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[Review Rock n Pop](#)

How Palumbo Phunk were given a psychic start

Single launch party for funk-rock collective

31 March, 2017 — By [Róisín Gadelrab](#)

The Palumbo Phunk are set to play at The Gunners on April 9

WHEN Dion Palumbo reached a crossroads in his music career he did the natural thing – he headed into the Australian Blue Mountains to see a psychic.

This decision gave him the push to move and London, enrol in a music production course and establish himself as a musician on the circuit, who also uses his music as therapy.

Dion, who grew up in Australia, is putting on a special launch party for heavy blues single *Freefall*, from album *All The Rage We Are* (out June), at The Gunners on April 9, where his funk-rock collective The Palumbo Phunk will play alongside Chanel and the Circus, The Coolness, Martha Makes Mistakes and Blow Up Doll.

The musician, who now lives in Finsbury Park, was 14 when he first picked up a guitar.

“I started playing with friends in bands and I just kept going – it was this natural thing I wanted to do,” he said. “I thought I could write these songs and I never let it go.”

Over time, Dion played in a number of groups and seemed to be on the verge of big things.

“I had a very good band in Sydney. The guitarist’s father had played with Elvis and the drummer’s godmother is Joni Mitchell. Everyone thought we were going to be huge. This band was good,” he said.

But things didn’t work out due to some internal issues.

“It was some of my best work, I’ll release it sometime. I was like, ‘I’m done here, I need to go to Europe and explore my family origins’.”

He headed for Liverpool where his classical musician mother is from, via a trip around Europe, playing gigs where they were offered. He developed music contacts, later moving to Manchester to work as a roadie. He went on to study counselling and psychotherapy, his other interest.

Visiting home in 2010, Dion realised he needed to decide on his next move.

He said: “I was thinking, should I stay here? I had been living in Manchester and someone said, ‘Have you lived in London?’ I always felt a connection with London. I didn’t know what to do. I was that undecided that I saw this ad’ in the paper for a psychic in the Blue Mountains near where my mum lived. I went to see this guy and said, ‘I don’t know what to do’. He said, ‘Go to London, something about music production, that’s what you need to do’.”

Dion, who warns that psychics should be treated with caution, took the advice, enrolling in a music production course in London Bridge.

He said: “It tightened up my skills, brought extra knowledge, some good contacts. It gave me confidence. He was right, it was the right thing to do.”

He began The Palumbo Phunk while at university.

“It’s a transient band, there’s been many members, because people come and go,” said Dion.

“It’s me with a bag of songs and arrangements. I like people to be positive to one another. I keep thinking about Nature Boy by Nat King Cole – the line, ‘the greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return’. I think that’s a message I’m trying to fly the flag for, that helping people makes you happy – that’s what I’m striving for – the accumulation of material wealth does not make you happy, and I think people work that out in the end and that’s what I’m trying to put across through various lyrics.”

After university, Dion found a way to combine his interest in therapy with music after leaving his CV at Manor Gardens Centre in Holloway.

“A guy, Peter Crockett from Music For People, called me back. He wanted me to play music in care homes. Some of the places were mental health centres, that’s where the counselling skills came in. A lot

of the sessions are classed as music therapy. In dementia homes people are in pain and rattled, and the music calms them down, it's more about tuning in. If people are stressed, I try to ease the pain by calming them down by direct reflection without talking, I can use the music and therapy in a different way, so instead of talking it's about energy.

“If someone's in distress I'll go straight up to them with my guitar and it does work. In that hour, I get some hostile stuff but I can deal with it because of the empathy, training, reflection and acceptance of people.”

A regular at The Gunners, Dion chose the pub because it had a particular appeal. Promising the high-energy line-up is full of good bands, he said: “The Gunners is a football pub, it has a very community aspect to it, that's why I wanted to do it there – I live in the area and really like the landlady.”

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