

the Sunday MUSIC

FRONTMAN Murray McLeod admits The Xcerts always feel the heat when they return to Scotland for gigs.

The Aberdeen band are now based down in Brighton and travel all over Europe when they are touring.

But coming back home is always the most nervewracking gig because it's in front of friends and family – and the country some say they left behind.

Murray, 30, says: "I still go back to Aberdeen a lot and play there as much as I can. I love playing in my home city but there's added pressure, I think, because we moved out.

"We're the guys who left the city to try to pursue this career so I do think there's added pressure for us.

"We need to prove ourselves a bit more – but it's always a warm welcome." The group released their third album *Hold On To Your Heart* last month and recently toured with popular Nothing But Thieves in Europe.

But next month's gigs in Aberdeen and Glasgow will be one of the first opportunities to play their new material to a home crowd.

Recent single *Feels Like Falling In Love* debuted on the Radio 1 Rock Show and also joined the Kerrang!, Radio X and MTV Rocks playlists.

It is also nearing two million streams on Spotify.

But it's title track *Hold On To Your Heart* that Murray reckons is the real crown jewel of the album.

The singer poured his heart out on the break-up track.

He says: "It's a song that we had to write in order for me to create some closure around the end of a five-year relationship.

"I'm not kidding when I say the words just poured out of me as if they'd already been written and it took just 15 minutes from writing the first line to recording the whole thing.

"Listening back, in my mind at least, it almost plays out like a movie montage.

"Me and my ex-partner experienced some ugly moments during the break-up but that's not how I wanted to remember our time together, because our time together was beautiful.

"I wanted to say goodbye in a way that hadn't been said before and I felt like if I could go back in time and say one thing, to let the person know that they are worth more than the pain they are

PRAISE... latest album



by COLAN LAMONT

going through, it would be *Hold On To Your Heart*. What I'm trying to say is, don't break broken pieces."

With such an emotional song, Murray admits he's not afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve.

But he reckons not enough men open up about their feelings.

And he thinks that songwriting should play a key role in letting rip about what you're really going through.

He adds: "I basically write the blueprint of a song and take it into the practice room to show the guys what I've got and then we work together where everyone has input.

"Where I'm at now, I've had a lot of experiences to write about and writing lyrics is cathartic and cheaper than therapy. Maybe down the line I'll be more into storytelling and Bruce Springsteen-esque stuff.

But I like songs that can be welcomed universally, I connect with them the most and write from my own perspective but hope others can find meaning in them too.

"As a songwriter, you shouldn't feel censored in any way, write from the heart and put your guts on the line.

"That's what's required in my eyes. In this day and age people are told to bottle up their feelings. I'm encouraging everyone to feel everything."

●The Xcerts play Glasgow's O2 ABC on February 23 and The Garage in Aberdeen the next night. Ticket info: seetickets.com

Our time together was beautiful

— MURRAY MCLEOD



HOME TIME ... Xcerts love playing in Scotland

A warm welcome is an Xcert ROCKERS RETURN HOME

EASY

WHERE: Ayr/Glasgow
WHO: Kit Smith (guitar/vocals), Moss Taylor (keys/vocals), John Davidson (guitar), George McGarrity (bass), Lewis Clarke (drums)

FOR FANS OF: Stevie Wonder, The Average White Band, Red Hot Chili Peppers

JIM SAYS: Back in the day I'd get band demos on cassette. Later it was CD-Rs then MP3s.

In the case of Ayrshire-formed funksters Easy, they approached me in the street and handed me their *Easy Does It* demo EP on a USB wristband.

The tracks were a bit rough, but I got a feel of what they were about. Now based in Glasgow, the five-piece originally got together at the University of the West of Scotland Ayr Campus.

Initially, it was just to record one song to help out a mate with their Sound Engineering course. They must have enjoyed it as they kept on going.

First dabbling in hip hop as Funkosaurus, they soon rebranded as Easy. With the new name came a new sound. Spurred on by classic funk and soul, they began to find their way.

The promise they showed on the first EP is fulfilled with their freshly released debut single *Bringin' Me Down*. A joyous brass-laden slab of



NEW MUSIC
By Jim Gellatly

contemporary funk-pop it truly delivers. Guitarist John Davidson said: "Bringin' Me Down is a laid back, groove-based track discussing the complexities of open relationships. With dual vocals and a killer synth solo it's unconventional, yet still catchy and memorable as our first single. We also had our friend Catherine Potter join us to record some trumpet which gives the track a great lift too."

Last summer saw Easy go to France as part of an international music exchange. Closer to home they made their festival debut in August on The Scottish Sun Break Out Stage at Linlithgow's Party At The Palace. John said: "Party At The

Palace was pretty special for me as it takes place in the town where I grew up. Ever since its first year I've been involved in helping out. To actually play it was a lot of fun and the crowd seemed to enjoy themselves."

Bass player George McGarrity added: "If ever I have any doubt about being cut out for playing music I just think of the incredible experience of being at Party at the Palace."

Easy kick off their Scottish tour on Tuesday and are encouraging fans to look the part. John explained: "When it comes to fashion we like to dress to match our music, wearing the grooviest shirts we can find. We're offering a free download of our single to everyone who wears their own groovy shirt. Don't be shy!"

Catch Easy at Conroy's Basement in Dundee on Tuesday. Wednesday they are at Café Drummond in Aberdeen followed by Stirling's Méditerranée on Thursday. Friday it's Sneaky Pete's in Edinburgh then a final blow-out at Audio in Glasgow on Monday, February 19.

MORE: facebook.com/groovyeasy
●Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm.

amazingradio.com
jimgellatly.com



Watch a video of the band playing at: www.thescottishsun.co.uk

