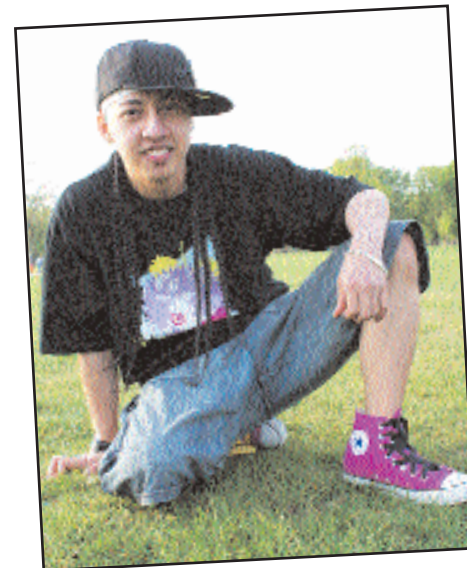




**LOOSE LIMBS:** Breakdancer A'jai Felicisimo pictured in Kensington Gardens showing off a few moves he's perfected for the stage



# DON'T STOP UNTIL THE BODY ROCKS

**EVER HEARD** of such dance moves as krumping, popping, locking or breaking?

Fear not. King's Road resident and breakdancer A'jai Felicisimo, 23, will be showing off all his street moves at one of contemporary dance's biggest gatherings of international talent.

Performing at Breakin Convention '07, A'jai and his crew, Boy Blue, will showcase alongside leading acts from as far afield as Belgium and Brazil.

Relaxing in Kensington Gardens, he explained: "I used to be so shy that my nickname was Stickman! It's hilarious to think that I was so stiff and nervous."

"Now my dancing speciality is krumping, an aggressive urban dance that involves taking it in turns to square up to opponents with confident and well-executed moves."

Out of a crew of more than 100, A'jai is one of only 13 chosen to represent Boy Blue at the convention this year.

He said: "It's a real privilege. Kenrick Sandy is our leader and he chose me for this performance not necessarily because I'm the best, but because he wants to show the diversity of styles within the group."

A'jai grew up in Manila, in the Philippines, but moved to London when he was 11 to go to school at Hurlingham and Chelsea School in Fulham.

His brother Jeffrey, 25, first got him into dancing when he was 14 and soon after he was entering himself into competitions without telling his parents.

**WHETHER IT'S IN THE STREET, IN THE CLUBS OR AT PRIVATE GET-TOGETHERS, A'JAI FELICISIMO CAN KNOCK 'EM DEAD WITH HIS BREAKDANCING SKILLS. A BREATHLESS CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN WATCHED HIM IN ACTION IN KENSINGTON GARDENS**

He said: "I've got to know myself so much better through dancing."

"I'm much more confident now and more in tune with my artistic side."

"I always wanted to be Boy Blue, and after a performance at the Lyric Theatre in 2005, Kenrick came up to my bro and said: 'Tell A'jai he's in.' I started in November that year and it was such an experience."

"We perform anywhere, in the streets, in clubs, in private venues. I was also one of the five that were chosen to do a TV ad for Choice FM."

Founded in 2001, Boy Blue was the vision of Kenrick Sandy, 26. Known globally as H2O for his liquid-like body movements, he recently won the Olivier Award for performances of Pied Piper at Theatre Royal Stratford East.

A'jai said: "He is an inspirational dancer and one of the top choreographers in the world."

"He takes kids from anywhere and

**'WE MOTIVATE EACH OTHER MENTALLY AND HELP EACH OTHER THROUGH OUR STRUGGLES'**

harnesses their talent.

"But it's not only about dancing in our crew. We encourage each other to stay out of drugs and violence."

"We motivate each other mentally and help each other through our struggles. It's like a family, we look after each other."

The support is so far reaching that members are encouraged to promote themselves beyond the group. "Kenrick sees Boy Blue as a launching pad for us to realise our ambitions," added A'jai.

"I'm writing my own production which I hope to be out for next year. It's a very modern musical but I don't want to reveal any more just yet."

"As for the performance on May 7, it's going to be a very tribal eight-minute set with six or seven tracks especially composed. So don't miss it."

● *Breakin' Convention runs over Bank Holiday weekend, May 5-7 at Saddler's Wells Theatre, Rosebery Avenue, EC1. Day pass £20 (under 18s and concs £12). Two-day pass £32 (£18). Three-day pass £48/£27. For more details call 0870 737 7737 or visit: www.breakinconvention.com or www.sadlerswells.com*

# INDEPENDENT BANDS NOW LIGHTYEARS AHEAD



**WINNING SMILE:** Chris Russell and vocalist George Owens of The Lightyears are looking to break into the big time

**THE ASCENT** into the rock stratosphere has already begun for one budding band, The Lightyears.

The Chiswick-based threesome are one of only four bands to make the 36-strong shortlist of the first-annual Indy Music Awards after turning heads at the Rock Garden club in Covent Garden on Wednesday night last week.

Lead singer and guitarist George Owens, 26, said: "The Indy Awards highlight the fact that being an unsigned bands does not make you a failure."

"Look at Koopa, for example. They are the first unsigned band ever to have a top-40 hit. That's proof that the music industry has changed."

"Record labels used to pick bands up when they were just starting out, but now they force you to do it all on your own before backing you."

Nominated for best pop/rock group, the unsigned band have toured South Korea, the east coast of America and will be playing at Glastonbury later this year.

Chris Russell, 26, on keyboard, bass and vocals, said: "We've been playing together since we were 13 and have recently finished our fourth album, *Mission Creep*, with our drummer and producer, Tony Lyons, 29."

"We played Glastonbury in 2005 for a few hundred people at a vegan café, who then asked us to play every night. This year we've been invited to play on the Small World stage."

"It's fantastic to be involved, as far as I'm concerned. Glastonbury is the greatest musical showcase in the world. All we need now is a good manager that can help us play to even bigger crowds."

The winner from each of the nine categories will be chosen by a panel of industry experts at the Clapham Grand on Tuesday, May 15.

There is no cash prize but the recognition and exposure that bands receive in the process has already proven to be a remarkable success.

Jeremy Glover, founder of the Indy Awards, said: "Early research shows that 45 per cent of the shortlisted bands have already been contacted by record labels, managers or agents. Bands desperately need this kind of encouragement to overcome early doubts."

"I helped promote Battle of the Bands at the Rock Garden for five years and it was amazing to see how bands' talent would grow after every round."

Glover set up the awards by asking top venues and promoters to nominate the best four acts they booked in 2006.

More than 120 venues and promoters responded, equivalent to roughly 40,000 bands that were considered for nomination.

The venues in London included My Place in Trebovir Road in Earl's Court, who nominated The Brent Flood, Hopper and Drivin' Me Crazy; The Halfmoon in Lower Richmond Road, Putney, who put forward Suzerain, Marner Brown, Ashdowne and This Time Oblivion; and The Cobden Club in Kensal Road who liked Tyler.

Of the 500-odd bands that made the first cut, 36 then progressed to the next stage thanks to online votes from the public. 1.5 million hits and 30,000 votes later, and 36 bands remained.

Glover said: "The awards were created to make music promotion a more democratic process, as well as giving us a chance to acknowledge promoters and venues that make it all possible."

The People's Choice Award will be given to the artist that has received the most votes.

Fan of the Year Award will go to the most phenomenal fan described in 150-word essays submitted by the bands.

Visit: [www.indyawards.co.uk](http://www.indyawards.co.uk) for regular updates.

Christian McLaughlin & Sam Berman



**STRUMMER BOY:** Chris Russell hits the right chord at the Rock Garden in Covent Garden last Wednesday night

# PUNK MASTER TAKES MICE TO HIS DEMENTED CIRCUS

WHAT a glorious mess.

Mark E Smith, the unruly Mancunian ringleader of The Fall, has teamed up with Andi Toma and Jan St Werner of German techno-freaks Mouse On Mars to create one hell of a strange new record, released by London-based Domino on May 21.

Or in the words of St Werner: "We wanted the album to have the energy we would imagine a futuristic band playing grime or ska or soca would have."

From the opening song, Von Südenfed (even with the name that would fit a cough syrup) sound like a demented joke. A slinky, dirty electro beat is introduced until Mark E Smith laconically wades in.

The beat is increased, he starts getting feisty, the beat gets heavier, the snare drops in and the bass line takes over and locks in the brain-scrambling nonsense of Mr Fall.

By the time you've got your head around it, you've digested a full diet of dubstep and disco.

But this unique side project does more than just take a spin, via Dusseldorf and Salford. It combines the attack of early-millennia club music with Smith's free-associating visionary wordplay.

And that's the beauty of this affair. Rather than casting Smith as the ranting, drunken, abusive circus freak, the mice from Mars take time to craft ideal sonic backdrops for him, that cradle his bizarre contributions.

The support inspires Smith to produce some of his finest – and most nuanced – singing in quite awhile.

And for those who think they've got Smith pegged, check out *The Rhinohead*, which throws the punk elder into new territory with its shortwave stomp – only to discover a wistful, even tender, side to the scoundrel.

As *Tromatic Reflexions* unfolds, it's clear that the trio are pushing the boundaries of musical logic, with synths, samplers and sequencers all firing off like rebellious infants.

Geoff Cowart



**TRUE MISFIT:** Mark E Smith makes Von Südenfed growl

