



Members of T-Rex (from left) Junaidi Kusnong, Bryan De Rozario, Ahmad Khaliq and Axel Serik will release their debut album, Volume 1, at Laneway. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Laneway Festival Singapore 2017

From school project to big stage

T-Rex, a band formed for a final-year recital, will play at one of the largest music events here

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Music Correspondent

When then-Lasalle College of the Arts music undergraduate Junaidi Kusnong roped in several musician friends for his final-year recital in 2015, all he wanted was to get a good grade.

Little did he think that the makeshift band, T-Rex, would be performing at Laneway, one of Singapore's largest music festivals. The band take the stage tomorrow at Gardens by the Bay.

"It was all about the school project then and, I thought, once it was over, we would just disband," says the 30-year-old multi-instrumentalist.

The school had other ideas though.

His lecturers were impressed enough by the band's intricate performance and composition – their

all-instrumental repertoire is a heady mix of progressive rock, jazz and experimental music – that they invited them to do an encore performance at the school's Lunch-time Concert Series of shows.

From there, a buzz quickly built up around the band's blistering live sets and they started getting invites to gigs at local festivals such as the 100 + 50 Festival in 2015 and the Esplanade's Baybeats and Mosaic Music Weekend last year.

All the members in T-Rex are seasoned musicians who have played for several home-grown bands with genres ranging from post-rock to jazz.

Junaidi, who now teaches music and runs Plugged Studios, a music studio, with his wife, has played in bands such as Amateur Takes Control and Temple Of Horses.

Guitarist Ahmad Khaliq, 28, also a music teacher, plays in Anechois and Silhouette; while bass player Axel Serik, a photographer, plays in Navire Creux and Sphaeras.

Last year, they added 20-year-old saxophonist Bryan De Rozario – a full-time national serviceman who also plays in The Warriors and What Is Hip – to the line-up.

Junaidi had named the band T-

Rex after watching Hollywood flick Jurassic World (2015). The members later found out that there was a 1970s glam rock band headed by the late British singer Marc Bolan that shared the same name, albeit with a different stylised spelling, T. Rex.

"By then, it was too late. We were starting to play shows and we decided to just stick with the name," Junaidi says.

And while the band will release their debut album, Volume 1, at Laneway, they are already thinking ahead.

Ahmad says: "We're working on songs for the second album, Volume Two. We want to take our performances beyond just local gigs and hope to tour out of Singapore soon."

But first, Laneway.

All four members say they are starting to have jitters about playing one of their biggest shows to date.

"We all get very nervous when we take the stage," says Junaidi. "But once we start playing, the adrenaline rush takes over and we let the music flow."

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BOOK IT / LANEWAY FESTIVAL SINGAPORE 2017

WHERE: The Meadow, Gardens by the Bay, 18 Marina Gardens Drive

WHEN: Tomorrow, from 10am

ADMISSION: \$185 for standard tickets, \$166.50 a ticket for purchases of five or more tickets, from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg); \$200 at the door

INFO: Ticket holders can collect their wristbands today at H&M (Orchard Building) from 10am to 10pm. Each wristband comes with a 20 per cent discount for one item at H&M. Bring along a ticket or a clear print-out of the e-mail confirmation; a valid NRIC, passport or FIN card; and the credit card used for the purchase. For more details, go to singapore.lanewayfestival.com