

Weekend entertainment

Island records

Powerpop trio The Risk have been laying down tracks for their first album in more than 20 years. **Shaun Shackleton** spoke to Mark Le Gallez about how the band ended up recording on the Isle of Arran

THE Risk have been in the studio laying down tracks for their latest album, 22 years after their last – Songs From the Big Tomato.

But The Risk (Mark Le Gallez bass, vocals and backing vocals, Colin Leach guitar, vocals and backing and Stuart 'Ozzy' Austin, drums) being the The Risk, they didn't pick a swanky, well-known recording studio in some hip city. Far from it.

'The studio is called Isle of Arran Recording Studios at Lochranza on the Isle of Arran,' said Mark Le Gallez on the phone, before nipping out to Sainsbury's at Timperley. 'It's owned by Stan Robertson, who was in a Glasgow band in the 70s called The Sensational Jeepers Creepers, silver-suited Teds who supported Showaddywaddy, but they were better musicians. He used to play in Glasgow clubs in the 60s when the razor gangs were about. He's a lovely man.' How did The Risk end up on the Isle of Arran?

'Colin [who lives on the coast of Kintyre, Argyll] was trawling around, looking for mainland and island studios,' said Mark. 'He found out about Stan's place and went to visit him. They got on like a house on fire and they arranged to bring The Risk up.'

Ozzy got the plane from Guernsey to Manchester and then the train to Glasgow and Mark got the train up. The band was there for three days and three nights and laid down five tracks while they were there.

'They were the five songs that Colin and me wrote when I went up to see him last year. Three of his and two of mine. We rehearsed the Friday and recorded on the Saturday and Sunday. Two tracks for an A and B side of a single and the other three to go towards an album. So there's another seven tracks to do. Five songs

The last album by The Risk, 2002's *Songs From the Big Tomato*.



Colin Leach arranged for The Risk to use the recording studio on the Isle of Arran. (33723046)

per side.' While in the studio the lads had a great time, often jamming to 3am with Stan. And Mark found a new mate. 'One of my jobs was looking after Stan's

dog, Bobby the Border terrier, and giving him doggy treats. 'Stan let us stay in his house. The studio was in the dining room. It had the same vibe as when Flexagon used to record in his cottage by St Sampson's douzaine.'

The session saw Mark's debut in The Risk playing electric guitar. 'I couldn't do the notes on bass for one song. Col showed me how but it was a four-fingered pattern and my little hands couldn't reach, so Col played bass and I played guitar.' There are plans to return to the studio early next year with the album's release around Easter time.

'I want to put it out on vinyl, on my FAB Records label, and we'll be pressing a couple of hundred copies.

'We wanted to do it as a tribute really, for friends who have passed away – for Andy Coleman [who played trombone for The Risk and wrote all the



Mark with his 1965 Hofner 500/1 Violin Bass. (33713874)

brass parts], for Dave Edmonds, who both Colin and me worked with at the Guernsey Press for years and who took the very first picture of The Risk for the paper, and for Colin's brother, John.'

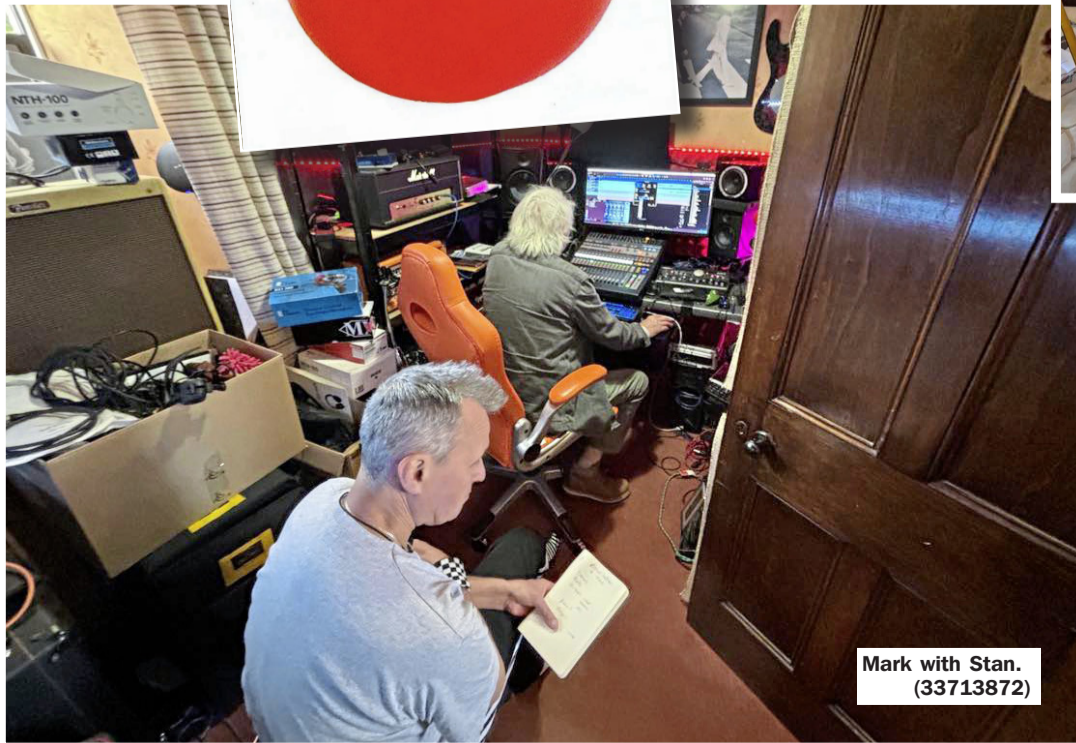
As there is always news when talking to Mark (the fella is always busy), he told me about a couple of other projects that are happening.

'I've been working with a guy called Dave Barker from Preston. We've become really good mates. He's actually a fan of The Risk. He contacted me and said he had something for me to sing on. It's not something that I've really done before. It's keyboard-driven. It's described as "Acid Jazz, ska, with nods to legendary acts like XTC and The Doors". His band is called The DBC, the Dave Barker Collective. We went into the studio in Salford and the engineer there, Biff, asked Dave how many tracks had he got and Dave said "52". "Not a problem" said Biff. I sang on a track called The Good Companions.'

After two EPs, Mark has a full album coming out next year with The Mark Three, the combo he formed with Paul Hooper-Keeley on guitar and keys and Emma Page on drums.

'And I'm doing my spoken word stuff at the open mic night at The Kings Head in Salford next Monday,' he said. 'You've gotta keep busy, eh?'

Mark and Ozzy. (33713876)



Mark with Stan. (33713872)

Final call for vinyl, CDs and tapes for fair

A FINAL call out from Vale Earth Fair. The VEF is looking for any vinyl, cassette tapes and CDs as donations for the record fair. If you have anything you're looking to get rid of, contact info@valeearthfair.org. Collection can be arranged if needed.

◆ The Vale Earth Fair Record and CD Fair is at the Styx Centre, St Peter's tomorrow from 11am to 4pm. Entry £2. Featuring live music with Dan Guilbert and Grace Athena and DJs.

