"One of the core things of this record was that everyone was working together live in the room. People have forgotten that you can get five people in a room and make music. You can start rehearsing in the morning and by lunchtime the record is done. It's not that difficult to do. It's how lots of people's favourite records were made. It doesn't happen often enough."

at odds with the more popular rave and dance music of the time.

Their first LP RAINTOWN was the first of five top albums and the band, who were named after a Steely Dan song, went on to notch up an impressive 18 top 40 singles.

The band eventually disbanded in 1994 and various members branched out into new areas. While Ross carried on as a solo artist and songwriter, his wife started acting and drummer Dougie Vipond began a long and successful career as a television presenter.

Deacon Blue has reformed on several occasions over the last years, and despite the loss of guitarist Graeme Kelling to pancreatic cancer in 2004, the band still perform whenever their schedules permit to this day.

"I've enjoyed it more in the last 10 years than I did at the time," admits Ross. "It seems like more of a bonus now. It's a lovely position to be in, having material people want to hear. It's great. Sometimes songwriting can be stressful. Going on as Deacon Blue can be dead simple. You go on, play the gig and there you go!"

Ross might have swapped regular appearance on Top Of The Tops for being something of a backroom boy, but he remains happy to be a songwriter. "Most of the time it is absolutely, totally enjoyable," he says. "You get the occasional session where it doesn't work out, but songwriting is a much bigger thing in the music business than it was 20 years ago. Good songwriters are encouraged to co-write. You get a lot of things going on between old guys, like myself, and younger artists."

"The songwriting room can be quite a confessional room," he adds. "People do share their fears. Very often, you are working with songwriters who say they're thinking about labels or managers. The kids today have their head screwed on. When I was their age, I didn't ask anybody anything. That's why they will be successful. They're determined."

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Ross says he hasn't got "a bad word about either" Nanci Griffith or Jamie Cullum.

"It was my first trip to Nashville. A good friend of mine, Edwina Hayes had lived in Nashville for about a year, put me in touch with loads of people. She said there's Nanci Griffith, of course!"

"I dropped Nanci an email and she got back, saying she was happy to get a day in but warned she was not writing anything, because she was burned out and angry at George Bush. I thought that was a challenge. On my last day in Nashville, I went up to her house. Slowly a song emerged. It really sparked a friendship. One thing led to another and she cut the song. It was really nice."

He might have a track record to die for, but Ross still claims he knows "nothing" about songwriting as an art. "I'm not one of those people who has theories about things," he says. "Sometimes I will feel it needs a chorus. It's just what you hear. I don't have any set rules."

Ross and McIntosh have been happily married for 19 years and now have three daughters. There might be numerous fashion faux pas from their halcyon days on YouTube, but Ross says their daughters remain unfazed about their famous parents.

"When they came to Deacon Blue gigs eventually, they were the ones who didn't know the songs," he says. "With McIntosh Ross they have really enjoyed the show. All their friends enjoyed it. The kids are very accepting of it. I have three daughters. My youngest plays and sings guitar. She enjoys the Dixie Chicks. They all love music, which is great. " ***Jamie Hailstone***