

YOUR SHOW OF SHOWS

Kiwi Liam Finn
puts on a hell of
a rock concert



No matter where you find him playing, it's a good bet that Liam Finn is the best ticket in town. With the aid of looping pedals and backup singer EJ Barnes, this 25-year-old Kiwi rocker puts on one of the most creative and energetic shows around. Finn, who is no more than 5'7", fills his stage in a Tasmanian devil act that has him hopping from instrument to instrument, creating the sound of a full band right in front of his audience.

"It's definitely a mental workout as much as it is a physical workout," says Finn, son of Crowded House lead singer Neil Finn. "But that's what I enjoy about it. I kind of thrive on it." The singer, whose debut album *I'll Be Lightning* was released in Canada at the beginning of 2008, has spent the past year touring his one-man-band show around the globe.

"I feel lucky that [the show] appeals to a wide range of people. People are watching it happen off the cuff. They can see the concentration and the spontaneity of it – it draws you in a bit more, makes you feel a part of it." The energy Finn puts into his show is contagious, and is returned in full by his audience. There's a sense of danger in the performance as he juggles rhythm guitar, bass line, lead guitar and drums, layering their sounds over each other in a perilous frenzy.

"It could fall apart at any time, and I think people secretly want it to happen," says Finn. "It seems like the more drunk I am, or the more screwed up I am, the more people are onside, because it feels like they're part of the show. In these live things, you want to see somebody fall over – I do, anyway." DIY suits Finn these days. Formerly a member of the New Zealand group Betchadupa, he produced his first solo album entirely analog and on his own, performing every role on nearly every track.

"I wanted to do a record in a kind of demo style, which ultimately means I'm on my own in my bedroom. But I did it with some really lovely old gear, so it was kind of somewhere in the middle," says Finn. "You get yourself into kind of an interesting mental state when you're on your own and you don't feel like you're wasting some engineer's time. You can experiment."

I'll Be Lightning received good reviews upon its release, and *Rolling Stone* named Finn one of the top 10 artists to watch this year. But more than be watched, Liam Finn needs to be seen. You need to see him play the theremin, for instance, during a performance of "Lead Balloon," where he controls the instrument like some mad magician. Finn will spend December touring Europe and Australia. You can see him there.