

**EXCLUSIVE**
by COLAN LAMONT**BUSKER** Ben Monteith is hoping to go global in 2019 after being swamped by gig requests from fans all over the world.

The 33-year-old singer sells out every show he plays in Scotland and can count on a passionate home support.

But after his street performances clocked up more than 50million views online, the dad of three has become a viral sensation as far away as America and Australia.

And now he's hoping to see his overseas fans on their home turf.

Ben says: "People want me to go to as far as America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

"And the only thing that's ever stopped me is finances.

"Without a record label backing you up it's hard to travel the world.

'I'm saving up to get back in the studio'

"I feel rotten because I'd love to but just haven't had the opportunity.

"It would be awesome and I wish I could meet all these amazing people around the world and play shows for them."

Last week a family travelled from Germany just to watch the singer busk outside Glasgow's St Enoch Centre.

He adds: "Social media has shrunk the world.

"They messaged me on Thursday night and asked if I was busking at the weekend.

"So they said they jumped on a plane to see me because I'm not in a position to go to Germany at the moment.

"They stayed for hours and I'm very lucky to have fans like that.

"Somebody is coming from Texas to Glasgow for my next gig too, which is absolutely mental."

Ben started busking five years ago after quitting his job delivering furniture.

It was only when a video of him singing The Fray's How To Save A Life hit the internet

I want to go from street busker to world superstar

**STREETS AHEAD**
... Ben busking in Glasgow

in 2015 that he became known further afield than his busking patch in Glasgow.

Since then he's been approached by representatives from

The X Factor and Britain's Got Talent.

But he admits he loves doing his own thing too much to become a reality star.

If he can find the money, he would rather record an album this year.

Ben continues: "I would like to get a manager to help with the logistics and legalities of stuff like booking tours.

To take things to the next level I'm realising you need some help.

"I'm writing new music at the moment and I'm saving up money to get back in the studio. I'd like to bring out an EP or album, depending on how it goes.

"But it's expensive to record as an independent artist.

"The sky is the limit as far as how much recording costs.

"You need to pay other musicians for studio time and it could end up costing as much as £3,000 per song or £30,000 for an album."

After a well-earned festive break with the family, Ben will

kick off his 2019 gigs with a show at Glasgow's Stereo on February 16.

The singer has sold out the venue before and knows it will be another special night.

He says: "I'm hoping 2019 will be a big year and it starts with this gig.

"I'm looking forward to it because my fans are incredible here and it's always amazing to perform for them.

"I sold out the venue last time so hopefully we can do the same again."

● For tickets to see Ben and info about the gig at Stereo, check out stereocafebar.com
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Team play made us go super Sonic

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

SONIC has always been a high-speed superstar, so it was a no-brainer for Sumo Digital to serve up fun arcade racer Team Sonic Racing.

Design director Derek Littlewood told STUART CULLEN how the game — which lands later this year — will stand out from the pack.

He said: "We had a solid foundation of an arcade racing game that we know fans really enjoyed and loved. That allowed us to build on that with the Team Racing experience.

"We have added a whole new level of strategic play that doesn't really exist in other racing games. I think fans coming from Transformed will find lots that feels familiar — like drifting and doing stunts — but, ultimately, it's all about being the fastest line to the finish.

"The thing we have really worked on is that you can work in co-op to win the race as a team."

Having access to Sega's heroes was another bonus. Derek, below, added: "With past titles we went very wide with different Sega franchises, but here we decided to do very deep just with the Sonic series. There are new characters that people will not have seen in racing games and there are a lot of different locations which reference his history. That allowed us to introduce a story-driven team adventure mode.

"We got to explore the Sonic universe in more detail. We wanted something for all Sonic fans — the hardcore that have been there since the Mega Drive days will find references to things they will enjoy, but fans who have come to Sonic in the past five years will also have something to enjoy."

Derek admits he has his favourites. He said: "I have a soft spot for Tails. I was one of those gamers in the 90s that was there when Sonic 2 came out so I tend to play as Tails but I also like Omega the robot.

"Omega has some of the best put-downs in the game. If he hits you with a weapon or drives past you, he'll just throw you a one-liner that really burns."

But they have dropped the ability to switch from car to boat or plane mid-race.

Derek added: "Instead we have a new customisation system.

"In terms of the range of looks your car can have, it is as much if not more than the last game and it introduces a lot more depth to the game.

"Fine-tuning the parts on your car so they have just the right power for the track you are racing on adds a lot of depth and skill to the game."

The cars are also stars in the game. Derek added: "We were very fortunate to have direct contact with Takashi Iizuka at Sega America, who is like the head of all things Sonic and has been with the series since Sonic 3 so he really knows his stuff and was able to help us.

"But we also tried to draw inspiration from the real world so Sonic's car looks like a modern Ferrari whereas Shadow has more of a Lamborghini style."

● Team Sonic Racing is out on May 21.

**RUVELLAS****WHO:** Aiden Stuart (vocals), Lewis O'Farrell (guitar), Matthew Short (guitar), Ben Gowans (bass), Matthew Smith (drums).**WHERE:** Dundee.**FOR FANS OF:** Oasis, Arctic Monkeys, Catfish And The Bottlemen.**JIM SAYS:** I was lucky enough to catch Ruvellas early on, under their former name Room-One. They were one of the emerging acts from Tayside and Fife that took part in 2017's Youth Music Initiative at the Gardyne Theatre in Dundee.

Now in its fifth year, the programme gives young musicians the opportunity to be mentored by established local artists.

The kids also record a track at the theatre's state-of-the-art recording studio, with a compilation CD launched at a showcase concert.

Room-One instantly caught my attention with their fiery indie rock 'n' roll. Lewis, Ben and the two Matthews originally got together in their early teens, jamming at Menzieshill High School. They moved on to Harris Academy after the school shut and continued to

**NEW MUSIC**
By Jim Gellatly

develop their music. They are all still 17, and 16-year-old singer Aiden, from St John's High in Dundee, completes the line-up.

Drummer Matthew explained: "Originally we just covered some cringey adolescent rock songs from Green Day to Nirvana. We regularly practised without a singer until the owner of our local rehearsal studio recommended Aiden.

"For the next couple of years, we worked on original songs."

As Ruvellas, I caught them in June playing a storming set at the WestFest Battle Of The Bands at Dundee's Church venue. They may not have won, but the potential was clear. More recently the band secured a slot on November's Hit The Road tour, which gave them

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

the chance to appear across the country with other emerging acts (The Plastic Youth and Spynn).

Hit The Road has proved to be an incredible platform for the stars of the future. Delivered by The Scottish Music Centre and funded by PRS Foundation and Creative Scotland, its alumni include Lewis Capaldi, Indigo Velvet and fellow Dundee act Be Charlotte.

Matthew said: "The whole experience gave us some of the most memorable gigs we've had, and what it's like to be a touring band at a professional level. Hopefully that will help us out in future."

On Boxing Day, the lads were back at Church to launch their debut single, a cracking double A-side featuring the tracks Sick & Tired and Still The Same. Matthew sa: "It was one of the best receptions we've had. As it was our first Dundee headline gig, we stepped up to the plate knowing we were the main event. That helped with our performance, and with a longer set than usual we also got the chance to play some new material, which went down brilliantly."

The next confirmed date is at Beat Generator Live! in Dundee on January 31 with Saint-Louis.

MORE: ruvellas.com

● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio, Sundays 2-4pm.

amazingradio.com
jimgellatly.com