



Technology and lead Scientist don't mix

IT'S fitting to take a backward glance when discussing a retrospective gig.

Kim Salmon, frontman of 1980s Perth underground band The Scientists, can't resist reflecting on how the music scene has changed in his 30 or so years in the business, which has seen him play guitar in The Beasts of Bourbon and lead The Surrealists.

It's The Scientists that gets Generation X going, though. The band influenced grunge greats such as Mudhoney, Nirvana, Jon Spencer and, more recently, The White Stripes.

But being a highly regarded musician didn't stop Salmon losing his day job in a music distribution warehouse.

It might have something to do with the shift towards music downloads and piracy whittling away at musicians' royalties.

Married with two children

and speaking from the Melbourne base that he's called home for the past 18 years, Salmon says not only were vinyl albums and their accompanying artwork more exciting than downloading tunes off the internet, they also were more likely to provide a livelihood for artists.

"It's a funny thing, people's attitudes to music," he says.

"People are saying music should be free, which kind of ignores the fact that it's somebody's livelihood.

"A photographer wouldn't have a bar of it.

"Technology has changed things for a lot of industries.

"Anarchy is a great thing but you can't just have it in small sectors, where 'property is theft' for musicians but not for everybody else.

"If I'm able to make a living out of something I've put so

much effort into, all the better."

Salmon says his musical tastes have expanded with time, with keyboard, samples and harmonica now part of the blend.

"If you say you can play guitar, it's been devalued somewhat over the years: it's not thought of being a skill, although when you think about how most people play it, it isn't," he laughs.

"It can be as sophisticated or as degraded as you want it to be."

The Scientists played a 'Don't Look Back' concert at the Becks Music Box as part of the Perth International Arts Festival last week.

And fans of The Surrealists will be delighted to know a reunion is planned in the next few months.



Perth's underground band The Scientists