It's a funny old world... Isn't it! Full of contradictions. Like the way some people say one thing and mean another. Or how we think it's uncool to be popular. It's all topsy-turvy really. We're even ashamed of love songs and prefer paens to pain. I mean we've got it so back to front we don't even appreciate how well off we are. Fancy complaining and whinging when we're sitting in the lap of luxury. We don't even know how good we've got it. Look here's a case in point. Just get a load of this! Right here in this lucky old country of ours the better we do the more we're criticised. What the hell is that all about! Just take a look at silverchair. One minute they're perceived as tall poppies growing up in the harsh glare of the media searchlight and the next they're seen as dedicated artists looking for their own nirvana? But here's the twist. silverchair probably don't realise it but many people in Newcastle are fiercely protective of them. You see, they're on a par with three times world surfing champion Mark Richards, also from Merewether, and the raggedly glorious Knights. They're family. And families can bitch about each other all they want but God forbid if anyone else does. And it seems everybody in Newcastle has an opinion about silverchair, with their own story to tell, good or bad, about the biggest band to ever come out of this town.

There's the hoary old tale that's now part of silverchair's myth-making about the night at Newcastle Town Hall where the guys from Sony were witnessing them in full flight for the first time. The Innocent Criminals, a name the band wasn't sorry to ditch, were banging out the odd Pearl Jam cover along with the tunes that were to make it onto their first album. That gig has been immortalised in Craig Matheson's book i-Fi Days. But others' recollections don't include any bikers, just the Friday night crowd of other bar and the boys' mums and dads hanging out the back with the agent who kept yelling to Danial to play Acid Rain. Or there's the story of the Jesmond High school-dance in the Black Stail where the stage was rushed from the very first number by the eager schoolkids I stared of live music. The band hung out in the boys' toilets taking drugs and doing the usual high school things while their bemused dads kept a watchful eye. Or there's the time they did an undated gig at the notorious Pipper's Nightspot in Hunter St... and no-one saw!

My favourite story is the time silverchair were doing their first major support at the Workers' Club with a band of some considerable national standing. The road crew decided they had to have dinner and were going to leave this unimportant young band to their own devices. Though wearing the 'guns' suits from Sony were witnessing them in full flight. But for the first time. The Innocent Criminals, a name the band wasn't sorry to ditch, were banging out the odd Pearl Jam cover along with the tunes that were to make it onto their first album. That gig has been immortalised in Craig Matheson's book i-Fi Days. But others' recollections don't include any bikers, just the Friday night crowd of other bar and the boys' mums and dads hanging out the back with the agent who kept yelling to Danial to play Acid Rain. Or there's the story of the Jesmond High school-dance in the Black Stail where the stage was rushed from the very first number by the eager schoolkids I stared of live music. The band hung out in the boys' toilets taking drugs and doing the usual high school things while their bemused dads kept a watchful eye. Or there's the time they did an undated gig at the notorious Pipper's Nightspot in Hunter St... and no-one saw!

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After those early days in the band's career the personal stories got less so, except for the occasional sightings. I mean you could read plenty about silverchair in the press or see them on television but essentially, they were gone. Headed on the road to fame and eventual fortune. They'd already started to set the world alight with a video that won the SBS Nomad competition. They were then duly pushed by ULL. Tomatine started to use the band's name and on its eventual commercial release caused a sensation. They headed into the studio with Kevin Shirley and laid down the tracks for Frogstomp, the album which was to carry them across the all-important American market and allow them to become the latest in a line of big Australian musical exports. They wound up riding reminisces in cities with legendary names like New York, Houston and Chicago, played on the evening at the MTV Awards, watched backstage as Madonna and the Red Hot Chili Peppers did their respective things and they saw themselves as lucky to be playing at the same festivals as their own idols. I mean how often do you get to meet Ozzy Osbourne? Most of all though, silverchair tried to keep their heads down as they rode the tiger of fame. But try as they might they couldn't be low-key.

In 1995 they won a string of accolades including Best Debut Single, Highest Selling Australian Single for their smash-hit Tomorrow and were lauded as Best Australian New Talent. In 1996 they were honored again by ARIA with an outstanding achievement award. This year MTV gave them the Best Video award and ARIA named them Artist of the Year. They've got a song on The Spiderman soundtrack and the ABC has even devoted prime television time to them with a documentary on their incredible international success. Now they've released their second album Freak Show and after promoting it overseas are embarking on their first fully fledged Australian national tour.

Along with Daniel Johns and Ben Gillies, Chris Joannou, the quiet bass player from silverchair, was home for a bit of well earned rest and relaxation, when we caught up with him. Along with completing his HSC he's also been hanging out and checking the scene he left behind, taking the opportunity to catch a few local bands. "Actually," Chris ventures with the enthusiasm of a peripatetic music fan, "a lot of my friends are into going to see that band Spoon, so I've been tagging along with them quite a bit. They're great. I got to go out and have a bit of a jump around to it."

With his schoolknees even though Chris will no doubt add a few stories of his own to the "chairs road exploits, which are documented for all to see on their own massive website.

"Now that we've all eighteen it's the first time we've done a full on national tour of Australia. We all think it's pretty exciting," he states enthusiastically, keen to get on with it. "All we've been doing all year is basically overseas and probably one or two shows in Australia and that was it. We had the idea of leaving the national tour to the end for Australia so we could have a bit of fun finishing up on the Freak Show tour. They're still all young gigs so that everyone can come to the gig really. You see, especially in America, all our shows are all ages as well because the legal age there is twenty-one and that gets a bit ridiculous. I mean a nineteen year old not being able to get in...so we just make them all ages."

"Which is a neat piece of planning as it allows all those fans who have helped silverchair's meteoric rise to get along to the shows. The canny management partnership of John Watson and John Donovan, former Rolling Stone journalist, appreciates that it's this all-ages fan base that buys silverchair's albums."

"It's been going quite well actually," venturers Chris,
"It was a bit of a buzz," admits Chris, "because we'd always had it in mind especially to work with Andy Wallace.

And although the man story of Aesop Rock is a bit different, his muscular body and his powerful vocals are a perfect match for the band's music. He brings a raw and energetic presence to the stage, which complements the band's already intense performance style.

Featuring tracks like "Mighty in the Morning" and "Drugs for Breakfast," their album has received critical acclaim for its unique blend of hip-hop and electronic elements. The production work of Andy Wallace is clearly evident in the album's sound, with its intricate layering and precision.

Aesop Rock is just one of the many guest artists on the album, which also includes MCs like El-P and Atmosphere. Their contributions add depth and variety to the album's overall sound.

The band's tour dates are listed on their official website, where you can also find more information about their music and upcoming events.