

Fox Jaw reinvent themselves on keenly awaited new album

ALAN OWENS

RELIEF is etched all over Ronan Mitchell's face. The lead singer of Limerick band Fox Jaw is delighted that the world can finally listen to their new album.

The singer - boasting one of the most distinctive voices on the Irish music scene, think a register lower than The National's Matt Berninger - sinks into a chair and offers a slight grin when asked what he thinks about Ghost's Parade, Fox Jaw's keenly awaited new album.

"I love it. I am just delighted to get a chance for other people to hear it now, we have been sitting on it for so long," he says.

This is a new start for the beefed up five piece that was a long time coming.

As Fox Jaw Bounty Hunters the central three piece of Mitchell, Morgan Nolan and Shane Serrano released the 2011 debut *The Devil In Music*, one that rang with a chillingly dark tone, an album that boasted reference points as diverse - we thought - of Queens of the Stone Age and Joe Cocker.

It was a solid debut offering, but failed to make the impact the band hoped.

"We rushed releasing it," says Ronan simply. "There were a lot of things coming out at the same time, we just released it at a bad time. I think it just got lost underneath all of that, so this time we decided to have a better



Fox Jaw - Shane Serrano, Morgan Nolan, Ronan Mitchell, Kieran J. Sims and Manolis Sheehan - have just released their new album, *Ghost's Parade*, out now in all good record stores. The band will launch the album with a gig in Dolan's Warehouse this Saturday night

plan of attack."

That plan included a year 'in hiding', writing, recording and honing their craft, before drip feeding singles and incredibly impressive videos - produced by drummer Serrano.

For a notoriously proactive, hardworking band - they played 80 shows within ten months of releasing their debut - it was hard to sit on exciting new material.

"We were excited about this two years ago, we just couldn't give it to anyone," says the singer.

"Especially playing it live, we were touring a lot of the tracks off it for the last year and a bit and

then you have people coming up to you after a gig saying - 'where's the album' or that song was great, can we buy that?' And it is like, that is not coming out for another year.

"We sat down and planned out the whole campaign from start to finish, what we thought would do better for us."

Strategy was key. As was working with a producer for the first time - Dave 'Skippy' Christophers, veteran of work with Josh Ritter, Whipping Boy and Mundy. Owen Lewis, an engineer from Limerick who

worked on album number one, was also enlisted, while a decision to record it in the Bishops' Palace paid dividends, adding to the expansive, dark and brooding sound on the record, one that hints at the surroundings it was recorded in.

"It felt like a huge step forward when we did it, it absolutely did," says Ronan of the album. "I think even just working with a producer, because everything we did before, we did ourselves. Just having someone to guide us in the right direction."

New faces were added to the line-up in the form of Manolis

Sheehan and Kieran J Sims, both experienced musicians and the name was shortened to Fox Jaw. New directions were experimented with also, leading to an album that plays with the notion of the typical 'Fox Jaw' sound.

The album is a cracker, bursting with influences from heavy rock leanings to delicate ballads, showcasing Fox Jaw's ever evolving sound and reinforcing their image as a modern band with an old soul.

"One thing we were worried about, a lot of the songs, the genres are a bit...it is not one thing," says Ronan. "Dave helped us make it all gel. The one thing he said was once I started singing on it, it would all tie together."

"But even things like we grouped songs - stuff that suited styles - and arranged them that way. Even sonically, the sounds we used to tie the whole thing together; I think the overall picture of it, is that it does work. I think it does anyway."

Fox Jaw. A band with a new name, a new line-up, a new direction and now armed with a new album. The future is yet to be written for this band, expect it to be in bright lights.

Ghost's Parade is out now, see record stores and www.foxjaw.ie. Fox Jaw play Dolan's Warehouse this Saturday with support from The Mighty Stef and The Hipneck Blues Collective

Reform-ing Limerick's musical heritage

ALAN OWENS

THE first ever collection of music on CD by Limerick band Reform will launch next week.

Paddy Brennan of Limerick Rock and Roll club, who raised €30,000 for Milford through his *Limerick On Record* album, is the man behind the project, releasing a new compilation album of Reform's back catalogue.

"It is eight singles and one album and this is the first time on CD. There is also some rare, never before heard demos of the band, recorded in Limerick," explains Paddy, a self-avowed "fan since the very beginning" since the band formed in 1968, and a personal friend of Willie Browne, Don O'Connor and Joe Mulcahy.

"Following on from Limerick On Record, I just felt it was another band that needed to be put down in the archives of Limerick music, their legacy needs to be continued because of the very fact that they were on vinyl and it's not really available any more," said Paddy.

"It is to keep on the tradition, keeping Limerick music going and alive," he added.

This year is the 30th anniversary of the band's last ever gig, in Kilkee in July 1984.

Ten years previous, the trio signed a recording contract with UK label Young Blood - a division of CBS.

Songs such as *One for the Boys*, *Keep Music Live* and *You Gotta Get Up* made Reform one of the country's best known

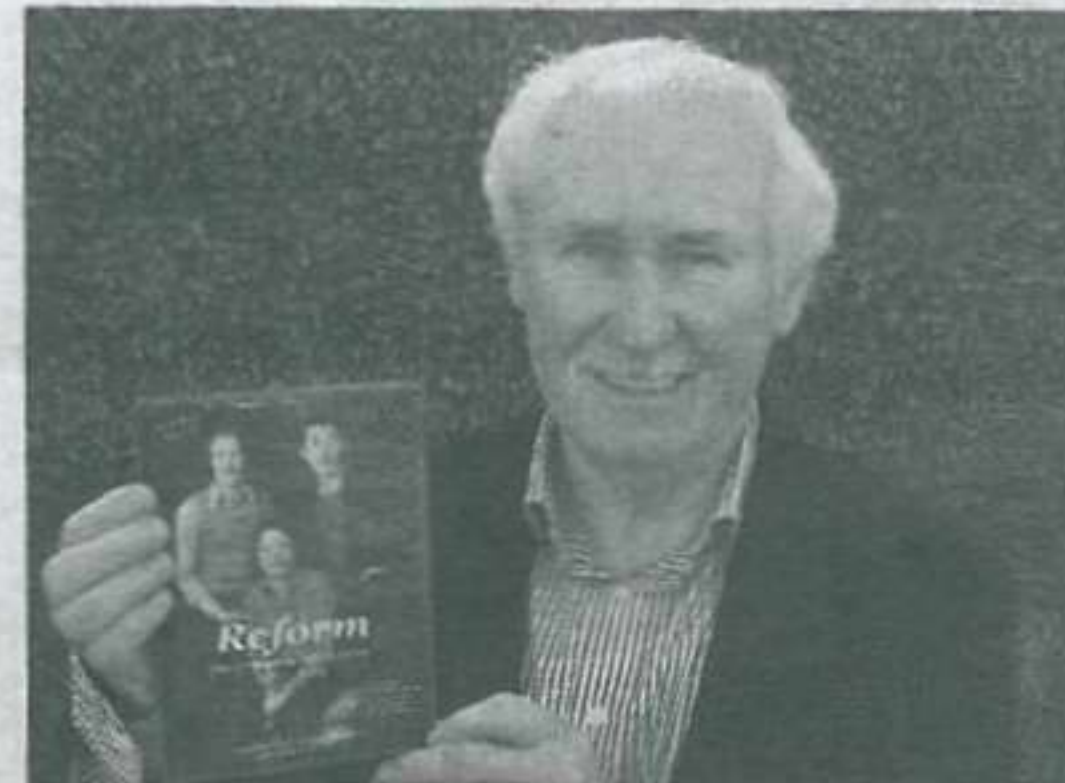
bands of the 1970s.

"They were Limerick's top band - locally and nationally - in the 70s," says Paddy.

"They were a very tight band, renowned for their harmonies, reminiscent of Crosby, Stills and Nash, they put a lot of work into their arrangement, especially the harmonies. They were a band that were able to rock like Status Quo as well."

The compilation contains the band's only album, *One For All*, eight singles - A and B sides - a radio interview from 2006, a Buddy Holly medley recorded for the Rock and Roll club, and rare demos recorded in Phantom and Menlo studios in Limerick.

The album will launch in the Clarion next Tuesday at 7.30pm.



Legacy: Paddy Brennan of Limerick Rock and Roll club with the Reform CD, the first time their music has been released on the format

Picture: Adrian Butler