



**WILL CONNER**  
**SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**  
INDEPENDENT

It is always a pleasure to discover an Australian artist who has pure and unwavering talent. With a music industry that has transitioned in current years from an independent groove to a commercialised and

manufactured stream, it is exciting to find an artist whose ability melds closer to that independent 'real talent' spectrum.

Yet, this doesn't mean Will Conner's album doesn't have commercial appeal – his songs are catchy and he has impressive vocals – both strong and yet soft at the same time, a contradiction but in a very appealing way. Similarly, his lyrics are as funky and current as his music is rhythmic.

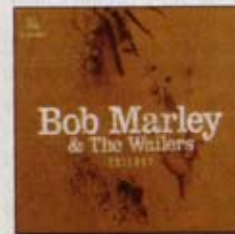
Releasing his debut album independently, with all original tunes bar one, is a pretty risky move. Somehow though this doesn't sound like a debut release or a solely independent one at that. Produced in the USA by renowned producer Jim DeVito, and recorded at his studios, which includes musical credits such as Creed and Tom Petty, the album does have that polished finish.

Will Conner has had quite a prolific career thus far. He performed at the 18th annual Bluesfest this year and was even joined on stage for an impromptu performance by Jack Johnson.

The guitar work on 'Southern Hemisphere', especially from an acoustic perspective, is strong and a stand-out feature on the record. This, combined with Will's lyrical prose and his down-to-earth songwriting makes the album a pleasure to listen to. His songs not only tell a story, but also portray a message reminiscent of those found in work by artists such as Jack Johnson, John Butler and Xavier Rudd.

With the bluesy-undercurrent stylistically through all songs, there is also the odd appearance of something that can only be described as slightly pop-oriented. If Will Conner's debut album is anything to go by, this singer-songwriter is going to have a huge career.

*Eva Roberts*



**BOB MARLEY**  
**TRILOGY**  
MUSIC BROKERS/FUSE

Few individuals have come to be as closely associated with a musical form in the public mind as Bob Marley has with reggae,

several elements. The vocals on the first disc still display strong R&B and gospel influences, but emerging changes are evident on a number of tracks – 'Satisfy My Soul' and 'Do It Twice' slow the beat right down and underpin it with an insistent chugging bassline, while syncopated guitars on other tracks begin to create a sound that is recognisably connected to the later reggae. This was still a formative period for the band, though, and that fact is reflected in a scattershot mix that intersperses the emerging rocksteady sound with R&B, traditional gospel tunes, and the occasional flight of fancy like the Lennon-esque absurdism of 'Mr. Brown' that sees Marley's nonsensical couples shrouded in swirling layers of dirty organ.

From the beginning, Marley had a good ear for tune, and in the early part of his career produced many immediately catchy songs, but after connecting with Lee Perry as producer his output began to change. This period is documented over all three discs of *Trilogy*, which covers the group's progress right up until they left Jamaica for England. Perry was introduced to the mix like molasses, driving the bass deeper and deeper as he slowed the rhythm section down, but still letting the group's harmonies echo the melody and soar above it sweetly as Marley's lead began to mature into the one that would make him famous. Though they had touched on it previously, it was in this period that Marley's lyrics began to regularly address the social injustices of which he was acutely aware, as on tracks like 'Concrete Jungle' and the Tosh-sung '400 Years' while Rastafarian sensibilities and a mystical element also began to become very important. At the same time The Wailers moved beyond writing arrangements around simple tunes and began to construct complex songs; the melody became subjugated to the overall sound of the effects-laden production. As a result some of this material is less instantly accessible to Western ears, but once accepted, the rich combination of sounds is infinitely interesting.

The problem with *Trilogy* is that like many other collections, it skips between eras and producers constantly and as a result lacks any sense of cohesiveness. Disc 2 is comprised of some of the most fruitful Lee Perry sessions, but collaborations with the producer are scattered over the other discs, mixed with every other style at which the Wailers tried their hand. The result is that, rather than charting the musical progression from the straight appropriation of American R&B on compilation opener 'There She Goes' to the overly crisp production and slick lead guitar of the 'I Shot The Sheriff' instrumental by way of Perry's dub, *Trilogy* provides an uneven listening experience that may reflect the diverse nature of The Wailer's musical output misses the opportunity to highlight some of the many links between these musical styles.

*Alexis Buxton-Collins*