

THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY PLAN TO BECOME A SINGER/SONGWRITER, BUT **MARK WILKINSON** IS JUST ABOUT TO HEAD OFF TO EUROPE TO BE JUST THAT. **MICHAEL SMITH** INVESTIGATES.

A BACKPACK OF SONGS

"A flatmate taught me a few chords on the guitar and I just got swept up in it," the English-born Sydneysider Wilkinson explains. Already in his early twenties, he only picked up the guitar five years ago. "It took a while to pluck up the courage to perform live but friends took me along to an open mic night and things went from there."

The songwriting came pretty soon after Wilkinson knew enough chords to match the tunes that were coming into his head and on the evidence of his debut EP, *Cellophane Life*, the songwriting shows an already high level of sophistication, with a fine sense of craft and arranging. The usually solo artist also opted to call in a band for the recording. "I didn't want to be limited by the fact that I play solo live, because even I get a little bored listening to singer/songwriter albums that are just guitar and vocal. And when I write songs, I can always hear the instruments filling out the sound, so I really enjoyed doing that with the EP."

As for the songwriting itself... "Nothing in particular was prompting the writing, apart from just wanting to do it. The lyrical content is stuff that was going on in my life or just things I'd think about, but I usually write the melody first so I'd try and match the lyrics to how I think the melody feels. I'm always writing and that for me is the good stuff."

"You get more of a feel live of what works as a song and what doesn't. I'm sure a lot of people find some songs are really good live but don't translate in the studio, where other songs work better in the studio. So the gigs have given me a better idea of how that works for me. When I first started writing, a lot of my songs were six or



seven minutes long and I didn't realise so I've obviously refined that."

Soon after recording the EP, Wilkinson scored a worldwide publishing deal with Peer Music after attending a "death by demo" session organised by the Music Managers' Forum, plus met the local Peer rep who then checked him out at one of his gigs. Knowing he's potentially got the support courtesy of an international publisher, Wilkinson decided it was time to check out the possibilities overseas. "There are gigs already locked down at The Perseverance, The Green Dragon and The Regal Room in London, Thomas Reed's in Dublin, Intersoup, Oxidant and Zimmer in Berlin and a gig or two in Paris and I'm also about halfway through recording a debut album and I'll finish that when I get back for a release early next year."

WHO Mark Wilkinson

WHAT *Cellophane Life* (Independent)

WHEN & Tuesday 17 June,

WHERE The Basement, Circular Quay