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Gary Lucas under the skin of Dracula

by Michel Hernandez

The US guitarist Gary Lucas defied the gods and brought back to life one of the darkest and most terrifying creatures in the literature of horror. Sprung from the imagination of the Irish writer Bram Stoker, Count Dracula did not need to rise from his coffin in order to return from the [realm of the] dead, nor did he have to sink his fangs into any sensual female necks. He did it through the guitar of this legendary musician, who, like the most celebrated vampire from Transylvania, has been “condemned” to immortality.

Lucas, former member of the emblematic band Captain Beefheart, and co-author with Jeff Buckley of famous songs such as **Grace** and **Mojo Pin**, arrived last Friday at the Chaplin Cinema to provide music for the Spanish version of **Dracula** (1931), directed by the North American George Melford.

With more than 20 records, Lucas is one of the world-class cult guitarists. During his career, he has shared the stage with sacred monsters of rock and roll such as Patti Smith – the great punk poet –, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop and Frank Zappa, among many others. And if we're talking about monsters, we can't fail to mention his work at the head of the band Gods and Monsters, whose name was borrowed from the film **The Bride of Frankenstein** (1935).

Described by the New York Times as “the guitarist of a thousand ideas,” he has blended with a goldsmith's passion different genres from all over the world, ranging from gospel music, to Indian music, blues, electronic and experimental.

His attraction to the legends of the creatures that inhabit the other world has led him to create movie sound tracks for live performance accompanying screenings of fantasy or horror movies that have made history. One of his most outstanding productions was the music elaborated for the film **The Golem** (1920), by the German director Paul Wegener, and he also created **Sounds of the Surreal and Monsters of the Id**. Nominated once for the Grammy, Lucas has added a “new chapter of horror” to his career, with his accompaniment to Dracula on his trip onto the screens of the Latin American New Cinema Festival.

What moved you to put music onto a mythical personality such as Dracula?

“Though it's about a horrible personality trapped by destiny, I like Dracula because since i was a little boy, I was attracted by vampires. I saw them as very exciting and I loved vampiresses because they seemed to me very erotic. The horror movies they make today, unlike the cinema of another time, are unpleasant, too graphic and bloody. They show everything and leave nothing to the imagination.”

What is the moment in your career that you remember with most satisfaction?

“The collaboration with Jeff Buckley was my most exciting because with Lou Reed and Iggy Pop I was

mainly an advisor. But with Jeff, I was creating something new in the world. Many people still come up to me and talk about the tunes we made together. This is the most important feeling I can have as a musician and a human being: to find people whom I have been able to influence through my songs.”

A group of well-known US musicians has recently demanded from Obama that they stop using music as a form of torture in the Guantanamo Naval Base...

“I fully support that demand. It's outrageous that songs that have been designed to bring pleasure should be converted into instruments of torture. It's really diabolical. The blockade of Cuba is also terrible. I hope that that policy changes. Hopefully, Obama will know to do the right thing, and end it.”

What do you find attractive in Cuban music?

“I have listened to Buena Vista Social Club a lot, and I love Company Segundo, apart from this presentation at the Festival, I would love to perform a concert in Cuba.”

What are your principal creative concerns?

“I want to continue my work. I have been on this path a long time and I love this life of creating spectacles. That's my happiness. Recently I made a blues record with an Indian artist (Najma Akhtar). I am always interested in knowing new musicians from every country and seeing how the music evolves.”