

Adam: I'm with chuck and Matt from Area7. You guys formed in '94 out of 'Mad not madness' a Madness tribute band and have steadily risen to the top of the Australian skate rock genre.

Chuck: Yeah, I guess it's been one of those things, I mean that kinda music scene has changed a bit around us. When we started out it was very kind of, very subculture genre and we just kept doing what we were doing and then all these bands around us kept popping up and suddenly it was like now everyone's playing ska, so you know. And things kind of very quickly changed I guess. We started doing tours like Vans Warped and Big Day Out. Then bands like Frenzal and Living end started going through the roof. So it's kinda funny 'cos there was about four or five years there where we were just doing the local Melbourne shows and didn't even go to Sydney and then all of a sudden we were a national touring band.

Adam: How was the Living End tour, was it a sort of turning point for you guys?

Chuck: It was pretty full on, we did the Living End's first album tour which obviously was huge and ah, it was the first proper tour we did.

Adam: What was it like, I mean a first tour but with the Living End. That's got to be pretty full on.

Chuck: Well I mean going from doing gigs of a couple of hundred to a couple of thousand. It was pretty amazing, and the playing the festival season immediately after that with crowds of 10-15 thousand. It's a baptism of fire, and yeah. Since then we've just kind of been doing our thing.

Adam: Does it take anything away from it, like is it more enjoyable when it's a sub-culture?

Chuck: Ah, I think if you can balance it, I mean you don't want to have a closed off sub-culture where people aren't open minded and you can't stray off the path at all. The thing about, as you mentioned, you know the skaters and stuff, when they got really into Ska, was that they are a little more open minded to, you know, whether it's hardcore, punk, Ska or whatever. So you can mix it up a bit and our music did get a lot tougher and dirtier around that time which had a lot to do with our audience changing.

Adam: Last year, I think it was, Toby, one of the founding members left the band and was replaced by Matt, what was that like?

Matt: It was amazing, I was standing on flinders street station and got a call out of the blue and hadn't really been in the music scene for a couple of years, and yeah got the opportunity to get back into it.

Adam: Were you friends with the band?

Matt: Yeah I used to be in a band called Cibo Smith, did a couple of supports for the band. I knew Dan so...

Chuck: we put you straight into a war zone didn't we.

Matt: Yeah straight to endangering my life.

Adam: What effect does it have on a band when one of the founding members leave?



AREA-7

Chuck: Yeah well around that time we lost a couple, we lost Rohan our bass player. He, um, he had real kinda tendon problems in his arm from playing bass so he basically couldn't keep doing it. Alistair our sax player also left, so we turned over our horn section and our bass player, and Rohan was a pretty signature member of the band as well, as far as musically. But in a sense it was kind of good because, I guess we had the very early Area7, and then we had the middle Area7 when Stevo joined and now we've kind of got the third line up. But it's at least, we don't have a rotating door, we brought in some members, not to sound like a footy coach, but we brought in some young blood.

Adam: Just taking it one show at a time.

Chuck: Yeah. And we've been able to do it with a lot of the Ska community too. So you know, the members that have joined have actually been in a Ska band. So it actually been a genre thing. But you know, we're all kinda open minded to playing different styles.

Adam: A lot of your lyrics have a sort of social message in them, is that a deliberate thing or just something that comes through naturally?

Chuck: I think it is deliberate, I mean I think we've kinda made a point that, there are almost two faces to Area7. There's the kind of take the piss, Nobody Likes a Bogan sort of style, and then there's the very serious side of Area7, which you see in the single, The Big Issue, and you know its kind of come out in second class citizen and all that sort of thing. Stevo wrote a song called 'Away' on the first album which is pretty serious. Um, always social issues, never really political issues. We're like a socially aware band but we're not a political band as such so ah...

Adam: It'd start too many fights.

Chuck: And we are a diverse, you know, and it's a good thing, 'cos within the band we've got a range of different views, and if you can boil it down to the fundamental issues that everyone agrees on you can communicate about that. At the end of the day you've got to write your music about something you know, so, if you can balance it out with having good fun and also getting some sort of message across.

Adam: So when you're writing songs are you writing them for yourselves, as in this is what I like and this is what does it for me. Or are you saying yeah I think this will sell. Is it for you guys or is it for the fans?

Chuck: There was a certain period of time where it was lets write songs just for the hell of it, and we got to the point where we were writing for albums so you know. So not so much that you write songs that you want to sell, but you're very much aware that you're going to have to have all radio friendly songs or more musically indulgent songs.

Just trying to come up with an album. I never like an album that's got no hooks and I never like an album that tries to be all singles. So we've always tried very hard to balance it out. If you listen to the album's and the Ep's, I don't think it's ever a case of two strong songs and all filler. So there's a balance, but I'd be lying if I said there aren't a couple of songs we wrote hoping that they'd catch on. But you know, we're not delusional we don't think that Area7 ever gonna be the answer to Shannon Noll, or Guy Sebastian.

Matt: But we did want to do what about me.

Chuck: We did! That was my idea. I said that was a forgotten aussie song.

Sound Guy: Play that tonight and you're not getting payed!

Mark: What would you say is your most commercial song. The song designed to be most successful?

Chuck: I wouldn't use the word design. But I guess most people would say 'Bitter Words' or 'Second Class Citizen'. But with Second Class Citizen that's not the case. I wrote that on the Vans Warped tour and if you look at the crowd, it just kinda made sense. And people might say the same about 'Nobody Likes a Bogan' but we wrote the second album and we were a couple of songs short, so I looked at the songs and they were all kind of serious so I just took it to the other extreme and it really caught on. People are gonna look at that and think it was written to successful, when actually it's not the case.

Adam: How does seven people in a band work?

Chuck: Yeah it's got its pro's and cons. It's fun being in a group and if I have a barny with matt I don't need to speak to him for three days. But on the flip side everything's more expensive, but also if we have to chip in for something it's not so bad 'cos you split it seven ways you know.

Matt: It's fun having a big group you sort of feel like you're in a gang. Up on stage you look around and everyone's sort of doing something different.

Adam: What makes a good gig. Is it when you play well or when the crowd's having fun.

Matt: When I play it's a good gig. (laughs)

Chuck: The ideal is you're having a ball and the crowd's having a ball. But it tends to happen that if you're not having fun then the crowds not so...

Adam: 'Cos the energy's not coming across.

Matt: yeah, exactly.

Adam: well thanks a lot for talking to us.

Chuck: no worries, have a good time.