
New Album

Posted by theguy - 2008/03/26 05:49

The New Album:

For me the process of recording and composing this music has been such a learning experience. At the beginning I felt as though I could hear the album from start to finish; that every aspect of each piece was well thought out, and that all there was left to do was record.

However, in several sessions, the allure of a new direction proved to be more appealing. The first time I heard many of these tunes outside of my mind was the day of the recording. Spontaneity in the studio has produced some of my most memorable musical moments, regarding composition and interpretation.

This project was to be a cohesive representation of who I am as an artist, yet it has become much more than simply that. This album captures the process of finding my musical identity.

My style is a reflection of my taste in music. I gravitate towards hypnotic grooves of neo-soul and R&B, as well as, the music of seminal guitar heros of the past and present. The mesmerizing ambiance of electronic and experimental music is also very appealing to me.

My sound is a confluence of my favorite aspects of different styles. I combine strong grooves with unique harmonic textures and a very lyrical approach to melody. My music is subtly sophisticated, enough so to satisfy an aficionado, yet appealing to the casual (non-musician) listener.

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Re:New Album

Posted by cheburashka - 2008/03/30 15:45

I gave you good karma! I like what you say about your style its very truthful and interesting.

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Re:New Album

Posted by theguy - 2008/09/04 18:45

It is done. They album will be available on this site via PayPal early next week, as well as, through cdbaby.com

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Re:New Album

Posted by theguy - 2008/11/04 19:02

At the beginning of the Only Human project I was convinced that I knew exactly what I wanted to create. I was driven to create my first cohesive recording, something that was to be an accurate reflection of my style, to put to tape all that I had learned thus far regarding playing the guitar. I could hear the entire album in my head. Every nuance, every tune, every arrangement was thought out, or so I thought. I simply had to find the right rhythm section and record the material.

The reality, as I would slowly, and rather arduously come to discover, was something quite different. The reality, quite simply was that I knew nothing, and this project would be the vehicle of my discovering my musical self, as well as, how to produce a project, compose cohesive, effective, interesting compositions and arrangements. And form some semblance of a clue as to how to play the guitar.

The title Only Human is my reference to the artistic process, and the way in which every (seemingly insignificant) event affects everything else. The events of ones day affects their mood and ergo their note choice. A sequence of events leads to composition of a tune otherwise never conceived. A mistake in the session seals the fate of a recording etc.

The rhythm section on Only Human is comprised of:

David Livolsi – Bass (Jazz Is Dead, John Scofield Bump album)

Tyger MacNeal – Drums (Jose Feliciano touring drummer)

Chris Coogan – Keyboards (John Lennon Songwriting competition winner, Good News Gospel Director)

Chris Coogan and I met rather fortuitously at the Silvermine Art Guild in Connecticut. He came up to me and said something to the effect of:

"I feel like I should know you. You are a musician aren't you?"

Soon thereafter we composed An Interlude In Bleu together.

I have known Andy Abel since 2004. I first met him at a club in which his band Tangled Vine was performing. I was slightly inebriated and miffed at the fact that they wouldn't let me sit in. The temerity! In 2005 my first guitar teacher, Mike Gallelo, to record a demo, referred me to Abel Productions. I arrived unaware. The door opened and we were quite surprised to see one another.

"Hey! It's you! Sorry we couldn't let you sit in that night." He said.

"No worries. Sorry I was a belligerent drunk that night." I replied.

Andy was an invaluable contributor to this project. Not only is he a competent engineer, fluent in the pertinent programs and recording techniques. The fact that he is an educated and superlative guitarist enabled him to assist me in production in a way unlike most any other Producer/Engineer.

I spoke to Andy (early 2007) and told him that I wanted an album worthy of comparisons to those of my heroes.

"I want it to groove, I don't care what it cost." Those were my naïve, immortal words.

Tyger MacNeal and Dave Livolsi, without question, would be my rhythm section.

Dave and Tyger play together often. During the time this album was recorded they were playing in T. Lavits' band. In a trio setting it is important to have a rhythm section that have a similar musical philosophy. In their case I would describe it as sympathetic to my own: an awareness of the importance of the groove, a sensitivity concerning dynamics, and a musicality allowing the overall composition to hold more importance than sporadic, virtuoso flashes. At the time of writing this I am cognizant of my condescension; they lay down the groove and I shred all over it, very musical indeed.

Re:New Album

Posted by theguy - 2008/11/05 22:03

Intro

This ambient E Lydian piece is the first track of Only Human. Initially called Jejune Affair, it is the first of a two-part piece. It sets the mood for Icarus. The concept of a solo piece preceding the a strong, ensemble tune is certainly nothing new; Ah Via Musicom/Ciffs of Dover (Eric Johnson), I Know/And Now We Know (Julien Kasper), Blackbird/Suspension (Jeff Beck), ...And The Gods Made Love/Have You Ever Been (to Electric Ladyland).

I used my D'Pergo strat, GHS .011's, Bogner Shiva (el34), a MESA Boogie 2x12 Rectifier cabinet (Vintage 30's), and a cheap instrument cable. All of the effects are Pro Tools Plug-ins.

Icarus

This is my personal favorite. It is the tune that earned me a place in the Guitar Player Magazine Guitar Superstar Competition (2008). Steve Vai enjoyed it. He said:

"...Sweet, sweet playing guy! I mean really beautiful... They say one's playing is evocative of who they are. If that's true, you must be a really nice guy!"

This piece offers a new flavor to the tried and true I IV I progression. I use a constant structure Lydian approach. I maj #11 to IV maj #11. The solo section is a seventeen bar phrase (why not?). In the B section I hit the high harmonics (F9+ and C8+) by pulling back on the tremolo bar and pressing the string behind the nut. I put a GHS lubricant underneath the strings by the nut to help keep it in tune. The working title was Soaring Eagles on Meth, because it reminded me of flight. I didn't think we captured the mood of the piece the first time in the studio. I used this description to explain the mood of the piece to my rhythm section David Livolsi and Tyger MacNeal; after they stopped laughing they nailed it! The melody is lyrical and has a nice shape. I like the fact that it is not overtly Lydian in tonality (unlike a very familiar cartoon theme).

An Interlude in Bleu

This is the first tune we recorded. It is also the one that took the longest to complete. I composed the harmony, bass line, and melody before I met with Chris Coogan. We were jamming in his studio, a small red room overlooking the woods of Weston Connecticut, rehearsing for a show at which I was to sit-in (Silvermine Tavern 2006). After going over his originals we composed the interlude section, and charted out the arrangement.

Zebra Club

I composed the chords to this tune while sitting on the couch, displaced as a result of renovations to my house. Zebra Club was the name of a strip club in my hometown of Norwalk CT. I named the tune that because of a conversation I had with a friend, stating that the risk inherent in producing a cohesive album is having many pieces that sound the same. In which case is like staring at a heard of Zebra. One cannot differentiate between one and another. I thought the tune could easily end up sounding like H.H.H. I played a wrong chord in the alternate A section. It should be Vsus2sus4 to Vmaj 11 and resolving to Imaj 11 instead of just Vsus2sus4 to Imaj 11. The groove is African-esque in deference to the title. I really dig the techno-inspired B section. It is good driving music. The cicada intro was recorded on the last recording session. I feel the buckles on my shoes have a nice ring to them.

Youngblood

Tyger MacNeal (Drums) referred to me as a Youngblood during many of the sessions. The tune has edginess reminiscent of teenage angst. This piece was inspired by one of my favorite instrumental guitar pieces by my former professor Julien Kasper titled Talkin' Bout What. The Band of Gypsies influence is apparent, especially when I turn on the MJM Roctavios (octave-fuzz). I composed this tune because I desperately wanted to write a blues. The form is an elongated blues. I do not recall the exact composition process, however. The A section is simply the I chord, like the first four bars of a 12 bar blues. The B section is the IV chord on the first time through and V chord on the second time (essentially the first 9 bars of a 12 bar blues, with a unique number of bars 8,3,8,4, and some metric modulations). The solo form differs from that of the rest of the piece. Some prefer to modulate during the solo section in an effort to make it stand out. I prefer to compose a related yet differing section altogether.

Effects: I am using the same guitar and amp setup as all of the other tunes, although by this time I had invested in some quality cables. In the solo section I am using an MJM Roctavios (octave fuzz) and an MJM Blues Devil (overdrive). I turn the drive and level of the Blues Driver down and the level of the Roctavios up. The fuzz knob is also turned way down. The sound that is being recorded, more often than not, is quite different than the sound in your headphones. What you perceive as the preferred amount of gain in the headphones may be incendiary and ridiculous when played back.

Syeeda's Song Flute

This is a John Coltrane composition heard on his seminal album Giant Steps. I became familiar with it when a friend left me a voice mail of himself playing the melody. I often describe my arrangement as Rage Against The Machine meets John Coltrane. This was one of three tunes we recorded at our first session (April 07). I asked Tyger and Dave to jam in the beginning; Tyger immediately began working out this up-tempo paradiddle thing. The Engineer/Producer Andy Abel's face was pressed against the glass in the control room, obviously impressed, no doubt wishing he were on the opposite side of the glass; recording with his favorite rhythm section. Just before coming out of the solo, I quote Well You Needn't, a Thelonious Monk tune.

I used a Crybaby 535Q and a Digitech Whammy pedal. Chris Coogan overdubbed the organ in the B sections.

Her Hypnotic Heart

One day I thought to myself, "I should really practice because I am not going to have time later and I haven't picked up my guitar in days."

I sat down, plugged into a Moog MF-102 Ring Modulator and the first notes I played were the bass line to H.H.H. I looped the bass line using a Boss GIGA Delay. I immediately heard the chord voicings in my mind's ear. I looped the bass line and harmony and just pace the room and hallway and absorb what I was hearing, while thinking of melodies in my head (this is my idiosyncratic creative process).

The B section came just as easily. IVmaj9 bVI #11no3rd IVmaj9 bVI#11no3rd V-b13

Something Beautiful

I composed this piece on Valentines Day in 2005. I was feeling particularly forlorn as a result of certain New Jersey debutante's ambivalence concerning our... association. Two days later (my birthday) she acquiesced to my advances. We dated for a year before our relationship acrimoniously imploded.

I recorded the track on December 9 2006. A former BCM professor heard the recording and said:
"Great job. Beautiful playing. But remember Chris, there already is a Jeff Beck."

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