June 11 and 12

Details Phone 9250 7777 or go to www.sydneysydneyoperahouse.com

etentious? Moi?

da channel Erik Satie, Jean Cocteau and Picasso for their latest sonic happening. PARIS POMPOR quaffs the absinthe.

When I talk to Nick Wales, he has just returned home after buying lamb and vegetables from a Surry Hills supermarket. But the sparky violist could never be described as your meat and potatoes kind of guy.

First, there's Coda, the unconventional electric string collective he formed in 1994. That's one outlet for the myriad fanciful ideas that pop into his head with enthusiastic regularity. Another is under the misleading alias Alterboy.

Then there are those outfits.

"I felt a bit weird in Bellingen," Wales says, referring to a recent Coda show. "I wore this sort of Egyptian dress that men wear. It was all glittery and it had a strange dude playing a drum on it. It's all sequinned and really over the top."

He describes the crowd that night as "yobbish", saying that encouraged him to change midway through the gig. Wales returned wearing "a smock with a fireman's outfit drawn on".

Despite their lunatic fringe, Coda consistently conjure up beautiful musical worlds both live and on albums such as 2001's *There Is a Way to Fly*. The mix of impassioned strings, exotic backdrops and subtle electronics has enchanted a vast cross-section of listeners who, so far, have not taken exception to Wales's eccentric dress sense on the road.

"No threatening behaviour, only

rainbow-clad expression dancers threatening to knock the speaker over!" he says.

"It's not a real Coda gig unless there's an expression dancer. There's always one. Even if you've got everyone sitting on the floor and gazing at you, there's always one losing it up the back. It's fantastic."

"In Byron I did see one person star-jumping like, *Aerobics Oz* style ..."

Coda's continual touring has led them to play venues from schools and pubs to Brisbane's Valley Mall, where Wales says even "grandmas" were buying their album. However, Coda also have a rich history of staging special shows.

Last year, Coda performed at a series of events that included DJs, live music, performance artists and goat rides at Sydney

It's not a real Coda gig unless there's an expression dancer ... there's always one losing it up the back.

Nick Wales

dominatrix Madame Lash's converted-church venue the Kirk. This year, it's a multimedia extravaganza at the Opera House Studio titled *Music for the Eyes*. And who better to base the new show on than an oddball French composer?

"I wanted to find someone in the recent past who shared a few thoughts that we might have thought," Wales says. "Someone that was a little bit outside-of-the box in their day. I thought Erik Satie would be perfect for that. He was a bit of an outsider."

"Back then, a lot of the music was very grand and [German composer Richard] Wagner was all the rage. But Satie was really content writing his short miniatures that were really beautiful and melodic, very minimalist."

"He was caught up in dada. He wore the

same velvet suit every day. He worked with [writer Jean] Cocteau and [painter and sculptor Pablo] Picasso."

It's no surprise, then, to hear Coda are having some of the Picasso designed costumes for Cocteau and Satie's 1917 ballet *Parade* copied for the Opera House show. Also included are an aerial gymnast, hand-made visuals and a sound-art installation involving rubber bands, monologues and a walking beanbag.

Part of the idea is to recreate the Montmartre artists' hang-out Chat Noir club, where Erik Satie was in-house pianist "until he got too drunk", Wales says. Apparently he was "heavily into the absinthe".

"Instead of doing the circus angle, we wanted to go with the heavily romantic, operatic angle," Wales says of *Music for the Eyes*. "The first half is more in the classical-chamber-orchestra sort of vibe; there are 28 performers. The second half: rockin' tunes!"



Stran
rock
by N

CD of the Week

Coda

For Our Animal Friends
Silent Recordings

★★★★★

From the ever-enchanting Coda comes a new EP—a follow-up to their brilliant album *There is a Way to Fly*, laced with haunting violins and echoing of Arabian shores. It is hard to believe that they are five 20-somethings from inner west Sydney. Nick Wales and Naomi Ransom capture something unique and strangely aerie with their amazing skills on violin. It's a psychedelic journey of epic proportions; a non-stop ride through all things slightly electronic but always emotive. With some recent band changes nothing has been lost in the way of live show or recorded material. The Hunt stands out as track that both captures the acoustic string element that makes Coda so unique as a live outfit, yet also sounds slightly produced. It also features Prop's Kim Moyes on Vibraphone. The only question that remains is where does the inspiration for such a well-crafted yet strangely and strongly themed sound come from?

Benjamin Chinnock



SINGLES & EPS

28 DAYS

Use It

FMR

This is a bit of a departure from standard 28 Days material, but it's a positive one. The band is sounding a little softer and much more vocally expressive nowadays. I was slightly impressed with a live version of 'Drinking', that features the band Vision, as well as 'When Dickheads Snap 3'. Basically what we have here is a single with one real track, two tolerable videos and a screensaver that I wasn't so sure about. I'd have to say that it's pretty mediocre and 28 Days need to raise the bar.

KATIE CROTHERS 2.5/5

GOODSHIRT

Buck It Up

EMI

One of the saddest occurrences in the music industry is when a good band releases a shit single. Being an early Goodshirt fan makes it hard to say this, but 'Buck It Up' is a shallow, poppy and lifeless catastrophe. Unlike their earlier music, their latest single contains little emotion, presenting a fake encounter highlighted by stuttering vocals and a dilly keyboard melody. It feels like the band has tried to recapture their initial quirkiness, but has only succeeded in producing what seems a rushed recording with no musical depth. Hopefully the band can rebound from this and produce some future music worthy of the accolades their past album received.

NATE 1/5

ART OF FIGHTING

Along the Run

Trifekta

The line between peaceful and boring is a mark often flirted with, however Melbourne's Art of Fighting may have just skipped the foreplay. Like a one night stand this four track attempts to romance the senses, but merely succeeds in evoking regret and a bad hangover. 'Along the Run' contains promise, taunting the listener with the hope that the song may be a late bloomer, but by the four minute mark it becomes painfully obvious that this mundane noise has set in for the duration. Overall this is a barely average, cheesy, slow rock recording, and might find a more comfortable home in the easy listening section.

NATE 1/5

KISSCHASY

Cara Sposa

Below Par Records



One of Australia's youngest rock outfits, Kisschasy release another EP only months after the release of their debut EP. Songs are catchy as only Kisschasy can be, but they seem to have a more sophisticated edge to them on this EP. Some of their energy that has got them this far has been suppressed a little in exchange for softer rock style ballads on the first 2 tracks and closing track. These songs come off as being a little too subdued at times and could do with a hit of adrenalin that previous work has displayed. The mould is broken by the time *one mistake* blasts over the speakers however, with great catchy lead work not dissimilar to, dare it be said, AC/DC. A fairly decent follow up that hints as to where Kisschasy will be taking their music in the future. They just should have waited and released a full length.

TOM S 3/5

PACSETTER

Red Letter Morning

Independent

Straight out of the hub of the Brisvegas rock 'n' roll circuit, Pacesetter sound like they could headline a Secret Life of Us soundtrack. You can tell these guys have been rockin' hard for quite some time, as they are technically very tight. My favourite song is track three, 'Transit Lounge', which really emphasises the one quality this group exudes so well, without being annoying. For me though, it takes a bit more than catchy tunes and angst lyrics to get my juices flowing; however good the band.

EBECGNAH 2.5/5

THE FRAMES

Finally

Little Big Music

Now this is interesting. Ireland's multi-faced The Frames have a new single out. In an age when trash-rock seems to be the trend, a-side 'Finally' strikes me as a more mature take on rock. This is a big, moving number bursting at the seams with emotion, with the singer belting

his heart out and beautifully arranged strings soaring upwards throughout. The whole thing is marvellously engineered, the mix is perfect and aside from an album and single version of the main track, the two b-sides and digipak format make this a fantastic little package.

GREG BUCHANSKI 4/5

CODA

For Our Animal Friends

Silent Recordings

Brilliant! Stunning! Full on Goddamn amazing! Why have I never heard of these guys before? They seem to me to be one of the greatest hopes for the Australian music scene. This EP is wonderful; a swirling, psychedelic journey through a lush dreamscape that reminds me of the swelter moments of Secret Chiefs 3. There is an Arabic flavour running throughout the disk, with sweeping strings singing out haunting melodies above immaculate programming and fantastic playing. Add the excellent artwork and the esoteric geometry on the disk itself and you have a rather unique release that will astound those smart enough to purchase it.

GREG BUCHANSKI 4.5/5

TOAST

Self Titled

Pro Music

This four track EP is jam-packed full of rock, rhythm, samples, background effects, wah, gritty vocals and a subtle sense of gothic which I found rather invigorating. Funny, feverish and musically witty, this left me wanting more than four... The final track 'Friend' is surreally unreal. My only criticism would be that at times there's a little too much for the ear to digest. This is kind of like a naughty desert - you love it when it goes down but you end up thinking to yourself 'should I really be eating this?' I say stuff it, gorge yourself on Toast. EBECGNAH 3.5/5

WOLFMOTHER

Self Titled

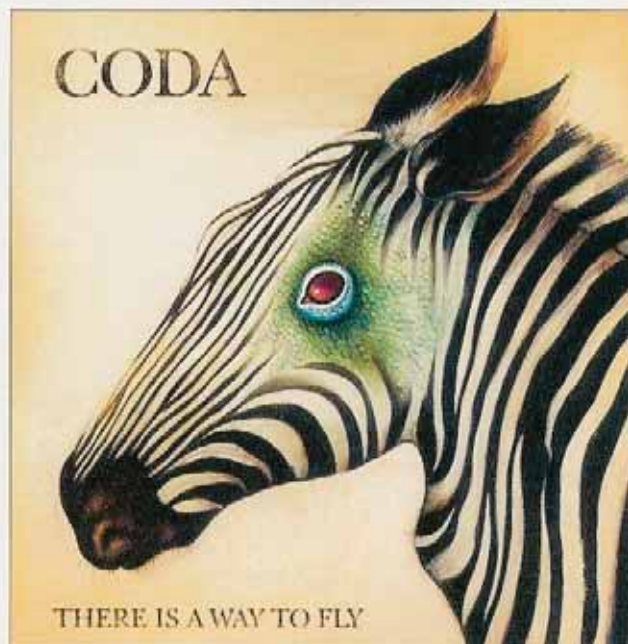
Modular

Sydney's Wolfmother are the latest, most authentic of the sixties and seventies sound-alike bands. The production is very thick and warm, and the instruments sound as though they have been sitting in a treasure chest for the past thirty years. The problem is that it seems like this CD was done a little bit prematurely, as the songs are really not worth talking about and the band itself sounds as though it needs a lot more rehearsal, lacking much power and tightness. Nonetheless, the cover is amazing and I'm sure these guys will come up with some cool stuff in the years to come.

GREG BUCHANSKI 2.5/5

SOARING STRINGS AND OTHER THINGS

Through psychedelia, beats and strings, **Coda** find a way to fly.



Anyone who can turn Laurie Anderson's haunting "Born, Never Asked" into a semi-tragic, groaning concerto must be on their way to very big things. Anderson's track from her *Big Science* album is a gentle stab at an unrealised global consciousness that lumbers long, unchanging and hypnotic. However, Sydney collective Coda have taken the drama in Anderson's spoken word and arrangements and played with it like a cat teases a mouse before it kills it. They appear to be using her formula, respectfully traversing her kooky spatial bent – but before you know it, the Coda signature engulfs you like a flash flood and you're experiencing an extremely dense sound.

You won't find much other appropriation on *There Is A Way To Fly* as Coda are perfectly capable of creating enough drama on their own. This string and keyboard four-piece, with two ring-ins on vibraphone and percussion, are stalwarts of both the Australian classical and contemporary music scenes. Having toured with Musica Viva since 1998, they've recorded soundtracks for the Bell Shakespeare Company productions of *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant Of Venice*, and provided string arrangements for rock outfits Leonardo's Bride, Died Pretty and Big Heavy Stuff. Their classical training, contemporary minds and desire for electronic integration make for interesting aural fodder on this debut.

Coda's longstanding love affair with all things string – bowed and plucked violins, violas, electric and acoustic bass – means they really know how to work them. The strings do exactly what Coda want, and their timbre changes in nanoseconds, before you even know what's hit you. The opening track, "La Chasse", sounds like it should be accompanying Kurtz on his wretched ride down the Congo, when the strings stop aching and start to soar. This number puts your head in a spin, and it remains that way for most of the album.

You'll hear sluggish, psychedelic keyboards gently working their way through a melancholy viola riff. You'll hear vibraphonic Latin beats with those strings again – this time cascading in the background, letting the beats have their fame. You'll hear Michael Nyman and a Hal Hartley soundtrack gloriously wrapped into one.

Tracks run into one another; whether elegant or brutal, it's simply the sleight of the musicians. *There Is A Way To Fly* modestly demonstrates that classical fusion goes beyond geekdom and the bourgeoisie. There is more to life than bleeps and blips: there is Coda.

There Is A Way To Fly is available on Silent Recordings.

THERE IS A WAY TO FLY CODA

(Silent Recordings/Shock)

★★★★

Just two releases old, and Sydney based Silent Recordings seems set to become known as the home of beautiful music.

Following on from Prop's gorgeous debut comes Coda, a six piece group that blends the beauty of strings with the warmth of electronica. The result is a unique and stunning album that explores aspects of both pop and purism, without ever suggesting musical novelty. Forming in 1994, and comprised of musicians with a high degree of professionalism, Coda has emerged itself in both the classical and contemporary corners of the Australian music scene, and this experience is clearly reflected in the group's debut album. *There is a Way to Fly* is nothing less than 11 musical gems that feature violins, marimbas, vibraphones, violas, cellos and a wurlitzer. If you've ever played an instrument you'll appreciate Coda's graceful and unique beauty – and if you haven't – you'll do just the same. **Lemon Head**



3D - 01.10.02

CODA

For Our Animal Friends
Silent Recordings



Almost impossible to review, as Coda have made their own niche of string-driven electronica really unlike anything doing the rounds. So thus, all you can compare them to is themselves. The middle-eastern

Influence comes through here perhaps a little more overtly, but not so to be scared into placing them in some sort of world music foxhole. It swings and soars, and while you might have started by trying work out what noise is coming from where, you eventually let yourself be carried along by beauty of the overall effect. The animals, including that camel they are *Smoking Camels* on, should be delighted to this dedicated to them. 'Unique' can only be an absolute.

music

CODA

Where The Kirk,
422 Cleveland Street,
Surry Hills

When Tomorrow and
Sunday, 7.30pm

How much \$18/\$15
at the door or go to
www.lastminute.com.au

More information
DJ Seymour Bulz is also
performing



Strung out

JONATHAN PEARLMAN discovers the organic-electronic wonders of Coda.

It took the unusual sound of a string quartet playing Kraftwerk songs for the members of Coda to realise there is a life beyond the classics.

"Wow, we don't just have to play Mozart," is how viola player Nick Wales recalls the revelatory gig by Romanian group the Balanescu Quartet.

That concert was another important milestone in the formation of Coda – the group's five members, who are graduates of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the

University of Sydney and Canberra School of Music, first met there.

Starting as a string quartet, Coda soon added drums, vibraphone, electronics and bass to their line-up.

"It was pretty whacked out music back then," says Wales. "We were finding our new voice."

The multi-layered, soulful timbre of that voice became apparent on Coda's debut album, *There is a Way to Fly*, which filtered their amplified strings through a range of

Latin, Middle Eastern, electronic and jazz influences. Understandably, they've had a hard time producing a label for their rare musical blend: they rejected classical fusion for urban-world and are toying with organic electronic.

"What section of the CD store do you put us in?" Wales wonders. "World music, rock music, classical music, chill out – where do we fit?"

With no vocals, Coda's message is transmitted by the music alone. But rather than hide behind the sound, Coda furnish audiences with visuals or text to guide the mood. Their album sleeve includes fanciful notes relating an image or narrative to accompany each song. And for their live performances, they try to create a theatrical feast for their music to feed off.

"Live, our music is really a soundtrack," says Coda's violinist, Naomi Radom. "So we thought, let's put some drama to it."

So far, they've done a 1920s theme night and are planning a space odyssey and an 18th-century ball. But for the next two nights, the mood will be "Middle Eastern Bohemian", as Coda fill the performance space belonging to Sydney dominatrix Madam Lash with singing Egyptian statues, erotic maypole dancers and a sampling of Mediterranean snacks.

The show will be loosely based on the tale of Scheherazade and her stories of the *Arabian Nights*. Madam Lash will be the king.

"Instead of killing," Naomi explains, "she will do what she's known for – chained bondage. The dancers will sedate her and we're going to be the ones who put faith back into the queen."

Just don't turn up expecting to see them smash a Stradivarius.

Coda prepare themselves for the imminent return of flapper music.



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CODA PROP

Hyde Park Barracks

A lot has happened since the lustrous Festival of Sydney, with all its musical interludes and fluoro-colour projection on city building facades. Unfortunately, though, the hedonism of the Big Day Out got in the way, and the glorious intricacies of the open-air night Coda wave their string-fuelled magic and Prop propelled through an electronic swathed world built on classical foundations fell by the wayside into the realms of blissful memory. Until now, obviously.

Perhaps it's because it's so easy to lose something so unusually exquisite against the brute force that is rock'n'roll. Because Coda and Prop don't do that kinda stuff. Both collectives rely on the gimmick of recycling the old in to new, taking essentially classical instruments (violins, glockenspiels, drums) and combining them with modern day fancies (synthesiser, bass guitar, projections on the back wall... even a man creating giant bubbles by the side of stage out of a giant vat of washing up liquid). The point is that while it could easily be something completely old hat and tiresome, both have crafted it in to something completely new and perfect.

Coda arrive onstage dressed identically (colour of choice this evening - white), as always looking like characters from their own self-penned periodic play. They begin with their interpretation of Laurie Anderson's *Born, Never Asked* - and while the violins are originally overpowered by the bass, drums and glock, it gradually builds and builds until even the poor dead souls in the barracks have been woken by the compulsory explosion toward the latter half of the track.

"This is from our CD *There Is A Way To Fly*," coos violinist Naomi before *Kawaii*. "Everybody's got their own way." And with that single comment we realise Coda's agenda - with the dreamy *Cabin Fever* and 'good vibe' tune *Lucky 7*, and without even a single word being sung, they want to push forward the ideals of a better world through the images each person creates in their own mind by listening to their music. Dream, Believe, Fly. Beautiful, isn't it?

Sigh.

Prop are equally spellbinding, though for the

epic Air-esque electronic/ space-exploration track *Pilot*.

All in all, a gorgeous night. And with a backdrop of the barracks against the silhouettes of skyscrapers, it was almost like the centuries colliding. A bit like the music, really.

DNM 19/2/02

ALICIA BRODERSEN

Interview

CODAPENDANT

It takes only a cursory listen to realize that Coda have been doing their thing for a while. "We've been together for ten years," keyboard and viola player Nick Wales explains. "We met when we were all starting out. We had some common influences, things like the Balineski String Quartet." Evidently, the group trained well. Wales has completed a bachelor of music at the Sydney Conservatorium, as has violin player Naomi Radom and drummer Jarred Underwood. "We're all trained, we all do session work," he says.

"The main idea with Coda is to welcome people into another world, to give them a new take on things." This is an apt description if ever there was one. Thick with gorgeous strings and throbbing with played and programmed percussion, Coda's music travels deeper roads than much of what is played today. Their latest release is the *For Our Animal Friends* EP, a stunningly well crafted and atmospheric release. "We thought we should make a record for the animals because we are being really bad..."

"We're destroying the world, doing all these terrible things, so we thought we should make one for the animals." I mention Secret Chiefs 3, one of the few bands whom I can pick that have had a direct influence upon the sound of Coda's work. "We love Secret Chiefs! We were very inspired by them while we were making *Animal Friends*, actually." I ask whether the group writes together in a jam context or whether the members bring songs in on their own. "A bit of both, actually," he replies. "We often keep playing a song on the road, so it sort of evolves itself after a while."

Live, the group take their music a step further by adding new elements to the overall presentation of the music. "Live is another dimension, we can go and improvise and we have our costumes. We've been working with a bunch of different people as well; we recently did Woodford Folk Festival with ten performers. There's the Codapendant Showgirls, we have goats and animals..." Recently the band performed as a twenty-five piece for the Wayne Cooper Fashion week in Sydney.

"We're working on writing new material at the moment, we're looking at having a new CD out next year." Intrigued by the multi-faceted blending of styles evident in Coda's music, I ask if there are any styles that the band won't be incorporating. "Really cheesy pop," he answers immediately. "That's not



cool. And metal. Well, we like some extreme music but I don't think we'll ever play it with Coda. There are too many people doing that already." I ask if a tour overseas is on the cards at all.

"We're hoping to tour overseas next year as well. Both the EP and *There is a Way to Fly* have been released overseas but these things go slow because people don't really know you. You really need to get out there and support your releases." January of next year will also see two performances by Coda in Brisbane, including another show in the Valley Mall. "Playing the mall is always fantastic, we always play to heaps of people and everyone's into it heaps. It's going to be hot this time though!" Indeed it will.

CODA LIVE

The Valley Mall, January 2
The Troubadour, January 8
See Touring News for more

Greg Buchanski



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the Grass '04

Nirvana
Anniversary

Good, Bad &
Strange of '03



Coda [For our animal friends]

Silent Recordings

Be prepared when you flick play on this album, it could release the animal within.

This album is awe inspiring. There isn't a spark of the brain that wasn't awoken by this multitudinous offering of sound.

The album plays out like a wild festival of sound, with individual sound being displayed in your mind like tangible objects.

The increase tempo on track 'smoking camel on a camel' conjured up thoughts of rushing through the desert while all manner of wild beasts followed in quick pursuit.

Coda's For Our Animal Friends is like junk food for your imagination.

★★★★



:: MUSIC REV:



:: LIVE: DALLA

:: CD: MISSY H

:: CD: THE COP

:: ARTS REVI



:: IDÉE FIXE

:: FILM & DVD



:: FILM : THE B

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:: BEHIND THI



:: MUSIC: FEEL

:: FILM: MONK

:: ARTS: STONI

CLASSIC POP

CODA: SOUNDING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE YOU LIVE IN. BY SIMONE KAPSALIDES

NOWADAYS, CHART SUCCESS IN popular music can be guaranteed if a group is a kaleidoscope of colour, influenced by hip-hop music, shiningly pubescent and shockingly innocent. Coda are a musical collective based in Sydney who have just released their debut album, *There Is A Way To Fly* (Silent Recordings), which is a risky concoction of orchestration irrelevant to the overcrowded pop scene. They don't fit the above criteria; actually, Coda stand out like sore thumbs. Tell this to Nick Wales, a founding member of Coda, and he will set out the group's simple intention: to add much-needed creativity to the current bland pop recipe.

"We put our hearts and our souls into our music, and make it as beautiful as we can," explains Wales. "It's not about defining what is cool; it's not about saying, 'This is fashionable now.' It's about making beautiful music that comes from our hearts – stuff that we believe in and that we really love."

Describing Coda's eclectic sound as "urban world music", Wales believes the outfit's history speaks for itself. Together since 1994, Coda has collaborated with contemporary pop Australian artists like Leonardo's *Bride and Died Pretty*. Their string arrangements have featured on soundtracks and stage productions – including *Trailus And Cressida* and *The Merchant Of Venice* for the Bell Shakespeare Company, and have been involved with a state-wide schools music program for Musica Viva since 1998. It's Coda's work with Musica Viva that has been the highlight for Wales.

"We have a lot of fun playing to the school children as part of Musica Viva,"



he says. "Because music's not always about being cool and getting your face on TV. We find it really rewarding."

With a style impossible to pigeon-hole, Coda's sound is a mixture of strings with electronica, groove with noise, and pop music with classical.

"We've always had a lot of Middle Eastern influences, with rich string textures, and lush melodies and harmonies," explains Wales. "We've gone through a number of metamorphoses: we used to be a string quartet playing more avant-garde music, but we moved away from that and started using beats, a band and samples to get more of an electronic edge – and to mix things up."

Coda is the first act to be released through Silent Recordings, a music label aiming to appeal to an audience as diverse as the bands it features.

"I try to be a facilitator for the label to get this beautiful music out there," Wales enthuses. "Quality music is almost forgotten by the mainstream media; Silent is encouraging instrumental and live music, and music that not many major record companies would look at as a commodity. Most music these days is really gentrified."

HQ

Coda

Madam Lash's Kirk Gallery
September 18, 2001

Once upon a time in a land far, far away, there lived a Prince who was known throughout the land as being noble and wise. If he was also handsome he would no doubt be inundated with swooning Princesses, but alas that was not the case. One eve he rode his gallant steed to Madam Lash's Gallery, a towering church in the heart of the emerald city that often housed the diabolical doings of bondage vixens, something the pure and true Prince knew little about, but tonight was the stage for some of the most gorgeous music the land had yet heard. The Prince was smitten by the beautiful Princess at the door, before entering the room full of knights, royalty and servants. He managed to draw his sword and slay the mighty dragon Zammit before Coda appeared, as if summoned by the magician Murphy. Prince Craig was transfixed. Coda instantly silenced the seething population by invoking spirits of music through their instruments, using nothing but the strings of violins, violas and cellos, a wafting caress that grew and strengthened, expanding into the room until it was as if the muses themselves were frolicking in the very hall. Tears were shed, hearts were palpitating, and an ecstatic enchantment fell upon the crowd.

Suddenly the light shifted and three bewitching spirits could be seen dancing on high upon stairs that stretched to the cavernous ceiling and beyond. Their movements were like liquid, slow and fluid and mesmerising.

Without warning the Coda ensemble again reappeared out of smoke, their numbers swollen with persussion and vibraphone. Their quaint classical tones were now wrenched through modern sensibilities, beats and loops surging through strings which now breathed more urgency, the muses wrestling playfully and chasing each other's tails. The audience were spellbound, many not even able to stand up and dance (which incurred the silent wrath of the Prince no end). Coda themselves looked to be under spell, smiling and laughing with honest enthusiasm as the music took their bodies and gently rocked them as a breeze rocks the oak's leaves.

By the conclusion of the set the people had a new understanding of aural pleasures, they would no longer look at music in the same light. Prince Craig smiled a secret knowing smile, and rode off to the kingdom of Davic Lane in Bondi, joyous in the knowledge that the music in his kingdom was on the rise.

BY CRAIG NEW

PICS BY JAMIE BOWERING



> Coda

Coda: pic by Linda Heller-Salvador



The Cruel Sea: pic by Linda Heller-Salvador



Nebular vocalist/guitarist: pic by Rod Hunt

live

CODA, Kirk Gallery 18/09/01

Anyone whose been forced to learn the violin as a child will know what a horrible instrument it is. While the other minors gambol with guitars and drums, the most unfortunate are forced to cart around a squeaky piece of wood with a horsetail bow and the propaganda of the Suzuki Method etched into their psyche. I know - I was one of them. But having mastered *Twinkle Twinkle* at the age of five, I decamped to the much more urbane world of keyboards.

The point of the story is this - had I had CODA as a benchmark and Naomi Radom and Nick Wales as my tutors, I may have thought differently. The lead violinist (and viola) in this surreal musical collective, they are the epitome of other-worldly cool - like all the people onstage here, clothed in 1900's mystery, looking like they've just stepped straight from a film concerning Europeans in the colonies circa 1924. It's an exquisite sight. And, as Naomi says later - "We couldn't have imagined it anywhere else" - the arcane Kirk Gallery, an atmospheric old church swathed in red velvet curtains, candles, incense and a great deal of underground history - territory of the enigmatic Madam Lash, who herself sits centre left amongst the crowd tonight in a large leather chair.

They don't rely on sexiness for a gimmick like Bond, they don't rely on rewriting Beethoven like Vanessa May. Perhaps, like Nigel Kennedy and Fourplay, they rely on a touch of eccentricity to get by. A relaxing dreamy fusion of electronic meandering mixed with the classic notions attached to every string ensemble by rite.

Onstage there's violins, cello, keyboards, xylophones, drums, djembe, bass guitar - everything. In our minds are whirling images of other places and other times. The strong Middle Eastern flavour of *Smoking Camel On A Camel*, the upbeat *JR Boulevard* (plucking and diving and echoing up to the chapels ceiling), the haunting, sorrowful, beautiful, baroque epic *Born, Never Asked*. Even *The Fondue Set* - three ladies dressed in vibrant red tulle and taffeta - materialise upon a staircase and co-ordinate themselves in slow motion to the tremendously mellow NYC 1953.

But while other tracks like *Latin Quarter* are uplifting, it still shows that ultimately, no matter how chirpy a track is, each song holds an inherent sadness - that's just the kind of instrument the violin is. But still... take me back to five years old again. After tonight I think I'd reconsider packing away the plywood.

Drum 01.10.02

Alicia Brodersen

Lounge lizards

CODA

There Is a Way to Fly
(Silent Recordings)
Everything from jazz to
electronica

Actors don't carry business cards generally, but they all have their show reels, tapes of their best moments to prove to directors they can do Malvolio and margarine ads just as well as playing muscle boy number three in *Home and Away*. *There Is a Way to Fly* is Coda's show reel: more diverse than strictly cohesive, flexible and always packaged flatteringly. And, on the evidence here, you would give them a job scoring your film/party/TV series tomorrow.

Starting as a string quartet capable of switching from mellow to noise, Coda have evolved into an act that straddles jazz, contemporary classical, pop and modern electronic music. They have as much in common with The Catholics, Lloyd Swanton's often thrilling quasi-world music jazz ensemble, as with Nitin Sawhney's rhythmic ethnic pulse, and there are many times when you swear you have slipped back a decade and a half to the swirling organic electronica of Not Drowning, Waving or even further back to the liquid funk lines of Brian Eno's '70s work.

Although there is a definite sense that rhythm is the linchpin here, there are relatively few instances of programmed beats – interesting for an early 21st-century band. One of these, *Latin Quarter*, has the percussive overlay of congas

and timbale (and subtle vibraphone) to humanise the program, anyway.

More common is *JR Boulevard*, which uses Jared Underwood's drums to nail a strict beat while vibraphone and Wurlitzer interchange riffs against a bass that slithers and slides. There's a cool slinkiness about this track as it matches chamber

On the evidence here, you would give them a job scoring your film/party/TV series tomorrow.

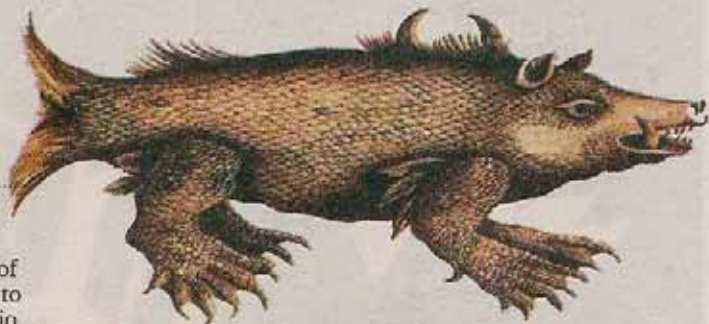
edgily and then grows majestically.

It's a conflict compacted into one body in *Tangled Angel*. Here a melody opens sweetly before some harsher tones intrude as the rhythm becomes insistent then falls back. It's neatly done.

Perhaps their most "rock" moment is *Lucky 7*, a slow-building number that has echoes of Led Zeppelin, Michael Nyman and even Radiohead's *Amnesiac* and *Kid A*, but merely threatens to explode, holding back its fire. It's almost perversely appropriate then that Coda close the album after this with a light-fingered gambol, *Gonna Run U Over*,

that wouldn't have been out of place on Dimitri From Paris's tongue-in-cheek bachelor pad/cool swing albums. Cheeky beggars.

Bernard Zuel



LIKE THIS? TRY THESE

Craig
Armstrong, *The
Space Between
Us*; The Catholics,
Life On Earth;
Not Drowning,
Waving, *Claim*

pop and an early evening club feel.

Salut is their calling card to film producers looking for more traditional scores (along with the Bernard Hermann moments in the moody NYC 1953). *Salut*'s romantic, somewhat Maurice Jarre-like, strings are contrasted by the almost Egyptian strings in Laurie Anderson's *Born, Never Asked*, a track that begins

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
25/1/06

SYDNEY LIVE



Weird and wonderful . . . CODA draw on theatre's surreal side

Strings to the bow

CODA

Beck's Bar, Hyde Park Barracks

Review



Sydneysiders CODA put on an amazing live show — with lots of strings attached. With two violins, a viola and sometimes a cello, as well as keyboards, drums and a vibraphone, the classically trained group make a sound that blends the best of yesterday with a promise of tomorrow. And they look fantastic, too. Nick Wales

(viola, keyboards, electronics) and Naomi Radom (violin, melodica) wear strange medieval-with-a-twist outfits, all warped hats and skewiff ruffles.

And the hilarious CODApendant duo of dancers further emphasise the superb sense of surreal theatre.

Playing a selection of music from their 2001 ARIA-nominated album *There is a Way to Fly* as well as their 2004 EP *For Our Animal Friends*, CODA charm the entire dance tent. Their sound

writhes lithesomely, sometimes sounding Arabic and at other times absolutely stirring.

Jared Underwood's restless drumming keeps the crowd moving to the beat.

These truly original artists simply ooze creativity and inspiration. They sign off promising to see us again at mid-year Opera House shows inspired by children's writer and artist Norman Lindsay. Sounds like a magic pudding indeed.

SIMON FERGUSON