



INTERVIEW WITH

GARY LUCAS

Song: Gary it is a privilege to sit down with you today. How's the weather in New York holding up? Still in a deep freeze, and no I won't tease you with the temperature out west today... 74 degrees.

Gary: It is still fridge here. Snow, cold, and ice. Certainly sounds better out where you are!

Song: Your energy is deep, and vast experiences with multiple musicians and influences is impressive. I for one am a huge fan of yours and Peter Hamill's works. From what I have heard of the album, Other World- ethereal symphonic psychedelic doesn't even begin to take this into the outer reaches of our universal expanse. With influences connecting you to Captain Beefheart, and other-worldly psychedelic measures... you and Hammill produced a 14 track masterful artistic work, in a relatively short time in a partnership that seemed well over due. Settle in with your cup of hot tea, to keep you warm, and let's begin.

Song: I heard as a teen you were rather an Anglofile? Were you switched at birth, or did the stork drop you off at the wrong residence... better yet wrong country?

Gary: (Laughs) No, no it was just as a teen the sound of the English at that time- it sounded as if it had more energy in experimenting. Bands like Pink Floyd, Family, Dr. Strangely Strange and more, have that sound I love, psychedelic.

Song: What was it in the mid 60's as a young teen that drew you to the sounds of the UK?

Gary: Think of "Strawberry Fields Forever." There were a plethora of psychedelic bands and maybe it sounds a bit snobbish of me, but it was the shininess which appealed to my sensibility, there was a sparkling during that period.

Song: Why over the music produced stateside or abroad? What was the UK appeal at that time?

Gary: This isn't to say there wasn't an equal grade to it in the USA, but in England the music was being covered every week. The music magazine, Melody Maker, was out weekly. You would maybe read something in the US once a month in Hit Parade or Rolling Stone, but in the UK it was constant.

Song: Explain if you can in further detail this difference, and is this difference still relative today?

Gary: Simply put over there music was and is a way of life, in the States it was more like...(pauses) background noise. In some ways it still is that way. The arts as a whole have always been more widely accepted and encouraged in Europe. England regarded music I feel, higher. I would say the difference today is, I believe its harder to make it in the industry. There are so many fantastic artists out there, but they are buried somewhere online. Young people seem to be falling into conformity, they aren't 'busting out!' The focus is on social networking, instead of the arts. Ask yourself, how much real innovation is coming into new music? Is it jaded? How many times can we do new chords, is there a burnout in the arts? It is a good question.

I believe people will always try new things, but their efforts will be buried in all that's online. Odds now are even more astronomical. Maybe, sure some real core fans, but overall real excellence will be rewarded, but does that mean real excellence? Manifestations are good to what you like, it's your badge. It's just my criteria when I hear something my spine will tingle... if its got something. That grain of the voice and instrumentation... as I've always been someone who recognizes patterns in music. Let it be said, music most have a sensuality to

Song: Time moves on, you're style of music and instrument continues its development. What are some of the influences bouncing around you?

Gary: As a guitarist I am just drawn to that early work of blues, the early R&B. I began taking guitar when I was 9 years old, (laughs). I think I took lessons for about a month. I remember how here in the States they'd allow a little R&B into the top 40 play list. Steady pitches, holiest sound, sacred music... uses this- it's wailing man, crying the sounds of ecstasy emotion in a song. The sounds were gritter, keeping it real. Then came for me the uncharted psychedelic element, there's a lot to play, those sounds of a guitar jabbering away...that is organic.

Song: As each occurrence seemed to bounce itself forward, you and Peter seemed destined almost to create this collaborative album, Other World. Tell me, when the first occasion had presented itself, were you already knowledgeable of Peter Hammill's work, or was that your first indoctrination? What was it about his style that intrigued you?

Gary: In 1970's, I took my first trip overseas performing lead electric guitar in the European premiere of Leonard Bernstein's, "Mass," in Vienna with the Yale Symphony Orchestra.

On the way back home I stopped in London for the very first time, it was time for me to finally experience it live for myself. I wanted to hopefully get some interviews, and submit them maybe to the magazine, Zoo World.

As I found my way down Oxford Street I wandered into a store and met a fellow enthusiast who told me Peter would be playing that week, at the Friar's in Aylesbury.

So, yes I was already knowledgeable, and a fan.

I then rang up my pal, ZigZag editor Pete Frame, and he put me up for a few days so I could catch Peter Hammill's concert.

It was incredible, to say the least. After his set I went backstage to interview him, and found him exceedingly nice and friendly.

Song: Did you at that time say anything to Peter about your guitar playing?

Gary: (laughs) No, I was too shy. I wasn't (pauses) I felt that I wasn't ready.

Song: Not ready?

Gary: I was very young and scared at that time seriously. The confidence though, soon after.

Song: You and Peter had another meeting in May of 2005 in London, you were at the Royal Festival Hall I believe with, UK journalist Mike Barnes and former Propaganda vocalist Claudia Brucken. I think you all were attending Van Der Graaf Generator's historic UK reunion concert? Then another couple of years pass and through modern technology you and Peter find each other again. Were you looking for him? Was he looking for you?

Gary: Yes, we were at the Royal Festival Hall and Peter was just as compelling. (pauses)

If I recall, it was through Twitter we reconnected and I just said, "How are you, remember me?"

Song: Who asked whom first or was it a mutual collaboration that came into being?

Gary: I asked if he would be up for a collaboration, he knew of my work. He said yes.

Song: The invite to Peter's studio in Bath is extended. What is going through your mind?

Gary: My wife and I were already over there in England, we were visiting. I remember taking the train, and I was in a very 'zen' state. Having logged in over 100,000 hours on guitar, I already knew I could and can play in my sleep.

Song: You arrive to Peter's studio and...?

Gary: Without pre-conceived notions, I had brought with me some pieces prepared. Peter had some pieces, as well.

A cup of tea, and we know we want to do our best, letting go we just see what happens.

We listened, we over dubbed some parts, and the culmination produced what I am very pleased with. We threw all of it out on the table, and came away with so much.

Song: Will you collaborate again, and expect another album since there was so much produced and was keen to your ears?

Gary: I want to. Peter is a great collaborator, just a nice, nice person and creates only incredible.

Song: Favorite tea?

Gary: Twinings- Butter Mint herbal tea. (laughs) I just order six boxes online- can't find it here in the states.

Song: In your own words give a brief description of yours and Peter's album, Other World.

Gary: Psychedelic Stereophonic- indescribably delicious music that continually comes to you in your collective dreams. Other World.

Links: <http://garylucas.com/www/bio/>

Purchase Touched by Grace by Gary Lucas: <http://www.amazon.com/Touched-Grace-Time.../dp/1908279451>

The Collaborative album by Peter Hammill and Gary Lucas, Other World is available on Amazon:

http://www.amazon.com/Other-World-Peter-Hammill-Lucas/dp/B00HYTYPTM/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1391262977&sr=8-2&keywords=other+world+album

Twinings Butter Mint Tea: <HTTP://twinings.co.uk/twinings-herbal-sensations/butter-mint-sensation>

