



Global crunch the real thing for boomers

TIM BOREHAM

ENDURING music veteran Russell Morris — made famous by his 1969 psychedelic classic hit *The Real Thing* — has experienced all the ups and downs of the rock 'n' roll industry.

These included a lean period in the 1980s when he struggled to get 30 people to a gig and promoters stopped returning his calls.

But these days it's plunging global share markets — rather than sound checks, renegade drummers or the industry's renowned excesses — that are causing the 63-year-old stalwart to lose sleep.

Like thousands of fellow baby boomers coming to the end of their working lives, Morris faces the "nightmare" of maintaining a retirement nest-egg at a time

when markets are fluctuating wildly on the reports of the debt problems afflicting European and US economies.

The generation's fears have translated to record deposit flows to the banks, and a rush to financial houses to seek guidance on how investors can protect their capital.

Annuity products that guarantee income over a set period have become popular again.

The community's new-found caution is good news for fixed-interest brokers such as FIIG Securities, with the firm signing up 250 clients a month without any advertising. "Pre GFC we would be lucky to sign up 50 a month," says executive director of

markets John Lechte.

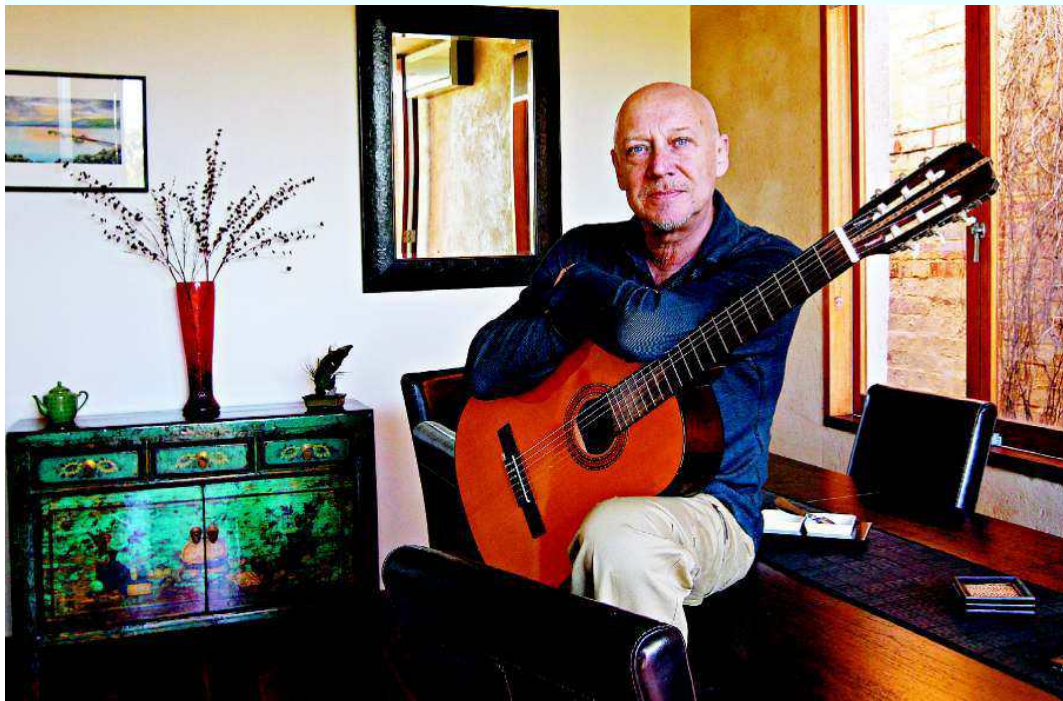
But for Morris and his retiring contemporaries, it's a confronting situation.

"It doesn't help my nerves that every day you think it's coming back then you hear some horrible news from overseas," he said. "Some days I want to roll myself in a blanket and not hear anything."

At least Morris faces a conundrum that so many impoverished musos would love to have: how to maintain a respectable super balance. "A musician's life is a self-indulgent life and you do waste a lot of money doing stupid things," he said.

Morris's self-managed fund was respectable, until the latest

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Baby boomer musician Russell Morris, famous for his hit song *The Real Thing*, ponders his investment strategy in a falling sharemarket

PAUL LOUGHAN



Morris in the 1960s

Rock'n'roll stocks a real worry

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downturn pared what were some handsome profits by about half.

"Now it's like one of those cousins you have for dinner but you don't really like them because they're not affluent enough."

Armed with a "good adviser" and the unmusical attribute of an accounting degree, Morris has long invested in the sharemarket: mainly blue chips such as BHP Billiton but also a few speccies "which have fallen in value so much I might as well keep them".

Morris's long-term interest in investing means he's already experienced the vicissitudes, having dived into the "big blue ocean" of the 1980s boom. "Then 1987 happened and suddenly the ocean turned very cold," he says.

While he won't panic, he's switched one-third of his portfolio

to bank preference shares (a form of fixed-interest investment) and is considering bank and corporate bonds. He would like to buy property, but is constrained by rules banning geared investments in a

'I don't want to sound like a frightened sheep'

RUSSELL MORRIS

super fund. "It's unnerving but I don't want to sound like one of those frightened sheep," he says.

"(Shares) should be the best investment, but unfortunately it has turned into a nightmare.

"Australian fundamentals are pretty good and we should hold up but unfortunately we are affected by overseas conditions."

While many pre-retirees face an unwanted extension of their working lives as their super balances dwindle, Morris is still happily touring with fellow 60s rockers Darryl Cotton, Jim Keays and Brian Cadd. . Once again, that gives him a head start. "In the music business you don't plan to retire, you're forced to retire because audiences drop off."

Since *The Real Thing* — produced by Ian "Molly" Meldrum and written by Johnny Young — Morris has enjoyed a virtually uninterrupted career as a behind-the-scenes songwriter and as the frontman for groups including the Russell Morris Band and Russell Morris and the Rubes.

His retirement fortunes have been helped by the Seven Network, which used his famed baby boomer anthem for its AFL coverage.