ONCE DESCRIBED AS A ONE-MAN MUSIC INDUSTRY, MULTI-TALENTED TODD RUNDGREN IS STEPPING OUT WITH JOE JACKSON FOR A GIG IN THE CITY. STEVE PUMFREY TALKS TO THE RUNT

Tod Rundgren laughs at the suggestion that he might fancy a cameo part in Desperate Housewives after the producers picked one of his songs for the show’s soundtrack. “It’s not a show I’ve watched,” he confesses. “Television is too banal here, anyway, I don’t know what they would do there.”

That’s the thing with “The Runt”: he never does what is expected. His early 1970s records are shockingly good, combining Californian harmonies with rock guitar and Beatles-esque production. Problem is, Rundgren has a habit of deviating his career with ambitious, idiosyncratic production experiments that antagonize the critics and confuse his fans.

His breakthrough album, Something/Anything, included the pop nuggets Hello It’s Me and I Saw The Light. The follow-up, A Wizard, A True Star, was, well, different.

“I suppose it started with the Beatles,” he says down the line from Hawaii. “They were waiting for the next one and instead I came up with A Wizard, A True Star which included echoes, feedback, even my dogs barking.”

The record company hated it. “It was more difficult to be eclectic in the 1970s because there was too much commercialism, but I was already way out there.” Rundgren then had a lengthy digression with pop-rock group Utopia, which resulted in a lot of entertaining albums but not a lot of success, locking him more tightly into the image of a cult star.

Lillas, released last year, was his first album of all new songs for 10 years. “It was much better received in the UK than over here. It was gratifying to get such a good reaction.”

During the development of Lillas, Rundgren produced material for his internet patrons and toured a “greatest hits” package – played in bossa nova style. He is also a renowned producer: Meat Loaf’s Bat Out Of Hell is just one of his credits. His latest collaboration is with sharp-suited 80s boy Joe Jackson, who guests with him at De Montfort Hall in June.

Todd said: “I didn’t really know Joe, but he invited me on stage for a couple of songs at the Delacourt Theatre in Central Park, New York, and we hit it off.”

“In the blink of an eye, we’re doing five weeks in the States and five weeks in Europe, supported by the string quartet, Ethel. We can certainly promise eclecticism.”

The Something/Anything album was well received by the record company and had hits. “They were waiting for the next one and instead I came up with A Wizard, A True Star which included echoes, feedback, even my dogs barking.”

The record company hated it. “It was more difficult to be eclectic in the 1970s because there was too much commercialism, but I was already way out there.” Rundgren then had a lengthy digression with pop-rock group Utopia, which resulted in a lot of entertaining albums but not a lot of success, locking him more tightly into the image of a cult star.

Lillas, released last year, was his first album of all new songs for 10 years. “It was much better received in the UK than over here. It was gratifying to get such a good reaction.”

During the development of Lillas, Rundgren produced material for his internet patrons and toured a “greatest hits” package – played in bossa nova style. He is also a renowned producer: Meat Loaf’s Bat Out Of Hell is just one of his credits. His latest collaboration is with sharp-suited 80s boy Joe Jackson, who guests with him at De Montfort Hall in June.

Todd said: “I didn’t really know Joe, but he invited me on stage for a couple of songs at the Delacourt Theatre in Central Park, New York, and we hit it off.”

“In the blink of an eye, we’re doing five weeks in the States and five weeks in Europe, supported by the string quartet, Ethel. We can certainly promise eclecticism.”

THE WEEK 12 Bar Best Performance Award winners Dark Side of the Wall set off with a new line-up on Saturday. They are appearing at the Nicholas Camberlain School, Bedworth.

Then they are playing at Stoney Stanton Social Club on April 23. Get tickets by ringing Jim on 01450 272 492.

‘Taj’ Mahal and his distinctive blend of blues and world music comes to De Montfort Hall on June 24. The timing is unfortunate, because Robert Cray is making one of his extremely rare appearances at the Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham on the same night! The Taj Mahal tickets cost £15.50 and £17.50. Call the box office on 0116 233 3111. The Robert Cray tickets cost £22.50 and are available on 0115 989 5555.

Another concert lined up for June 24 is Flamenco guitarist Juan Martin at The Y. Tickets cost £12/£10 on 0116 235 7066.

Harpist Doug Jay and his talented band The Blue Jays were on form at the Musical Institute recently. He has a new CD out entitled Jackpot.

Meanwhile, Rollo Markee appears with his Tailshakers on Saturday at the Musician.

Howard Smith and the Razors play at the same venue on April 23, and the Smokehouse Blues and Smokestack Blues Bands play on April 30.