



MATT SAVILLE

# TAME IMPALA

WORDS JOHN LUCAS

For someone with a reputation as something of a recluse, Kevin Parker is a pretty friendly guy. Or at least that's the impression the frontman for Australian psychedelic-rock outfit Tame Impala gives when he's reached on tour in Austria. You could be forgiven, though, for assuming that Parker lives a hermetic life. After all, he does live in Perth, Australia, which has been described as the world's most remote city, and he did name the latest Tame Impala album *Lonerism*. The previous one, released in 2010, bore the navel-gazing title *Innerspeaker*, and its standout track, "Solitude Is Bliss", contained one of Parker's most telling lyrical couplets: "There's a party in my head/And no one is invited."

On the line from Vienna, however, Parker refutes the perception that he's a loner. "At the moment I'm not alone at all, because I'm on tour with my friends," he notes, adding with a laugh, "The last time I was alone was when I went to the toilet."

There may be something to the notion that the musician relishes his moments of isolation, however. Consider the fact that Tame Impala is essentially a one-man creative outlet, with Parker writing all the songs and recording all the parts himself. "Generally it's just me slowly putting songs together," he says. "That's just the

way it's always been. It's totally a solo project in the studio, but no one seems to consider it that. Everything I've read has just been "Tame Impala, the band." I'm not really put off by that or anything. It's just the way people see it, because they see a bunch of guys on a stage playing the songs, so they assume it's a band, but it's totally not. When we play them live, we all get together and take the song that's already been recorded and interpret it. We just sort of have fun with it, basically, and that becomes the live version."

Impressively, *Lonerism* sounds like the product of a group of people. It's all Parker, though, and while the Fab Four vocal harmonies and acid-washed guitar licks of songs like "Mind Mischief" and "Apocalypse Dreams" suggest he hasn't lost his taste for paisley-skies psychedelia, there are plenty of elements that set this LP apart from its predecessor. Foremost among these is Parker's ample use of keyboards, adding layers of pastel-washed synth tones to tracks like "Why Won't They Talk to Me?" and "She Just Won't Believe Me".

"I was just feeling like looking to other things to get new crazy sounds," he explains. "I'm always trying to find the craziest sound, you know—the thing that sounds the least like it comes from

Earth. It's really difficult to do that with guitars, because whatever you do with a guitar, it's usually going to end up sounding like a guitar. It's going to have that kind of earthy, rock 'n' roll feel. But with synthesizers, they just start in a completely different place. It was just really kind of exciting to have this whole new playing field of sounds and emotions."

As much as Tame Impala's music makes ideal bliss-out fodder for those who like to indulge in things green and leafy, Parker's command of melody makes it worthy listening for those who simply want to hear a good tune. Some might hesitate to call it pop, but not Parker, who claims he's got an entire album's worth of songs just waiting for his fellow Aussie Kylie Minogue. The man loves hooks, and he doesn't care who knows it.

"As long as you do something that feels cool, or sounds cool, or gives you some sort of emotion, then nothing's ever too cheesy, or not cheesy enough," he says. "It really just depends what you consider to be pop and what you consider not to be pop, which is a totally subjective thing anyway."

Are you listening, Kylie?