

INDIE LABEL LEGEND BACK IN THE FRAME

After dropping off the scene for five years, Bakery Music co-founder Sukie Clapp is back with a photo exhibition and is ready and reinvigorated for a big return to the stage **By Nuttaporn Srisirungsamakul**

It was supposed to be just a hobby, something that took shape during downtime. It was something he did for himself just to collect memories while he was on the road. But, like everything Sukie Kamol Sukosol Clapp has done, what started as a fun pastime soon turned out to be so much more.

"After I left Bakery, I realised I had no pictures from the Bakery days. Zero. None," says Sukie, referring to the indie record label he helped found, Bakery Music. When he ventured into TV and started a travel show called *Dreamchaser*, Sukie told himself he wasn't going to make the same mistake again.

As he knew nothing of photography, the novice opted for a small, inexpensive point-and-shoot digital camera that he could travel with easily on a motorbike, and simply started snapping away.

"I've never taken a class in my life so technically I don't know what the hell I am doing," says Sukie, laughing. "I shoot anything that I think is pretty, things that are appealing to me. I'm very spontaneous. I think people are very interesting. To me, that's the most interesting subject."

"I was only given one piece of advice," he says. "A friend of mine who is a professional photographer told me lighting is everything. If you go out to take pictures between 5 and 6:30pm, everything will look good because the sun is perfect. So that's the one technique I have."

What started as a hobby quickly turned into a passion. Before he knew it, he had lots of pictures. And then Facebook came along. Naturally, he started posting his photos online and the feedback was unexpectedly encouraging. "I got a lot of comments that said 'Hey, your pictures are pretty good.' And many people encouraged me to do an exhibition, so I decided, why not?"

Still, getting a "Like" on Facebook is one thing, but hosting an exhibition is a different story. Mishandled, it could appear like a rich man's lark. But Sukie has the

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gumption, and more importantly, as he puts it, the vision.

"This is my belief: With any art form, whether it's photography, whether it's music, there are two parts to it," says the heir of Siam Hotels & Resorts. "There's the technical part and there's the artistic part. Say if it's guitar, the technical part is you have to learn the notes, the chords, the scale. But then you can have somebody who technically can play really well but sucks at writing music. It is two different things. Or with painting, there are those who can paint really well but can't create their own works. They end up copying others' works and selling them in Pattaya."

"Technically, I'm not an expert," he admits, "but I do believe I have a vision of what the world is."

His first exhibition reflects what he has been up to for the past five years since leaving the music business, hence its aptly titled "Life after Music". The photos, taken with his Canon S90, are mostly from his travels around Thailand, with some from other countries. "That's what my life after music is mostly about, travelling."

"Life after Music" was originally set to open on Nov 9 but due to the floods it was postponed twice. But it has now been confirmed that the exhibition will open on Dec 13 at Sombat Permpoon Gallery, Sukhumvit Soi 1.

To promote and get people to come to his "photolicious exhibition", the man returned to his roots — music — arranging the Life after Music the Charity Acoustic Concert, also at the gallery, on Dec 19.

"At first I wanted to do something small. Maybe just me and my brother Noi [vocalist of Pru] on one guitar. But then when I called up Pod Moderndog and Palmy, they said yes. I was like 'Oh, s**t!' " says Sukie, laughing. "Now I've to do it properly with a full band and everything."

Initially he planned to make it a free concert, but the appearance of the three indie darlings is going to draw a throng of excited fans so Sukie decide to sell tickets just to limit the number of people. "The gallery can accommodate no more than 400," he says. "But the artists are helping me for free. I can't keep the money so I decided to donate half of all proceeds from ticket sales to Friends of the Asian Elephant and the other half to the Thai Red Cross for flood relief."

Having been away from the scene for five years, the former guitarist of Pru says he only misses one thing — live shows.

"What I enjoyed most was playing live or when I was watching one of our bands playing live. It always brought me to tears when we were able to move the fans. I really miss that." »





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» Asked if he continued to play guitar after he left the limelight, Sukie says, “No, I haven't. I used to have 50 guitars. I sold almost all of them. I have seven left now. About two years ago, I built a little studio in my house and I tried to play, but I couldn't. I didn't have the fire. I had no passion.”

Uninspired, Sukie sought advice from Pod, who told him to look for new bands, as fresh new faces might be able to spark the fire. However, the attempt was in vain. “I went around looking but I didn't find anybody who inspired me like when I met Pod or Flure,” he says, trailing off. “I don't want to believe that there's no one. They are out there, I just haven't found them yet.”

So does throwing the concert suggest the long-lost fire is back?

“Yes. I don't know why but it's a very good feeling for me to have because I haven't felt this for a long time,” he says. “Even last year when we [Pru and I] did Big Mountain as a one-off show, I felt that I had to force myself to play. It's only around the past six to eight months that I started to have passion for music again and felt I wanted to come home and play guitar.”

Passion is a recurring word in this interview and it has always influenced Sukie's approach to life.

“I'm an artist, which means I always lead with my passion. Whenever I lead

with business, I fail. I get bored,” he says.

Passionate and imaginative as he might be, Sukie is pragmatic. “We did Bakery not because we wanted to make money but because we wanted to make music. Money followed. I did *Dreamchaser* because I wanted to travel, then I found a way to make the business work. It's called the music business, not music fun, so at the end of the day you have to make money too. It's my profession, not my toy.”

The photo exhibition and the concert are just the teasers. All fired up, Sukie plans a comeback. But he hasn't set his sights on a Pru reunion or launching a new record label.

“Who is going to do that again? No! That's stupid!” exclaims Sukie. “Records don't sell any more. Everyone knows that by now. The old music business is broken but there's a new one and you just have to know how to adapt to it.”

This time around, the bespectacled artist is going instead for what he calls “creative events”.

“Before, you'd do an album, and then from there, you'd do concerts, touring, etc. Now, you still create new content, but instead of putting that on CD, you put it in events. Luckily, people still believe in music marketing, and in my personal opinion, a lot of events lack creativity.”

Coming back, does he feel the pressure of keeping up with the new audiences?

“If I try to compete with the kids, I'll

lose. I'm not a kid any more,” says the 42 year old. “When we played at Big Mountain, I realised 20% of the audience didn't know us. I was kind of disappointed at first. Then after I thought about it, five years ago those kids were like 13, so of course they don't know us. The show made me realise you have to grow with your audience and focus on your fan base. If we get new fans along the way, that's good. But I'm not going to make music and hope the 20 year olds will get it. That's ridiculous.”

Sukie's greater challenge seems to be taking care of the family business. “Is it my passion? No. But you have to have responsibility and obligation towards your family,” says Sukie, who is now overseeing the construction of two new hotels. “I'm getting older, so I've got to contribute and start taking an interest.”

However, his interest now clearly lies in music and his upcoming events.

“It's been a long time for me. I want to do it well. It's going to be an acoustic concert and I'll rearrange all the songs in a different way. We've been rehearsing for months. People won't be disappointed.” ■

The 'Life after Music' photography exhibition will be on view at the Sombat Permpoon Gallery from Dec 13 until Feb 5. Admission is free. Also, catch Sukie and his guests in action at the Heineken Presents Life after Music Charity Concert on Dec 19, 8pm at Sombat Permpoon Gallery. Tickets are 1,000 baht at www.thaiticketmajor.com.