



# BOUNCING BACK

BY **DARYL KIRKUP**

There's an old adage that says "It's not how many times you get knocked down, it's how many times you get back up that's important."

**L**ife has a tendency to throw us a curve-ball now and again and, for **MERILYN STEELE**, that curve-ball came in the form of a diagnosis of chronic fatigue and the skin and hair disease, Alopecia.

As Merilyn recalls "I thought I was never going to be the same again following my diagnosis. When I first got it, it was difficult for me to even carry on a conversation... I'd be out of breath. Walking out to the front letterbox and back, that was a major feat!"

Those trying times are thankfully now behind her and Merilyn has an entirely new lease on life, both personally and musically. She admits she is probably doing a lot more now in her life than even before the diagnosis and that includes the formation of her own band, the **MERILYN STEELE BAND**. "Forming my own band was probably the last thing I wanted to do," Merilyn explains. "I've worked mainly as a solo performer with festival bands or my own duo, but fate definitely played a hand in the formation of this new line-up."

That fate came in the form of a musician Merilyn met in her local gym who loved her material on her debut album *This Passion*. He invited her to join his current group and the **MERILYN STEELE BAND** was born.

Interestingly, a career in music wasn't something that Merilyn dreamt about. "I don't recall sitting and

daydreaming about being a great musician or star," recalls Merilyn. "It's something that I started and it just crept up on me but I've always had that strong interest in music and have always kept it going".

Merilyn's first love is writing. "I've always been an avid writer, having had published poetry books and won awards for poetry in the past," she admits. She loved English at school and loved telling and writing stories, which she attributes to her father who had a degree in journalism.

"I didn't actually find that out until I'd received my own diploma," says Merilyn, "so writing comes fairly easily to me."

With this love of writing, it's no wonder that songwriting is now one of Merilyn's greatest joys, with her current album *Extraordinary Daze* containing a wonderful selection

of self-penned songs. The album also contains **ALANIS MORISSETTE**'s *Head Over Feet* and the soon to be released single *Good Man, Good Woman*, a duet she recorded with **TONY MARTIN**.

Merilyn is currently working closely with director Ross Wood on the video clip for *Good Man, Good Woman* and hopes to have it on CMC in the very near future.

Her influences are many and varied, having great respect for artists such as Alanis Morissette, **BONNIE RAITT**, **BERNARD FANNING** (**POWDERFINGER**) and **KASEY CHAMBERS**.

"Kasey was someone so fresh and new," says Merilyn. "She was the first person that I'd really heard singing and writing from the depths of their soul." Listen to the lyrics in a Merilyn Steele penned song and this influence becomes evidently clear.

Merilyn received her first accolade as a songwriter back in 1994 being named as a Finalist in the Tamworth Songwriters Association (TSA) National Songwriters Awards. A string of successful single releases and award success followed culminating in her naming as the Female Vocalist of the Year in Horsham in 2007 for her debut album *This Passion*.

Life's curve-ball has come and gone for Merilyn Steele. The success of her current album *Extraordinary Daze* and extended touring schedule will assure this very talented singer/songwriter will continue to hold a special place in Australian country music.