



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

James Arena PRESENTS

STARS OF

ROCKS

DANCE

POPP

**THE
EUROPEAN
EDITION**

FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH OVER **50** INTERNATIONAL MUSIC LEGENDS

Including

PETE BURNS of **DEAD OR ALIVE** • **THOMAS ANDERS** of **MODERN TALKING**
LIZ MITCHELL of **BONEY M.** • **FAB MORVAN** of **MILLI VANILLI**
JENNIFER RUSH • **SABRINA** • **YAZZ** • **AMII STEWART**
DESIRELESS • **TACO** • **ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK** • **HAZELL DEAN**
RYAN PARIS • **FANCY** • **AUDREY LANDERS**
MEL BROOKS and many more!

AuthorHouse™
1663 Liberty Drive
Bloomington, IN 47403
www.authorhouse.com
Phone: 1-800-839-8640

© 2015 James Arena. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the written permission of the author.

Published by AuthorHouse 02/28/2015

ISBN: 978-1-4969-6226-3 (sc)

ISBN: 978-1-4969-6227-0 (hc)

ISBN: 978-1-4969-6228-7 (e)

*Any people depicted in stock imagery provided by Thinkstock are models, and such images are being used for illustrative purposes only.
Certain stock imagery © Thinkstock.*

Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any web addresses or links contained in this book may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid. The views expressed in this work are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, and the publisher hereby disclaims any responsibility for them.

CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[The Executive Suite: Thomas M. Stein and Christa Mikulski](#)

[Special Commentary from Audrey Landers](#)

[Special Commentary from Mel Brooks](#)

[The Stars of 80S Dance Pop](#)

[Amii Stewart](#)

[Big Fun's](#)

[Boney M.'S](#)

[Carlos Pérez](#)

[Carmelo La Bionda](#)

[Caroline Loeb](#)

[Christian De Walden](#)

[Dead Or Alive's](#)

[Debut De Soiree's](#)

[Desireless](#)

[Engelbert Humperdinck](#)

[Fancy](#)

[Five Star's](#)

[Gazebo](#)

[Gold's](#)

[Hazell Dean](#)

[Hubert Kah's](#)

[Imagination's](#)

[Jack Robinson](#)

[Jaki Graham](#)

[Jennifer Rush](#)

[Joy's](#)

[Junior](#)

[Kristian Conde](#)

[Les Avions'](#)

[Lian Ross](#)

[Linda Jo Rizzo](#)

[Lino Nicolosi](#)

[Luv's](#)

[Maitai's](#)

[Manfred Esser](#)

[Milli Vanilli's](#)

[Modern Talking's](#)

[Opus'](#)

[Pedro Marín](#)

[Phil Harding](#)

[Pierluigi Giombini](#)

[Romano Musumarra](#)

[Rondò Veneziano's](#)

[Ryan Paris](#)

[Sabrina](#)

[Savage](#)

[Silent Circle's](#)

[Spagna](#)

[Taco](#)

[Technotronic's](#)

[The Twins'](#)

[Tom Hooker](#)

[Tony Esposito](#)

[Yazz](#)

A Conversation with producer Johann Perrier

The Record Shop

Credits

Acknowledgements

About The Author

I dedicate this book to:

1. The most loving people I have ever known – my parents.
2. The artists featured here, whose brilliant work will always hold a cherished place in my heart.

PREFACE

Why is an American writing about European dance-pop songs of the '80s and the artists and professionals who created them?

The answer is simple. These individuals and the music they cultivated mean the world to me. Despite living on the other side of the planet during this decade, I developed a deep connection with Europe and this wonderful music, as well as a tremendous respect for the people who made it. The artists contained within these pages are, in a way, citizens of all nations, and they communicated great positivity through their creative efforts. Thousands of miles away in New York, they made my life (and the lives of millions of others around the planet) more enjoyable. I wanted to collect some of their remarkable history in a book – a tome that would serve as a memento of the era and a small tribute to its stars.

Following a drought in upbeat music (the so-called “death” of disco) that befell the United States beginning in 1980, I soon discovered European dance-pop. My country had largely deemed disco a dirty word, but by a lucky chance, I gained access to the uplifting and energized sounds that began coming out of Europe. Thanks to my mother and father traveling to the continent and Great Britain on frequent business trips during the decade, I was able to obtain many of the music releases that were huge hits there, but unknown and often unavailable on my shores. I developed an insatiable craving for European dance-pop and the huge variety of sounds that this genre encompassed.

I sat for endless hours in my local library, scouring *Billboard* magazine's international pop charts. I was always trying to figure out what records to buy, without having heard a single note of any of the titles listed. Then I spent every spare dime of my decidedly limited

income to purchase this music, giving my parents a lengthy wish list when they headed overseas. Time and money didn't matter at this point in my youth because it always felt like Christmas when I held these records and CDs in my hands. They added an unforgettable, uplifting soundtrack to my early adulthood.

Some of this hypnotic music from overseas had elements in common with the American disco style I loved, but in many ways, it possessed highly exotic differences. These recordings were often saturated with unusual synthesizer and electronic sound effects, an intoxicating dance beat, or a quirky, edgy blend of punk, rock, and new wave rhythms. Even ballads frequently had a kind of energetic spark that set them apart. Many songs possessed a touch of classical influence, adding to their international flavor. European dance-pop had what the French might call a certain *je ne sais quoi*, and the inspired creativity found in these unconventional songs was magnificently diverse and inventive. Some records simmered with a wonderfully alluring style, reflective of the region and culture from which they had originated, including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Britain. Their melodies sounded so original and decidedly beautiful to me that I'd often gasp at how unusual they seemed upon first listen. I soon learned the names of songwriters, producers, remixers, and even the photographers and record companies that were advancing these incredible productions.

The vocalists of European dance-pop mesmerized me. They intrigued my senses with their mastery of song, distinctive styles, and their ability to convey passion and energy through this very physical music form. Though I was raised in a time and place where American mainstream entertainment suppliers generally had little interest in foreign languages or accents, I vigorously embraced the unfamiliar dialects of many of these vocalists. Whether a song was sung in French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, or English, it didn't matter to me. I didn't need to fully understand its literal meaning (though such comprehension might have further enhanced my experience); I just knew I loved what I was hearing.

This book project evolved from my desire to know more about the people responsible for so much of my bliss. I wanted to hear what was in the hearts and minds of these great artists at the time they participated in the creation of these wonderful records. Their impressions of the present day and their outlooks for the future were equally important to me. So I asked each individual a series of basic questions about his or her life and career. Documented here is what each of these fascinating artists wanted to share. As you might expect, you'll find some of these stars to be quite articulate and their memories to be vivid and detailed. Others are a bit sketchy. Some recollections are quite fabulous, and others are disheartening. However, I'm hopeful every chapter will give you some new insights into the humanity of these ladies and gentlemen.

Most of these artists (and myself for that matter) consider themselves well ensconced in middle age today. Some have moved past this phase and now possess an even broader view of life. Regardless of the point each of us is at in our personal journeys, I think we can all agree that humans tend to become increasingly reflective with the passage of time. We reminisce a bit more as we progress with our lives, appreciating where we've been and what we've done. But make no mistake – the artists in this book are not confined to or bound by nostalgia. Each of these vital, vibrant, and dynamic individuals continues to make valuable contributions to the world (whether still involved in music or not). They will never be defined solely by the '80s. Expect the unexpected from these great people in the years to come, whatever direction they may take. Mick Jagger probably said it best in his 2001 interview with Juan Villoro – *“The past is a great place, and I don't want to erase it or to regret it, but I don't want to be its prisoner either.”*

I'd like to mention another important note. As I alluded to earlier, English was not the primary language of a great many of the artists featured in this book. However, I was astonished at the lengths so many of these participants went to in order to overcome our communication challenges. Even when they were uncomfortable with English, they often went out of their way to indulge me so that this

project could move forward. It was a long and sometimes challenging process to complete this writing, and I would not have succeeded if they had not been so willing to help. They appreciated my goal and worked very hard to make sure I attained it, all while juggling their own priorities. I am extremely grateful for this. I only wish I could have produced this book in each of their native languages.

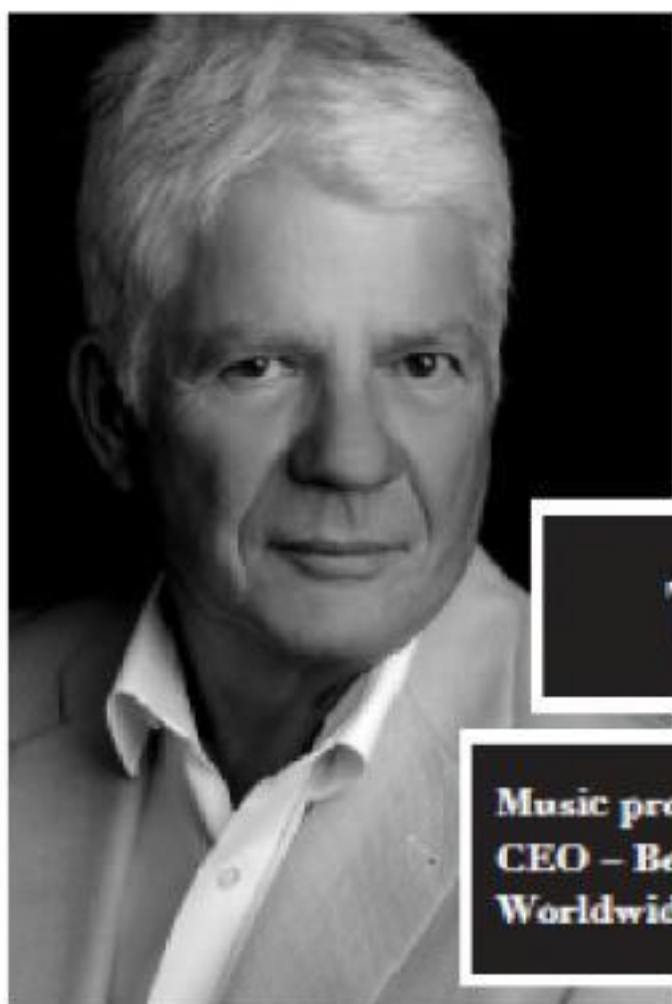
When I began work on this project and throughout the months that followed, it seemed to me that the world was besieged by an unprecedented series of man-made threats. Maybe it was the same amount of trouble that's always been plaguing our planet. However, the level struck me as being even higher than usual for our time. Terrible crimes against humanity, constant skirmishes and outright warring, gross displays of greed and corruption, vicious racism and discrimination, stunning barbarism, insufferable indifference and intolerance – the list goes on and on. We continue to live in a world where profoundly dismaying negativity and brutal hostility threaten to divide our cultures, day in and day out.

The dark events that make headlines today are a bitter pill to swallow. By contrast, the beauty of the music discussed in these pages is an inspiration. The artists you will meet here remind me that man can always choose to uplift the souls of his brothers and sisters, rather than cause harm. The artistry celebrated in this book can provide us with the fuel that our worldwide quest for peace, love, and the simple enjoyment of life's pleasures desperately needs.

Music is emotion, and we all can be moved by it, regardless of our location on this island Earth. Sharing their talents, the *Stars of 80s Dance Pop* brought all of us a little bit closer to each other. These artists matter because they made this world a better place in which to live, and I have been deeply touched by what they have done. I salute all the extraordinary music professionals who found success throughout Europe and Britain during these remarkable years, and I invite you to experience their magic once again.

James Arena
2015

THE EXECUTIVE SUITE



THOMAS M. STEIN

Music producer, artist manager, and former
CEO – Bertelsmann Music Group Europe,
Worldwide Vice President – BMG A&R/Marketing

Thomas M. Stein is a long-time music industry legend in Germany who has served on the jury of the country's hit TV show *Deutschland sucht den Superstar*.

The '80s was a period of great excitement in Europe and a wonderful time for dance-pop music. In Germany, the influence of the Neue Deutsche Welle explosion was felt strongly. Many European artists crossed international borders with this sound like Falco ("Der Kommissar") and Nena ("99 Red Balloons"). The '80s also incorporated the energy of the *Saturday Night Fever* movement that came from the '70s, adding new electronic innovations to the mix. Through the middle and end of the era, we were moving to the beat of artists like Kylie Minogue and Rick Astley. When the '90s arrived, they paved the way for the success of Snap! and Dr. Alban. Another entirely new sound for clubs and lovers of the dance-pop genre was born at this point. The amazingly diverse music that Europe embraced in the '80s reflected a great spirit of joy, and this era remains very close to my heart.

CHRISTA MIKULSKI



**General Director of ZYX Records,
Merenberg, Germany**

ZYX headquarters in Merenberg, Germany. Inset – Christa Mikulski oversees the organization, one of Germany’s most successful record labels of the ’80s and ’90s.

The founder of ZYX Records (also known as Bernhard Mikulski Schallplatten-Vertriebs-GmbH in the ’80s) was my late husband, Bernhard. He was originally involved in the music industry in the jazz genre, which was the pop music of the ’50s. By the ’70s, he had a successful pop import record business established. In the early ’80s, he expanded his organization into an independent recording production company.

We became aware of dance music productions that were being made in Italy and went to meet with some of these artists, producers, and record distributors. It wasn’t so easy at first because we didn’t speak Italian, and they didn’t speak German. Fortunately, the Italians were doing their productions in the English language, and we began to distribute them in Germany.

We had many successes on the German pop charts. They included Valerie Dore’s “The Night” and “Get Closer,” Scotch’s “Disco Band,” “How Old Are You?” by Miko Mission, Sabrina’s “Sexy Girl,” and our series of “Italo Boot Mixes,” among many others. In

those days, you had to work very hard to get those positions on the charts. (We also had many records sell over 500,000 copies that never made it onto the mainstream charts. At the time, I was young, and I didn't know exactly how the business worked.) We were, of course, always interested in having a chart hit, but more important to us was that we made music that people liked. We didn't always get a lot of airplay on the radio. Much of the Italian music we released was more popular in the discothèques. The discos and DJs were always our best promoters. Our music really gained popularity through the clubs, and then it would hit the pop charts.

Some critics said our music was cheap and very easy to make. Such comments were not important to us. We believed the melodies behind many of our hits were very good, and the Italians were very talented in this regard. When I think about both the criticism and the praise our releases received, I often ask myself some questions. What is "quality" in regard to music? Which is better – to have a song that is brilliantly constructed, but nobody listens to it? Or a song that is simple, pleasant, and everybody loves it? I don't know the definitive answer. I can only tell you that people liked our music very much.

Working beside the major record companies did not intimidate us, even though ZYX was a small independent label. Most of them didn't really want to be involved with the music we were releasing. The 12-inch maxi-single was a very important format for us, but the majors weren't that interested in releasing extended dance mixes unless their song was a big chart hit. Perhaps the only other major label that had significant interest in club music during the decade was Teldec. They had good instincts for Italian songs that would be popular. The other labels were more interested in the pop charts.

Today, for sure, there are a lot more opportunities to give music exposure than we had in the '80s. Anybody can release something today on iTunes or through YouTube, and the whole world can potentially hear it. You have songs on those sites that have been listened to over 15 million times, and there isn't even a physical record out there. There's so many new ways to consume music now.

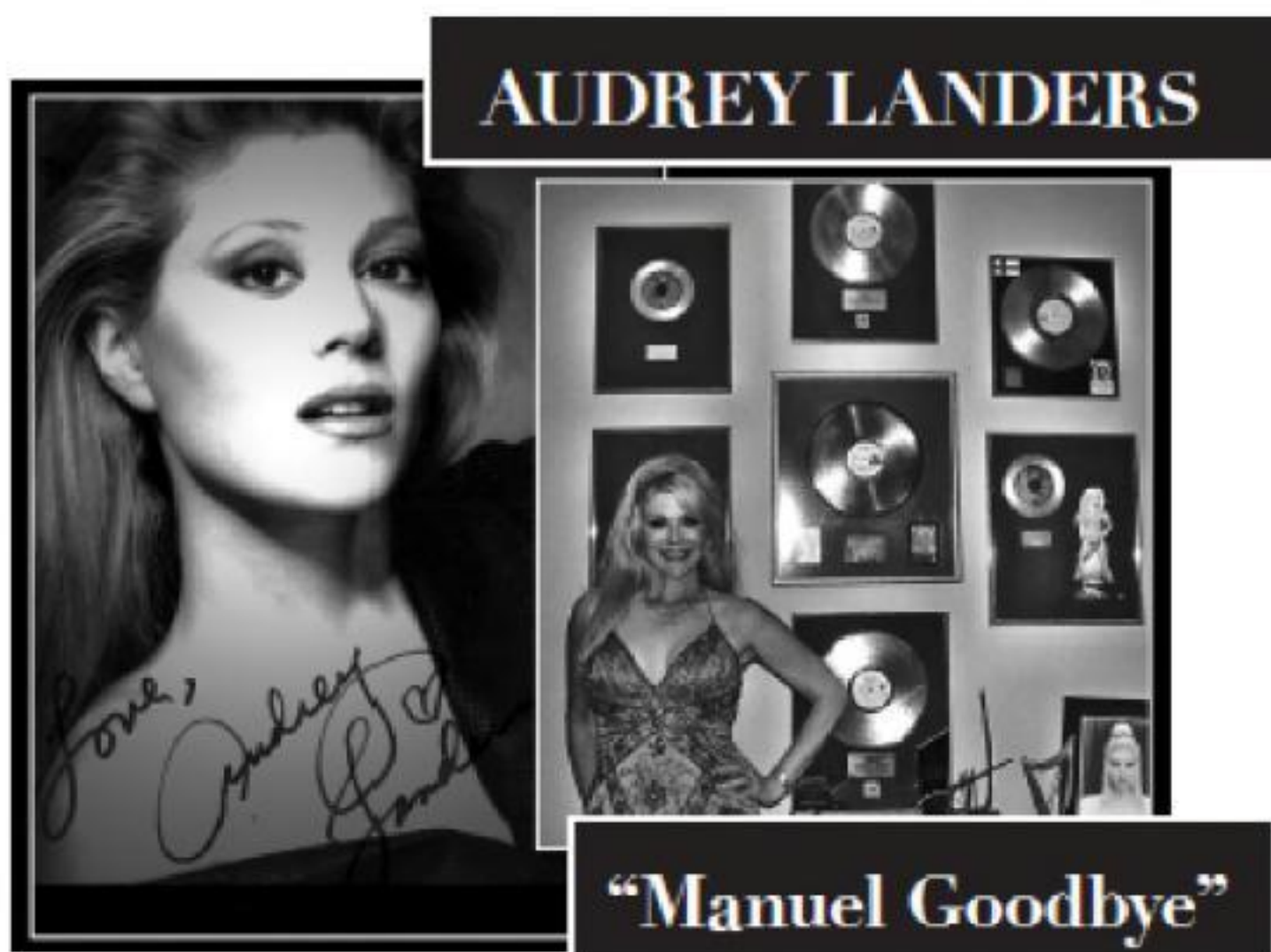
I think people enjoy a much larger selection of sounds today, and in many ways, I think it is a more democratic environment than we had in the '80s. That's how a song like "Gangnam Style" by the South Korean artist Psy can reach over one billion views on YouTube. That would probably never have been such a huge hit in the '80s. It no longer matters what country a song comes from. But despite this great advantage, there is still tremendous competition out there, and many wonderful songs never become successful. So, in some ways, the 1980s and the 21st century are still very much alike.

I am always astonished that people continue to feel so strongly about the music we released on ZYX over three decades ago. I think they connect our music with the enjoyable nights they spent in the clubs. Wherever my husband and I went in our travels back in those days, we always brought copies of our records and gave them to the club DJs. We were able to expose the clubs to our music in many countries, including nations like Poland, Russia, and East Germany, where our records could not be sold. Even in the United States and Mexico, they loved our music. We also licensed it to major parts of Asia such as Singapore. For this reason, I think people from all over the world still have a sense of appreciation for our releases. And I am very happy that so many young people are discovering these sounds today.

We made happy music, and I think that's why our brand is alive today. And that's why we continue to release both our classic mixes and contemporary projects in the dance-pop genre, such as our *Italo Disco New Generation* compilation series.

I am very pleased to know that people enjoy the music of ZYX so much, and I hope they will always get a good feeling from it.

SPECIAL COMMENTARY FROM



Singer and actress Audrey Landers is seen in a 1988 autographed publicity still (left) and posed at home in 2014 with several of her international gold record awards. Inset photo courtesy of Audrey Landers.

There was something very magical about Audrey Landers in the early 1980s. Ambitious, talented, and determined, Audrey was a bright young American celebrity in the making.

The singer, anxious to record in a fresh style following her departure from White's fold, joined forces with celebrated pop producer Christian de Walden (Amanda Lear, Bonnie Bianco, Thomas Anders) in 1988, and together they created the artist's critically acclaimed album "Secrets." Filled with dance-pop gems like the floor-filling "Never Wanna Dance (When I'm Blue)," Audrey was, once again, a major hit-maker on the European charts. The LP "Meine Träume Fur Dich," which has sold over 350,000 copies to date, followed in 1990.

After a few more successful recordings, she took a break from music, opting to raise a family (which included her son, Daniel Landers, who is forging a pop career of his own today). Audrey has since returned to the industry, recording new albums for the European market sung in English and German. In 2013, she released an American CD and digital download collection, “Dallas Feels Like Home,” which served as a tribute to her work on the classic show. She also appeared on the new “Dallas” TV series that ran for three seasons on America’s TNT network.

Though her musical success in Europe still remains a bit of a secret in America, her many fans abroad continue to embrace her irresistible sound. Audrey’s magic remains as enchantingly potent today as it was over 30 years ago.

Like the many successful musicians who were fortunate to grow up in a musical household, I too was exposed to music at an early age. My mom, Ruth Landers, was working full time and struggling to support our family. She managed to save enough money to buy a record player. We would borrow albums from the local library, and I listened to classical symphonies, jazz greats, rock ‘n’ roll classics, operettas, Motown, Broadway show tunes, country, and gospel music. By the time I could talk, I knew I wanted to become a singer. I acted in my first commercial when I was just three years old, and I eventually began performing and singing in all the school plays and with local theater groups.

When I was about 13, I auditioned for a daytime TV drama called *The Secret Storm*, and I got the part of Joanna, a role I enjoyed playing for a couple of years. One day, I opened up my script, which was to be taped in two days, and the stage directions said, “Joanna sings and plays guitar.” I ran to my mom and asked her what I should do. “Well, I guess we’d better buy a guitar tonight!” she said. So that night, I taught myself a few guitar chords, and I took one of the poems I had written and wrote a song. That was the beginning. It went over so well that future scripts would often call for me to sing my own songs. So I began to write, practicing my music every day.

By that time, my mom was busy building her own printing company business. Yet she somehow found the time to manage my acting and singing career, all the while encouraging me to write more music. One evening, she came home from work and told me to prepare a music cassette of my original songs. So I made a little recording of them – just me and my guitar – on a tape recorder. She announced that she was taking off from work the next day, and I would miss school because she and I were going to fly to Nashville to “sell my songs.”

Upon arriving in Nashville, we got a taxi and asked the driver to take us to a place my mom had heard of called “Music Row.” We had no idea what to expect; we had no appointments or contacts. In the morning drizzle, we walked from door to door, dropping off my cassettes, hoping to get a positive response. Near day’s end, totally drenched and exhausted, Buddy Killen, who was a music publisher and country music legend, told us he actually liked my songs – and he liked “the singer.” When I told him that I was the singer, he immediately signed me to a record deal. In the space of 24 hours, I was suddenly a young teen from New York with a contract to write and record country music in Nashville.

Even though we had some success in the country genre with my self-penned “The Apple Don’t Fall Far From The Tree,” released on Epic Records, Buddy realized that I was also writing pop music. He decided to test the waters beyond the country market, and we recorded some songs with a more R&B pop sound. However, that release was put on hold because I was offered a role in another daytime TV drama, *Somerset*, in which I co-starred for the rest of my teen years.

Even though the character I portrayed in *Somerset* was that of a young singer (as were many of my recurring TV roles), in those days there were distinct lines drawn between the careers of actors and singers. The perception in America was that if a person was an actor, with few exceptions, he or she couldn’t possibly be a serious musician. But I *was* a serious musician. Yet, my U.S. recording

career had hit a brick wall. It was frustrating for me because I could see no reason why I shouldn't be able to pursue both creative avenues. Today, the business of music is quite the opposite: television and film feed the music industry, often creating music stars from their TV exposure.

When I won the role of Afton Cooper in the nighttime TV drama *Dallas* in 1980, my character was yet another singer. I wrote all the songs that Afton sang on the show. *Dallas* was not only a huge hit series in America, but also a smash in 100 other countries, including Germany. Jack White, a German record producer, saw me on the show and recognized my musicianship as well as my potential marketability with European audiences. Well, he was right. Europeans were more open and accepting of me as a total artist. They did not try to fit me into one category.

The '80s were in full blast and dance-pop music was popular worldwide. By now my songwriting had evolved and grown. I had studied music at Juilliard and had already written hundreds of songs. I listened and learned from the songs of the era, from ABBA to Donna Summer. My first international single release, "Manuel Goodbye," which hit store shelves late in 1983, is now considered a standard in Europe, as are many of my subsequent hits. Throughout the '80s and into the '90s, I recorded for Ariola, BMG, Bellaphon, WEA, and Polydor Records and did concert tours in Europe, with my mom by my side as my manager.

During the mid-to-late 1980s, my popularity in the United States was predominantly due to the success of *Dallas* and my roles in feature films like *A Chorus Line*. However, in Europe my celebrity status was amplified because of my recording career. If my face was on the cover of one publication a month in the U.S., I was on the cover of 20 magazines during the same period in Europe. My success in Germany, the Netherlands, and other nations with songs like "Playa Blanca" and "Never Wanna Dance (When I'm Blue)" was fueled by the kind of fan support that only rock stars were experiencing. To my great surprise, fans were camping outside my

hotel, waiting to get an autograph. No matter how tired I was, I always stopped to say hello and sign my record albums and singles for them. Sometimes I would sign for as many as two hours. My mom and bodyguards weren't pleased with me because they had to cope with crowd control. But I always asked them to give my fans and me some space. I knew that some of these people had been waiting for me all day. I would never want to disappoint them. I have always been grateful to the people of Europe who supported my recording career.

Yes, *Dallas* was popular in Germany and many other places, but my records were topping the charts and reaching gold and platinum status in many countries across the globe. I supported my records with mini tours. Unfortunately, they usually had to be short because I was still filming the television series. So, for a number of years, my schedule went something like this: I would finish filming *Dallas* in Los Angeles on a Friday. My mom and I would get on a plane and fly non-stop, arriving the next morning in Frankfurt, Paris, or Amsterdam. At the airport, TV crews and the press met us. I would do interviews at the airport, then an afternoon TV show, such as *Top Of The Pops*, and then do a concert at night. Sunday was more of the same, including a magazine shoot. Then we would fly back to L.A. on Sunday night (or Monday, with a little luck and schedule permitting), and I would go back to the set of *Dallas*. My mom was still running her printing company, so she would usually fly to New York and go directly to her office. When I had a filming break, my concert tours would be extended for a week or 10 days.

During our tours in Europe, Ruth and I noticed that the U.S. TV show *Knight Rider* was new to German audiences and that our friend (and its star), David Hasselhoff, was becoming popular there because of the program. David was experiencing a lull in his American career – *Knight Rider* was off the air in the U.S., and *Baywatch* had not yet been created. One day, David visited us on the set of a film my mom was producing, and she came up with the idea to introduce David to my producer, Jack White. David and Jack struck a deal, and that's how his successful German recording career got started. As many

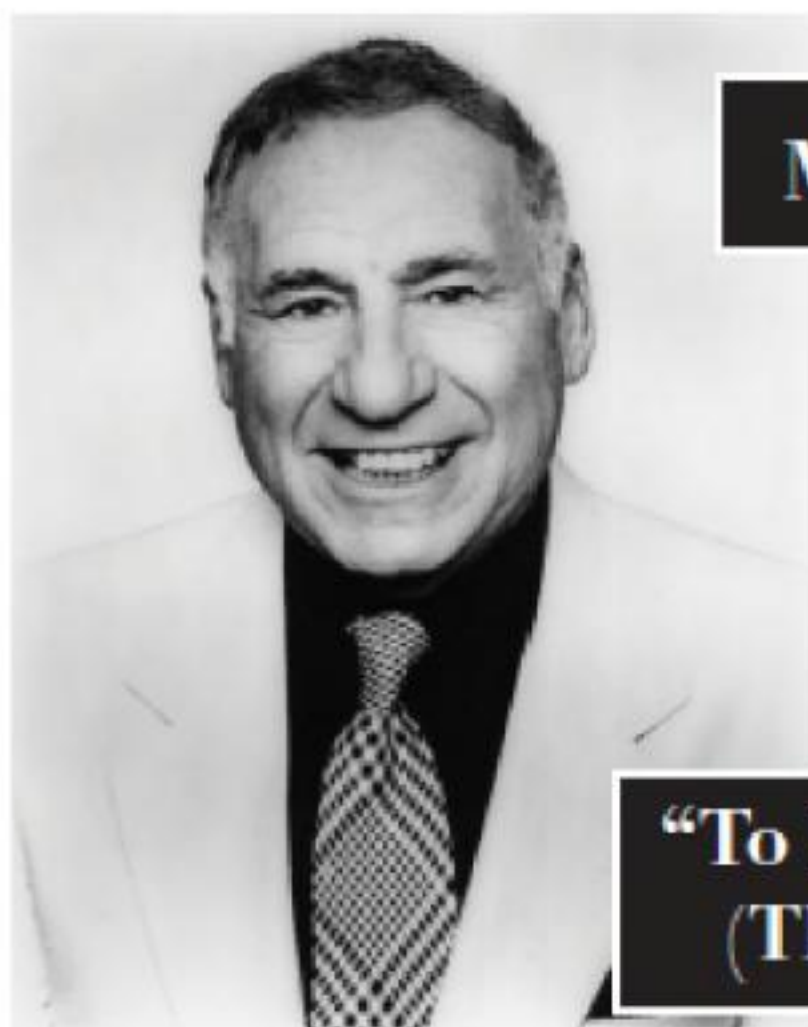
people know, it led to his huge number 1 hit “Looking For Freedom” in 1989.

It was a crazy whirlwind most of the time, but I loved performing in Europe. The '80s was definitely an exciting time for me as a performer and a songwriter, and I enjoyed a unique dual career in entertainment that few people can say they experienced. I wrote most of my hits in English, which was no problem for my audiences or me. The challenge was to write my songs with a hook that anyone could sing along with in any language. However, no matter what the subject matter was, I needed to *feel* the music. My European style was romantic, melodic, and often very danceable, and I am proud that so many people embraced my work and responded so well to it.

To this day, whenever I perform in Europe, they always ask me to sing “Manuel Goodbye.” I love the fact that a new generation is listening to my music and that it’s still relevant more than 30 years after it was born. Every time I hear the song’s introduction, I get butterflies in my stomach, and I can’t help but smile. I would like to say thank you to anyone who has listened to and enjoyed my records. This music is absolutely a piece of my heart, and it’s been an honor to be able to share it with so many people.

Finally, I warmly salute my fellow artists in this book, with whom I often shared the European music charts and stages back in those wonderful days. Our music has stood the test of time, and it’s a joy for me to be back in the company of the *Stars of 80s Dance Pop* once again.

SPECIAL COMMENTARY FROM



MEL BROOKS

**“To Be Or Not To Be
(The Hitler Rap)”**

In a 2006 interview with Lars-Olav Beier for *Spiegel*, Mel Brooks said, “...by using the medium of comedy, we can try to rob Hitler of his posthumous power and myths.” Photo courtesy of Brooksfilms.

What can a Jewish-American comedic genius and entertainment legend who has won a Tony, Grammy, Emmy, and Oscar possibly add to his resume of stellar accomplishments? How about rapping a controversial dance song about Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich? Mel Brooks (the creator of such immortal film farces as “The Producers,” “The Twelve Chairs,” “Blazing Saddles,” “High Anxiety,” and “Young Frankenstein”) successfully took on the challenge in 1983 and raised eyebrows throughout Europe when he released the skillfully written and stingingly comical single “To Be Or Not To Be (The Hitler Rap).”

This sharply executed vinyl history lesson was created to support the film “To Be Or Not To Be,” which starred Brooks and his wife Anne Bancroft. The song was reportedly banned in Germany, whose

nearly 40-year post-WWII reconstruction phase was still underway at the time. Surprisingly, the track received an equally cool reception in the United States, where it was virtually never played. Keep in mind, Brooks was no newcomer to dance-pop, having successfully rapped his way through the hit club and radio single “It’s Good To Be The King” (a satiric poke at Louis XVI and the French Revolution made to promote his 1981 movie “History Of The World, Part I”). But such a problematic response to his Nazi lampoon came as a surprise to the entertainer. Still, “The Hitler Rap,” against all odds, managed to be a Top 20 smash in the U.K., reached number 15 in Switzerland, and was a Top 3 hit in Australia.

Long after his audio jab at the Nazis, Mel went on to collect robust acclaim for numerous comedy films, as well as his enormously successful Broadway production of “The Producers,” which also satirized the image of the infamous German dictator. He earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and has been the recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors. Brooks also received the American Film Institute’s highest tribute, the AFI Life Achievement Award, in 2013. In September of 2014, the famed director placed his handprints in cement outside the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, alongside those of other great Tinseltown stars. He amusingly added a false sixth finger to his left hand during the imprint ceremony, later saying, “I wanted to do something just a little different.”

From his office at Brooksfilms in Culver City, California, Mel takes a moment to look with humor and affection at his unusual brush with fame in the international dance-pop music arena.

My 1983 film *To Be Or Not To Be* was a remake of the 1942 movie starring Carole Lombard and Jack Benny. I won’t say whose was better, but I think we did a pretty good job. I think I showed bravery right from the start of the picture by singing “Sweet Georgia Brown” in Polish. Anne took to the song and language naturally – she learned it immediately, and she had to teach me. I struggled with it, but I finally got it. We needed another song to promote the movie, and that’s why I wrote the dance-pop-rap single “To Be Or Not To

Be (The Hitler Rap).” Since they weren’t doing rap in the 1940s (the era the film was set in), the song was too hip to actually appear in the movie, so our intention was to use the track just to build publicity for it.

When I wrote “The Hitler Rap,” I just followed the storyline of Göring, Himmler, Goebbels, Bormann, Hess, and all the guys that concocted the administration known as the “Third Reich,” led by Adolf Hitler. I think I called Martin Bormann “Marty” and rhymed his name with “Nazi party.” I really took it soft and easy with those guys when I think about the song. I was very intrigued by how lucky these guys in Munich got when they put their scheme all together and how – I hate to say it – brilliantly they stole the government. I was always a history buff, and I was always trying to understand why things happen politically. I’m surprised I ended up in show business and not a history teacher or assemblyman somewhere in Brooklyn.

Pete Wingfield, the producer and arranger of the track, worked with me a little on the lyrics, but he didn’t know too much about the Third Reich, so there wasn’t much he could do there. But he was a big help with the rhythm. Here I was, a man in my 50s – what did I know about rap? He was 26 and was very much involved in pop music at the time. So he coached me on how to handle the beat, the musicality, and my delivery. Having already done the rap on “It’s Good To Be The King” a couple of years before, it wasn’t too difficult. “The Hitler Rap” was a very similar song. Plus, I had been a drummer in a band and had a gift for tempo and timing. I think it took me one rehearsal, and I understood what the beat should be.

The man who helped make the video we did for the song was Alan Johnson, who also directed the film *To Be Or Not To Be*. He choreographed the song “Springtime For Hitler” in my first movie, *The Producers*, way back in 1968. We worked very closely together to make “Springtime” a good, stand-on-its-own number in that film, as well as a satiric escapade. Alan was the perfect choice to stage “The Hitler Rap” video. He did such an amazing job. You’ll notice I’m not wearing the swastika armband in the video. We knew we

might have some resistance to the song in Germany and weren't sure how other countries might react if I had worn it. So we opted to leave it out and stick with less obvious references, such as the eagle symbol hanging in the background. That was definitely a choice. Alan also included the most beautiful girls imaginable in the clip and had a few touches of Nazism, S&M, and weird sexual references thrown in for good measure. It ended up being a very hot number. I think it was Alan that really made that song work – I just wrote the damn thing. We ended up leaving the swastika band on the cover artwork of the 7-inch and 12-inch record single jackets. I guess we felt it might generate some attention in places outside of Germany.

Releasing a pop song as a tie-in to a movie could be useful in the marketing of a film, especially in Europe at that time. “It’s Good To Be The King” may have helped the box office for *History Of The World, Part I*. We did very well with the song and the movie in the U.S. and France. I can’t say that “The Hitler Rap” did much to boost *To Be Or Not To Be* though. They wouldn’t play it on the radio or television in America. They thought the video was a little too sexy and a little too out there. I guess they also didn’t want to push a song about Hitler too heavily. I suppose the single may have placed some attention on the movie in Germany (with the very limited underground airplay it received). The film did well there, considering they wouldn’t let it play in the regular movie theater chains. But the Germans did have something I believe was called “the cinema club,” sort of an underground movie theater circuit, and there must have been a thousand of those places all throughout the country. If we made any money from the film, it was there. But they banned “The Hitler Rap” record from being played on radio or TV in the German mainstream commercial markets.

I never anticipated it would be so problematic – not at all. I thought everyone would get a big kick out of it, especially in Germany. It was almost 40 years after the war and the whole Hitler thing, and I figured what the hell – there shouldn’t be a problem any more. But I guess the Germans knew there were some bad things in their past, and maybe they didn’t want to be reminded of it in a rap

song.

That feeling may still hold true. It was only about 18 months ago that my stage version of *The Producers* finally played in Berlin, but we couldn't put a swastika on the stage. They hung a banner with two pretzels on it I think. The fun of the big song from the show, "Springtime For Hitler," is the boldness of the swastikas and all of that regalia. When the Germans in the theater saw the number, you could hear a pin drop. Not a sound; no response. They didn't know how to react to "Springtime For Hitler." But yet at the end of the show, they stood and gave the production a standing ovation. Keep in mind this awkward combination of reactions took place over 65 years after the war. It was tricky, and I'm sure that this same uneasiness in German society today was even stronger at the time I came out with "The Hitler Rap" in 1983.

I had no idea until just recently that I had reached some top positions on a number of international pop charts in the '80s with "To Be Or Not To Be (The Hitler Rap)." I was right up there with many of the artists in this book. I must have been so busy doing other things that I didn't pay attention. Since I don't recall knowing those statistics back then, I can only tell you that, right now, it feels *great*. And I'm happy to be one of the *Stars of '80s Dance Pop*.

So to all the good people who bought "The Hitler Rap" single, I thank you and say, "How could you have been so far ahead of the curve? How could you have known what a smart decision that would be?"

You are, indeed, the best of the bunch.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

AMII STEWART



“Knock On Wood”

Singer and dancer Amii Stewart's scintillating costumes complemented her athletic figure and powerhouse voice, as evident in this promotional shot from her 1979 album release *Paradise Bird*. Photo courtesy of Amii Stewart.

Vocalists who achieved a number 1 dance song at the height of the '70s disco era had no guarantee of future prosperity, at least in America. That icy conclusion became abundantly clear to many singers who enjoyed the mirror ball spotlight, only to find themselves hopelessly outcast after the so-called death of disco. Amii Stewart was a very distinct exception. She was among a select few artists in dance music who successfully transitioned from the '70s into the '80s with stellar results.

Her singing career first shifted into high gear when her thundering powerhouse single “Knock On Wood” (an all-time classic of the disco genre) created a worldwide sensation in 1979. When disco took a nosedive in the U.S., the vocalist continued her recording career, focusing her attention on Europe. Relocating to Italy, she became one



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

done!') They called it 'cuttin' the rug.' Everybody in my family could and sometimes would 'dance till the cows came home.' My dad, especially, could really throw down. Thus, music was a fundamental ingredient of my youth. My dad, an army veteran, worked at the U.S. Printing Office, but he also played reed instruments (mostly clarinet) for the military marching bands. He probably would have been a serious musician had he not met my mom and started a family. He would often go down into the basement on weekends and practice. I'd sit on the steps and listen, just adoring him. His mom Geneva was an accomplished pianist and played for the silent movies. My oldest sister is named after her."

Amii is able to recall hearing the voice of Billie Holiday, her mother's favorite vocalist, as a young child. "I must have been about three years old, because I have a memory of being in the crib holding on to the bars to keep myself erect," she recollects. "My mother is ironing and singin' to Lady Day. My mom sang and smiled, hugged and kissed all of us, all the time. I see it as if it were yesterday. During my youth, I became accustomed to hearing the greats – Dinah Washington, Louis Armstrong, Ray Charles, Mahalia Jackson, Nat King Cole. As I got older, I'd lock myself in my brother Joe's room on hot summer afternoons and sing for hours to Nancy Wilson (my all time favorite) and imitate Ray Charles. Then I'd hop over to Ella and Sarah for the 'variations of a theme.' Let me explain: I'd take, for example, the song 'I Loves You, Porgy,' sung by Ella. Then I'd study the same song by Billie, then by Satchmo, and so on. That would go on all afternoon. The breathing, the phrasing, the cadence, the emotion – I learned back then there are no wrong notes when you sing from the womb.

"Then one day, along came the group Rufus with Chaka Khan singing 'Feel Good,' and I almost lost my mind and my voice. The funk jumped off the turntable. Stevie Wonder and the Temptations took me to the verge of being thrown out of the house. I drove everybody crazy. To make matters worse, I knew every jingle and opening song to every TV show and sang them every single time they appeared. It got so bad they put an industrial roll of brown

scotch tape on top of the TV – a threatening last resort. Didn't work.”

Stewart started dancing by the age of nine, following in her older sister Brenda's footsteps. It became her passion and main focus for the next 15 years. Because of her skill in dance, she was accepted into the Workshop for Careers in the Arts, founded by Peggy Cooper Cafritz and Mike Malone. In later years, it became known as the renowned Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and remains a highly regarded learning institution today. Says Amii, “At the workshops, I honed my natural talents for dancing, singing, and acting. What a glorious time that was for me and for all those who were lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. My teachers were of the caliber that even today is awe-inspiring: Mike Malone, Louis Johnson, Debbie Allen, Glenda Dickerson, and Charles Augins to name just a few.

“I knew early on that I was born to be an artist. I had no idea if I had the stuff to become ‘famous.’ I just knew I was hell bent on being one of the best in whatever I did. If it didn't happen, it wouldn't be because I didn't give it my all. I was insecure as a child (maybe most kids are at that age), but my mentors at the Workshop were rigorous in teaching me the tools of the trade. They instilled in me that indispensable necessity, self-esteem, which gave me the assurance that I too could shine. I too possessed an inner light and could become whatever I chose, and no one could extinguish that light. The stage would become the barrier between me and the dark monster of uncertainty. Onstage, *I* ruled. Fiercely, yes, but always with humility. What you learn at an early age you never forget.”

By 1975-76, Amii moved to New York and became an understudy for the role of Ella and a pit singer in the cast of the musical *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. “I'd made an audition as a chorus dancer/singer six months previously in the Miami company and was chosen by the producer to come to New York,” she says. “The score was all Duke Ellington material – glorious. By that time, I was a seasoned but untried professional dancer/singer/actress. Musicals were my world. My old ballet teacher/mentor Charles Augins then chose me for the

London's West End production, but this time I was hired as his assistant director/choreographer and was given the lead role of Ella. You see, I was so hungry to prove my worth that while I was on Broadway, I sat in the wings every performance and literally learned the whole show by heart. I could play everybody's role (choreography, songs, and blocking included) with my eyes closed."

Disco fever had a tight grip on the United States and Europe by the late '70s, and the pop charts of virtually every country were crowded with dance music singles. "Singing disco was the furthest thing from my mind," claims Stewart. "I was 22, living in London, renting my very first house and making great money doing what I'd always dreamed of. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven in a Bentley. (I used to rent one to pick up family and friends at the airport when they came to visit from the States.) [Music producer] Barry Leng came to see the show one night and came backstage to introduce himself. Barry had these sparkly eyes and a happy-go-lucky manner. He was like a mad scientist with a mop of curly blond hair and a quick wit. He asked me if I would like to go into the studio and sing a demo. I asked him, 'What's a demo?' I'd only ever sung live, so I didn't have a clue. He explained and we made an appointment to get together on a Monday when the theatre was dark. Well, when the day rolled around, I had a really bad cold and went to the studio with a box of tissues under my arm. (The studio was a dump. It was just plain ol' filthy, but it had the acoustics of life, and the engineer was a wizard.) There I met Simon May, a very kind and considerate person and a great songwriter. The first track we cut was 'You Really Touched My Heart.'

"I remember I had to stand back from the mike because the arrow was permanently in the red if I didn't. In the theatre, you're taught to project your voice all the way to the 'exit' sign over the door in the back of stalls. Their eyes popped when they heard my voice, the range and control. Barry and Simon were easy to work with. We were in total sync from the jump because they just put on the track and let me fly. Theatre and dance gives you fierce discipline, so I didn't just show up. I came prepared to nail it. I got the song in the



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



Amii Stewart dazzles onlookers as she performs one of her high-energy dance hits at the close of the 1970s, just as the disco craze was about to lose steam in the U.S. Photo courtesy of Amii Stewart.

“I truly must thank Trudy Meisel, who commissioned Miranda Holland to create my image and design those fabulous, ground breaking costumes, all handmade creations. She lived in the English countryside and would hire senior ladies of the village to do the beading and double stitching while watching the soaps and gossiping over cups of tea and biscuits. She was a creative wizard. The head dress for ‘Knock’ used to drive me crazy. Wearing it was like performing a circus act because it was so top heavy. It’s true that the costume was out of this world, but you really had to be careful not to get your feet tangled up in it.

“I’ll never forget my first time on American TV. I was in Vegas doing the *Dinah Shore Show*. I’d sent the costume to the cleaners on my arrival at the hotel. The next day (the day of the show), after makeup, etc., and with 20 minutes till show time, I started to get dressed for the number. I discovered that the costume had stretched at least 10-12 inches longer and was dragging on the floor between my legs. The set had a long staircase for the grand entrance. I held the skirt coming down, but my heel got caught when I let it drop, and I

couldn't get it out. I lindy-hopped and fought with that damn dress the whole three minutes of 'Knock' on primetime TV. *A disaster*. Needless to say, I got it altered afterwards (a little too late), but I never trusted that costume again. Since then, I have never, ever waited until the last minute to check my costumes before going onstage," laughs the singer.

"I had some fierce costumes back then that really put my anatomy on show because I was a singer with a dancer's body. There were almost always dancers behind me, and I handled all the choreography – not just a little here an' a little there. I had stamina for days, so singing and dancing was no big deal for me. I was still intensely shy, so I wore a long robe, which I threw in the wings when I hit the stage. I was always cold and half naked and never quite got used to it. Making the videos for 'Knock On Wood', and especially 'Light My Fire' and 'Jealousy' [from the follow-up album *Paradise Bird*] were grueling 10 to 12 hour affairs. In those days, there was no such thing as digital, so we taped a thousand times from different angles, changing light designs, dry ice for smoke effect, etc. I loved doing makeup and did my own for 'Jealousy,' with a rainbow effect for the close-up of my eyes.

"Coming down Sunset Boulevard, I looked up, and there was a huge cutout poster of me in the 'Knock' costume dominating the skyline. That was the moment for me when I realized I'd made it."

"There were scores of music shows all over Europe in the late '70s and early '80s, and I did them all. Not to mention the live disco gigs. It was almost always the same line-up, more or less – Boney M., Precious Wilson and Eruption, Dschinghis Khan, Village People, Sylvester, and so many others. It was a wonderful but hectic time. When the single hit big in the States, Trudy flew with me to New York where the record company held a big showcase for the critics and press. From there, we went to Los Angeles, and I will never forget it. We were in a limo on the way to the Beverly Hills Hotel. Coming down Sunset Boulevard, I looked up, and there was a *huge*

cutout poster of me in the ‘Knock’ costume dominating the skyline. That was the moment for me when I realized I’d made it. It was exhilarating but also a little scary. The expectation was through the roof, and it’s so easy to disappoint.”

Following Stewart’s breathtaking success, the very musical genre she’d found fame in came under siege. By the end of 1979 in the United States, thanks largely to an over-saturated record market and (some degree of) public and media burnout with the phenomenon, disco was declared dead. Europe continued to embrace the style, but the musical landscape was clearly changing. Amii’s producers were faced with the daunting challenge of figuring out what would come next.

“Barry, Simon, and the record company were under tremendous pressure to come up with new material after a monster hit like ‘Knock,’” observes the singer. “When you get to the top of Mount Everest, you’d like to stay there a minute and enjoy the view. How do you top that song? Almost impossible. My job was the easiest. All I had to do was get in the studio and make a slammin’ vocal.”

The *Paradise Bird* LP was served up just as the decade came to a close. U.S. audiences largely ignored the set, but the singles “Jealousy” and “The Letter” (both retreads of “Knock On Wood” to some degree) fared well in Italy, the Netherlands, and Britain.

“I loved the song ‘Paradise Bird’ because it was a beautiful ballad, and to be honest, I’ve always considered myself more of a torch singer,” Amii says. “The video was also lovely. When I’m in the studio, my only concern is the music in the earphones. You have to be focused on that and only that. I’d heard about the disco record burning fiasco in the States. It was a sorry sight to see, but I wasn’t worried about my career per se. Coming from the theatre, I’d been talking to the guys about changing styles slowly, so as not to get caught in the shuffle. We were still going strong in Europe, so neither they nor the record company felt the urge to change too quickly. I could feel the itch because of my melodic music background.”

Stewart's next album arrived in 1981, released under two different names and with slightly different track listings in the U.S. and Europe. American indie label Handshake Records released *I'm Gonna Get Your Love* in the U.S., emphasizing a trendy, high-energy remake of the Supremes' "Where Did Our Love Go" (a Narada Michael Walden production) and funkier soul tracks created by Raymond Reid and William Anderson of the R&B group Crown Heights Affair. Europe received the LP *Images*, which featured some alternate tracks created by the Leng/May team.

"Trudy was a savvy business woman," says Amii, "and we had great respect and affection for one another. She could see the writing on the wall, and we flew to New York to collaborate with Handshake Records. I loved that period in New York. I'd left in '77 expecting to be away for only six months, and here it was four years later. I've always had great respect for composers and try to be true to their concepts. Today, I realize I could have been ballsier. But I was young and felt a bit intimidated working with such icons, and that hindered me a bit. I remember listening to demos for hours with the head of Handshake, looking for the right track. I honestly can't say I heard it. But being that I was dead wrong about 'Knock,' I decided to lay low. Everyone was wonderful to me, but I could feel the underlying tension in the air at Handshake. I would discover the company was on the verge of closure while in the middle of producing the project. The balloon was slowly losing helium and settling to earth.

"I continued on to San Francisco to work with Narada Michael Walden. That was something. Narada is special. He has an aura that sets the creative tone. His studios are beautiful and simply appointed, the atmosphere peaceful. It's like singing in an ashram. I loved working with him, but 'Where Did Our Love Go' did not inspire me. I didn't want another remake. I wanted to do melodic music with strings. I wanted to become a serious interpreter of song. In those days, a sister was supposed to sing R&B or soul. Well, I am not an R&B/soul singer. I'm a crossover melodic pop singer."

The album contained the first of many duets Stewart would

perform throughout her recording career. The Smokey Robinson/Ronald White evergreen “My Guy/My Girl” paired Amii with R&B veteran Johnny Bristol. (The song was later revamped in 1985 as a duet with Deon Estus.)

“Johnny was a trip. He had a fabulous voice and knew it. He was also used to getting any lady he wanted. When he turned on the charm, I didn’t bite. Instead, I would get on his case, which he wasn’t used to. When he finally accepted that ‘My Girl/My Guy’ was just the name of the song and not reality, we got on great. We laughed a lot. He loved to recount his trysts, the women he’d had, sometimes in explicit detail trying to shock me. He was like a bad little boy. I remember one night we were in Amsterdam, I think doing a promotion. He fell asleep while talking to his girlfriend in L.A. When he woke the next morning, the phone was still off the hook. At checkout time the promo manager and Trudy went to pay the bill and had a shit fit. Johnny turned red as a beet; I howled. Needless to say they couldn’t wait to get his butt back on that plane to L.A.”

“Here is where the plot thickens,” says Amii, describing her parting of the ways with the Simon May-Barry Leng team. “My last years in London were not rosy artistically. The songs just weren’t coming any more, and Barry was becoming more and more self-absorbed and at odds with Simon and me,” she recalls. “Barry was insisting on doing a duet with me. (I think he used to sing and play guitar in a band in the past.) Needless to say, I flatly refused. The inability to find another mega-hit took its toll. My contract was with them, and they were signed to the record company, who was also unhappy. The royalties became shaky, and I was no businesswoman. In the end, I made the two most difficult (but inevitable) decisions I’d ever made in my life. I broke with Simon and Barry and decided to stop singing to let the disco image die down. It was like holding my breath. My break with Barry was stormy, with Simon sad.”

By 1983, Amii was back in the studio. With her return came a critically acclaimed, self-titled LP produced by Simon Boswell, released by the Italian division of RCA. The set was punctuated by

the upbeat arrangements of tracks like “Working Late Tonight” and “Beginning Of The End,” but gone was the heavy disco sound with which the artist had been associated. It also marked the beginning of the singer’s close connection to Italy, one that flourishes to this day.

“I’d been going back and forth to Rome for years doing promotion and loved it,” she says. “When RCA Italy found out I didn’t have a contract, they offered me a deal I couldn’t refuse. ‘Sign with us and we’ll give you complete artistic control. We’ll put our recording studios at your disposal.’ It was what I’d been longing to hear. That’s how it all started. Italy is the motherland of music – melodic, classic, or otherwise. In Italy, being black was an asset, not a label for the kind of music I was supposed to be singing. RCA were true to their word. They put me in a lovely residence and a recording studio with engineer on call, songwriters, and a promo team.

“Now, I’ve always worked and studied hard. But that can also be said about a lot of artists. What I’ve got in my favor is that I’m *lucky*. Even when things go badly, I am resilient and keep on the positive path. You’re bound to meet up with lady luck again, but you better be ready, or she’ll pass you by.

“RCA immediately put me with Simon Boswell, a hip songwriter of the time, and we started working on the first album. It was a glorious time for me. In those days, RCA was *the* major company with a stable of top artists, Italian and foreign. So even though I was recording in Italy, they could call sister companies abroad and have English material sent over. ‘Working Late Tonight’ was the lead single for the album, and I performed it at the San Remo Festival as a special guest. I remember that during the live performance the music went out for about five seconds. I kept on going nonetheless, and when the music came back, the dancers and I were still in sync. The audience loved it.”

1984 was a very good year for Amii Stewart, and Italy continued to provide a musical environment brimming with creative possibilities. It began in earnest with a stunning duet ballad Stewart recorded with veteran Italian crooner Gianni Morandi called “Grazie

Perché,” a reinterpretation of the Kenny Rogers U.S. hit “We’ve Got Tonight.”

“The song took Gianni and me to the stratosphere of popularity in Italy,” she recalls. “Gianni had been hugely famous since the early ’60s, but when I arrived in the ’80s, the company was looking for something to renew his image and jumpstart mine. The song was perfect for us both and went to number 1 in no time. I sang without understanding a word of Italian. There’s only one way to sing a love song, so the intensity was easy. I’ve a good ear for accents, and that really helped. Gianni was very patient and always there. He is a lovely man, old school, shy, and respectful. Today, he still sells out 30,000 capacity arenas after 40 years in the business. He defies age groups and is admired by all,” Stewart says affectionately.

Crossing paths with successful singer/songwriter Francesco Puccioni, better known as Mike Francis (1961-2009), Stewart entered a musical phase that saw the release of several of her most engaging works. Francis’ lightly danceable productions made for easy listening in a landscape that had become filled with high-spirited Italo-disco stompers. It was the perfect fit for Stewart’s vocal charm. The two artists joined forces with producer Paul Micioni for the landmark single “Friends,” a delightfully uncomplicated and irresistibly breezy pop song with a sweet, gentle beat. The endeavor, remixed numerous times since its initial release, went to the top of the Italian pop charts and was a Top 20 U.K. smash. The song also returned Stewart to the U.S. R&B charts. The *Try Love* LP followed, which highlighted a sophisticated mix of soft ballads and sharp dance material, including the song “Fever Line.”

“Francesco was one of the first people I met at RCA, which has since become Sony,” Amii remembers. “When I arrived on the scene, he was riding on a mega-hit called ‘Survivor,’ which I loved. He was also one of maybe three people at RCA who spoke English. We hit it off immediately. Francesco was one of the sweetest, most sensitive and elegant men and songwriters whom I’ve ever or will ever meet. God made *one* Francesco. There will be no more. Francesco was



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

12 hours; I kid you not. She would rant and rave at her assistants who took it all without a whimper. I held that position on that lounge chair for forever. I'll never forget she looked at my breasts as they were draping the red silk fabric over my body and said, 'Beautiful breasts... how old are you?' I told her, and then she said, 'They won't be like that for long. Just wait a while.' I was speechless!"

Inspired by their success with "Friends," Stewart and Francis released the single "Together" in 1985, a lean and punchy dance duet that bubbled with its stars' irresistible chemistry. The song vaulted into Italy's Top 10.

Observes Amii, "When we cut 'Together,' we were like two peas in a pod. We did it in a couple of takes because we were in perfect sync. I remember on one TV show we did together we laughed like fools. The stage was all Plexiglas, and they had this smoke effect going on (smoke was big in the day). The only problem was that the smoke effect was oil-based, so it made the stage extremely slippery. Well, we bounced out on the stage, and before too long, I fell flat on my butt. Thankfully, the camera was on Francesco at the time. His eyes got as big as marbles. Then the Steadicam operator slipped and fell. Well, after that there was no containing either of us. We laughed our way through the whole song."

The singer says Italy was an extremely welcoming land for people of color. "In the '70s and '80s, luckily for me, Italy was the place to be if you were black American. They loved our work ethic, diversity, and vocal quality. (The whole truth be told it wasn't just about the art. It was also about our 'side B.' They went ballistic for the Brazilians too. You could serve tea and crumpets, their backsides were so fierce!)

"We were considered exotic. I was one of many black women who graced the Italian stage and fashion runways of Milan. Italy's love affair with black Americans started with World War II. The soldiers came and brought jazz in their backpacks. Blacks are open, generous, fun lovin', food lovin,' and family-orientated, just like Italians. They fell in love with Louis Armstrong, Sarah, Ella. In the '60s, Lola



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



Amii Stewart appears poised and relaxed with Maestro Ennio Morricone, despite the case of jitters she experienced recording with the famed composer in 1987. Photo courtesy of Amii Stewart.

“When the day came, I went to the studio, still a wreck. After the pleasantries, I went into the booth to get the vocal levels. I was so nervous my throat felt like it was tied with a rubber band. All I could think about was Ennio on the other side of the glass. At some point, the engineer said, ‘Amii do you need something more in the cans? You want a tea? What can I do?’ I realized that I had to do something because the session was going down the tubes and my rep with it. ‘I can’t sing with Maestro Morricone watching me. I’m sorry Maestro, but you make me nervous; I can’t sing with you here.’ At which point he said, ‘Okay, I’m going home. When you get finished, call me.’ Ennio is wonderful like that. He understands the effect he has on people. His reputation precedes him. Two hours later, I called and said, “Okay Maestro, you can come back now. I’m done.’ That was the beginning of one of the most treasured relationships of my career – Maestro Ennio Morricone and his wife Maria. I went on to do another title song, ‘My Heart and I,’ and then an entire album, *Pearls – Amii Stewart sings Ennio Morricone* (1990), and a number of live concerts. Thank you Maestro.”

Stewart released several other albums throughout the 1990s, including *Magic* (1992) and a series of well-received sets devoted to pop standards called *Lady To Ladies* in 1994 and *The Men I Love* in



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“I always wanted to be a singer, even from the days when I was very young,” says Phil. “I knew I had a good voice because I’d get a lot of solos in the youth choir. When I got a bit older and my voice broke, it didn’t really change all that much. I quickly discovered I loved performing and decided I would go to London and become famous. Around 1988, I answered a personal ad in *Gay Times*. It said something like ‘famous record producer looking for boy friday.’ I met up with producer Ian Levine’s personal assistant, who looked me over and made sure I was okay. I then met with Mr. Levine himself, and that was the beginning of our connection.”

Ian and partner Fiachra Trench (who had scored a monster hit with Evelyn Thomas’ “High Energy” earlier in the decade) were having success at the time with an all-male group called Seventh Avenue. The outfit had been making the disco rounds with various members since 1979. By the mid-’80s, Seventh Avenue had racked up several major dance hits, including “Ending Up On A High” and “Love’s Gone Mad.”

“I knew Ian’s formula with Seventh Avenue,” recalls Phil, “and I waited and waited until the time was right to ask him if I could audition for a new line-up of the group he was forming. Jason was already in the band when I finally became part of it. I found the concept of this group very funny and very cheeky, and that started my professional career. I can best describe Ian as funny, annoying, and a perfectionist to the point of it being painful. He was quite interesting to work with because he had a very determined way of recording. There are a few horror stories that could be told about when he came down hard on us during the recording of a record. Then, after we thought the recording was finally all finished, he’d say it *still* wasn’t quite right. He was a nice guy, really, and you can’t knock someone for being a perfectionist, but it was challenging at times,” Creswick admits.

“One of the members of Seventh Avenue dropped out (I think he got bored with all the traveling throughout the U.K.), and another was sort of pushed out because our thinking was he wasn’t really



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

jamming on the other. Their music appealed to everyone and broke down so many barriers – it was embraced by young and old, gay and straight.”

Creswick vividly recalls his experience working in the London studio confines of PWL’s creative center.

“The studios and offices were really phenomenal,” he says, his enthusiasm clearly evident. “They were really lovely guys to work with when we started there. We were walking into an incredibly successful epicenter where nearly everything that came out of the place was a hit at the time. Walking into PWL, there’d be a big chart propped up in the lobby, and it would show on any given week that number 1 was Kylie, number 2 was Jason Donovan, number 3 was Sonia, number 8 was Big Fun...and it was absolutely phenomenal to see the impact this production team was having on the industry. We would say to each other, ‘Wow. *We are actually a part of the PWL empire.*’ I can’t begin to tell you how it felt to see our names on the recording studio list and see that Kylie would be coming in later that day, or Rick Astley was scheduled for tomorrow. It was just so bizarre and thrilling really.

“As exciting as it was, however, it wasn’t always easy going. Mike Stock was a bit of a tyrant to work with, and I remember Mark leaving the studio in tears because Mike had been shouting at him. Mark hadn’t gotten something right. Mind you, it wasn’t necessarily an easy process to record songs with them. You’d go into the studio, but they wouldn’t play the song from start to finish to familiarize you with it. You’d hear bits and pieces, like the chorus or the bridge. They’d record a song in sections – you’d start with the chorus, then go back to the first verse, then all the bridges. And you wouldn’t really know what the whole song sounded like or what the song was really about. You couldn’t really get a feeling for the song. The songs we sang were mostly written for us, and we definitely had a connection to them, but it was really quite bizarre the way it all came together. A week later, you’d finally hear the song from start to finish, and I have to say it was always really incredible. We would

record a lot of our tracks in a week, and the singles were picked out from the final versions.”

Big Fun, combining tight, high-pitched vocal harmonies, irresistibly catchy melodies, and youthful, sexy looks, had a remarkable run of hits. Fresh out of the gate in 1989, they reached number 4 in the U.K. with a bubbly, energized remake of The Jacksons’ disco nugget, “Blame It On The Boogie,” which was a Top 5 hit in Spain and a monster throughout Europe. “Can’t Shake The Feeling” nearly duplicated the feat, and in 1990, “Handful Of Promises” made a sizeable impact in numerous territories.

“I understand why people called it a factory and why some of the stars didn’t like it,” concedes Phil. “In some ways, they were sort of manufacturing your product. But at the same time, they weren’t because they were always really guiding you. They tailored the songs to our group’s sound, like ‘Handful Of Promises,’ and it came out quite cool actually. Even the material the three of us wrote for ourselves was produced at PWL with a very specific feel for us. It’s true, however, that over time the songs started to sound just like each other. They had a formula that worked for quite a while, but they may have stuck with it too long. And unfortunately, we never had any of the tracks *we* wrote released as singles.”

For a time, the boys’ star power seemed invincible, and Creswick recalls many extraordinary moments that left an impression on him. Says the artist, “I think the very first *Top Of The Pops* we did in 1989 really stands out for me. We were standing in the area where the audience would dance for a run-through, and also on the show was Liza Minnelli and the Pet Shop Boys. She was singing ‘Losing My Mind.’ Jimmy Somerville was there too, and we were like, ‘Oh my God, check us out – we’re on *Top Of The Pops* with these incredible performers!’ We couldn’t quite believe what we were seeing, and I remember thinking this was going to be the start of something really big for us. Once you were on that show, you had really hit the big time.

“I also remember we had done a radio show interview, and after

about an hour on the air, we finished and were getting ready to leave. We couldn't get out of the station because there were hundreds of screaming girls gathered outside. We were literally trapped in there until they could get a police escort for us to leave the place. It was actually quite frightening. I also recall going to a concert in Spain, and we were driving past a whole block of buildings plastered with Big Fun posters, one after another. It was an amazing feeling to know we were beginning to become popular in other countries besides our own. We did TV shows there, and they just loved our stuff. It was *very* cool to see three of our songs hit the Top 10 in Spain," he says, a touch of astonishment still in his voice.

Creswick alleges that he and his group mates were advised by their marketers to keep matters of sexual identity private, fearing the impact such revelations might have on their mass popularity. "Mark (our lead singer) and I were boyfriends at the time, and the producers knew [about our relationship]," he says. "They would not allow us to be out in any way. When we'd be staying in a hotel, we'd always have separate rooms. But Mark and I would end up staying in each other's rooms overnight to get some time together and go back to our own rooms in the morning. Nobody ever noticed. But it was very difficult to have a relationship, and we did end up finally breaking up.

"It's funny. I had the courage to come out as being a gay man early in my life, and it felt like I had to go back in the closet when we became Big Fun. There were days I felt really bold, and I thought I was going to tell everybody. That would be it. Then there'd be other days where I'd think twice about it. I mean, I always thought, 'How could they *not* know we are gay?' I mean, look at our hair back then!" He laughs. "I know that our fans knew we were gay, and clearly they didn't care.

"It's funny. I had the courage to come out as being a gay man early in my life, and it felt like I had to go back in the closet when we became Big Fun."



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

felt they totally screwed us. We didn't know; we thought we had this great deal. It seemed to be going all right, but it didn't quite work out so well in the end. I think if we had gotten to do a second album, we would have reached an even higher level. They would have made serious money, and maybe we would have too.

“We worked so hard and put in really long hours to get those records to the level that they attained,” Phil says, the frustration in his voice clearly evident. “I’m telling you; we worked our asses off for them. I didn’t even want to talk about it after it was all over. I thought, ‘Okay, I tried the music business; it’s not good. I’m not going to do it any more.’ But life is short, and I didn’t want to go through the rest of my life holding a grudge. I must admit, in the time that came after that, I grew to love being anonymous.”

With their high spirits, crisp harmonies, and rousing dance-pop endeavors, Big Fun remains one of the era’s signature groups. As part of a boy band that set the standard for future generations, Phil Creswick’s distinctive voice, flashy moves, and magnetic charm added immeasurable excitement to the twilight of the ’80s. But he is adamant about living in the present.

“I love what I’m doing today, and it keeps me very busy,” the artist says contentedly. “My friends and family keep me sane. I’m lucky to have them; they’ve been with me for many years. The Big Fun thing was a wonderful part of my life, but it’s these personal connections that have really kept me going and that mean the most to me. I confess I do miss performing, but I wouldn’t want to be famous again. I like leading a less conspicuous life, and I enjoy who I am now. I have more fun today than I had in my 20s, believe it or not.

“It’s funny how life changes. I’ve never been happier than I am right now. I live my life like every day is my last. And as for Big Fun, well, I just want people to remember us with a smile. That’s it!”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

several other countries. They also reached the Top 10 in the lucrative British market. “Ma Baker” and “Belfast” were major successes in 1977. In the years that followed, Boney M. racked up numerous hits that made them seemingly permanent residents of the international pop and disco charts.

In 1978, the ensemble reached a milestone with the double A-side single “Rivers Of Babylon/Brown Girl In the Ring,” which, like so many of the group’s hits, featured Mitchell’s distinctive Caribbean-flavored vocal charm at the forefront. It became one of the biggest selling singles of all time in Britain, reaching number 1 throughout Europe and scoring a Top 30 position on the U.S. pop chart. The song “Mary’s Boy Child” nearly duplicated the feat. Fiery dance tracks like “Rasputin” and “Hooray! Hooray! It’s A Holi-Holiday” solidified Boney M.’s standing as one of the most important international pop groups of the decade and Farian as a master producer and composer.

“It wasn’t difficult to go in the studio and get the sound right,” Mitchell recalls. “I guess the debut Boney M. album was the most challenging because that was the album where my personality and Frank’s ideas had to come together for the first time. Marcia was with me, and I think the toughest part of the whole process was deciding who would be the lead singer on various tracks. She wanted to be ‘found’ as a singer, just as every artist does. Frank allowed us both to literally sing all the songs as lead vocalists, and then he and his team chose the ones that sounded closest to what he envisioned. My vocals were determined to be the best match. It was a fair process. Frank had brought Bobby into the studio to try to sing ‘Ma Baker.’ I think his problem was pitch, and they realized he was not going to be able to do it. It ended up that it was me, Marcia, and Frank that handled Boney M. vocally.

“Frank was the ultimate producer – he really knew what he was doing,” Liz adds without hesitation. “He recognized my abilities as a singer. He allowed me to express myself the way I could best do that as an artist, and he appreciated me for who I was and what I could



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

largely confined to Germany and nearby countries) as the decade progressed, including a remake of Tony Esposito's dance gem "Kalimba De Luna" and the euphoric "Happy Song" (a Spagna composition that momentarily returned Farrell's name to the fold, at least on record jackets). The group also had some modest success with their version of the Stevie Wonder evergreen, "My Chérie Amour." Another track, "Young, Free And Single" (once again featuring Farrell's name on the record jacket), was issued as a single without much fanfare, as their hits of the period were gathered together for the 1985 album *Eye Dance*. The set did not have major commercial impact, and Farian was reported to have become fatigued with the Boney M. project.

"Pop music in general took a turn in Europe at this point as punk and new wave emerged beginning in the early '80s," Liz says. "We had to decide whether to blend or not to blend. This was a difficult period for Frank, because arguments between he and Bobby had taken their toll. Bobby was no longer a part of the group – he was gone by 1982 and replaced by Reggie Tsiboe. Though Reggie had vocal ability, he didn't have the same charisma as Bobby. Our market had been greatly reduced. Frank found it difficult to work with Reggie, and so he backed off the group by 1986.

"Prior to the *10,000 Lightyears* and *Eye Dance* albums, our music traveled the whole world. But when Reggie came, people did not recognize him as Boney M. The singles we did in the mid-'80s were a success mostly with diehard fans, but we didn't cross over to all the countries in which we had charted in the past. I remember a DJ on the radio saying 'Who is this?' after playing one of our new songs, and the general consensus was that Boney M. didn't sound the way it should. We were missing that 'Daddy Cool' sound. I guess Frank was hearing the same critiques, and I think he might have been disappointed by what was happening.

"I think we had the German market at that point because the record company could force promotion there. But in countries where they couldn't see us as easily, like Russia and places where they



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

The rich, exquisite harmonies and irresistible melodies of Boney M. from decades past are a textbook example of European dance-pop at its finest. Though new singles under the Boney M. moniker turn up every so often (such as “Barbra Steisand,” released in 2010), fans always instinctively return to the group’s original hits. Liz Mitchell defined the sound of those classics, and she recognizes the significance of the Boney M. legacy and her powerful connection to it.

“There are so many things I’d like people to think about when they think of Boney M. and myself,” she says most genuinely. “I know that the most important thing in life is your legacy – your name. If you live right, then people can only have positive things to say about you. I am trusting that people will recognize the positive energy that we tried to give to people as Boney M. Maybe that energy will still be just as strong and uplifting 100 years from now!”



“I’m very happy with the journey I’ve taken, and I’m still standing,” says Boney M.’s Liz Mitchell today. *Photo courtesy of Liz Mitchell.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

produced once again by Fonny De Wulf. Something few people know is that the original working title was in English, 'Love Me Tonight.' The song broke all previous records in terms of sales and popularity. It opened the doors for me to other international markets. Besides Spain, the song was also a hit in Argentina, Portugal, France, Finland, and Mexico, where the record achieved award-winning sales.

"I think the song was so popular because people recognized themselves or certain situations in the mood and lyrics. For example, with 'Las Manos Quietas,' one might think of a girl in a disco saying, jokingly or seriously, 'hands off!' The song rang true for people," the singer observes. His debut album, *Pienso Quedarme Soltero*, featuring mostly Hi-NRG tracks and a few ballads, was released in 1985.

Pérez speaks with a still strong sense of elation when describing the experiences that stand out from the era. "Well, I have to say that just the fact that I was successful *at all* was an amazing feeling for me!" he admits. "But there have been several moments that left a wonderful impression on me for life that I'll never forget. One was singing for more than 40,000 people in a bullring in Valencia (Spain). I also remember the thrill of my first TV appearance in Spain, as well as in Mexico. And I cannot forget receiving my Mexican platinum record. But you know what the most memorable moment of all was for me? I think it was just getting in my hands my very first record, with my picture and my name on it...now *that* was unforgettable!"

"Believe it or not, through all that success I never quit my day job...during the week I was this normal human resources employee, and on the weekend I'd turn into a successful singer, giving concerts all over Spain."

A third single, "Soltero," was lifted from his LP, but by the time it began making waves, the singer had begun to reconsider the security



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

CARMELO LA BIONDA

PRODUCER, COMPOSER

La Bionda, Righeira, et al.

The accomplishments of Carmelo and Michelangelo La Bionda have earned the brothers the title of “music royalty” in their native Italy. They were responsible for creating several major international hits during the disco frenzy of the '70s (under the monikers of D.D. Sound and La Bionda), and they emerged in the '80s as hugely successful producers and songwriters. Among their most popular efforts in the latter decade's dance-pop arena were a series of hit records made with the edgy Italian duo known as Righeira. As a result, in the minds of many, the La Bionda brothers were absolutely integral to the launch of the Italo-disco sound. Today, they continue to perform, are composers of film and television scores, and manage a popular hi-tech recording studio in Milan utilized by the likes of Depeche Mode, Rihanna, Laura Pausini, and many other notables.

“My brother and I were born in Sicily. I was born in 1949 and Michelangelo in 1952,” says Carmelo. “We moved to Milano in 1954. Our mother was a housewife, and our father worked for the National Electricity Company. There wasn't much money in the family, but the radio was on all day. We only had the Italian Government Radio channels in those days. I have to say, they didn't play much of the music that my brother and I liked – rock 'n' roll. Fortunately, the jukebox in the bar down the street played Elvis, Little Richard, Fats Domino, and many other American stars. Luckily, we found a way to hide under a table there when we were



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

mostly limited to her first and second albums due to the fact that she couldn't really go too far with her musical concepts.”

While nurturing Lear's early music career, Carmelo says that he and his brother wanted to get into the disco scene themselves. They created and performed as D.D. Sound (Disco Delivery Sound), which also included a collective of studio musicians. “We thought it was better not use our Italian name to get into the international music market,” La Bionda recalls. “With the help of very talented international musicians in Munich, D.D. Sound became popular in Italy and in some European countries. Our style was still more pop than disco, but the combination of our pop with the so-called ‘Munich Sound’ was different and gave us a precise identity. Our album *1-2-3-4 Gimme Some More* had a sort of a bubble-gum sound, but it was arranged in that Munich disco style.”

Though D.D. Sound released several albums throughout the golden age of disco, the brothers decided there was room enough for a second entity. “Since we realized that D.D. Sound had worked quite well on the scene and in the market, we decided we could start to use our real name, La Bionda. The D.D. Sound group was gonna continue 'cause we didn't want to lose a winning name in the market. However, at the same time, we had a surplus of songs. We realized some were more pop-oriented. We decided to keep those songs for D.D. Sound productions, and the rest were gonna be released as ‘La Bionda.’”

The upbeat “One For You, One For Me,” recorded in Munich, was a substantial worldwide hit for La Bionda in 1978. The song reached the mid-regions of the British pop chart, a significant accomplishment for an Italian act. “I remember in the early days of this production, we were waiting for our arranger, Charly Ricanek, to pick up a cassette with two songs on it, just piano and voice, so that he could begin writing the arrangements for our first self-titled La Bionda album. For a few days, we sat at the piano and started putting down some lines of a couple of songs that we had in mind, ‘One For You, One For Me’ and ‘There For Me.’ ‘One For You...’ was a mix



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

changing and fine-tuning various aspects of their songs. They needed gimmicks and a very special sound. We would spend days and days and a lot of money to find very good musicians that would help to make their songs become hits. Righeira started doing more live shows based more on the original early material we made with them. They still work quite a lot today with live gigs. We have been talking about creating a recording comeback for them, but somehow it still hasn't happened.

“Recently, I had the chance to meet RedOne (Lady Gaga’s original producer), since he was working for her in our studio facilities in Milano. He confessed he was a big fan of the ‘masculine sound’ of the Righeira hits. That made me so happy. We were listening to the songs in the studio, and the sound was still so impressive and powerful. The songs are still much used all over the world for summer hit compilations and with films and advertising.”

Though major labels in America picked up the music of the La Bionda brothers (notably Righeira), their sound never fully caught on beyond the U.S. club scene. “It is always a dream to be on the U.S. charts,” Carmelo admits. “However, it was not really very easy to enter them. I always believed it could happen if you had something appealing to offer that doesn’t appear to sound like it is trying to be an American production. After Righeira, we were involved on the business side of Falco’s ‘Rock Me Amadeus,’ which we pushed hard in the United States. It was signed to A&M Records and went to number 1 on the charts there.”

As the '80s progressed, Carmelo and Michelangelo began composing more music and songs for movies, TV, and publicity projects. “We were very successful internationally because we started working with these ‘Miami cop’ productions with the famous Italian ‘spaghetti western’ actors Bud Spencer and Terence Hill. One of these productions was successful in American theaters and on TV and featured Terence Hill and Ernest Borgnine. Other films we worked on were mainly for Italy but with top Italian actors. One of them featured Giancarlo Giannini (of *Swept Away*). All together, we



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

period of her career, the chaotic challenges that accompanied her remarkable achievement, and her journey to modern day creative fulfillment.

Caroline spent her early childhood in New York, a memory she describes as still vivid and enchanting. “I was brought up there from the time I was four years old until I was six,” says the artist. “We were in one of the Eldorado towers on Central Park West. Central Park was our garden. My childhood was very much like the TV show *Mad Men*. My father had an art gallery on Madison Avenue, and my mother was very elegant. Life was poetic and fun. New York still has an incredibly strong attraction for me. My only regret is that we left. I would have loved to live my entire life in ‘The Big Apple!’

“My family left New York and moved to Paris after my grandfather’s death. His name was Pierre Loeb, a very important art dealer in the ’30s and ’40s and founder of Galerie Pierre. He was a friend of Picasso, Miró, Balthus, and Giacometti. I started going to Paris nightclubs at a very young age. I was 16 when I started to dance every night at the Club 7, owned by Fabrice Emaer, who later opened the Palace, the French version of Studio 54. For about 10 years, I was a hard night-clubber. That was the time when I met Pierre Grillet and Philippe Chany, with whom I created my hit ‘C’est la ouate.’ In the ’80s, we were all crazy night birds. Dancing in clubs was our main activity. I remember very well how Guy Cuevas, Philippe Krootchey, and Henry Flesh, the DJ stars of the time, played disco mixed with salsa, Eartha Kitt, and new wave all night long. We were absolutely *mad* about dancing!” she smiles.

Exploring her potential as a singer and songwriter in 1982, Loeb had the opportunity to record her first album, *Piranana*, which fit well into the edgy new wave style that was in vogue at the decade’s dawn.

“I owe a lot to Michael Zilkha, who discovered the songs I had been writing,” says Caroline. “I really started to sing because I loved writing lyrics. Then he introduced me to Ronnie Rogers [songwriter of “Deputy Of Love” by Don Armando’s 2nd Avenue Rhumba Band]



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

With success arriving on such a grand scale from virtually every other global direction, the singer says life suddenly got – *crazy*.

“People were nuts about that song,” she remembers. “It was in Italy where it was the wildest. At TV shows, the audience would scream and pull their hair. I felt as if I was all four Beatles for a couple of years. My absolute favorite moment was in Siena during a performance on a huge Italian TV show. I performed with the audience singing along throughout the whole song. There were about 10,000 of them out there in that gorgeous city in Tuscany. It was magical.”

There was a flipside to the coin, Loeb admits. “The period that followed our breakout success was a nightmare. So many people [in our circle] were fucked up from morning to night – and I wasn’t much better.

“Drug abuse hurt everyone. And not only artists were doing drugs. In the record companies, the boss, public relations people – everyone seemed to be hooked. It was pretty bad. The drug abuse of some of the guys who were important in show business ruined some artists’ careers because they were so busy getting stoned instead of working with the singers. Then AIDS arrived and killed so many great artists and suddenly death became very present. Before AIDS appeared, we were just going from one party to another.”

Loeb says her relationship with Chany became severely strained. “In my own personal circumstances, I tried to free myself from Philippe...but, unfortunately, I didn’t do it early enough. It cost me 20 years and almost killed me as an artist. It was really difficult.

“The album that followed the single, *Loeb C.D.* [also called *C’est la ouate* in some territories], remains a very painful memory. With the huge success of ‘C’est la ouate,’ everyone around the song became a megalomaniac. Every day when I got out of the studio while making that album, I cried for hours. It was a horrible experience. The album should/could have been much better had the egos been kept under control,” she conjectures, the memory



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

CHRISTIAN DE WALDEN

PRODUCER, COMPOSER

Bonnie Bianco, Amanda Lear, et al.

Ideally, a great singer should be supported by a producer who brings the artist's musical projects to life and hopefully makes them as good as they can possibly be. If an artist gets lucky, he or she connects with someone who has a genuine passion for music, a flair for innovation and creativity, and a rock-solid belief in the artist's talent. If a singer is *very* lucky, his or her producer will also have a keen business sense and be an honorable guide through the trenches of the music industry.

In the mid-'80s, many singers in Europe turned to producer, arranger, songwriter, and publisher Christian de Walden to do just that. From all reports, he never let them down. He worked with some of Europe's greatest pop and dance music stars of the period, including Thomas Anders, Engelbert Humperdinck, and Amanda Lear, among many others, and forged a highly respected, award-winning career and track record through the decades that followed. From his office in Los Angeles, de Walden eagerly reflects on his vast history in the music business and speaks of his experiences with great zeal and honesty. He shows ample confidence, but is never arrogant or pompous. One of the most engaging features of his personality is a warm sense of humor, which often punctuates his recollections.

“When I was very young, I always loved music and was always



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Germany and Switzerland, they could try to place her masters with their own affiliates around the world. If after that time they hadn't placed them, they'd get another six months to try to place them with other outside international labels. After that, my team would have the right to set up her music with third party companies around the world, provided the artist was not in an un-recouped position. So, it boiled down that we'd get the masters two and a half years later, which was, of course, useless. However, I learned from this and thereafter did deals only on a territory-by-territory basis.

“My mother told me from the beginning to never have a love affair or highly personal relationship with an artist – and I followed that advice all my life.”

“It was difficult for me to deal with an artist's personal problems at times. I tried to never interfere or get involved with the personal lives of the artists I worked with. My mother told me from the beginning to never have a love affair or highly personal relationship with an artist – and I followed that advice all my life. I was always the last one to know if an artist was doing drugs or drinking too much or whatever might be going on. We had very big singles together, Bonnie and I, and she seemed very grateful. But then Warner came and offered her double the money, and she decided to go with them. However, she didn't have the level of success she enjoyed when we worked together,” the producer is careful to note.

Bianco recorded two albums with Warner and released a few pop singles, including “When The Price Is Your Love” and “Straight From Your Heart.” The single “A Cry In The Night,” using the name Lory “Bonnie” Bianco, was produced by Dieter Bohlen of Modern Talking fame and became a number 1 hit in Austria. However, her career on the European charts faltered by the early '90s and the artist left the label and the music scene for several years, reportedly to lead a more private life.

As his Zig Zag Productions became increasingly well regarded in the '80s, Christian worked with many lyricists in fashioning

European hits like those enjoyed by Bianco. He quickly learned the nuances of crafting a successful song for the international market.

“The lyrics must match the melody in Europe,” he says. “That was why I was able to work so successfully with European lyricists, as opposed to Americans. In America, lyricists often chose to be more poetic and less aware of the melody. To the European ear, that is a big crime. So, I favored lyricists who understood this and could follow this direction. If you listen to any of the productions of Dieter Bohlen, with all the number 1’s he had with Modern Talking and other artists, and you listen to his lyrics, you’ll notice he follows this rule. Even if, sometimes, the English words don’t make sense.”

Around the same time he was working with Bianco, de Walden met Amanda Lear, who was well-established as one of Europe’s most intriguing entertainers, celebrities, and dance music artists (“Follow Me,” “Queen of China Town,” “Fever”). Together, they created the celebrated 1986 LP *Secret Passion*, which contained numerous edgy dance hits, including the dark, high-energy drama called “She Wolf,” a sharp remake of “Wild Thing,” and the new wave-flavored “Times Up.”

“I met Amanda while she was taping an Italian television show, and we spoke in French,” Christian remembers. “She said, ‘Good, the people won’t know what we’re saying!’ I told her I had a couple of songs that I thought were perfect for her. She responded, ‘Of course.... *everybody* says that,’” he says, imitating her deep voice and laughing. “We had no MP3s back then, so I asked if I could send her a cassette of the music. She was returning to her beautiful home in the south of France, and I had some songs sent to her by courier. ‘No promises,’ she said, and I agreed. The first tracks I sent her were the songs ‘I Want My Name On A Billboard’ and ‘Mannequin.’ When she heard them, she was on board!”

“She Wolf” (also known as “Le Femmes” in its French version), from the *Secret Passion* set, was a ferocious and fiery club hit. A tale of female man-hunters on the prowl in the dark of the night, it reflected the alluring, edgy energy for which Lear had become

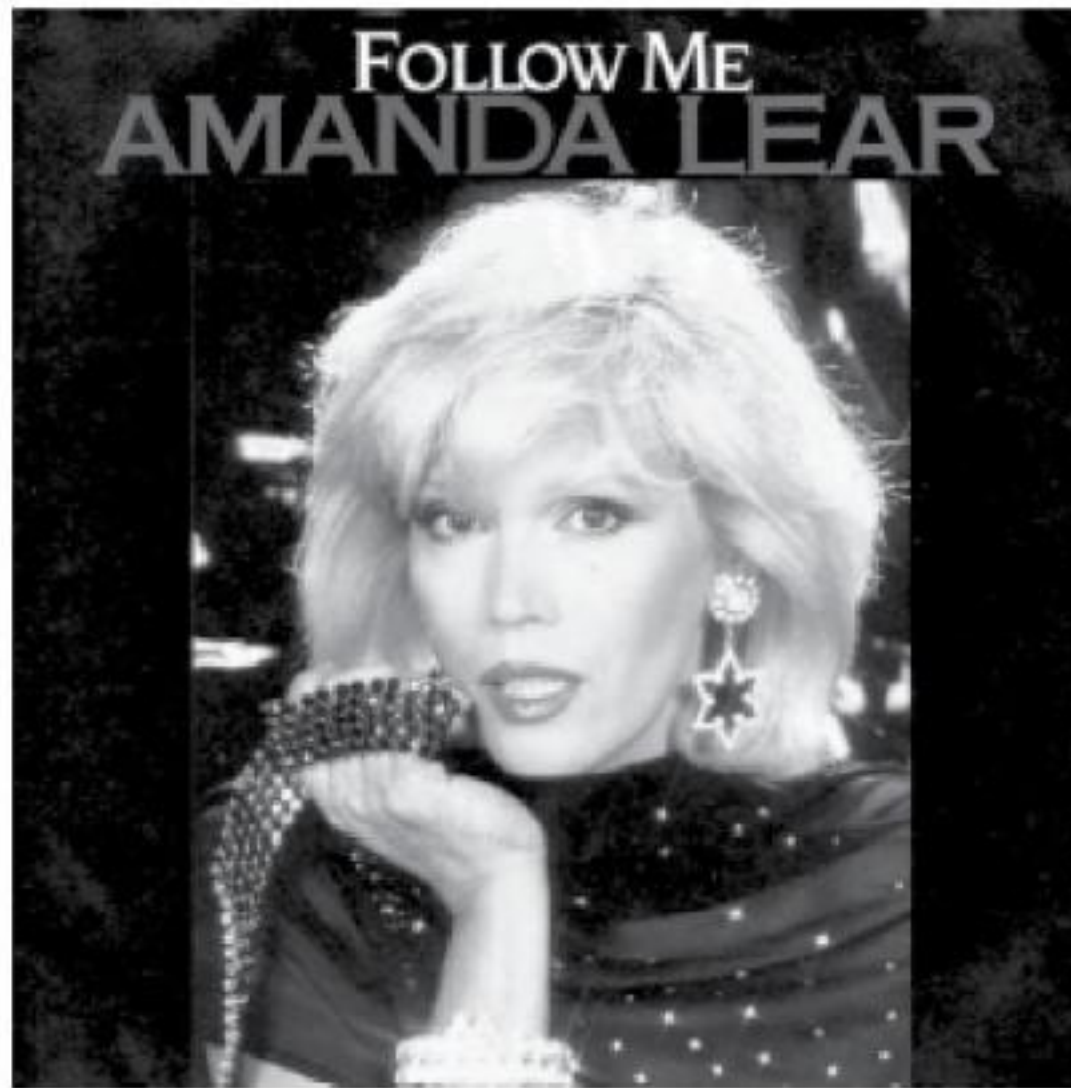
famous.

“The song ‘She Wolf’ has an interesting history,” de Walden remarks. “My friend Bobby Hart recommended me to Madelynn Von Ritz for the best haircuts. She would sit you in her garden and cut your hair, but he warned me that she would also start talking about her music and that she would submerge me with songs. One of the songs she played on her cassette was ‘She Wolf,’ and I thought it was really great. I think I gave her an advance of \$500 or \$1000 for the song; I don’t really remember. We recorded the song with Madelynn as the vocalist, but we couldn’t place her master anywhere because several international record companies felt she didn’t have the right look. I got the idea that Amanda Lear would be perfect for the song. I believe she had a show at the time on French or Italian TV called *Les Femmes*. Well, Amanda loved it.

“Amanda collaborated and changed the lyrics on some of the songs on the *Secret Passion* LP. I kept the original correspondence on her letterhead where she requested some lyrics be changed. I ended up giving her credit on these tracks as a writer (‘Mannequin,’ ‘I’m A Mystery,’ and ‘Aphrodisiac’). She is a brilliant lyricist in both English and French, and I might add, she has wonderful handwriting. In the studio, she was fantastic. She was always very, very professional. No bullshit – you don’t start joking around with her. Not that she doesn’t have a sense of humor – but she is quite professional when it comes to work. And she stays late to do the job right. She and Audrey Landers were both like that. Brigitte Nielsen (who recorded the *Every Body Tells A Story* LP with me in 1987) was the same way. They were three ladies who were very professional in the studio. You know, I have to say, the bigger they are, or let’s say the more famous they are, the nicer they are. When you have little shits who are nobodies, they’re the ones who give you the temper tantrums.

“I can understand why Salvador Dalí made [Amanda Lear] his muse and why so many people were attracted to her and intrigued by her. She has a lot of class and a great deal of charm. She is honest

and upfront. From the day I met her until now, when I address her I always say ‘Madame’ – because she is a *true* lady.”



Working with producer Christian de Walden in the second half of the '80s, Amanda Lear re-recorded her signature disco hit “Follow Me” with an electro-flair, seen here in its 7-inch format. *Single courtesy of Christian de Walden. Single © 1987 Teldec/Carrere. (P) 1987 De Walden Music Intl. Inc.*

Christian worked again with Ms. Lear on a 1987 update of her venerable classic “Follow Me,” originally produced by Anthony Monn. The track was given an ethereal electronic overhaul and a new arrangement, which de Walden, Coolwhip, and Joe Seta remixed. “I felt no pressure to duplicate the success Amanda had enjoyed with her former producer, Anthony Monn,” says de Walden. “By 1987, the music was changing, and we wanted to go with dance music that favored the pop side – which is the great rage again today. All these dance songs you hear now are exactly like the music we were doing in Europe in the '80s and '90s,” he insists.

“There was a very big German TV show which was filmed in Bremen that everyone wanted to be on – even though Bremen was out of the way from everywhere. The owner of the show said if I wanted to get Amanda Lear on the program, we’d have to do a

remake of 'Follow Me,' which had to be in a different style. I remember Amanda said, 'Sure, why not?' Steve Singer and I got the project together." The single was well received in the German club market.

As his roster and reputation continued to grow at a feverish pace, the producer found himself overseeing a new phase in singer Audrey Landers' recording career. Landers had enjoyed great success in Germany and several other countries with a series of English recordings in the schlager genre, a kind of romantic cross between the pathos of country and the energy of disco. Producer Jack White (David Hasselhoff, Laura Branigan) supervised the creation of this music for Landers for a number of years while the singer was a star on U.S. TV's prime-time soap opera *Dallas*. Audrey's biggest hits were the 1983 smash "Manuel Goodbye" and its chart-topping tropical follow-up "Playa Blanca," in 1984. In 1988, weary of her tenure with White and his successful but somewhat formulaic output for the Ariola label, Audrey connected with de Walden for her next project. The album *Secrets* placed the singer squarely in the middle of a contemporary sound that was equal parts American pop and European synth-dance. The lead single, "Never Wanna Dance (When I'm Blue)," fared well as a club hit and numerous song bytes from the album were used on episodes of the *Dallas* TV show.

"I first met Audrey and her mother – *Ruth Landers*," Christian says (with a dramatic pause before humorously elongating his pronunciation of Ruth's name), "through Götz Kiso, then the president of Chappell-Intersong publishing. Ruth is, oh my God, a business genius. She is very tough and very, very honest, and we had a great relationship. I remember those days very well.

"First, let's discuss who created David Hasselhoff and Audrey Landers back then. It was producer Jack White. I have seen a contract issued by Mr. White with one of his artists, and in my opinion, it was extremely – well – I will say not exactly in favor of the artist," he opines, carefully choosing his words. "He would create these artists, but so many of them left him because the conditions they worked



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

movie *Tender Mercies*. Christian continued to produce a plethora of celebrated international artists, and he remains extremely busy in the industry today. Still based in Los Angeles, he's been working with artists in every corner of the world, from the Philippines (where he spends much of his free time and his records have reached platinum status) to South America. He's also enjoyed tremendous success in recent years with Spanish and Latin American acts like Marta Sanchez and Paulina Rubio. His publishing company received the prestigious ASCAP Country Song of the Year award for the smash hit "I'll Still Be Loving You," recorded by Restless Heart. (The walls of his office are impressively covered with numerous ASCAP and BMI certificates for other industry achievements.) Going back to his roots as a concert organizer, over the past several years de Walden has also orchestrated major music events in Greece, featuring luminaries such as Luciano Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli.

Christian de Walden's distinguished contributions to the European dance-pop scene of the 1980s and ongoing accomplishments as a producer, arranger, composer, songwriter, and publisher continue to earn him international accolades. He eases back in his chair to think about his decidedly thrilling resume for a moment. It's a ride he's been enjoying immensely.

"My mother spent a lot of money on hotel school for me. She dreamed of me someday being the chairman of a Hilton or Hyatt organization, and I know I initially disappointed her by leaving that business. But I am doing a job that I love. Truly. Whenever I find artists and music I like, oh wow – I just *love* the feeling. Every day, I wake up experiencing the joy of how much I love music. If one day it happens that I can no longer be a part of the music business, well, my hobby is fishing. I'll buy a little boat and probably spend my days fishing in the Philippines. But I hope people will remember me as someone who was in music because of my passion for it. Food, women, and music – that's been my life. Not necessarily in that order."

DEAD OR ALIVE'S



Pete Burns' avant-garde style and powerful voice became the signature of the group Dead or Alive, one of Britain's most influential bands of the era. This shot was used as the cover of the band's 2010 *That's The Way I Like It: The Best of* album. Photo courtesy of Pete Burns and Dead or Alive, with thanks to Epic/Sony BMG Europe. Photography by Peter Brown.

“I hated the name Dead or Alive, but it was a brand name, and it really ended up being Pete Burns that everyone knew,” asserts the star vocalist himself. The 55-year-old Englishman's observation is spot on. Burns was one of the most unique and iconic figures to emerge from the dance music scene of the mid-'80s. His eclectic image, maverick attitude, and uncensored lifestyle earned him copious amounts of paparazzi attention, as well as a plethora of accolades and criticisms. A relatively short time after the first hits of Dead or Alive broke across the European continent, Britain, and America, the masses did, indeed, know the name of the group's front man. And they still do today.

Dead or Alive evolved from Burns' gradual rise through the ranks

of the British punk and new wave scene. The incarnation of the band most widely recognized included Steve Coy (drummer), Wayne Hussey (guitarist), Mike Percy (bassist), and Timothy Lever (keyboards/saxophone). Pete Burns, serving as its avant-garde, powerful lead vocalist, orchestrated the transformation of the group from unknowns to chart-topping superstars. It began with their first major hit, 1984's "That's The Way (I Like It)," but the success of their razor-sharp reinvention of the K.C. and The Sunshine Band disco classic was just a warm up. Pete's darkly androgynous appearance, flair for decidedly original showmanship, and intoxicating vocal delivery became the very definition of all that was edgy and revolutionary about the period. More groundbreaking international dance hits followed, most notably the monumental smash "You Spin Me Round (Like A Record)," a scorching tour de force that charted exciting new high-energy musical territory. It was a song that had major artists from across Europe clamoring to duplicate the sound and commercial success of Burns and his band mates.

In the years that followed, the accomplishments of Dead or Alive and the musical talents of the group's innovator were often eclipsed by Burns' own larger than life personality. In the 21st century, tabloid television exposés and gossip rag probes into his personal life, not to mention his aberrant appearances on programs like the U.K.'s *Celebrity Big Brother*, further fanned the flames of curiosity that surrounded him. Adding to the drama, the artist says a lip enhancement procedure a few years back (part of an ongoing quest to attain a look that he believes will eventually result in a truer representation of his identity) had disastrous consequences. As a result of the ordeal and the unfinished medical procedures the artist says are necessary to repair the damage, Burns' ever-changing facial appearance continues to bring him sensationalistic attention. Meanwhile, he sedulously commits himself to the process of regaining his health and deciding what comes next.

Pete says it's been a long time since he last agreed to an interview. He's making a rare exception given of the nature of this project.

There isn't a moment that he hesitates to say exactly how he feels about any given topic. His manner throughout the conversation is consistently calm. Though he warns he may drift off onto tangents, he rarely does. On those occasions where multiple memories of his vast experience actually do manage to tangle with each other, he always quickly comes back to the subject at hand. From his residence in London, he seems to enjoy the interview as something of a cathartic exercise.

“I choose *not* to do interviews now because of my principles,” he states resolutely. “I was paid rather highly for trashy interviews, and I am asked trashy questions all the time. I always came out feeling bad about it and decided about two years ago that I was going to put a full stop to the trash interviews and wouldn't do them any more – not for any amount of money. I'd rather do without the financial benefit than continue promoting that kind of thing. Our talk is a bit different.”

Burns briefly recalls his younger days and his mother, Eva.

“My childhood ambition was to become a doctor. I was an incredible painter and cartoonist when I was young, but they weren't exactly the qualifications necessary to enter a college and study medicine. My mother was a Nazi concentration camp survivor. She escaped and worked for the Russian Secret Police at one point. Her father owned a film studio and directed some of Dietrich's silent films. She had me when she was 51 years old, which was very unusual in 1959. And I'm not from Liverpool. I'm from a small village called Port Sunlight. I wasn't put in school until I was seven years old because my mother thought it was more important to let me have freedom of expression (much against my father's will) than to know when the Battle of Hastings took place or who Henry VIII married. She was very troubled, especially when she found out her father had been murdered (after having disappeared).

“About 1974 or '75, I worked as a hair stylist in a salon and my appearance was so extreme (I was already buying clothes from places like Vivienne Westwood's 'Let It Rock' and wearing blue foundation and things like that), as was Lynne [Corlett], my ex-wife, that they

had to employ extra security at the mall where the salon was located to handle the crowds. We had to stop dressing that way, Lynne and I, and wear uniforms after the crowd broke the glass of the front window of the shop. I was very talented at hair dressing and coloring. But eventually we were fired.

“I found myself with nothing to do and had about £250. Lynne and I rented a small room and started buying army surplus clothes, customizing and dying them, and kind of making punk copies of the styles of the time (it was 1976, '77). We would sell them from our room. An older guy named Jeff Davis, who owned a big record store called Probe, bought a lot of our stuff and asked us to move into the back of his store.”

In a 2006 interview with Fiona Cummins for Britain's *Mirror*, Lynne (wed to Burns in 1978) revealed that Pete had begun a fling with his future boyfriend, Michael Simpson, even before their marriage had (amicably) ended. Lynne said she was aware of their relationship during her marriage to Pete but expressed no resentment for it throughout her published interview. Lynne has remained loyal to Burns, and the singer confirms they continue to be soul mates. “She is sacred to me,” he says.

In their early days together, the couple pressed through the challenges of their offbeat appearances and lifestyle. “Lynne and I were not allowed into any gay clubs because of how we looked,” Burns recalls. “We’d wear razor blades for earrings and women were not allowed in gay clubs at that time. So we started hanging out at a club called Eric’s, and I opened a small shop in the back of the place. I always liked the American bands, and I was sort of adopted by many of them, the musicians, when they played there. I was treated like a V.I.P. and never had to be in the audience. I was either to the side of the stage or backstage, which was quite amazing for someone who was just 16 years old.

“The owner of the club, who had started to bring over bands like Blondie, Kraftwerk, and Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers, suddenly told me I was barred from the club until I formed a band

and started to sing. We thought he was joking. But he actually set me up with a band of musicians called The Mystery Girls, and my first gig was supporting a group called Sham 69. My audience was really shocked when they first saw me. It was really throwing a cat among the pigeons.

“After working with The Mystery Girls (my appearance caused some problems, and it didn’t mean that much to me, so that ended), I started to get noticed by the music newspapers. They wanted to interview me and print a picture, but I didn’t have a band, so I made up one called ‘Rainbows Over Nagasaki.’ It kind of all started to snowball. I had no band and no songs, but was asked to perform. So I pulled together a gravedigger, a strict Mormon, a basic bass player, and a friend who taught himself to play a keyboard. We became the band called ‘Nightmares In Wax.’ The band name came out of my friendship with the American punk rock band The Cramps, who I did quite a few support gigs with, and they were absolutely wonderful. Our group disbanded after one single, ‘Black Leather.’

“To be truthful, I wasn’t ambitious about being a singer. It was just too much fucking hassle with the musicians and stuff because they were very egotistical.”

“To be truthful, I wasn’t ambitious about being a singer. It was just too much fucking hassle with the musicians and stuff because they were very egotistical. I’m sorry, but in my bands, there was no democracy. It was my way or the fucking highway. It was stressful. It’s not that I’m opposed to stress; it was just like I would say, ‘Oh this is too hard. It’s not worth it.’ I wasn’t running around thinking I should get in a band, have a hit record, and I’d be a rich person.

“I did pull together another group of musicians, though, because I had another gig still to do. I had this book about James Dean and other celebrities called *Those Who Died Young*. I thought that should be the name of the band. When we arrived at the session, the ex-gravedigger guitarist, Avery Mitchell was his name, said there was

no way he was going to play in a band called ‘Those Who Died Young.’ He said we needed to be called ‘Dead or Alive,’ or he wasn’t doing the session. So, okay, it didn’t matter to me as long as we had the money for the session. Well, guess what? We got more and more sessions. I started recording and getting paid for it. I started getting checks, and I started to feel like I won the lottery.”

Released in 1984, the Dead or Alive’s first album, *Sophisticated Boom Boom* on Epic Records, began the group’s journey into commercially accessible synth-dance music. The album cracked the Top 30 in Britain and their rousing, hammering version of the disco nugget “That’s The Way (I Like It),” flirted with the Top 20. Clubs in America sent the track into the Top 30 of the disco/dance chart.

“Zeus B. Held, who did the album with us, was the greatest producer I ever worked with. He was the most unbelievable person to work with. I mean, it may not be the best production, but he and I worked so well together, and he totally understood what I was after. I liked certain elements of disco, others I couldn’t bear. Certain disco records were breathtaking, like Donna Summer’s ‘MacArthur Park Suite.’ Unbelievable. I used to love that kind of disco. I loved the music’s ability to lift people up. Things like Cher’s ‘Take Me Home.’ I never heard a disco record that offended me, but if I thought it was shit, I was done with it,” Pete says.

The album initiated Burns’ uneasy relationship with the corporate side of making commercially popular music. “I never allowed – and this never did me any favors – it was a bad attitude, but it was my way of working – I would never allow the record company people to come in on the recording of my music. That was a strict contractual term. No A&R people. Nobody from the company was allowed into the studio until the full completion of the album. That didn’t make [the executives] feel very pleased. When they’d hear it later, they’d always come back and say things like, ‘Hmmm...the bass sound needs altering,’ or something like that. And you know what we used to do? We’d give it back to them, saying we fixed it, and it’s okay now. They didn’t even notice that nothing was changed, but they had

to feel like they were involved.

“The other thing they’d always say to me was, ‘Where’s the ballad? Where’s the ballad? Where’s the ballad?’ I never had a desire to do a ballad – I only wanted to do music that made people happy.”



Dead or Alive reinvented the disco classic “That’s The Way (I Like It)” and enjoyed their first brush with commercial success in 1984. Photo courtesy of Pete Burns and Dead or Alive, with thanks to Epic/Sony BMG Europe.

Though considered by many to be phenomenally distinctive in a vast sea of interchangeable pop music singers, Burns says he was never able to appreciate the unique quality of his baritone voice.

“I hate the sound of my voice,” he confesses. “I’ve only liked it on one thing – an acoustic show I did with an Australian gentleman named Jonathan Coleman. We did an acoustic medley (just a piano) from the album *Fan The Flame*. I saw it recently on the Internet, and I thought, okay, that *is* fucking good. I thought my voice sounded really good.

“I have power and perfect pitch, but you see, I have many singers I like, and they are usually female. I am sure you have heard of Sylvester (although, if you can believe it, many people have *not* in this country, even in the gay community – they don’t know who Divine is either). I was quite astounded when I saw Sylvester on *Top Of The Pops*. He appeared as a man singing; he put a fan across his

face, and then he's kind of an androgyny. I was like, 'Wow!' Even in the punk clubs here in the U.K., Sylvester's music would be played, and he filled the floors, which was quite amazing. I fully expected when I stood in front of a microphone, that a voice like his would come out of me. That was my spirit voice, the voice that I wanted. That was the voice I wanted to come out of me. Personally, my choice, I wish I had a different kind of voice, but I have to settle with what I have."

Dead or Alive's next project proved to be a groundbreaking innovation, but its evolution and eventual success required patience.

"I was very motivated by *Pink Flamingos*, Divine's first movie that I saw very early on (where he eats the dog shit)," Pete remembers. "I never laughed so hard and was never shocked so much in my life. The next thing I knew, a record by Divine appeared called 'Native Love (Step By Step),' produced by Bobby O [Orlando]. When we signed our record deal with CBS for the next album, we were in negotiations for production with Bobby O. Bobby was being very, very difficult, and the plan died in the end. A while back, we had also considered working with Sylvester's producer, Patrick Cowley [1950-1982], but the record label had opposed him.

"I was happy signing with Sony, and it was very nice to have a multi-album deal with them. But I wish the deal had come earlier. But CBS was only interested in us because they wanted a second Culture Club. But hey, I'm sorry, I was the one with that kind of style long before Boy George, when you look at my indie singles, the posters of me, and just look at the history. But statements like this always get me into arguments, and my mistake is that I respond; I bite back.

"We were young and naïve in the '80s. We didn't get media training. That was always the problem with my interviews – I told the absolute truth. Today, I believe people are media-trained now with what to talk about and how to do it. I always reserved the right to change my mind at any given moment. You make a decision like, 'I fucking hate that pair of shoes more than anything in the world.'

Then you decide you really love them. That's the way my mind works. Maybe it's schizophrenia. It's pretty much impossible to be that way in our society, and it was totally impossible in the corporate music industry.

“Anyway, I digress. I kept a clock-radio alarm beside my bed back then (I don't have clocks any more). When it would go off, the radio came on, and the record that was being played the most at the time was ‘Whatever I Do (Wherever I Go)’ by Hazell Dean. I noticed the production and the cowbells and the sounds on it. Then Divine's ‘You Think You're A Man’ came out, and I did research into who the producers were. So we went and had a meeting with our record company and said the producers of those hits were the ones we wanted to use. Essentially, that was Pete Waterman.”

Dead or Alive aligned forces with Waterman, whose fledgling British production house included partners Mike Stock and Matt Aitken. The result was the album *Youthquake*, released in the spring of 1985, a number 1 hit in Britain and a Top 20 smash in the U.S. From the set came an unforgettable single, “You Spin Me Round (Like A Record),” a wild romp through high-energy dance music that not only gave Burns and his band mates a number 1 in the U.K., Canada, and Switzerland, it became a monster success in Germany, Italy, Austria, America, and numerous other countries. It dramatically increased demand for the expertise of the Stock Aitken Waterman crew, and it became *the* sound to emulate by artists on both sides of the Atlantic. The record made international stars out of Dead or Alive. However, the single took over four months to top the British chart, and Pete insists that not everyone was initially enthusiastic about the track.

“The label kept telling us ‘Spin’ was not a hit. And then eventually it *did* become a hit through the gay clubs. It turned into a *huge* hit. Then it spread into the straight world. I know that Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys used to write for a music paper as a journalist at one time, and he gave ‘Spin Me’ the most damning review you have ever read. I remember the label told me the maximum it could be number

1 for was two weeks, if I was lucky, because [their next artist] was coming out with a single, and he'd have to go to number 1. That's how the corporate industry worked, and I had disgust for it."



Pete Burns and his band are seen in a publicity photo issued for the release of the blistering 1985 Dead or Alive single "Lover Come Back To Me." Top row, left to right: Steve Coy, Pete Burns. Bottom row: Mike Percy, Timothy Lever. Photo courtesy of Pete Burns and Dead or Alive, with thanks to Epic/Sony BMG Europe. Photography by Paul Cox.

The Stock Aitken Waterman team was reportedly quite firm about adhering to their production methods and concepts, which Burns says was a major source of friction. "We would butt heads so fucking badly; it was unbelievable. That's why we eventually walked away from them. For instance, there was a lyric from 'Something In My House' [from the follow-up album, *Mad, Bad And Dangerous To Know*] where I make a reference to a 'wicked queen.' The actual producer, Mike Stock, stopped me and said I couldn't use that term because it would mean the record is about gay people. I was like, 'Fuck this; it's going on.' They actually wiped the original vocal, but then Pete Waterman came back and said, "Let him do it the way he wants to.' There you go.

"I got really sick working with them during the making of the *Mad, Bad* album. I got really, really sick. We worked on that album



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

The rise of Pete Burns and Dead or Alive ran parallel to the rapidly emerging AIDS crisis that befell the world during the '80s. Pete remembers the impact of the pandemic.

“Very early on in the crisis, some really close friends and acquaintances started dropping like fucking flies. It wasn't a pretty death, and I was at their bedside through their deaths. At one point, the main AIDS ward in Britain then was...oh I don't know, I think it was St. Mary's something. I can't remember. The poor kids there, their esophaguses were being burned by the medicine AZT and other things they were giving them at the time. So they couldn't eat food. I did some research, and I was able to get a huge supply of fresh, organic Aloe vera flown in. I took it into the wards, and the kids started improving. They could actually start eating meals in bed. Well, I was banned from the ward when the hospital found out.

“Thinking of that crisis, the grief got to me so much. I remember in the early '90s I was brought over to the Limelight in New York by that horrible Michael Alig [co-founder of the Club Kids group, who pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 1996] – they bought me for a fucking fortune. When I arrived at the door for the sound check, Michael Alig wouldn't let me in – I was blond and didn't come with my band; I had planned to do a different kind of show with Alvin Ailey dancers and a female vocalist. [Once I got inside], there were these tacky glitter letters that said 'Dead or Alive.' I said no way, and I just wouldn't do it. So I walked out. I continued with the rest of the tour.

“I could see down to the street level where there were homeless people with signs like 'Ex-Vietnam Vet with AIDS,' 'Homeless with AIDS, please help.' There I was, livin' it up, and I couldn't take it.”

“I felt I had to do something myself because I had an issue with the administration costs of the AIDS organizations that were in Chelsea, New York. I was staying at an Ian Schrager hotel, and my room had a huge glass wall. I could see down to the street level



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

out, etcetera, etcetera. It's a legendary record. I'm grateful to have had 'Spin Me.' Of course I get bored singing it every night. I've said this before – I'm 55 years old for Christ's sake. It's like being forced to wear your grade school uniform when you're 25 years old."

In recent years, Burns has been a media favorite, mostly because of his almost unrecognizable appearance, the result of cosmetic procedures that he began to explore in the mid-'80s.

"I was one of the first to be open about what I've done in terms of cosmetic surgery. Why lie?" he asks quite pointedly. "I had my nose done the week before 'Spin Me' came out, and it cost £700 and was done by someone in Liverpool. The nose basically collapsed on one side, and I was basically purple. So I had to wear an eye patch to disguise the nose job disaster until it healed and could be redone. Then later on, during the '90s, I decided I would have my lips augmented. I had seen Barbara Hershey in *Beaches* and wanted that kind of collagen augmentation. I had no desire to look like [transgender performance artist] Amanda Lepore, by the way – she looks great, but I didn't want to look like that."

Burns describes receiving a cosmetic procedure involving lip-filler some years ago, which he says was improperly administered by a London doctor. It marked the beginning of a grueling ordeal for the singer.

"I did a gig with Scissor Sisters on the radio, and the next morning I woke up – with no exaggeration – and my partner found me on the floor, writhing in pain and my lower lip had swelled up larger – and I mean this – than when a person has a disc inserted in it. It was bigger than my face – the lower lip. There was yellow stuff pouring out of holes in it. I called my doctor and my partner explained the situation. The doctor saw me in the waiting room and hid me in a back room. He removed over a liter and a half of fluid. Holes started to appear in my cheek and neck. I started to get discharges from my eyes, and I developed kidney stones and stones in my liver. It ripped its way right through my body," he says in a tone that clearly reflects his exhaustion.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“I’m really not interested in what people think of me, especially the negativity,” he says firmly. “As a living human being, I’ve refused to pay any attention to it. They don’t pay my rent; they don’t put fucking food on my table. So what people think of me doesn’t matter. If you don’t hear that stuff, the bad stuff, it doesn’t hurt. I’ve personally never given myself a good review anyway. With the music, I’ve said before that you’re buying the record, not me. Thank you for buying the record, but you haven’t bought me. Some people in life try to take ownership of you and get very hateful. It’s beyond description.

“Being a human being is a fucking pain in the ass at times. I’d much rather be a cat.”



Pete Burns glams it up during the *Evolution* greatest hits album photo shoot from 2003, some 18 years after the release of the massively successful “You Spin Me Round (Like A Record)” single. Photo courtesy of Pete Burns and Dead or Alive, with thanks to Epic/Sony BMG Europe. Photography by James & James.

DEBUT DE SOIREE'S

SACHA GOËLLER

“Nuit De Folie”

When Sacha Goëller and William Picard reached the upper echelons of *Music & Media's* Pan-European singles chart early in the fall of 1988, they joined an elite list of fellow French pop artists (think Desireless, Patricia Kaas, and Vanessa Paradis) who also made the same rare, conspicuous leap. The two DJs and vocalists, better known as Debut De Soiree, became a sensation in France with their hook-fused, high-energy hit singles “Nuit De Folie” and “La Vie, La Nuit.” Once their hits were remixed by the U.K.’s renowned PWL production team, the group’s infectious sound traveled across borders with the speed of the Concorde. This sensational accomplishment isn’t lost on Goëller, who, over two and a half decades later, still looks upon his success as a genuine blessing from the universe.

“I was born in 1965 in Pont-Sainte-Maxence, France, and I lived near Paris till I was nine years old,” states Sacha, speaking from his current home in Barcelona. “In 1974, my family and I moved to the city of Aix (Aix-en-Provence), an area in the south of France. I remember first being interested in music when my parents gave my sister a stereo, which I seized when she was not at home. I’d listen to Earth, Wind & Fire, The Jackson 5, and other groups that were popular in the late ’70s.

“Later, I met William Picard at a radio station where we worked, and there our friendship was born. We were total opposites. William

was extroverted, and I was more reserved and measured, but the mixture of the two personalities made our partnership work well, and we've lasted all these years. Obviously the music united us because it was (and it still is) our passion, and to be honest, it's almost impossible to live without it. Originally, we created a group together in 1987 called Yankee, and we made a record called 'Mister D'J.' But it didn't work out. Then we named ourselves Debut De Soiree, meaning 'the beginning of the evening,' but club DJs have always interpreted it to mean the moment when they put a record on the turntable, the party starts, and everyone gets dancin'.

“At the beginning of the '80s,” Goëller observes, “the music that worked well in France was funk and disco. Then came new wave and the age of the synthesizers that were used by many groups like Depeche Mode and others. I think the inspiration of our song 'Nuit De Folie,' the track that first brought us success in 1988, came from the German dance-pop sound that was prevalent, like Modern Talking. However, we never imitated anyone. Every period of music shares similar styles, and in general during that period in the '80s, everyone had the same synthesizer sounds. Obviously, the techniques of the period inspired our songs, and the production behind our tracks helped to make them work. William and I were DJs, so we knew the 'groove' and 'feeling' of what set the dance floor on fire, which I think helped us incredibly.

“I know some sources out there say our first release, 'Nuit De Folie,' was released before 1988, but it wasn't. That is false information. After we recorded the song, one of our producers named Sauveur Pichot went to Paris in order to find a distribution deal for our song, and most of them rejected the track, saying it wasn't good enough and that it was way too 'commercial.' The last label Sauveur went to see on his search was CBS Records. He actually asked a janitor for the name of the label's artistic director. Without an appointment, Pichot went to the fourth floor of CBS and then knocked at the door of someone named Dominique Lefèvre. Dominique liked the record, and suddenly we were signed with CBS!”

“There’s always the problem of inexperience and the urgent desire to sign with a record label when you were young artists – like we were.”

Goëller says Debut De Soiree could have tried to negotiate a better label deal, but in those days, he admits they lacked savvy. “There’s always the problem of inexperience and the urgent desire to sign with a record label when you were young artists – like we were. You’ll sign a contract agreeing to almost anything. However, you have to ‘give to receive,’ and in our case, we have received and continue to receive so much that we are more than satisfied. We were fortunate to have very honest producers, and I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Sauveur Pichot, Claude Mainguy, and Guy Matteoni for the work they have done with us.”

A relentlessly effervescent tribute to the simple joys of a “night of madness,” the French record buying public quickly showed their approval for “Nuit De Folie” by sending the song to the top of France’s club and pop charts. Debut De Soiree’s first album, *Jardins d’Enfants*, was equally popular in the country.

“For the creation of the LP, our producers and composers gave us music demos of the songs. William wrote the lyrics. Then, each of us gave his opinion as to the musical direction, the arrangements, and how best to sing the songs. Meanwhile, from June to August of 1988, we sold more than 500,000 copies of the single, and we had our first gold record by September,” Goëller says with pride. “In one year, we sold more than three million total CDs and singles and received many awards. We were the last group to receive platinum certification for album sales of one million copies in France, certified by the SNEP (Syndicat National de l’édition Phonographique). After our award, they lowered the requirement to 800,000 copies.”

“Nuit De Folie” stood tall on its own merits in the deep pool of dance-pop records swirling about in France, but a well-crafted remix by one of England’s most respected production maestros, Pete Hammond (from Britain’s PWL production camp), changed

everything. Hammond's supplemental production work and remix sent the track leaping up the charts of France's neighbors, including Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg.

"I think the song was so successful throughout Europe," observes Sacha, "because the melody was very catchy and fit well with the sounds that were popular at the time. I think another very important reason was that we had the song remixed by the Stock Aitken Waterman production team at the time when Kylie Minogue, Rick Astley, and Donna Summer were very trendy. After selling half a million copies in France, CBS had the good idea to ask PWL for a remix, and that gave us the power to create an international push.

"Our lives changed completely. We started traveling constantly and began meeting people of many different cultures. We shared our passion with a huge variety of people. Everything seemed to move at such a supersonic speed that we didn't have time to really enjoy what was happening to us during the first year of success. Personally, it's only now that I realize the greatness of what occurred. I have had a blessed life, and I truly thank the universe for what happened," the singer smiles.

"During the first few weeks the song was released and was becoming a hit, we performed on many TV programs. Wherever we went, everyone began to look at us and ask us for autographs. I remember one day coming out of a TV show studio where, unexpectedly, a big crowd of people had gathered with discs in hand, asking for an autograph. I think it was at this moment we realized we were beginning a period of great success. The fame came to us overnight – just like that, without us looking for it. There are many artists and musicians who seek success for years and sometimes never even find it. You can imagine how frustrating that is. So we have always given thanks to the supreme power for what happened to us."

Despite the hit single's enormous success abroad, Goëller says an English language version never got past the brainstorming stage. "To be honest," he admits, "we thought of doing an English version of



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

DESIRELESS



CLAUDIE FRITSCH

“Voyage, Voyage”

“I am an androgyne – Yin and Yang. I never wanted to create an image. I just wanted to be myself,” says Desireless, seen here in trendsetting attire during a late '80s performance. *Photo courtesy of Antoine Aureche.*

Born on Christmas Day, the stars aligned rather well for Claudie Fritsch. She is better known as Desireless, an expressive French chanteuse who stretched the boundaries of gender identification with her stylishly androgynous look. She also displayed a remarkable ability to cross multiple international borders with the irresistible '80s dance classic, “Voyage, Voyage.” The song is reported to have sold over five million copies, and it became an undisputed hallmark of European dance music of the era. Desireless delighted, perplexed, and fascinated fans of her silky intonations and avant-garde, upbeat music. Her songs spoke of love, pain, and the freedom to choose one’s own destination – an idea she has most certainly embraced in her own life. She is a woman of few words today, at least in this



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

In a 2011 interview posted online by the entertainment hub Envrak.fr, the artist was described having no interest in being a man. Desireless was quoted as humorously insisting (loosely translated), “I have no balls or cock, but I can do everything like [a man].”

Despite the sudden glare of the spotlight and the novelty of pop chart success, she says her journey was unencumbered by fame. “[Success] did not change my life. I just took the plane a little more often. I drank a bit of champagne; I paid a little more in taxes,” she says with amusement. When asked if there was a moment where she felt she had crossed into the world of pop stardom, she simply laughs off the question.

By 1988, the momentum of “Voyage, Voyage” had eased, and the time was right for a follow-up. A riveting lament to the futility and hopelessness of war, “John” was the powerful track chosen as her next commercial single. Rhythmically, it progressed with an intoxicating dance beat that was in some ways more infectious than its predecessor. Remixed by Les Adams, the production surged with a high-energy rhythm as Desireless’s soothing, yet determined vocals hypnotized listeners. Says the singer, “I love the song ‘John,’ even more than ‘Voyage, Voyage.’ Ninety-nine percent of my fans also prefer the song. Unfortunately, the subject of this piece remains present.” “John” reached the Top 5 and was a huge hit in France, while making a significant impact in Germany and on the U.K. club charts.

The following year saw the long-awaited release of the Desireless debut album, entitled *Francois*. “Francois is the name of my companion all these years. He is the dad of my daughter, Lili. I loved the work we did in the studio for this album, from the sound of the kick drum, to the vocals and the final mix – I simply loved it,” she says with fresh enthusiasm. The set featured Claudie’s previous hits, as well as riveting dance cuts like “Les Commencements.” The eclectic dance single, “Qui Sommes-nous” (which, like most of the Desireless catalog, was deep in spiritual references), was lifted from the set and extended for the clubs. The track received its most

enthusiastic response from Germany.

The breezy, more melancholy single “Elle Est Comme Les Etoiles” followed in 1990, and with this final release, the artist left the confines of CBS. “I think there was too much pressure,” she says without elaborating, but with a smile on her face. “That’s why I left Sony and broke my contract with Jean-Michel after the release of the album. I regret nothing.”

“The best thing about my success with these songs was my connection with the public.”

Desireless says she always loved to dance and that dance music was a natural, comfortable genre for her talents. She was equally at ease recording in the country of France and is proud of her French heritage. Her love of “the language of Voltaire” allowed her to dismiss any pressures to sing in English or concerns about conquering the United States. “I had no such aspirations,” she says firmly. “I just tried to breathe and exhale to my rhythm. The best thing about my success with these songs was my connection with the public. These songs have instilled an emotional and intimate link between us. It’s magic!”

As for the excesses and vices of drugs and alcohol that were present back in those feverish days, the artist simply smiles and says, “A glass of champagne or a little joint has never hurt anyone.”

Lili, her daughter, was born in 1990, prompting Desireless to nurture her maternal side before returning to music. In 1994, utilizing a new production team and co-writing several tracks, she released an album called *I Love You*. The LP featured a sophisticated blend of synth-pop, dance, acoustic, and Bossa Nova styles. The single “Il Dort” and the title track, a duet with Charles France, garnered critical praise, but failed to attain the widespread popularity of her stellar debut. The singer paid little attention to such concerns, saying she felt no inclination to repeat the formula of her first collection. “I do not feel enclosed by any one style, even today,” she says. “I’m very eclectic in general. I work with the musicians that I meet and like and

with whom I have the ‘feeling’ I need to be creative. It is as simple as that.”

Though Desireless was less in the spotlight in the years that followed, she continued to explore her musical creativity, and the singer happily recites some of her accomplishments. “In 1995, I moved to Drôme Provençale and continued to make Bossa Nova music. I released a number of albums over the years – a live acoustic album, *Un Brin De Paille*, and an electronic dance album called *More Love & Good Vibrations* with Fabien Scarlakens in 2008. I also joined Mic-Eco for a guitar/vocal album called *Le Petit Bisou*.”

More recently, Desireless teamed with Alec Mansion in 2011 for the well-received EP *L’expérience Humaine* (featuring the irresistible track “Tes Voyages Me Voyagent,” which might be viewed as an evolution of “Voyage, Voyage”) and in 2012, the album *XP2*. Continuing to express herself in inventive ways, the artist collaborated with Operation Of The Sun’s accomplished innovator Antoine Aureche to release a critically acclaimed album called *L’Oeuf Du Dragon* in 2012/2013, which mixed retro-beats and synth-pop for a surprising overall mood of serenity and introspection. The set contained a stirring, decidedly darker electro reinterpretation of the song “John” that may be said to reflect the composition’s stark message in a more sobering manner than the previous ’80s dance version. The pair released a new Desireless set in mid-2014 called *Noun*.

Antoine expresses much appreciation for Desireless.

“The experience of working with Desireless is probably the most extraordinary adventure that I’ve ever lived,” he says. “It has simply changed my life. Desireless taught me how to face my fears, and how to live, create, and love in the present. You know, I come from the dark side of music, and I thought at the beginning that I was too ‘underground’ for her. Time has taught me that she is as underground as me. Today she is like a mother, a collaborator, a friend, and a muse for me. I feel that something is growing inside me thanks to her. I feel that she’s ‘transmitting’ something to me.”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



“[Success] did not change my life. I just took the plane a little more often. I drank a bit of champagne; I paid a little more in taxes,” says Desireless today.

Photo courtesy of Antoine Aureche. Photography by Benjamin Brolet.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

state-of-the-art at the time with great engineers. It was a pretty straightforward experience. I think this album was truer to my original style. I always think that it is important to try different genres of music. So I quite enjoyed the remixes and extended versions we did of songs like 'Torero,' 'Portofino,' and 'Radio Dancing' during my time with Jack.

“My son (and manager), Scott Dorsey, later help me create *The Dance Album* [with producers Barry Harris and Chris Cox, released in 1998] with remixes of many of my biggest hits. The CD was a huge success, and we had a couple of Top 10 dance hits in the U.S. from that album.”

A major standout of the *Remember – I Love You* LP was a duet with disco legend Gloria Gaynor called “Love Is The Reason.” A pop ballad, the song was a great success with adult contemporary radio formats in the U.S. Inspiration for the collaboration may have come from producer Diamond’s previous success with Gaynor on the 1983 international dance smash “I Am What I Am.” Says Humperdinck, “[Diamond] introduced me to the song and Gloria. I had always been a fan of Gloria’s work, so I was excited to record with her. I hadn’t done too many duets prior to that, so it was a nice change.”

By November of 1988, Engelbert was back on *Music & Media*’s German Top 20 LP chart with the LP *In Liebe* (another White production), alongside such luminaries as Michael Jackson. “Anytime you share a chart position with a giant of a star like Michael, you have to feel proud,” he says. “It is always rewarding to get gold and platinum record sales from efforts like this. The walls of my homes in the U.K. and America are covered in discs, and I am truly proud of that.

“The German audiences were extremely enthusiastic in those days. I remember the first time I saw 10,000 people holding lighters and candles at one of my concerts there...it really took my breath away. I can say that for me, however, the highlight of that period in the '80s was appearing at the opening ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. I sang the song 'One World' with over 150 million people viewing.”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

continues to intrigue his huge fan base to this very day. He looks back on his incredible journey, offering some rare insights into the life he has spent amongst the strobe lights.

Fancy began his early school years studying in a monastery setting, but by the time he'd entered his teens, he had discovered the joys of schlager music, a generally upbeat brand of German pop-folk music unique to the region's culture (which later incorporated elements of the disco sound). Living in Munich, he learned to play guitar.

"I had a rock 'n roll band at one point called 'Tess & The Mountain Shadows,'" he remembers. "I was the singer and the bass player in the early days of this group. I eventually went to work for a publishing company and started working as a composer and demo-tape singer. I also tried taking my first steps as a producer. Step by step, I worked with more artists and started producing music for different record companies." Recording as Tess Teiges, he released a number of German language singles on the Ariola label.

The artist used a number of signatures back in the '70s and early '80s, among them Tess Ric and Manfred Perilano. They were each connected with a variety of functions, including songwriter, artist, and producer. "I primarily envisioned myself as a producer," he says. "I was filled with enthusiasm for the disco and dance music of the era. I was really influenced by Giorgio Moroder and the early work of Bobby Orlando. I must say the Tamla-Motown hits were very inspiring to me as well. I was a big fan of Creedence Clearwater Revival, Donna Summer, Barry White, Cliff Richard, Jimi Hendrix...the list goes on and on. I knew some of these artists personally."

Hansa International released a hit single by an entity known as Slip, produced by Fancy using the name Tess Teiges, in Germany in May of 1983. It placed the Teiges firmly on the dance-pop map. The song was a fired-up electro-version of the Motown gem "Don't Leave Me This Way," and the track roared up the German pop charts into the country's Top 10. The production had the same energized



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Fancy's distinctive vocal delivery proved to be a winning formula.

As the new year began, the artist became well-known as an international hit-maker, and he fashioned for himself a rather inscrutable identity for live performances, videos, and TV. With dark glasses and austere, yet hip, uniform-style fashions, Fancy projected a rather aloof and mysterious appearance standing among flashing lasers and lighted dance floors.

“I wanted to customize my artist name visually, and so I had a lot of costumes made and created a masquerade visage for my face. I was always a very private person. I was always kept hidden behind makeup and costumes,” he admits.

The *Flames of Love* LP was developed and released in 1988, with Fancy taking more control of the creative process and producing several tracks (Monn handled the others). The title track was produced by Fancy at the Weryton Studios in Munich, and keyboards were programmed by Alfons Weindorf, co-author of the song.

“When you have your song covered in another country's native language, you know you've really achieved an international hit.”

“I think the reason the song ‘Flames of Love’ was such a success,” Fancy conjectures, “was because the chorus became like an anthem. Combined with the drive of the disco-fox melody and my vocal performance, I believe the song just had a timeless feel that many people from many different regions could relate to. In Hong Kong, an artist did a cover version of the song in the Cantonese language. When you have your song covered in another country's native language, you know you've really achieved an international hit.”

Fancy's production team expanded to include the writing skills of Alfons Weindorf and Sabrina Lorenz. “Since Alfons was already in the same studio working with singer Grant Miller (a protégé of mine, who had scored well in the clubs with ‘Doctor For My Heart’), we were able to collaborate on ‘Flames of Love.’ Alfons is the younger



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Though Fancy's endeavors in rap-dance met with mixed reviews, the artist continued to release numerous LPs and tracks for a wide variety of record labels during the '90s. Beautifully melodic dance hits like "Love Has Called Me Home" and edgy tracks like "No Way Out" were welcomed by radio, DJs, and dancers alike. Teiges worked with Siegfried & Roy, who were fixtures of the Frontier Theater and Mirage stages in Las Vegas during the '90s. He enthusiastically produced various CDs and books for the duo.

The decade culminated with the release of "Slice Me Nice '98" and a hit mix medley sponsored by the popular Fetenhits brand, a single that returned the artist to Germany's Top 20. Two LP's released at the same time, *Best of Fancy* and *Hit Party*, reached the Top 20 of the Media-Control charts. With the success of the *Hit Party* LP, Fancy became a key artist on the 69 Records/Jupiter label (connected to the BMG family), and released 1999's *D.I.S.C.O.* album, followed by the *Strip Down* LP in 2000. The latter featured the song "We Can Move A Mountain," which was a major club hit and a German pre-selection for the Eurovision song contest that year.

Through Universal Germany, the artist released an album containing newly recorded versions of his hits and dance music standards sung in the German language (*Die Hits Auf Deutsch*). The well-received set *Forever Magic* (released initially in Russia, Kazakhstan, and the Baltics) came out in 2008. Teiges recently returned to the ZYX label to release a new Fancy hit medley single, "Flames Of Love Megamix." His latest ZYX dance production, "I Should Have Known Better," a dance version of the Lennon/McCartney classic, hit digital outlets early in 2014 and placed well on the high-energy charts. Fancy began burning up those same charts at the beginning of 2015 with the single "Follow Me (Have A Celebration Mix)," lifted off his 30th anniversary album, *Shock And Show*. Throughout, Fancy's fan base has remained sizeable and loyal, and he contends he is the German pop solo artist with the greatest number of worldwide concert events to date.

"My audience can be very different, depending on the territory and



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Pearson survived his remarkable celebrity rollercoaster ride and says he stands stronger today, ready to embark on a journey of reinvention with renewed confidence. From his home in London, the handsome, soft-spoken, and decidedly optimistic man is anxious to tell his version of the Five Star story and to describe how he fits in the world today.

“My dad, Buster Pearson, was a lorry driver (to pay some of the bills) and a musician – more so a musician,” Pearson remembers. “He was once a guitarist with Otis Redding, Jimmy Cliff, and many others. He would also write songs and was a producer who ran a few small recording labels. In the ’80s, my dad got hold of a song called ‘Problematic.’ It was about how hard it was to get a job and to deal with life. My three sisters, Deniece, Doris, and Lorraine, heard the song, loved it, and decided they were going to get together and rehearse it. They didn’t know yet whether they could actually sing well together, but they thought they’d give it a shot. My mom, Delores, loved the sound they created and insisted my dad listen to them. She had an absolute vision that a family group concept for them would work. My dad didn’t really want us in show business at first, but he loved the way my sisters sounded too.

“I was working on several different things at the time. I was training in fashion and dance and was also training to be a runner for Junior Great Britain. I had been thinking about shows, musicals like *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, and that’s what I had my sights set on – to perform in things like that. My brother Delroy was 12, and I was 18. My mother asked Delroy and I to consider doing the group thing with the girls. So we agreed, and Five Star was born. My mom told me not to worry, and that I could always pursue my other interests during or after our Five Star days, possibly with a bigger name. As a kid, I could sort of visualize that there was going to be something more to the group down the road. I was happy that I took the step, and it was the beginning of me discovering so much about myself.”

Unfortunately, it wasn’t long before Stedman says he felt increasingly unsure of his role in the ensemble.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“We bought a large home in Berkshire and were very happy there for a time. But about two and a half years into living there, things started to go wrong. We made an investment to build a wonderful state-of-the-art recording studio right there in the house. We had Quincy Jones, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and Diana Ross all booking the studio. Eddie Murphy, too, who was engaged to one of my sisters. Vanessa Williams’ brother was interested in marrying another of my sisters. There was a lot going on, the kind of things the media loves to jump on. It was kind of amazing what was happening with us, but overwhelming.

“Yes, we had very expensive cars and were living well. At that time in the ’80s, it still made people generally uncomfortable to see a black family doing exceptionally well in England.”

“When the press got wind of all this, they started saying we were being overly indulgent with our lifestyle. Yes, we had very expensive cars and were living well. At that time in the ’80s, it still made people generally uncomfortable to see a black family doing exceptionally well in England. We were breaking down a lot of barriers. In Britain, I think many people wanted to see us fail. And that’s what the press was trying to encourage, saying our house was now worth a fortune, ten times what we paid for it. As soon as the banks started getting wind of all this, they started calling the mortgage in – they wanted it paid up. I think they wanted the house back, believing it was now worth much more than we paid for it. We lived in a fish bowl, and everything that was going on with us was thrust into the public’s face. At the end of the day, we did what we had to do, based on what our finances could handle. We were also getting ripped off by a lot of business associates who were doing our merchandising, and it all just started to collapse. So, we filed for bankruptcy. And that was it.

“We lost friends; many people wouldn’t speak to us any more. It was amazing how we had to give things back – not only possessions, but also relationships. We gracefully left the house, and we eventually moved to America.”

Subsequent albums like 1987's *Between The Lines* and the following year's *Rock The World*, although popular in the U.K., failed to reach the heights the group had previously achieved on the charts. By the time the family decided to move to the west coast of America, it seemed that Five Star's momentum had stalled.

"Our decline in sales, I believe, was so political," Stedman says with certainty. "I knew what these record labels could be like. I watched the stress my dad endured with them. He was Jamaican and had his own record label, which he signed to the majors. He was a real pioneer doing that in the U.K. The record labels didn't really like my father. Yes, he was tough to handle, but you have to remember we were his kids, and he was looking out for us. The flipside was he needed to view us as a business as well. That was difficult for him.

"When we won 'Best British Group' around 1987, my father had started thinking about taking us to Epic Records. He was intrigued by Epic because they had Michael Jackson. I didn't like that idea, because I felt RCA had been good to us. [RCA A&R executive] Peter Robinson was absolutely brilliant with my dad. But my father didn't listen to me. I loved my father, but we didn't get on as well as we should have.

"I remember some people from Epic Records came to our Berkshire home by the end of the '80s to discuss signing us. I hadn't changed from my street clothes, and I just looked like a nobody hanging around, wearing a baseball cap. The Epic executives were near me, talking with each other after they had just signed us. One of them said, pointing to our home, 'This is too much for a black family to have in Britain. Come Monday, we need to take this all away from them. They can't be making this kind of money.' They were so nice to us to our faces, but this is apparently what they were really thinking. My father wouldn't listen when I told him. I was literally crying," Stedman says, his manner agitated.

The similarities between the Jackson clan patriarch and Buster Pearson do not go unnoticed by Stedman.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“...at the end of the day, I can only be one thing – myself.”

Pearson says that inevitably questions were raised about his sexuality. “People often ask me if I am straight, gay, or bi-sexual,” he says matter-of-factly. “I look at them and just say that, at the end of the day, I can only be one thing – myself. I’m not trying to be evasive, but I just don’t feel I have to put all these labels on myself and all the baggage that goes with them. I don’t need to shout what my sexuality is to anyone – why is that necessary? People will believe what they want to believe no matter what I say – I’ll never win. What you see is what you get with me. Everyone can make his or her own assumption; that’s fine by me. As long as I am comfortable with who I am, that’s all that matters to me. We are all made the same way, no matter what label you put on a person. We are all human beings who need love – that’s it.”

Though there were plenty of challenges during Pearson’s jaunt through the ’80s, he is quick to remember that the period was also laced with extraordinarily exciting moments.

“Though there were a lot of difficult times in my life, there were some really incredibly good times too. For me, the experience of meeting great artists was like a high,” he says, his voice exuding a fresh sense of awe. “Again, Stevie and Diana Ross, some of The Beatles – connecting with these incredible people was just amazing. One of the highlights of my life surely has been meeting Her Majesty, the Queen. She asked us if we were all truly family, and we responded that we were. She asked us if we were British, and we said, ‘Absolutely, Your Highness.’ She just loved that. She told us that we were so good for the United Kingdom and so good for the world. Beyond that, I think it has been phenomenal to simply achieve what we did as a singing group. We were one of the youngest groups ever to reach number 1 (black or otherwise); we were nominated for a Grammy, and at one point we were even outselling Michael Jackson in the U.K. – it just blows me away. We had the title ‘The Royal Family of Pop,’ at one time in Britain. *That* is a real



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



“I’m not sure where my path is going to take me. But I’ve learned life is what you make it – it’s pretty much up to me to shape how my life turns out,” says Stedman Pearson in 2014. *Photo courtesy of Stedman Pearson. Photography by Ed Gregory.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“When we decided to try and release the song, we knew that Italian DJs and the radio people were very provincial. In other words, there was a prejudice among them that an Italian production, especially sung in English, was probably going to sound cheap and like B-material. A-stuff was American and British – that was the cool music, and that was the attitude at the time. We were afraid they wouldn’t give the song a chance if they saw an Italian artist’s name on it. We decided to pick a stage name that would allow us to bypass that problem. I thought of that word ‘gazebo,’ which I took from the lyrics, and [the co-producer of ‘Masterpiece,’ Paul Micioni] said, ‘Oh yeah, that sounds perfect!’ So the white label ended up reading ‘Gazebo – Masterpiece.’ The DJs didn’t realize it was an Italian production, and this was the key to our success. We were not the only ones in the business who had to use this ploy. Ironically, in the years that followed, Italy became *the* source for great dance music, and many German productions were made in such a way as to sound like Italian records.”

“Masterpiece” narrowly missed hitting the top spot on the Italian pop charts, and its impact was felt strongly on the Swiss and German surveys. Paul credits the gay community for helping to generate initial interest in his stellar debut.

“You had to be sensitive to get the subtleties of songs like ‘Masterpiece,’ and I was very proud that gay men and women related to it.”

“‘Masterpiece’ got to be number 1 on the gay dance charts in England and stayed on the chart for almost an entire year,” he says. “I think the people of the gay community were the first to really respond to the song, and I think they connected to the poetic aspects of the track. You had to be sensitive to get the subtleties of songs like ‘Masterpiece,’ and I was very proud that gay men and women related to it. I remember that the first club in Rome to play the song was called Easy Going, which was like a small, gay Studio 54. It was in a basement, but everybody knew about this club. The DJ there, Marco Trani [1960-2013], was one of the first to break the song. He invited



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

people go behind the face value of the song. The musical part of the song is also quite articulate and complex. There's a lot going on that you don't catch unless you hear it several times. Even in the video, we left our meaning a bit ambiguous. That was our whole goal... something more than just a simple pop song.”

Though immersed in the glamour and excitement of a rising career, Paul says he did not see many of the vices usually connected with the music industry of that period.

“I remember going to private parties where you'd see big piles of white powder on the tops of tables. That wasn't for me. I was always a wine guy.”

“As far as I was concerned and [in regard to] the people I worked with, to my knowledge drug abuse just wasn't a part of our world. Naggiar – he was hooked on caffeine. Twenty coffees a day. I didn't experience any drug problems with anybody I worked with. But it is true that cocaine was very much in fashion during the era, especially in the clubs in Milan. The '80s were very prosperous in Italy, people had money, and the clubs were very fashionable. I remember going to private parties where you'd see big piles of white powder on the tops of tables. That wasn't for me. I was always a wine guy,” he laughs. “Except on Thursday, which was beer night!”

Inevitably, expectations were high for Mazzolini's next endeavor. “I was promoting the first album for almost two years,” the artist says. “It was amazing, but at the same time it didn't allow me to work on the tracks for a new follow-up album the way I wanted to. I also couldn't do as many live concerts as I wanted to. The success I was having was keeping me a bit out of the world in a way. Baby Records wanted a new album...fast. It ended up being *Telephone Mama*. Pierluigi started working on it with a bit more of that ‘big producer’ kind of attitude. I was in the studio working on it one day, and then I'd be out for a week promoting the first album somewhere else.

“I did like the lyrics I ended up creating for the set. I had my own



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

the rest of their lives. Those records belong to their youth, and they are a part of their lives. The music is going to bring you memories, but the object itself adds another dimension. I feel sorry for the young guys...they are missing that. And I know people may argue this, but the music today, generally, is very artificial, over-sampled, computer-based, and overly compressed – which is something I *hate*. It has no dynamics. In order to make the music loud enough for today's technology, they reprocess the music to add power to it. It kills the low parts, the small details of the music. Music is made of sound, but it's also made of silence, and all that is lost. With technology, singers are also so perfectly in tune now...on their recordings – not when they have to sing live!" he laughs.

The artist continues to look ahead, contemplating his next creative move. He observes, "My children are gone now, and the nest is empty. So it's just me and the studio in my house. I find plenty of motivation there. I go inside it, and I go into my own little musical world. I always have a new goal – like doing a new album. I don't know if 10, 100, or a 1,000 people will buy it, but I want to do it. It's always about moving forward...taking steps in your life. You don't want to look back at your life and say you haven't done anything since the '80s. That would be terrible."

Paul Mazzolini, uniquely expressing himself as Gazebo, struck a distinct chord with European audiences of the era. For over 30 years, his music has influenced a generation of musicians and his hits have had a profound impact upon delighted listeners across the globe. He eases back in his chair, situated just a few feet away from his studio, as he thinks about what he has accomplished over the past three decades. He then leans forward, appearing decidedly focused.

"When I do shows today, I try to look in the faces of the fans. They all sing with me, especially on 'I Like Chopin.' I can see they are moved and that the song means so much to them. It's like it belongs to them. That's the great legacy of songs like this – when you have a successful hit, the song then belongs to the people, not the writers. I have this impression. They tell me of some important event



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Though other French artists like Desireless and groups like Les Avions and Debut De Soiree were enjoying great success in the dance music market, Llorca says his band wasn't influenced by their lead. Still, they managed to create a majestic electronic dance-pop sensation of their own with the hit "Capitaine Abandonné."

"We didn't style our sound based on the hits of others," he insists. "We found our own sound and balance, though we sometimes listened to what other French artists were doing. 'Capitaine Abandonné' was born of a merger between a song composed by Bernard and the music of another song composed by Émile. It was the brilliant idea of Cardona to bring these two songs together. I remember that we had to re-record the vocals for the chorus dozens of times to get that big sound of unison we were after. It was very hard, because the key was very high on this melody. We spent lot of time working on it. The recording took place in Toulouse at the Condorcet Studio.

"...no matter where a person is from, a good universal chorus...is irresistible."

"The lyrics were inspired by sports enthusiasts who go on explorations of the land or sea, then disappear, die, or are never found," he adds. "The subject of the text deals with adventurers who were known worldwide – sailors (Alain Colas), sportsmen (Arnaud de Rosnay), adventurers, and journalists like Philippe de Dieuleveult. I think that appealed to listeners of many countries. And no matter where a person is from, a good universal chorus (the 'Ohé Ohé' sound, as heard in our song) is irresistible."

"Capitaine Abandonné" reached the Top 30 on the Eurochart Hot 100 in 1986, and according to Llorca, has sold over 800,000 copies. The song was extended and remixed for maxi-single versions that were in constant rotation in the clubs. Eventually, an English language mix was created to enhance the international appeal of the French hit. The group subsequently enjoyed several club hits in a similar vein.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Today, Alain Llorca continues to perform the songs of Gold, a group that scored a major dance-pop hit in France with “Capitaine Abandonné” in 1986.

Photo courtesy of Alain Llorca.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

happen. I traveled constantly and had, in general, a fabulous time.”

Proto Records enlisted the talents of Mike Stock, Matt Aitken, and Pete Waterman (better known by their last names or simply as SAW), a production ensemble that was building a sizable name in the U.K. Pete Waterman had formed a partnership of sorts with Evangeli, and the pair enjoyed tremendous success with drag icon Divine’s frantic smash dance hit “You Think You’re A Man.” Divine’s monster success had set a new standard in high-energy music. The SAW team helmed Dean’s next single, and the results were tremendous. “Whatever I Do (Wherever I Go)” earned the singer a number 4 placing on the British pop chart, securing the positions of the vocalist and her production comrades as superstars of the period.

“I had a great time!” Dean says of her days with the famous production team. “I was very high on the charts with ‘Searchin’” and by fluke met Pete Waterman when he was visiting Proto Records one day. He asked me what I had in mind for a follow-up. He suggested I meet Matt and Mike, who played me the Divine track ‘You Think You’re A Man’ – I *loved* it. We recorded ‘Whatever I Do’ very quickly after they sent me a demo. I loved the verses but not the chorus, so I asked them to re-write it. Within a couple of days they had written the chorus you know it today. I did the first vocal when I was really tired. Pete asked me to sing it again, which I did, and the second vocal was the one that was actually used. Also, here’s something not everybody knows – I didn’t sing it in a vocal booth. I sang it in a corridor to get the sound they wanted. That was the start of the relationship and our success.”

Hazell followed her smash with “No Fool (For Love)” and an LP, *Heart First*, which didn’t quite meet the chart expectations of her producers. Still, the SAW team’s work at PWL Studios in London continued to gain more recognition, and the trio’s clout expanded worldwide as artists like Dead or Alive sought their expertise. Dean became well aware of the unit’s media branding as a so-called “hit factory,” pumping out dance-pop music at a breakneck pace.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

an arena in your 'home town' is amazing. I cannot describe the feeling of walking onto that stage – it was spectacular. It was packed. I had friends and family there, plus, of course, my PWL peers. I came off stage and walked straight into Pete Waterman's arms. It was magical, and it was emotional. I don't think I will ever experience anything like that again," the artist says breathlessly.

Hazell feels comfortable in her skin today. "Life is too short for 'what if's' and regret. My life is what it is. There have been ups and downs, but as Gloria would say, I will survive, and I am very happy," the singer smiles, easing back in her chair. "As I said earlier, I have done what most people only dream of. My family, friends, and my home are all things that keep me grounded today. I am not rock 'n' roll. I rarely drink, have never been involved with drugs, and I don't do the party circuit. I work, and I enjoy myself. That's it. When I go into the studio nowadays, I only record what I like. Nobody tells me what to do. I choose what I like; I record it in my style, and I am lucky enough to work with remixers who appreciate my voice. And when you are good at what you do, your audience will stick with you."

Hazell Dean's unique and powerful vocal style and electrifying hit singles during the '80s energized music fans throughout Britain, across Europe, and beyond. She played a pivotal role in shaping PWL's brand of dance-pop as she graced the top of the charts. In the process, she became one of the era's most important entertainers.

"I'd like the people who matter to me – my daughter, sister, nieces and nephews, my partner, mum, and friends – to remember me as a good person," she states.

And she also has one final decree – "Oh, and I would like to be remembered as having one of the best female dance-pop voices to come out of Great Britain. *The Undisputed Queen of Hi-NRG!*"



“When you are good at what you do, your audience will stick with you,” says legendary dance-pop songstress Hazell Dean today. *Photo courtesy of Hazell Dean.*

HUBERT KAH'S



This 1986 publicity photo was used to promote Hubert Kah in America by MCA/Curb Records and shows members (left to right) Hubert Kemmler, Markus Löhr, and Klaus Hirschburger. It was also used for the cover of the group's "Limousine" single in Germany by Intercord Ton GmbH. Cover by Mike Schmidt/Ink Studios. Photography by Dieter Eikelpoth. From the author's collection.

“Many people feel [the music we made] in the '80s was something that transcended them, that gave them hope. I think our music showed them it could also be fun. This is what hit records were all about,” says Klaus Hirschburger. He’s a songwriter, musician, and a former member of the prodigious German electronic dance band Hubert Kah. In addition, he was one of the key players who helped develop the hit sound of the international dance-pop icon Sandra. As co-writer of such evocative hits as Hubert Kah’s darkly sumptuous “Limousine” and Sandra’s expressive powerhouses “Innocent Love” and “Little Girl,” Hirschburger has a long and distinguished resume. Looking exceptionally youthful in middle age (and decidedly learned as he sits wearing dark framed glasses in the study of his Berlin home), he skitters through some of the highlights



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

well as production and arrangements by Swiss musician and producer Armand Volker, Hubert Kah made tremendous strides forward in popularity.

“Germany was not so big I guess because it was by chance that we first met Michael Cretu, who was making his music right next door to us in Frankfurt,” explains Klaus. “It was all about the melody, the vocal, and the groove. There was something kind of cold, gothic, and melancholic about the music we made together, and that’s what many people liked about us in the ’80s. I think we knew from the start we were all going to be writing a lot of music. And writing songs in English was not a problem for me. I traveled throughout the U.S. by rail at one point of my life, which I think helped me greatly to understand the language. In the ’90s and ’00s, I wrote a lot of German language material, and it wasn’t as easy for me. When it comes to German music, it’s lyrics first, and creating a song is more complicated. I’ve always liked to write with spontaneity, and I simply want my songs to reach people.”

By 1986, Hubert Kah hit their stride, and their appeal reached as far away as America and Japan. “We were on tour for maybe two or three years by that time,” the artist recalls. “Our main market was Japan and parts of Europe, and our manager was Australian. So I guess you could say we were a whole international ‘mess’ in those days. The dance hits we had were extraordinarily successful in America, especially New York and Los Angeles. We never crossed over to the pop charts there, but we didn’t care. We made enough money, and we were very happy with how things were going in the U.S., Europe, and Japan. It was quite a feat for us to have our records on the same charts with British electronica like The Eurythmics, Thompson Twins, and artists like that.

“We decided to do an album of short stories, which ended up being called *Tensongs*. It took us a long time to make the album – almost two years in fact before it came out in 1986. But after all that work, we realized we didn’t have a track on the set that would be a good single. ‘We are fucked without a single!’ I remember us saying.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Sandra's international record sales figures were a dream come true for Virgin. Thanks to equally vigorous club demand, priority tracks from her first set, such as the top-selling "In The Heat Of The Night," were often extended on 12-inch singles. "It was absurd to us because in one or two weeks of *The Long Play*'s release, I think she had sold over a million records throughout Europe," Klaus states. "It was a wonderful feeling for all of us. We started touring and established an international contract, and it was crazy. We started focusing on the next singles because we all knew Virgin was going to torture us for more. But I can tell you the label was one of the best record companies ever. Everyone has an opinion about songs and lyrics in the business, whether it's a label executive, a producer, or the wife of an engineer – they're all just a pain in the ass," he laughs. "But Virgin at that time was not like that at all. I think Richard Branson realized he had a handful of great people running his label in Germany. We had the best time with them, and they did a great job working with us."

Over the remainder of the decade and into the '90s, Hirschburger says the team never strayed from the creative blueprint they carefully established for Sandra. "I spent so much time out of Germany, living, working, and recording in Ibiza with Sandra and Cretu (where the couple lived). It was kind of strange because the people there were from all over – France, Hungary, Romania. I'd present ideas to her and Michael, and she would say whether she liked it or not. We had all kinds of concepts, like the songs 'Son Of A Time Machine' or 'Johnny Wanna Live,' which was a tribute to animal rights. Again, we always tried to keep things spontaneous, and we'd discuss whether the song was right for her – technically and personally. And if Sandra didn't care for something, there were no hard feelings."

Klaus says that he and his fellow artisans didn't worry too much about the pressure of being successful. "'Little Girl' [Sandra's third single from *The Long Play* album] is one of my favorite Sandra songs. It was written while I was on a trip in Venice with a girlfriend, and you can hear in the lyrics that it was a very spontaneous song. I came back with the idea; everyone liked it, and it worked. It turned



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

You need to enjoy the things you are doing. If you are not enjoying them, you have to get away from them. And you need to surround yourself with people you can trust and love. Keep the pressure off and move on. Believe in your intuition, and be open to what your subconscious tells you. It's very simple – there's nothing else I can say.”

Klaus Hirschburger was part of a dynamic team of creative individuals who not only helped shape the dance-pop sound of Germany in the '80s, they influenced and inspired a generation of fans in all parts of the world. From his essential work with the seminal band Hubert Kah, to the paramount achievements he enjoyed with Michael Cretu and Sandra, Hirschburger's contribution to the era is nothing short of historic. However, he's convinced his exploits can best be viewed far more simply.

“To be honest,” he smiles, “I would just like people to say my music was fun. We were young, it was fun, and it was not a lie. Music and words – they are unbeatable!”



“Believe in your intuition, and be open to what your subconscious tells you,” advises Klaus Hirshburger, seen here in 2014. *Photo courtesy of Klaus Hirshburger.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

some musicians in America redo it for me. I thought, ‘Okay, something’s going to happen for me now!’ Well, somehow they lost the master tape. Gone. To appease me, the record company introduced me to Tony Swain, who was one of their producers at the time. He liked my songwriting and asked me if I could write some lyrics for a piece of music he had on a cassette. It was a very rough track, but I remember I took the tape home, and that very night at my mother’s kitchen table, I wrote the lyrics to the song ‘Body Talk.’

“We called in my friend Ashley Ingram, who was a bass player I had started working with,” he continues. “Drummer Errol Kennedy [Central Line] was brought in after the ‘Body Talk’ single had been recorded. And that’s how we became a trio. I think we had it in our heads to try and emulate The Police, who also had three members. Most groups in those days were much larger. If we had formed a big group and went out on the road, I knew we’d only make tuppence. I said no way to that idea. It was a three-way split. Even though everyone didn’t write the song ‘Body Talk,’ I gave percentages to everyone. Everyone was given equal credit on our first album. I felt we came from nothing, and if we could achieve something with our records, we could reach higher platforms. I wanted us to all be in it together. ‘Body Talk’ turned out to be our very first hit record, and we became known as Imagination (a name inspired by John Lennon).”

Imagination’s smooth and sexy debut single was a slow shuffler that fell somewhere in the middle of the period’s ever-broadening spectrum of dance and funk music. A surprising smash in the U.K., it reached the number 4 position on the nation’s pop chart and nearly cracked the Top 10 in the Netherlands. The album of the same name, produced by Steve Jolley and Tony Swain, was certified gold in Britain and stayed on the charts for nearly a year.

“Morgan took ‘Body Talk’ to all the clubs and really pushed it,” remembers Lee. “It was one of the slowest records of the year, anywhere. It was a very different kind of sound. I loved bass and piano, and I wanted a lot of emphasis on those. I had a lot of input on the song and was very proud of it. Our group became part of this



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

you can hear Don say, ‘This is the group that has Marvin Gaye’s stamp of approval.’ I went to his dressing room to thank Marvin and asked him why an old album track of his sung with Diana Ross, ‘I’ll Keep My Light In My Window,’ was never released as a single. In London, in 1977, we used to dance to it. He couldn’t remember what song it was and told me to sing it. So here I am singing to Marvin Gaye. Can you imagine?

“Another moment was with Freddie Mercury. He loved my tones and sounds. He wanted to know how I achieved them. He invited us to his house, and we were up in his music room. He was playing all this funky music, very different from his Queen material. Then he played me this amazing track he did with Michael Jackson. I was like, ‘Why don’t you release this?’ He said it didn’t sound quite right. It turned out to be the song ‘State of Shock,’ which Mick Jagger later sang. When I told everyone Freddie had done this track with Michael, nobody believed me. I’ve had so many more incredible moments like these!”

The remainder of the ’80s saw a measured decline in Imagination’s staying power on the charts. A greatest hits package in 1989 returned the group to the top of the U.K. surveys, but original material from the period fared somewhat less favorably. They continued to tour to enthusiastic crowds, but Lee admits his feeling for the group had been changing.

“By the end of the ’80s,” he observes, “I was moving out of my home and planning what I knew would be ‘the last party.’ I sensed things were going to end for Imagination soon. You could just see what was happening.

“I think, for me, I hit the fork in the road around 1985 when we got an offer to play Sun City in Africa,” continues the artist. “When the offer came in, I didn’t know that much about the political situation there, but we were being presented with an awful lot of money to go perform. Other U.K. artists had gone there, but many had not. I was learning about Artists Against Apartheid and heard Harry Belafonte speak about it, and he inspired me greatly. I became



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

JACK ROBINSON

SONGWRITER

Princess Stéphanie's "Irresistible"

Jack Robinson knows how to write a catchy song lyric. He first made his mark in pop songwriting back in the early '70s. Robinson picked up speed during the classic disco era by writing the lyrics to Gloria Gaynor's 1975 evergreen "(If You Want It) Do It Yourself," "Do Or Die" by Grace Jones in 1978, and "Strut Your Funky Stuff" by Frantique in 1979. Tina Charles' phenomenally successful 1976 hit, "I Love To Love (But My Baby Loves To Dance)" became one of his most popular creations from the glitter ball period. He scored more successful singles with singer and production partner David Christie ("Saddle Up") and hit the jackpot with the landmark international '80s dance smash by Monaco's Princess Stéphanie, "Irresistible." An American living in Paris, Jack is keen to talk about the era and the challenge of writing a song that has the power to endure for decades.

Born in Seattle, Washington, Robinson came from a musical family. His mother was a singer who wrote comical lyrics, song parodies, and always had lots of records in the house. Jack humorously describes himself as "an untalented piano player – who played with a vengeance." After serving in the U.S. Marines, he became a news correspondent (first with Associated Press in America and then United Press International) and settled in France in 1962. "Every time I'd sit down to write something serious, I'd always have this mischievous side of me that would want to write the same story



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

are successful tend to be so outside of the country, not within it. Strange phenomenon.”

Robinson is well aware that only a limited number of dance-pop hits made in France managed to make their mark beyond the country’s borders during the ’80s. “In the case of Jeanne Mas (‘En Rouge Et Noir’),” he observes, “she had an outstanding producer and composer named Romano Musumarra. He also wrote the melody for the hit we had with Princess Stéphanie of Monaco. He was actually an Italian, and Italians have an incredible talent for melody. They just have music in their blood. I knew Jean-Michel Rivat, who produced *Desireless* and the international star Joe Dassin here in France. So sometimes there were people in the French music industry who had some influence in the international market. But there were very few French language songs that would travel in the ’80s. Though the French had memorable melodies, quite often the lyrics tended to be more poetic than musical. And if you don’t understand French, you’re probably not going to get off on it.”

Jack says there were many changes in the music business as Europe entered the ’80s. “The MIDEM (Marché International du Disque et de l’Edition Musicale) music convention was an extraordinary business trip I’d take annually to the south of France in the ’70s. It was a great deal of fun. I met everybody; even Clive Davis from Arista Records in the U.S. would be there. It was a time of creative joy. I thought the industry became more – professional – in the ’80s. The majors got more interested in dance music. It had been handled more by independents previously. The majors always told me in the ’70s they didn’t like dance music. They had to put some out, but they definitely didn’t like it. That’s when I was working with Grace Jones and Gloria Gaynor. To be honest, I didn’t love the ’80s. I felt the major labels took over the creative side of the business. Everything became more glitzy. Videos became essential, whereas before that we had live or filmed TV shows. A lot of money was spent in the ’80s, and it didn’t have the same feel as the previous decade. But I guess I was fortunate to have some big hits in this decade.”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

keep the royalties. I'm talking about sales of possibly millions of records. I'm told the Japanese are extremely honest in their payments, but unfortunately I've never had any experience with them," he says with a shrug.

Jack is still busy in the music industry today. While developing plans for his own musical comedy play to be set in the disco era and working on a compilation album of his many compositions and those sung by David Christie, he continues to be actively involved in the music-publishing world. He says at the heart of everything, he is still a lyricist.

"I don't know where the lyric writing talent in me comes from. With growing up in the radio atmosphere of the '40s and '50s, all the great musicals – I figure I must have at least 3,000 song lyrics in my head. It was like going to school for me, analyzing all these lyrics. I think the last lyricist I really studied was Hal David. I would think of all his wonderful songs with Burt Bacharach and wonder where they came up with all those ideas. I guess I accumulated all these lyrics in my head by others and tried to come up with something original myself."

At 76, Jack has no plans of slowing down because of aging. "I'm at the gym every other day, pumping iron and very much a physical fitness person," he insists. "I guess it's the marine in me. My wife Catherine and I are very health conscious people. I wear the same size jeans I wore 35 or 40 years ago. To me, age is something you should just basically ignore. I'd like to think of the body as something like an envelope. If you take care of it, you can maintain what's on the inside. There's no reason to stop doing something you enjoy because you have reached a certain age. At the gym I go to, I have a friend who is 71, and he is a black belt in Taekwondo, and he is still hired as a bodyguard. So it's all just a mental attitude. My goal is to be the Grandpa Moses of musicals. I want to be up there onstage when I'm 80, taking a bow for the musical I created!"

Jack Robinson's contribution to both the disco era and Europe's dance energy of the 1980s is something for which the lyricist feels a



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

notice me too. That's primarily how my solo career came about. I also provided guest background vocals on a couple of UB40 songs (one of which was a cover of Jimmy Cliff's 'Many Rivers To Cross') at the same time that I had signed with EMI, which also helped raise my profile a bit. I had always been part of a band or a unit. It was my husband Tony who encouraged me to give the solo career a go, but once I was thrust into the public eye, I felt a bit lost."

The artist's debut album, *Heaven Knows*, was released in 1985 and was a sizeable hit that cracked the British Top 50. The set was packed with funk-tinged soul-pop singles like "Could It Be I'm Falling In Love" (a Top 5 hit with former Linx vocalist David Grant) and the catchy, synth-pop dance track "Round And Around," another Top 10 success. The singles also gave the artist her first modest hits on the U.S. R&B charts.

"I didn't even have an American accent, yet they just assumed I was American because of the style of music I did."

Recalls Graham, "When I came on the scene in the mid-'80s and I'd say in interviews that I was from Birmingham, they all thought I was American and thought I meant Birmingham, Alabama. I always had to say, 'No darling, Birmingham, the Midlands, England.' I didn't even have an American accent, yet they just assumed I was American because of the style of music I did. American music was something we all grew up with in the U.K., and we wanted to emulate it. It's funny because I met a lot of American singers, producers, and record company people during this time, and I came to realize how much they admired British soul and wanted to emulate *our* sound.

"I think I can attribute a lot of my success to the foresight and songwriting skills of Derek Bramble. He had been a member of Heatwave at one point. He was working with Shalamar and artists and musicians who had that kind of funk-pop-soul sound. He was very into that kind of dance style. He approached me with these great

songs, which we recorded as demos, and thanks to those, I got the deal with EMI. It was a production deal, so I was initially signed to Derek's production company, which was signed to the label. Derek came up with all those great songs on my first album, and my voice really suited them. I wasn't a technical person, so I never got involved in most of the studio work Derek did. I didn't have a clue about that end of it or how he came up with those ideas. There was a learning curve for us though, really. Our sound evolved as we went along. We wanted to capture the American sound with a little twist, you know? So we sort of created our own soul-dance style, and my vocal interpretation of what he'd write just happened to hit the mark.

“But EMI Records in the U.K. had so much trouble understanding our brand,” she insists. “They didn't know how to promote our music; they didn't really *get* me. They didn't understand what we were doing, the black-soul-dance music thing, and I was finding myself in competition with other artists on their roster like [the new wave group] Sigue Sigue Sputnik [“Love Missile F1-11”], which they were putting all their energy and money into. So there I was, still managing to have some big hits, without the record company really behind me. ‘What's The Name Of Your Game’ off my first album started circulating on pirate radio stations and Radio 1 in the U.K. That was a big, big help to us. They embraced what Derek and I were doing, and they seemed to really love it. The record company would drag their heels, and they just figured my records would do their thing in the clubs or whatever.

“The first week of release of the ‘Round And Around’ single, it got picked up very quickly on radio. The next thing I knew, I was on *Top Of The Pops*. The show had this segment called ‘The Breakers,’ which were sort of ‘bubbling under the Top 40’ songs. We had debuted on the pop chart pretty high, like in the mid-40s. Sure enough, we started climbing, and I found myself on the show. The show's producers were always watching the sales figures of the songs of any artists they were planning to feature. Back then, to be in the Top 40 you had to sell a lot – tens, if not hundreds of thousands of copies. So being on the chart back then spoke volumes.”

Jaki says she felt frustration over her label's seemingly indifferent attitude toward the momentum she was gathering. "I suppose under a bit of duress, the label finally agreed with my management that we needed a video for 'Round And Around.' I remember at first they wanted the video to be about a minute and a half long. Their logic was that if the song doesn't continue to climb the chart, they haven't wasted too much money. EMI was so concentrated on Sigue Sigue Sputnik, and they thought that group, who I think only had two major hits, was going to be the next big thing. They understood that band's sound, and that's all the label could concentrate on. But British soul was definitely not on their radar.

"Well, my record flew anyway, didn't it? EMI were like headless chickens and didn't know what had happened when it reached the top part of the chart. That scenario was really repeated through all the hits that I had.

"I remember I had a single out during the Christmas period. It was Top 20 on the radio and the album already had multiple hits on it by that point. Still, EMI would not promote the LP on TV or do the marketing necessary to keep the project on top. I went to a gig with the group Maze in London at the Hammersmith Odeon, and I met some of the top people from the American counterpart of my label. When they figured out who I was, they said, 'You know Jaki, we really love your album, but the U.K. just won't give us the money to do what we wanted to do in the U.S. It would really fly in the States if we were given a budget to promote it.' That really did it for me. I wasn't even aware that the Americans even knew about me."

Graham's "Could It Be I'm Falling In Love" and "Round and Around" managed to make just a gentle dent in the U.S. soul charts (where the singer was often compared to Evelyn "Champagne" King), but her popularity in her native England and countries like New Zealand, Switzerland, and Sweden continued to grow.

"I think my management and Derek experienced the pressure of having to strive for more hits," the artist observes. "I was really oblivious to all that. I just wanted to go out and do my thing. I just



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Beyond and Climie Fisher. I just couldn't compete with artists like that. If I had a single scheduled to come out when one of their other key acts had something being released, especially American artists, I'd get pushed back. But you know what? I'm okay with it now. My songs got out, radio picked up on them, and they were big hits. The public wanted them – and that's what counts.”

Despite the lack of corporate support Graham describes, there was no shortage of demand for her talents beyond the confines of her label's headquarters. With so many balls in play, the artist says she didn't always get to focus on the spotlight.

“I was having this music career, and I was also a mom. I was traveling with my child, and we did it all as a family. I came into the industry thinking I would probably be in it for five minutes. I was enjoying what was happening, but I wasn't absorbing it – do you understand? I probably should have, but there were just so many things going on. My family kept me grounded and because my attention was often on them, I wasn't as likely to get caught up in the glamour or excitement.

“I do remember they used to call me a diva, and I liked that word at the time. I know now, if you think about the meaning of that word, I wasn't really a diva. You experienced all this adoration going on, but you also had to rush offstage to the dressing room, sometimes going from one event to another. There was just no time to pay attention to the cheering of the fans and things like that. When I think of the big venues and TV shows I did, I love the memories I have. But I have to say, I also remember the traveling and being on airplanes all the time, which was difficult and sometimes tiring. I had never been out of the U.K. before, but when my career took off, I was being flown *everywhere*. First class, I must admit. I wasn't used to that at all. I used to worry that when they gave me a little bottle of champagne, I might be getting a bill for it.

“I was doing some promotional touring in the south of France, where a record of mine was doing very well. Suddenly, I needed to be on a live TV show in Northern England. They got me a Lear jet to



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

and the worldwide fans that connected on so many levels with her work.

“I think of the love fans showed me back in those days, and I can appreciate it even more today,” she says softly. “Even now, fans greet me with such warmth. And that’s all I can ask – that people remember me fondly. I love seeing a new generation enjoying my work. And I love that my voice today still gives people joy.

“I never take for granted that people know my history. I always perform as if this might be the first time the audience is hearing me. But when I discover they *do* know about what I’ve contributed to pop music, I think how blessed I am, darling. I am a part of a lot of people’s personal history. The music will outlive all of us. Pass it on, and enjoy it!”



“You have to listen to your female fans, and when they endorse you, you know you’re okay. If you aren’t looking right, the women are going to tell you!”
insists singer Jaki Graham in 2014. *Photo courtesy of Natalie Graham.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

listened and lost the weight. Previously, I was always a happy, chubby kid, and no one ever mentioned weight in my house. But I knew I had to have the right look.

“My plan was that I would go over to Germany and be a songwriter, but I didn’t tell my dad this,” she recalls. “I had no clue how I’d do this. I went over for an extended summer, and nothing really happened for me. However, my dad was performing all the time at the Düsseldorf Opera House. So it was decided I would go back to Seattle. Another year passed, and then my father and brother persuaded me to come back to Germany. I didn’t want to, but I guess I decided to follow their suggestion.

“I met with a guy who was in the publishing house of CBS Records,” Rush continues. “I took the train from Düsseldorf to Frankfurt and sang three songs in their studio. This guy immediately took me upstairs to the head of the company, but the president was not interested in me as a singer. So the publishing guy gave me a contract to be a songwriter instead. Eventually, I *did* start recording a bunch of singles (some were horrific), and he started to organize the producers for the first Jennifer Rush album.”

Before her debut singles and album on CBS could be released, there was the matter of her name to tackle – Heidi Stern just wouldn’t cut it, at least according to the executives at the label.

Recalls the singer, “I was very, very angry when they wanted me to change my name, but I suppose I was reacting more like a young, naive person not wanting to ‘sell out.’ I was told the change was needed because my name sounded way too German and that I didn’t ‘look’ like my real name. I came up with the Rush and the secretaries in the office at CBS came up with Jennifer, after they were asked what name they would choose. I wanted Samantha but was told by CBS that Germans would have a hard time pronouncing it. My father reminded me that loads of people have changed their names – as he had. He was at one time called Mauro Lampi. So I agreed to make the change.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

didn't really understand the lyrics as well as I should. But it was a huge success in Spain – and that prompted me to learn Spanish. I did eventually – and then my Spanish singing was perfect. I have sung many of my hits in the language. Spain left a very big impression on me, as did so many wonderful countries, and I remain extremely fond of this nation.”

Despite the international attention the single received and the singer's appearance on high profile television shows like *American Bandstand*, the song failed to make much of a dent in the U.S., where Rush remained relatively unknown. Air Supply gave “The Power Of Love” a cover shot in 1985, as did popular songstress Laura Branigan (“Gloria”) in 1987. But it was Celine Dion's rendition of the track that ultimately achieved major American pop chart success. Dion's 1993 version earned her a Grammy nomination and the lucrative number 1 position on the U.S. survey. “I have absolutely no problem with Celine singing the song!” maintains Jennifer. “I was called up by her producer (who I was working with anyway) and the publisher – both telling me she was going to release it. I admit I thought it was kind of weird, but if I had been a bitter bitch over something like that, I would never have survived in this business.”

An “international version” of Jennifer's debut album, incorporating tracks from her German follow-up LP *Movin'*, hit the record shop racks of numerous countries in late 1985. Meanwhile, the *Movin'* album reached the top spot in Germany and was the country's biggest selling LP of 1986. More power-synth singles were released in extended dance mixes, including “Destiny” and “If You're Ever Gonna Lose My Love,” and though they failed to make an impression in the U.K., the songs were colossal hits in Germany and popular throughout Europe. Tracks like the high-energy “Ave Maria (Survivors of a Different Kind)” further secured Rush's dance floor credibility.

“Right outside my window – at night – was a group of biker guys and girls. They were playing my music full blast. I thought, ‘Wow.’”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Streisand and Don Johnson). “Working with Placido was so great,” she says. “When I recorded that duet with him, he came over to the studio straight after having sung at the Met. He probably figured his voice was ‘open’ and that he should do the duet right away. He was a really nice man, and he came with his son – who probably suggested me for the project. My dad was to be Placido’s replacement, in case he got sick. The most bizarre thing about this recording was that CBS Germany told me they wouldn’t allow me to do this duet because I was too young to sing with Placido. I told them I would start to age and get fat again to make it work. How ridiculous to say I was too young for such a wonderful opportunity!”

The artist recorded three albums for EMI in the '90s, *Jennifer Rush*, *Out Of My Hands*, and *Credo*. Each showed the artist’s ongoing creative evolution, while continuing to deliver the sumptuous dance and pop melodies that were her specialty. Tracks such as “Fortress,” “I Can’t Say No,” “Vision Of You,” “Sweet Thing,” and “Credo” were ambitious and adventurous highlights of the period that continued to win over fans. Sales of her albums remained strong, though they were not quite as impressive as they had been in the previous decade. She recorded *Classics* in 1998 with producer Leslie Mándoki, a critically acclaimed set that featured orchestral renditions of her biggest hits and breathtaking originals like “The End Of A Journey.” A three-disc collector’s compilation called *Stronghold*, primarily composed of her vast CBS repertoire, became a major seller in 2007. The artist signed with Sony/BMG and unveiled an album of all new material in 2010, *Now Is The Hour*, which peaked just shy of Germany’s Top 20. The set featured a blistering dance single, “Echoes Love.”

Rush considers the many factors that led to her extraordinary success over the decades and identifies the obstacles that created stumbling blocks on her professional path.

“One thing I can say is I think I’ve always had a great appreciation for different cultures and markets.”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

JOY'S

ANDY SCHWEITZER

“Touch By Touch”

The small Central European country of Austria has been known for centuries as an important center of musical innovation. The birthplace of classical period composers like Haydn, Liszt, Schubert, and the Strausses, Austria's prestigious historical ranking as a musical and cultural hub is recognized across the globe. By the later in the second half of the 20th century, the republic began building a new legacy for itself in dance-pop music. Artists such as Falco (“Rock Me Amadeus”) and Opus (“Live Is Life”), thanks to the worldwide embrace of their stupendously popular hits in the '80s, firmly placed the country back in the international musical spotlight. During this period, a trio of young male Austrian performers, known rather appropriately as Joy, decided to make their mark. Manfred Temmel, Alfred (Freddy) Jaklitsch, and Andreas (Andy) Schweitzer scored a blistering number 1 pop chart hit in their homeland with “Touch By Touch,” a high-energy electro-dance sensation that built them a sizeable fan base across Europe, Asia, and the USSR. Andy takes a look back at their popular sound, which continues to thrive in the present day.

The story of Joy began in the Austrian town of Bad Aussee. According to Schweitzer, the trio started out as school friends, each playing in amateur bands, beginning around 1975. The teenagers went their separate ways after graduating. Andy later became a policeman, Freddy started teaching the German language and history



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“We will go onstage as long as our audience still loves us,” Andy insists. “It’s fun for us, and performing our hits is literally – a joy. We remain young at heart, and music is the source of our health and happiness. Hopefully, people will remember Joy as a genuinely entertaining group, and we’d like to think our music will still be alive and in the hearts of many people for many years to come.”



Andy Schweitzer (left) and group mates Freddy Jaklitsch and Manfred Temmel continue to successfully perform as Joy in the 21st century. *Photo courtesy of Andy Schweitzer.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

lyrics, proved to be perfect fodder for the hit-hungry international pop charts that summer. A Top 40 success in America, the song climbed to Britain's Top 10 and earned the singer/songwriter the best newcomer award from the industry music bible, *Billboard* magazine.

“I didn't see the song as being dance music at the time. Bob and I saw it as our own blend of R&B. I was trying to do more than record a song that would make people jump up and down. I wanted to touch them in other ways. That was the joy of being an artist.

“When I first got to America with the song, I had no idea radio was segregated. Radio in the U.K. was limited (in that you had pirate radio and the regular radio), but you'd always hear different styles of music. In the U.S., it was much different. There'd be a head of 'black' A&R and the one who handled 'white' A&R. The black one would have to prove his record was good enough for the white guy to take it on board. My A&R man actually felt my version of the song was a bit too rock-oriented, 'too white' as he put it. There was definitely a color thing going on. I wasn't used to color being such a prevalent consideration. Segregation was very evident. The U.S. label made it quite clear they weren't going to push 'Mama Used To Say' in the beginning, because it was an English record and a black record. The record company didn't break Junior in America; the record broke me.

“The single sold, I don't know, something like 50,000 to 100,000 copies a day at one point in places like Chicago. The sales were phenomenal,” Junior claims proudly. “One reason the record did break so big was because of the remix version we did with Tee Scott. I was reluctant at first because 'Mama' was going to be one of the first records where the label would try to release a remix. Why experiment on mine? But then I got curious to see what someone else would do with it. I loved it. I loved the original version with the rock-R&B sound. But Tee Scott captured the sound that would work for a specific market, an evolution of the original. And in turn, it made people want to hear the original version. Tee opened the door by getting into the groove of the track. He was a remixer for Frankie



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

me. At the time, Michael McDonald and Patti Labelle had done well with 'On My Own,' and she wanted to do something like that. I said no – I didn't want to do *anything* like that. I suggested to her that if we were going to do a duet, it had to be something that was *us* – English with an edge. Not American. I said, 'To hell with the black and white thing; let's make something colorless so that it just drops!' We got together, and I kind of rearranged what she had written and adjusted the melody, and that became 'Another Step.' And people never went near that color issue with us, which was brilliant. Kim and I used to laugh about the whole color thing, which was still very much an eyebrow raiser in those days.

“That record was number 1 all over South America. I remember we flew down there, and when we arrived, people threw pebbles on the ground at our feet getting off the plane. It meant they thought of us as a kind of royalty. By the time we got to the hotel, the biggest news on the TV was the two of us arriving in French Guyana. It was a wild, wild scenario – you know what I'm saying?”

When the record was released in America, Junior believes his label was uncertain of how to market it. Unconcerned, he simply enjoyed the attention the single received elsewhere.

“Kim and I thought, okay, we'll just have to wait and see if anything happens in the U.S. But in Europe, it just blew up. So we traveled all over Europe with that song. What I love about it is that it fused a synthetic music style with energy and pop-sounding voices. A lot of people at the label in the U.K. were very skeptical about the record and said, 'Oh, that will never work.' I told them, 'Wait till it gets on radio, man. You'll get it.' They changed their minds. Once again, record companies just tend to sell a record; they don't feel what people sometimes feel about the music. Instead of dismissing everything, it would have been great if they just took a moment to listen to the music. So often they just pooh-poohed a song without even hearing it.”

By the mid-'80s, a three-man production force known by their collective last names as Stock Aitken Waterman (Kylie Minogue,



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

interesting.

“The Soler Brothers (Alex and Sergio) produced the track and the song was written by David Lyme. [*Author Note – Copies of the single credit J. Cubino, an alias for Lyme, whose real name was Jorge Cubino Bermejo.*] Lyme was highly regarded in Spain as a singer of the Italo-disco style. We recorded ‘Dolce Vita’ here in Barcelona at Aurha Studios. I think the whole session was done in just about an hour or two. It was a great team of people to work with, and I was in the right place at the right time. We recorded the ‘European Version’ first, and the label executives were going to simply include an instrumental version as the B-side.

“I insisted on doing another version that would have a more Americanized high-energy sound because I wasn’t so happy with the European style. I thought it was an interesting idea to make a Ryan Paris tribute, but I was also in the mood to do the song in a more original way that might have more international appeal. I preferred those high-energy sounds I heard in the clubs. I sang it in English because I wanted to make sure I was able to tap into that international market. The label agreed and felt that to be really successful, you *had* to work outside of Spain, especially in France and Germany. They agreed that English was a better fit for those areas. I [was responsible for] the American version, which ended up being the hit mix. I think my personality came through in this version of the song, which had many of the same qualities as the hits of the group Lime back in those days. It ended up being a really crazy summer for me in 1986.”

Max Music, which was having tremendous success with its *Max Mix* dance compilation series at the time, licensed the song to other labels in numerous territories. “Dolce Vita,” intoxicatingly upbeat and bolstered by Conde’s muscular vocal delivery, reached number 1 on the dance charts in Spain and many other countries, including Germany, Italy, and as far away as the Philippines, according to the artist. In 1988, the single was picked up for distribution in the United States by JCI Records after it became a major hit in Mexico. With his name gaining attention, Conde says he was also one of the select



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



“I think it’s important now to be public about who I am. I am much more comfortable about it now than I was in the ’80s,” says Kristian Conde in 2014.
Photo courtesy of Kristian Conde. Photography by Juan Ferragut.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

recognized the merits of “Nuit Sauvage” well before the general public.

“At this time, the gay community in France was organizing many concerts, and they were very interested in the latest emerging new wave and dance music tracks. Before our group’s big success, we often played in gay clubs. It seems like they really appreciated the look of our band and the punky, pop music we played. It is interesting that the gay community really loved ‘Nuit Sauvage.’ It was not on the level of Gloria Gaynor’s ‘I Will Survive,’ but it’s true our song was very symbolic of this period in time.

“This song was talking about the night and dancing, and they related to it on that level. Gay clubs (and gay-friendly clubs) were also the place where new music, new fashion, and even new drinks would be launched – they were the place to be. Paris was the place for nightlife and many clubs started playing our record. ‘Nuit Sauvage’ was also symbolic for a sad reason, because you had so many people who were dying from AIDS at the beginning of the epidemic when our song came out. I played the song about five or six years ago at a major gay club in Paris, and the people there told me it reminded them of so many things – good and bad. I believe ‘Nuit Sauvage’ is identified by many with all the things that were happening at the time within the gay community.”

“Nuit Sauvage” eventually reached the Top 20 in France and became a club and radio smash, but it didn’t happen overnight, says the singer.

“The song actually did just okay when it first came out,” Morgand admits, “and our record company was not impressed. They broke our contract because we hadn’t sold enough. Then, suddenly, the most important radio station in the country, NRJ, decided to play the song during the summer. The record company was obliged to make the single available again. I don’t recall the highest point we reached on the chart, but we stayed on it for a very long time. A year later, two years later, it was still being played by radio stations, and it went gold. We were very surprised by our success, and so were our



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“I was not really a big fan of success to begin with, and it was complicated to live with it every day.”

“To be honest, it was very difficult to play music after the success of Les Avions. I was a little bit depressed because even though I was doing some good records with other people, the success was not coming back. I was not really a big fan of success to begin with, and it was complicated to live with it every day. But it’s true, when you have it you have more opportunities, and life is easier. You have a kind of power to do what you want. You can call somebody and say, ‘Hey, I want to produce a record.’ I lost this power, and that was difficult.”

Still, the popularity of “Nuit Sauvage” endures and Morgand embraces the memories of the past while staying very much in the present.

“For some reason – we don’t know why – this song is still favored today, and people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s still like it,” he observes. “The song has been very popular in recent years again because of the big nostalgic tours I have done with other artists (Bananarama, Desireless, Sabrina, etc.) from the ’80s. These concerts draw as many as 7,000 people from 25 to 60 years old. Many people think this music is more fun than anything that comes out today. ‘Nuit Sauvage’ was also recently used as the theme for TV advertising about horse racing in France. Together, these things have kept the song in the spotlight.

“Today, I am very happy and doing my own music, although I don’t have the same kind of success as in the ’80s. ‘Nuit Sauvage’ was the key for me, but the business has changed since then. We used to get paid a lot of royalties back in those days. In France, our rights under SACEM (Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique) covered everything, including when the nightclubs and discos played our records. In fact, about 65% of our royalties came from the clubs. Today, financially, you must look at a variety of resources to earn a living. We call this ‘the new model’ – it is a mix



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

LIAN ROSS



Lian Ross was a major star on the European dance circuit by the time the single “Say You’ll Never” was released in 1985, seen here in its 12-inch single format issued by ZYX Records in Germany. The track was produced Bobby To (aka Luis Rodriguez), who was also busy contributing to the hits of Modern Talking. *By permission of ZYX Records.*

In the final minutes of the 12-inch mix of Lian Ross’ spectacular, high-octane 1987 hit “Do You Wanna Funk,” the artist gave a shout out to some important people in her professional life. The singer also warmly acknowledged “all the DJs in the world,” a group that remains extremely relevant to her career today. Ross was, indeed, a favorite of club record-spinners everywhere, and during the ’80s she became one of the most popular female vocalists to be associated with the German high-energy dance music movement. Her voice can be heard stirring the populace on a long list of records produced over the last three decades, many of which still enjoy top ranking among DJs and fans alike. Lian’s following grows ever stronger as the artist, looking as sleek and hip today as she did nearly 30 years ago, continues to tour throughout Europe and exotic corners of the world.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

show, I knew Lian Ross had arrived!” she says with a big smile.

Following their breakout success, the Studio 33 team, as Lian sometimes refers to her musical comrades, went to work on a string of follow-up singles. “Oh, there definitely *was* a kind of pressure to find the right follow-up single for ‘Fantasy.’ But we were lucky because the second single, ‘Say You’ll Never,’ was an even bigger hit in some countries in Europe and Asia. At first, I didn’t like the song because of the lyrics. I thought they were too repetitive. I asked Lee to change the lyrics because I thought it would be too boring for the people, and they would tire of it. But Luis and Lee convinced me to let them keep the lyrics and that the song would be a hit. They were right!

“We kept the momentum going,” says Ross. “You know, one of my talents has always been that I can implement the ideas behind any musical piece very fast. In the studio, I was always the fastest at understanding the concept behind a new song and using my voice to express it. Luis’ next idea was to produce a song with more powerful drums and for the B-side, use the same track in a slow ballad version. It was a great idea, and we released ‘It’s Up To You’ at the end of 1986. Luis liked the idea of creating one song with two different productions or versions, so we ended up doing ‘Neverending Love’ (the song version) and then added a rap mix. I think I might have been one of the first female German rappers.”

In 1987, the artist hit the bull’s eye once again, releasing a single that drew rave reviews throughout Europe (and the United States as well).

“After ‘Neverending Love,’” she recalls, “I wanted to do a powerful song where I could really scream and shout. Just really cut loose. One of my favorite songs was Sylvester’s ‘Do You Wanna Funk.’ So we decided to create a really high-energy version of this classic song. Luis, once again, had the fantastic idea for me to sing/speak the thank you list that you hear towards the end of the record. I love this track!” After making a huge impact with its original version, “Do You Wanna Funk” was re-released in a 12-inch



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

the business could be.

“My experiences as a female artist in the music industry taught me that you have to be better; you have to show your power, and you have to express your physical attraction – more than, say, male artists. Well, I responded by doing just that – by working harder, staying powerful, and taking advantage of the physical appeal I might have had. On stage, I was a very strong presence. A sexy diva full of energy – perhaps in some ways like Tina Turner – and I still give that energy in my performances now.”

The artist released a handful of singles using her own name during the '90s, including “Keep This Feeling” in 1994 and a few revisits to her signature hit (“Fantasy '93” and “Fantasy '98”).

“Life is a process, and as an artist, you always try to develop your career,” observes Lian. “In the '90s, I was looking for new trends and wanted to be very progressive with my team, just like always. As Lian Ross, I had only a few releases during this period, mostly in the Euro-house and Euro-dance genres. Using many, many pseudonyms, we decided to try some funk, hip-hop, R&B, reggae, techno, and trance music. I wasn't always happy in the '90s because I felt pressured to do so many releases under different artist names. At this time, Luis wanted to create a new sound like he had done in the '80s. I think he may have felt he had suppressed my career by selling his sound to Dieter, and he may have been trying to create new opportunities for us in this new decade.” Several of Lian's ghosting projects were widely embraced on international dance floors, including hits by Tears n' Joy, Joelle, Dreamscape, Fun Factory, 2 Eivissa, and Negakuss.

“I had the chance to work with Danny Schogger – a famous musician, writer, and producer from London in 1993,” Lian recalls. “Danny worked with Sam Brown, Celine Dion, George Michael, Bananarama, Jimmy Nail, Paul Young, Yazzy, Wham!, Sally Oldfield, etc. He invited me to come to London and to stay in his house for about two weeks to work on new songs and to find the right ones for me to record. At the time, I was so captivated by the world of Studio



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

LINDA JO RIZZO



“You’re My First, You’re My Last”

In 1986, Linda Jo Rizzo scored a major international dance hit working with producer Tess Teiges (aka Fancy) called “You’re My First, You’re My Last.”

The single is seen here in its 12-inch format released by Germany’s ZYX Records. *By permission of ZYX Records.*

A former model and a native New Yorker, Linda Jo Rizzo combined sharp looks, a powerful voice, and a go-getter personality to become one of the most exciting and memorable dance music stars of the '80s. Her accomplishments as a lead vocalist with The Flirts and as a solo star drew scores of dancers onto the floor throughout the world. Working with prolific producers like Bobby Orlando and Fancy, she became one of the key voices of a hybrid Italo-disco/Hi-NRG/new wave sound that swept Europe and the United States. It's been a long and thrilling ride for Rizzo, who often travels today between homes in America and Germany. She takes some time to enthusiastically reflect upon a music career that has prospered on both sides of the Atlantic for decades.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



Linda Jo Rizzo (right) strikes a pose with The Flirts, seen here in a mid-'80s label publicity shot. The formation shown includes Rebeka Storm (left) and Pam (center). Photo courtesy of Linda Jo Rizzo.

While The Flirts continued to release club hits, Linda strategized a new direction for her career in dance music. Her collaborations with the iconic German dance music producer and artist named Fancy (also known as Ric Tess Teiges, a publicly somewhat mysterious star who was enjoying tremendous success on the German charts with hits like “Slice Me Nice” and “Chinese Eyes”) proved to be inspired. Fancy, like Orlando, had a signature sound that included hard beats, electronic keyboard hooks, synthesizers, and simple, yet irresistible English lyrics.

Says Linda, “I met Fancy while I was on tour with The Flirts. We had come to play dates in Europe for two weeks. The two weeks turned into five months, and I met him at a concert in West Germany. He saw me on the stage with The Flirts, and he must have picked up that I had...*something*. He came to me after the show and gave me his card. He asked that if I ever left the group to please call him. He was looking to produce a girl. Well, I was living out of my suitcase for those five months, and I lost the number.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

compilation album called *ZYX Italo Disco New Generation, Volume 4* that came out in the spring of 2014.”

Linda recently recorded the pop single “Stronger Together,” which featured a cameo by Fancy, and 2015 remixes by Michael Fall earned the track extensive club play. She indulged in a remake of the Eddy Huntington Italo-staple “USSR” and was featured on the single “Out Of The Shadows” by ’80s-style pop singer TQ. The vocalist is also actively working on a new album.

“I think it’s a good time for releasing new music like this,” the singer observes. “Especially today – with people being under so much pressure. The economy, wars, the bad job situation – because of all these negative things in the world, music is so important. It gives you that evening or an hour of happiness. Or that 3-minute song, like ‘Day Of The Light,’ which takes you away from the shit!” she states.

As an integral voice of The Flirts and a solo artist who added greatly to the universal appeal of German dance music and Italo-disco in the ’80s, Linda Jo Rizzo has an impressive background. She ponders her contribution to the era and personal standing within the international community that has embraced her work.

“I love to make people happy,” she says after pausing for a moment. “I love being on stage, seeing people smile, and having fun and feeling good. If I’m remembered by people as someone who made them feel good and gave them a feeling of warmth, then I did my job.”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

the combined efforts of the same general team.

“The record was the idea of my brother and I,” says the producer. “We proposed the song to Roberto Gasparini, who was the executive producer of the project.”

Co-writers Barbara Addoms and Pino Nicolosi teamed up to create the somewhat curious English lyrics. According to Lino, sister Rossana also wrote part of the song (as well as parts of the two follow-up singles). Pino and Lino handled arrangements, and Dora took on the lead vocals. The result of this inspired collaboration was a magical, magnificent journey into mood and movement – what many have described as a captivating “Italo-disco ballad.” The timbre and color of Dora’s angelic vocals were ideally suited to the methodical beat. The musical arrangement evoked the spirit of a medieval cathedral, where baroque melodies float effortlessly up to heavenly rafters. The unusual fusing of these elements made “The Night” a haunting audio experience on the dance floor. The single vaulted into the Top 10 in Germany and Switzerland, where it was released through Merak Music and ZYX Records. It also reached the Top 20 in Italy. Listeners in numerous other territories, including France and Austria, were also drawn to the track. It quickly became regarded as a landmark classic in the expanding Italo-disco pantheon.

“We think that the song was inspired by the classical music that was part of all our backgrounds,” states Nicolosi. “At the time, we were trying to create a pop melody with a seductive style. The result was a pop song with a tune that was basically close to a classical composition. It combined very well with its attractive rhythmic support – which we had been searching to find in our recording studio for a long time. We decided to use English lyrics because Italian didn’t sound as good with the music. It took us about 20 days to record and mix the final song.

“Dora studied lyrical music, and that’s why ‘The Night’ has such a unique style and sonority. She was very passionate about opera music and about creating a melody that would evoke an operatic feeling. We think that was one of the strengths of this song. These elements



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

best hotels. I remember we arrived at a hotel, and it was crowded with people in the lobby. We all wondered what big celebrity was staying there. Then we saw all the banners for Luv' and realized they were *our* fans; they were there for us. There were other girl groups from Holland, but not that many had success in other countries to the level that we did. We have so many gold and platinum records, but we would have had three times that amount had we been able to get to all the countries that had them for us to collect."

Luv' did, indeed, reach an extraordinary level of popularity during their time in the spotlight. In addition to Germany, they were chart-toppers in France, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Denmark. A series of uncomplicated, sugary, beat-fused hits like "Trojan Horse," "Casanova," and "Tingalingaling" kept them prominently in the public eye. Only the U.S. and U.K. seemed immune to the group's charms.

"It would have been great if we had been picked up in America or England," José admits, "but I think the lyrics to our songs may have been too simple for those markets. We never made it there, but it was never a problem for us, and we never felt like we missed out on anything. We had a number 1 hit as far away as Mexico ('Ooh, Yes I Do,' translated as 'Si, Que Si,' which we sang in Spanish), so we were pretty happy with our reach."

José says she and her group mates enjoyed a strong relationship with their production team. "Piet was the best," she says enthusiastically. "He would always stand by us. Whenever we were performing or recording, he would always encourage us and keep us up. He was really the driving force behind my singing. He also was an excellent coach for Patty and Marga.

"Hans was the commercial person behind the group. He wrote most of our big hits, and Piet would do the fabulous arrangements of our songs. Hans had a harder time displaying – or I should say hiding – his emotions when we'd be recording, especially if he didn't like something. He would put some kind of equipment in front of his face so we couldn't see his reactions. But we had fun...that was the main



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

recorded in the ABBA studio. Björn agreed on the condition that he had to, of course, like the album once he heard it. Well, he gave us the most glowing recommendation, saying how proud he was that we were singing their songs in Dutch. I think it was the biggest compliment I ever received. We did a lot of shows with the songs from that album, and it was very successful.”

Luv’ very briefly reunited in 1988, and rumors circulated that the celebrated British production team of Stock Aitken Waterman might produce a comeback album for the group. However, nothing materialized, and the members of Luv’ parted company once again.

With the arrival of the ’90s, José’s focus changed. “I’m not the type of woman who would have a family and let the child be raised by a nanny,” she says of her decision to put singing on hold. “I couldn’t do that. I really wanted to raise my son and be with my family. I never had a problem leaving the spotlight. I loved performing, but my priority was my family.”

The singer resurfaced in the early years of the 21st century, releasing an updated version of “I Will Follow Him” in 2005 and a thunderous dance remake of the evergreen “Be My Baby” with singer Anny [Annie Schilder] in 2009. In 2015, rumors of a remix project of some of Luv’ biggest hits began actively circulating on social media. For José, it’s all contributing to her modern-day reinvention, which she plans to continue to advance in a relaxed and natural manner.

“My husband passed away two years ago, and it was a big setback for me,” she explains. “But since then, I’ve been working on getting my career moving again, and it feels wonderful. However, I’ve seen so many women who are in the spotlight go for Botox and things like that. I never did anything like that. I know I’m older, but I don’t mind that I am the age I’m at, and I’m happy that I made it to this point. So I’m trying to look my best, but I’m not dreaming that I will look like I’m 20 again. I know today, especially with young performers, sometimes their looks are more important than what they are doing as artists. I think this is especially true in America. People know my history, and I feel no need to compete with younger performers. I’m



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“The music of the ’80s was so great that, even now, the basic elements of many of today’s hit songs seem to borrow from it,” she asserts. “The feeling, the sound we had back then, was very recognizable, and I think we artists from the era made an important contribution to international pop culture. I think the legacy of the ’80s is huge. By the time MaiTai became a hit across Europe, the world was ready to see what Holland had to offer.

“I never felt I had to be in Germany or England to do music – I felt Holland was an exciting place to be in the industry in its own right. One way or another, the European disco and dance music scene was influenced by the Netherlands. We had a very distinct sound when you think of the music of Vanessa (‘Upside Down’), the Dolly Dots (‘She’s A Liar’), and even the sounds created by our producers, Eric and Jochem. I can hear the influence of our producers in many of the songs that came from other Dutch artists, and I think many people started to realize there was something really good happening in Holland. Our artists had a fresh and unique quality, and if MaiTai hadn’t hit the scene so big, I think another Dutch group surely would have.”

Weels says the excitement that punctuated this period of her career was extraordinary. “I’d have to say the highlight of our success for me was performing on *Top Of The Pops* in the U.K.,” she says enthusiastically. “It was such a *big* show to be seen on, and it was the type of event that made you realize you had reached the big time. We also did *Soul Train* in the U.S. This sort of thing rarely ever happened to Dutch singers. There was ‘Venus’ by Shocking Blue and the Stars on 45 – and Golden Earring had some hits – but there were very few Dutch artists who were known worldwide. I felt like we opened a few doors. We once did a gig for Johan Martin Schröder of Martinair. He organized a huge celebration for the Dutch Royal Family, and he chose MaiTai to perform. Everybody was there, and it was extremely impressive. We enjoyed so many big and wonderful events in so many different countries. I was incredibly blessed to visit places that I would never have been to if I had been, say, a secretary in an office. And I knew that. I’m being very honest – it



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

MANFRED ESSER



PHOTOGRAPHER

Modern Talking, Milli Vanilli, et al.

Manfred Esser, seen here in the late 1980s, became one of the European music industry's most sought-after photographers.

Once upon a time, people used to hold music in their hands. What a glorious feeling it was. Thanks to their captivatingly illustrated paper and cardboard sleeves, exploring the details of an LP, 12-inch maxi-single, or 7-inch record was an opportunity to feel the essence of the artist, learn about the production, and appreciate the music in a very personal way – beyond just the audio experience. Record jackets were able to evoke a mood and a powerful connection between music consumers and the sounds contained on their vinyl, while at the same time helping to brand and market an artist from a commercial angle. This physical and visual element played a vital role in the '80s dance-pop music experience, even as the industry converted to compact discs. Paramount to the creation of these extraordinary canvases of pop culture art was the all-important jacket photograph, the impact of which could often help determine a record's success in the marketplace.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Samantha could barely be contained. She was in more of a party mood than a photo mood. Still, we managed to get some excellent takes.

“It was quite thrilling to be able to do the comeback photos for Modern Talking and their *Back For Good* album in 1998. We developed a wonderful concept for the project, together with Mago. Black and white, white and black, as a marketing idea. It looked great and worked well. I always admired the calm composure that Thomas had when standing next to Dieter. I’m sure that wasn’t always easy.

“Bad Boys Blue had the perfect sound for that time. They were three cool guys, but they didn’t always know how to handle their enormous success and deal with the fame,” he opines.



Bad Boys Blue as photographed for the cover of their 1999 album, *Follow The Light*.

“These are just a few small excerpts from a much bigger story. There were, of course, hundreds of other artists and hundreds of photo sessions with wonderful people and amazing things that happened. Many of the records that our photography appeared on were very successful hits. And frankly, for my own career, it was important to work with artists that were selling a lot of records and CDs. But my philosophy has always been that every shoot should run



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



Fab Morvan and Rob Pilatus as seen during their “Girl You Know It’s True” photo session with photographer Manfred Esser in 1988. *Photo courtesy of Manfred Esser.*

“It came to a point where Rob and I decided what we were going to do, at least as far as our lifestyles were concerned,” Fab continues. “We were living in America by this time (1990); we were huge and about to go on a world tour. When we finished the tour, we would clean up our act and start living healthier lives. We’d at least fix that much. We never made it to that point because the world tour was cancelled when the news came out. There were rumors circulating about us not being the singers, and there were continuous fights going on between Frank Farian and us. Frank finally decided to go to New York and tell the Associated Press that we didn’t sing on the Milli Vanilli records. He then flew right back to Germany. That was it; he was done. How ironic, since he was the mastermind behind it all.

“What happened to us was unfortunate. I have no doubt that there are many other artists in this book with their own horror stories. And I am sure they would all agree that, back then, artists were not as savvy as they are today. We signed the recording contract without an attorney or manager. We had no experience whatsoever. [As the scandal broke,] the media didn’t care about any of that. The media were like wolves – they smelled blood and went after us,” he continues, exhaling with just a hint of frustration in his voice.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

that stigma, being the underdog and having some people not really expecting too much from me, is okay with me. I use it as motivation. Very few artists in this day and age can live up to the hype. I'll surprise [the doubters] and you will hear people say, 'Wow!' I believe it'll happen. Negativity won't get you anywhere – it's like an anchor pulling you down to the bottom of the ocean. You must be positive and believe in yourself. Anyone who ever achieved anything will tell you it's a positive mindset that's gotten them to a good place and lifted them out of the valley of darkness. Reading also helps open your mind and is a great thing to do, whether it's self-discovery books, positive philosophies, or learning about a great human story, which can inspire you to make the necessary changes in your life.

“I feel blessed to be an artist and to have various outlets for expressing myself. When you don't have a way to tap into your soul, what do you do? It's easy then to turn to alcohol and anti-depressants, etc. You have to love what you are doing in life, or you're going to perish emotionally. Everyone doesn't have to be an artist or musician, no, but you have to find out what makes you happy. Grow and evolve – get better at being who you are. That's what life is for – to accomplish and excel. Keep moving forward. That's what I've been doing. You haven't seen the last of me; trust me.”

Perhaps for all the wrong reasons, Milli Vanilli has remained one of the most talked about groups ever to emerge from the European dance-pop scene of the late '80s and early '90s. However, despite the controversy that still remains attached to the front men's names, there can be little argument that Rob Pilatus and Fab Morvan provided one of the most exciting, visually stimulating, and memorable entertainment experiences of the decade. More importantly, Fab Morvan has demonstrated the remarkable power of perseverance, even through the most daunting of misfortunes. He's got a new list of goals he's looking forward to achieving, while accepting that his association with Milli Vanilli will always be a part of his personal history. And he's just fine with that.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

song was a highly unusual blend of hip dance floor beats and keyboards, peppered with the synthesizer sensibilities of a '80s rhythmic ballad. Anders' dreamy vocals perfectly captured the youthful, melancholy mood of the song. The track was also released in an extended maxi-single version for the clubs. Credited to what sounded like an American producer and songwriter named Steve Benson (a pseudonyms used by Dieter Bohlen), the track is often cited as the beginning of a highly melodic, high-energy dance music revolution spawned in Germany, paralleling (and often merging with) the sounds of Italy's Italo-disco movement. Eventually, the song reportedly sold over eight million copies worldwide.

“I grew up with my family in the countryside, and all of a sudden I had a number 1 hit in 81 countries all over the world.”

“I can't describe the success of 'You're My Heart, You're My Soul' in words,” Thomas says, pausing to think about the enormity of the experience. “I grew up with my family in the countryside, and all of a sudden I had a number 1 hit in 81 countries all over the world. That song altered my life. It was the start of an international career. [From the moment the song caught on], things started to happen really fast. There was no time to cast for a partner. Modern Talking, who didn't actually exist yet, were going to be broadcast on three TV channels, one week later. Dieter would have to partner with me on television. They were small channels, and the plan was to replace him afterwards. We went into the charts, and five weeks later, we were number 1 in Germany. Replacing Dieter was no longer possible.”

A follow-up single, “You Can Win If You Want” (released in 1985), had an even harder, more powerful, and energized sound that easily managed to capture the summit of Germany's pop chart. Modern Talking's debut LP, simply titled *The 1st Album*, achieved platinum certification in Deutschland, where it also reached number 1.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

on, and it makes stress bearable,” he asserts. “I never felt any pressure. It wasn’t my job to take care of the sounds or worry about trends. I had to sell the band – on stage, on TV, and in pictures. Dieter and I both had completely separate realms. There was more tension as to whether the new single or album would make the Top 5 again. Our success grew from single to single. Neither the record label nor we as artists had any idea just how successful Modern Talking would become.

“I remember a manager at our record label came up to me after ‘You’re My Heart, You’re My Soul’ and said, ‘Enjoy it Thomas. It’ll be the last number 1 of your life.’”

“I remember a manager at our record label came up to me after ‘You’re My Heart, You’re My Soul’ and said, ‘Enjoy it Thomas. It’ll be the last number 1 of your life.’” The singer laughs at the executive’s prediction. “After that, we had four more number 1 hits and six number 1 albums in Germany. Modern Talking had *the* sound and was one of the most successful acts in the world!”

Successful is an understatement. The group released a new hit LP almost every six months, including *In The Middle Of Nowhere* (1986), *Romantic Warriors* (1987) and *In The Garden Of Venus* (1987). *Venus* featured the duo’s final commercial single of the period, “In 100 Years,” an allegory of a doomed and loveless future society. By then, Thomas discloses, he had become fatigued with his situation in Modern Talking.

“After the grueling period from 1985-87, I felt a sense of freedom when, at the end of 1987, Modern Talking came to an end,” he admits. “As for Dieter, unfortunately he had a character flaw in that as he realized he was earning enough money for himself, he trampled over all his partners. He doesn’t understand responsibility or loyalty. As soon as somebody waved a cheque, they became his best friend. What a shame. We are two completely different people with different attitudes towards life. Yin and Yang personified.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

In 1998, a rather extraordinary and unexpected event took place. Modern Talking officially reunited, launching what became a spectacular comeback for the group that would extend into the 21st century. Anders is the first to admit it's a strange story.

“I had been having contact with Dieter since 1993,” he recalls. “One day, he gave me a call at home, and we spoke for over an hour. It was an amusing, funny, and very open conversation. We agreed to meet sometime for dinner. A few months later, I was near Hamburg, and so we went out for a meal together. It was relaxed, and we parted company amicably. In the years that followed, we kept in touch regularly, but we realized that it wasn't the right time at all for a reunion.

“In November of 1997, I was enjoying a holiday with my wife in Los Angeles. I received an unexpected call from our Modern Talking lawyer. He was in L.A. and wanted to meet. Two days later, we met in the bar of the Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. He delivered me an offer for a Modern Talking reunion. I was unsure. Why would it be successful so many years after the end? The lawyer explained the marketing campaign of the record label (once again Hansa) to me and emphasized that a television company and event organizers thought that a reunion would be a great idea. Well, I asked for time to think about it.

“I had a few restless days and sleepless nights, but in the end I said...yes!”

“I was no longer the same Thomas Anders from the '80s; I had grown up. I had my own ideas about business and drove a hard bargain.”

Thomas notes that he was a wiser man at this juncture, and he intended to protect his interests. “I was no longer the same Thomas Anders from the '80s; I had grown up. I had my own ideas about business and drove a hard bargain. The record company didn't want to agree to my high demand for advance payment of royalties, as there was no promise of success. They made me a counter offer,

which consisted of a high percentage share. I accepted. After over 60 million records sold during this phase, it was the correct decision. Another very important factor that helped me come to my final decision was that Dieter told me he had changed.”

Beginning with 1998’s *Back For Good* set, six albums were produced, culminating with the *Universe* LP in 2003. After launching this highly successful comeback, which included a series of energized remakes of their original hits, some medleys, and original dance-floor shakers like the singles “You Are Not Alone,” “Sexy Sexy Lover,” and “Win The Race,” Modern Talking once again ranked high on the charts. Many of their top tracks incorporated the rap vocals of Eric Singleton, a stylistic curve ball that perplexed some fans. “The idea was Dieter’s,” says the artist. “He thought Modern Talking needed an element of rap. It was the right idea. Our ’80s songs needed freshening up. The sound was different, and it generated a somewhat different listening sensation. I found it great. It was a harmonious symbiosis.”

“TV Makes The Superstar,” released in 2003, was the final single of the duo’s second phase, bringing to an end Modern Talking’s remarkable reinvention. Thomas divulges, “I had felt for a while that Dieter no longer had that drive like he’d had with our earlier efforts. He told me that he just couldn’t come up with those great melodies any more and that the competition was getting stronger all the time. He got more insecure. I remember a time in Vienna when we were both sitting in our dressing room before our show. He told me that he was going to be a jury member on a casting show (*Deutschland sucht den Superstar*) and that he wasn’t sure if the show would be a hit. It was the German version of the U.S.’s *America’s Got Talent!* As it turned out, the show was a sensation in Germany, and Dieter wasn’t interested in Modern Talking any more. The show was also his inspiration for the ‘TV Makes The Superstar’ single, a number 2 hit in Germany.”



Manfred Esser (aiming camera, left) photographs Thomas Anders (middle, left) and Dieter Bohlen during the duo's second incarnation as Modern Talking. Photo courtesy of Manfred Esser.

Dieter Bohlen penned a book in 2003 about his experience in the music industry, not long after the group's second break-up. This work came under fire because of Bohlen's reportedly harsh slams against those he worked with, Anders included.

Thomas takes a dim view of the work, saying, "This book clearly showed that Dieter Bohlen was devoid of empathy and style. It wasn't just that the book was unnecessary; it was that most of the stories were also incorrect and were derived from his imagination. Obviously, there are rules for self-marketing in the entertainment industry. You have to be bigger in order to stand out from the crowd, but there have to be boundaries. I had to sue Dieter, as it wasn't just that he had made false accusations, he had brought my honor into question. I won the case 100 percent, and he had to pay damages.

"But I'm not someone who frets or gets bitter," contends Anders. "I live my life according to the principle – a problem overcome only makes you stronger!"

While Dieter continued record producing and began working with young rising vocalists, Thomas also moved forward with his career. He returned to Bertelsmann to record more up-tempo singles, including "Independent Girl" and "Tonight Is The Night" from the



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

enthusiasm in the recording. It seems like the problem with the tape and so many circumstances came together to actually create a great success!”

Kurt says that “Live Is Life,” lifted from the September 2, 1984 concert recording, was released as a single late in the year. The track caught on like wild fire and became a number 1 hit throughout Europe by the summer of ’85. With its decidedly catchy lyrics and its contagious exuberance of a live audience singing the chorus along with the band, the song instantly inspired the masses to their feet. The track reached the top of the charts in Austria, Germany, Spain, France, and other territories and was the biggest song of the year on the Swiss hit parade. “Live Is Life” was powerful enough to reach the upper regions of the U.K. chart and to make the trip across the Atlantic, where it was welcomed into the American Top 40. The full-length live album released in November of ’84 (called *Live Is Life*) was a major success in Europe as well. The American LP version, *Up And Down* (released by Polydor), was a mixture of the group’s previous studio album of the same name and the European *Live Is Life* album. To this day, the infectious hit single is one of the most popular anthems played at Europe’s large stadium sporting events.

“...maybe a part of our success was that the song had a positive feeling...it’s just three words – like ‘c’est la vie.’”

Over the years, “Live Is Life” has been a bit mangled by the masses, with everyone singing their own personal variation of the lyrics. As a result, the song’s meaning has remained remarkably open to translation. “Ewald’s idea behind the song was that to play music live on stage was our life as musicians,” Plisnier explains. “To play live was the meaning of our lives. It was very true at the time. Most people don’t catch that meaning though. But maybe a part of our success was that the song had a positive feeling, and the title allowed people to have their own interpretation of what it meant. It’s just three words – like ‘c’est la vie.’”



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

will remember my music or me – oh, shit. I dunno,” he laughs. “Does anybody really know?”



“You can conquer anything and go after whatever you want to achieve at anytime,” says ruggedly handsome Pedro Marín in 2014. *Photo courtesy of Pedro Marín.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

double or triple the length of the 7-inch version, get back into the song for a bit, maybe add another verse or bridge, and then extend the ending. This would give the DJ a chance to mix out from that point. Pete Waterman was very much a big driver of this formula, and pretty quickly it was the format we'd all conformed to," he recollects.

"Generally, we'd start off recording with just the three or four minute original version of the song. The thing that was vital was we had to know what the SMPTE code (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers timecode) and the B.P.M. (beats per minute) of the song were. Once the LinnDrum machine arrived in the '80s, the machine would be driven off the 'SMPTE' code that you would record onto tape. Before you would work on any music or audio, you would strike a piece of two-inch analog tape with the SMPTE code and make sure that it was able to drive all your machinery (most of it made in Germany) – sequencers and drum machines. Once you have a solid code working, then all this equipment could be synched to create the song recording."

Stock Aitken Waterman began enjoying their first commercial success in the early '80s with Hazell Dean, who had been starting dance floor fires with robust concoctions like "Whatever I Do (Wherever I Go)" and "No Fool (For Love)." Likewise, bigger than life drag sensation Divine scored a monster hit with the high-energy powerhouse "You Think You're A Man," which vaulted to the upper regions of the U.K. and Australia's pop charts in 1984. Capturing the gay market was the goal in those days, and they achieved it.

"I would say, and I think Pete Waterman would agree, the success of Stock Aitken Waterman was totally built on the gay scene and making records for the gay clubs."

"I would say, and I think Pete Waterman would agree, the success of Stock Aitken Waterman was totally built on the gay scene and making records for the gay clubs," Harding claims. "That was what



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

PIERLUIGI GIOMBINI

PRODUCER, COMPOSER

Gazebo, Ryan Paris, et al.

One of the most important composers, arrangers, and producers of the early Italo-disco movement was Pierluigi Giombini. He was responsible for the sound of a bundle of milestones in the genre that rank among the biggest-selling, most popular songs to come out of Italy in the 1980s. The mastermind behind the melodies of Gazebo's "I Like Chopin" and Ryan Paris' "Dolce Vita," among other hits, Giombini is hailed as an innovator of a beautifully melodic brand of electronic dance music that managed to enthrall audiences in nearly every corner of Europe and beyond.

Giombini was born into a musical family. His father, Marcello, was a noted composer, and his grandfather, Arnaldo, was an oboe professor and a member of the Saint Cecilia Orchestra in Rome. "Thanks to my father," he says, "I had the fortune of being surrounded by music from day one. I remember as a child I loved to stand next to him while he played J.S. Bach's music. Bach was a composer who I still study and consider my god. Furthermore, it was through my father that I discovered my fascination for synthesizers. I particularly remember his two synths, the Arp 2600 and the VCS3, which he could program to perfection."

The Italo-disco genre, a sound that melded elements of romanticism, classic disco music, drum machines, and synthesizers began emerging in Italy at the dawn of the '80s. Pierluigi is among a



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

U.K. or the U.S. Sometimes I ask myself what would have happened if I had moved out of Italy, but the past is the past. I can't complain too much, given how things turned out."

The artist says he enjoys the sweet life today, exploring the possibility of creating new music and moving forward in a positive, natural manner. "I have a new project in mind, a new inspiration, but before talking about it, I need to produce it...and to produce it, I need to find the right energy. Music doesn't come only from the mind. It must also come from the heart. Personally, I get a lot of spiritual energy from playing Bach, Beethoven, and other geniuses of classical music. I enjoy life and everything that is fun and positive – and that's without relying on drugs. I don't think I could last 10 seconds with someone beside me who does drugs, even the light ones. In the end, although I'm getting older, I still feel quite young. My philosophy? First of all, I believe in being sincere, honest, and fair with everyone. I believe in enjoying life. For example, even though I am terrified of flying, I will be going to enjoy the Caribbean for a few months, surrounded by fantastic women!" Again, the producer laughs heartily.

Pierluigi Giombini created some of the most important and groundbreaking melodies in the history of the Italo-disco revolution. Millions, far beyond the borders of his homeland, have embraced his music, and he says that gives him a good feeling.

"Having written and produced songs that so many people still remember and listen to after thirty years, it does make me feel very proud of what I've achieved musically in my lifetime. Given the results I attained with my hits, I wouldn't know how to make them any better today. I'd be afraid to ruin them by tampering with them!" he laughs.

"In the end, I would just like it if people around the world continue to simply say 'I like this song' when listening to one of my records!"



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“After reaching number 1 with multiple singles by Jeanne,” he continues, “several other artists and producers started to call me. I started doing more and more work in France, and it was much more lucrative for me to be there. So I moved to France. I soon was working all day long, seven days a week for several years. I was very happy, but I don’t think I really had the time to analyze it or ask myself how I felt about what was happening to me. It all came so fast, and the wave of success was quite substantial.”

Demand for Musumarra’s talents soared to a new level after he went into the studio with Monaco’s Princess Stéphanie, the daughter of actress Grace Kelly. The princess had been in the spotlight for some time, and her youthful, sometimes controversial antics brought her copious amounts of media scrutiny by 1986. The time seemed ideal for Stéphanie to become a pop star. Her debut dance single, “Irresistible” (also known as “Ouragan”), took Europe by storm, and the artist was at the top of France and Germany’s pop charts nearly overnight.

“I had composed this song,” recalls Romano, “and I originally proposed it to Jeanne Mas. She and I had a difficult relationship by then, and she refused to record it. I proposed the song to another singer, and she refused it as well. I don’t know why, as this singer wasn’t famous, and it might have boosted her career.

“I met a producer named Yves Roze, and he was looking for a song. He had an idea to turn Princess Stéphanie into a singer. At that time, she was living in Paris, all alone in a big apartment with her dog and chauffeur. She was fooling around a lot back then (she had not yet matured), and she had nothing to do but cause scandals. Her father (Prince Ranier III) was very upset with her, but she was who she was. Yves met with Stéphanie, and they became friends. He proposed my song to her, and she accepted the idea of recording it. Unfortunately, she wasn’t what you would call a professional singer, so we had a few problems. We had to record and re-record many, many parts of the song with her, and we were editing them for what seemed like centuries. In the end, we got the finished composite of



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

on. Most of the unscrupulous people from those days are gone now.”

Despite having composed, arranged, and produced a countless number of enchanting melodies, hit songs, and albums, Romano’s well of creativity has yet to run dry. But his approach to music is less about external sources of inspiration than it is about tapping into the musical spirit that restlessly stirs within him.

Observes the composer, “People often notice I live in these beautiful regions in Italy and Canada, and they assume I must be inspired by them,” he says. “My answer is always the same. I am not inspired by places. The music is just inside of me. For example, I was in my car driving home when the chorus of ‘T’En Va Pas’ came to me. I had the music in my mind, and I just wrote it out when I got home. I will give you another example – last night I woke up in the middle of the night, and I had a melody in mind. I got up and just wrote it down...that’s how these compositions come to be. It’s just inside of me, and I have to find a way to bring it out. I do not need ‘inspiration,’ as they say. Sometimes the environment, the things people *think* inspire an artist, can actually block the process because you are distracted by your surroundings.”

Today, Musumarra is focused on expressing his creativity relatively free of the business pressures he felt during the hectic days of decades past. He smiles, saying, “What I really prefer today is to compose music that I truly feel – without a deadline. When I can compose for an orchestra, I really enjoy it. I came from classical music, and so when I can compose for strings and brass, I am really happy. This is my favorite moment, my favorite time. My classical background has been a part of many of my pop hits. ‘T’En Va Pas’ has a classical orchestration, though it does not incorporate real strings – it was electronic. In the ’80s, using real strings and instruments wasn’t very trendy, but that’s changed today. Today artists often ask me (if they have a big enough budget) to write for an orchestra, even if it’s just a small string section. It’s very hip today to go back to the way we used to do things.

“I love composing, and to me, it’s the most beautiful hobby that a



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

and dreamed of being a classical musician. My older brother was involved with pop music, and he gave me work, just so I could earn money when I was a student. When I was 24 and graduated, I worked on some arrangements that were very successful (selling my first million records with one of my songs), and that kept me going in a pop direction for a while, working on soundtracks. When I came into Rondò Veneziano, it was a bridge between the pop music I was ‘forced’ to do and a certain kind of freedom I experienced by doing what I really wanted – working in the classical genre.”

Maestro Reverberi doesn’t necessarily attribute his creative development to living in the rich musical atmosphere of Italy, but he says he certainly felt the artistic influences and heritage of the region. He observes, “I think that creativity does not depend on the place where you live. But of course the kind of art you create is often deeply influenced by the culture of the country. For me, it was easy to write baroque music because that is probably the best period of Italy’s musical history. For exactly that reason, I could really appreciate and completely understand Richard Wagner’s operas, yet I only lived a few years in Munich.”

The Maestro’s notion of combining elements of contemporary music with classical melodies goes back as far as 1964. “My first experience with the concept was an album of classical themes arranged in a pop style. It happened in Berlin at the Teldec Studios. Nothing of that kind had ever been done before, and the Teldec art directors decided not to release the album because, in their opinion, the German people would have been scandalized by such an offense to their myths and sensibilities. Unfortunately, they were totally wrong, because a bit later, Waldo de los Rios with ‘Mozart’s Symphony No. 40,’ and later James Last with ‘Beethoven’s Romance In F Major,’ had a level of success that everybody still remembers,” he says.

Though one might be tempted to think Rondò Veneziano was born of inspiration after, say, a romantic twilight voyage through the canals of Venice, the Maestro concedes the concept was grounded in



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Countless millions around the world have enjoyed the music of Rondò Veneziano, but the Maestro (who cites the tracks “La Serenissima,” “Isole” and the signature hit “Rondò Veneziano” among his favorite compositions) still remains a bit taken aback by the concept’s longevity. However, its appeal, he suggests, is unsurprisingly universal.

“I have absolutely been surprised that this music has been so well received for so long. It was also an unfortunate surprise for all those colleagues who, after the first album, said or thought, ‘Okay, this was a lucky stroke, but let’s see if he can follow it up!’ I think the music was embraced by so many people because it was, and still is, a kind of music which has only one other example or competitor – the Strauss family. In our music, we are combining positive feelings that people need to keep living and to remain accepting of all the bad events we read daily in newspapers or see on TV.

“I think Rondò Veneziano bridged the classical world with the pop world for young people. I often saw many, many young people at our concerts. I remember seeing a three-year-old child in the first row, and at intermission, I wanted to say hello to him. He was sitting there for two hours listening to the music without becoming impatient or crying – he was like an adult. I believe many young people were able to cross from pop to classical because of this music. Many of them have told me they started studying the oboe or the violin because they heard my music. As an adult, you are usually already into classical music and the culture, or you are not.

“I found that certain countries are more accepting of different types of music than others. For example, when we gave concerts in Switzerland, Austria, or Germany, the audience was much the same as a pop concert. They don’t have the discrimination against pop or classical that sometimes exists in Italy and perhaps in America. They enjoy every kind of music, even the most modern and avant-garde sounds. They discriminate more in regard to the quality of music – whether it is good or amateur. Perhaps Germany and these countries are used to this way of thinking. In the time of Mozart, he was



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

“I went to work with Pierluigi. He was a fantastic musician and producer, but a crazy person. I mean that in a nice way. He was like an artist expressing himself out in the universe, and he was kind of – what is the word – eccentric. I think that’s the word. The first time I heard ‘Dolce Vita,’ I made a jump that almost destroyed the lamp on the ceiling. Well, we recorded the song, and it went to number 1,” says Paris, somewhat modestly.

“Dolce Vita,” became one of the biggest recordings ever produced in Italy. According to Ryan, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, and Austria all sent the single to the number 1 position. In Germany, it reached number 3, and the British embraced the hypnotic track as a Top 5 smash. In his native Italy, the song reached the Top 10 and shared a position among the top songs of the year with artists like Culture Club, Irene Cara, The Police, and David Bowie. Contemporary estimates place the track’s total sales around the 5 million units mark, according to the artist. Young, lean, and handsome, Ryan was a sensation on Europe’s top television shows, including the all-important *Top Of The Pops* program in Britain. “Dolce Vita” was released in the United States as a 12-inch single via the American division of the Carrere label and was an underground club hit.

“It’s interesting,” the artist observes, “because in Italy, ‘Dolce Vita’ was not quite as powerful on the pop chart as it was in other countries, but it was a very big hit in the Italian discothèques. All the people of Europe would come down to Spain and Italy in the summer – men looking for girls, girls looking for men, and everything in between. They would remember the song from the parties and nightclubs, and when they returned to their countries, they would ask for the song. Carrere Records bought the song from [the publisher] Severo Lombardoni, and BBC1 filmed the video for the song in Paris [for the British release]. The song just went up, up, up. The record was an amazing success in Spain. I have heard that it is the biggest selling record in Spain – ever. 750,000 maxi-singles sold.

“For me, music is one of the biggest expressions a



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

SABRINA



SABRINA SALERNO

“Boys (Summertime Love)”

Catapulting to the top of the international pop charts with her smash single “Boys (Summertime Love),” the dynamic and alluring Sabrina, seen here in 1988 promoting her “My Chico” hit, became a European sensation. *Photo courtesy of Sabrina Salerno.*

The women of Italy, with their style, passion, love for life, and show-stopping looks, have given the world much to adore. In the realm of entertainment, many would argue they are unparalleled. The cinema has certainly done its share to keep Italian women vividly in focus. The striking talents of Claudia Cardinale, Virna Lisi, Gina Lollobrigida, and Sophia Loren forged an indelible impression on the public, as their films brought the allure and beauty of Italian women to an international audience. In popular music, compelling 20th century vocalists like Ornella Vanoni, Mina, Anna Oxa, and Gianna Nannini magnificently represented the far-reaching power and spirit of the Italian female voice.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

world,” the artist recalls. “So by that time, whenever I asked myself what I wanted to do with my life, of course I said, ‘I’m a singer!’ I kept going with it. Claudio’s songs all had that sexy theme. I didn’t think of the songs as a personal reflection of who I was; I think it was all about creating an image for me.

“Having a recognizable image started to be very important in the ’80s, and today I think it’s become even more important. I really think Blondie (Debbie Harry) got that started, then Cyndi Lauper and Madonna. Creating a look back then was crucial, and it often had to be very exaggerated. The colors of the fashions and the extreme styles, the heavy make-up – it was all kind of shocking. For sure, for me to be sexy required I have an extreme look as well. I played with my image because I understood everything about me was relevant – my clothes, my body, the music. If I was going to have a sex symbol type of style, I needed people to see strong visuals. I think at the time, Samantha Fox and I were probably the most powerful girls in music with that kind of image. And it worked for us. It was all part of that period.”

Salerno’s sex goddess image was cemented in place by a video that was widely circulated for the “Boys” single. Though an otherwise standard clip with virtually no plot, the video became the talk of Europe thanks to what was probably the first official pop music “wardrobe malfunction.” In portions of the video, Sabrina, her ample bosom bouncing among the guests in a crowded swimming pool, is forced to tug her bikini top back into place. The effect was amusing, as well as titillating, rallying thousands of young males to become Sabrina fans.

“If you remember, the ‘Boys’ video was censored by MTV in the U.K. It was crazy. If you look at me in that video and compare it to what is in today’s videos, I look like a nun. Yeah, but that look I had in the clip projected an image that got people’s attention. I can’t deny it. You know, even if a look was considered cheap or vulgar, those images led the way for everything we have today,” Sabrina says.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Broken, produced by her husband, Enrico Monti, gave the artist a very contemporary and welcome re-entry into the electronic dance music market in 1999. However, RTI Music, the label releasing the project, was in the process of being sold, and promotional efforts for the album ground to a halt, unfortunately stifling any hope of commercial success.

As the 21st century got under way, Salerno, undaunted, hosted a TV show called *Matricole & Meteore*, starred in the independent film *Colori*, and continued to tour, singing her '80s hits to gargantuan crowds in Poland, France, and numerous other countries. She released an album of new material and remakes of her biggest hits called *Erase/Rewind* in 2008 (at the encouragement of her brother, according to the CD liner notes), which was accompanied by a hip and stylishly photographed video of the title track. Most recently, Sabrina took part in the television show *La Pista*, which also featured singer Amii Stewart, and has toured in concerts featuring Samantha Fox, David Hasselhoff, Jean-Pierre Morgand of Les Avions, and many others from the era.

The artist says that as a female, she has always found life in the entertainment business challenging.

“I was treated with respect in the record industry, but it’s true that it was a man’s world,” Sabrina states. “It’s still a man’s world, not only in music, but also in cinema, the medical industry, politics, everything. In Italy, we call it ‘Tetto di cristallo,’ the glass ceiling, where women can only rise to a certain level regardless of their abilities. Men have most of the power. As far as my look in the '80s and how men treated me, I must tell the truth. In my experience, usually men were very afraid of a sexy, strong looking woman. When they are face to face with a beautiful woman and realize she is not stupid, they are afraid. A clever, intelligent man would never judge a woman based only on her appearance. You have to get to know a woman. You can’t say she’s stupid because she’s blonde and beautiful or smart because she is less attractive. There are beautiful women who are very intelligent and some who are very stupid. You

party. You know, even though I had this sexy, party girl image, I'm actually a very private person. I don't like to go to discos and parties – I don't like the confusion. Today, I am often asked to go to events where there are very important people...and I rarely go. My friends say I'm crazy not to go because of the work I do, but I'm just not interested in doing things like that. This is just how I am.

“I'm not afraid to say what I think. It's a luxury to be able to say what you feel, and I admit I am not a very diplomatic person.”

“I think my way to be sane and healthy has been to say what I think...and I don't keep things inside me. Allowing myself to be this way is a way to be free for me. We are not completely free in our society, but in my little world, I am who I am. I'm not afraid to say what I think. It's a luxury to be able to say what you feel, and I admit I am not a very diplomatic person. I have had a lot of problems during my career with that. Whether I had the biggest and best director or music producer in front of me, I would not hesitate to say I didn't like this or that. That created a lot of problems for me. I refused a lot of work when I didn't like something about it. My husband and friends probably think I'm crazy for turning offers down. Maybe I am. But again, being crazy, doing what you want, and even saying no to a lot of money is a *very* big luxury that I am lucky to have.”

After some 30 years of being a world famous entertainer and having one of the 1980's biggest dance-pop hits, Sabrina remains very relaxed about her choices and her longevity in the business.

“It's funny,” she smiles, “because I wouldn't even think of doing anything else today. Singing is what I do, and I'm happy with it. It's true; sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had become a doctor or if I had done something else that I really loved. But I *am* doing what I really love today. I love to sing, to dance, and to act. You know, sometimes it is like I have two different personalities – I'm doing one thing, but sometimes I think about doing something

else.

“The artists of the ’80s who made dance music were sometimes considered somewhat disposable,” Sabrina believes. “I’m one of the very few from Italy who keeps going and is still working. Many of the other artists from my period are doing other types of work today. Next year I will have been working for three decades. I am still recognized on the street, and my popularity is still very high. If I go to France or Spain, it’s the same there. I think it’s partly because I’ve done a lot of television, theater, and movies – I think that has helped me stay in the spotlight. They know I’ve sold 20 million records in the ’80s; they saw me at the San Remo Festival in ’91; they saw me host prime-time TV shows and act in movies. This has helped me to maintain a higher profile. I’m not sure that would have happened if I had been just the singer of ‘Boys.’”

“I learned something in my life – to live day by day,” she observes. “I don’t want to plan for the future. I think we have to live more for right now. Sometimes we lose days and weeks because we spend them worrying too much about the future. I admit I do worry about the future in a bigger way – beyond work and my career. That may come from my having a son who is 10 years old. I don’t like the world we are living in these days. I don’t care for the politics, and it seems like everyone is stressed and ill. It’s not so easy to live in the world today – I think it’s one of the tougher periods in our global history. There are still millions of people with nothing to eat, no clean water to drink. And wars – as long as we have demand for petrol, I think we will always have wars. We have the technology to change that, but still we keep the world running on petrol. There’s no respect for other people, for animals, for the environment. It seems like everybody I know is getting divorced. I have 10 friends with children the same age as my son, and seven of them are getting divorced.

“Shouldn’t things be better by now in the 21st century?” the singer suggests. “It’s still money and power driving everything. To me, it seems like everything started to change with the attack on September

11th at the Twin Towers. From that moment, it seems like things went into a decline. Maybe I'm too negative, but I do feel that way. In the '80s, life seemed a little easier, a little better. Maybe there were the same problems going on, but we didn't see them as much. Today we have the technology to see what's happening in Africa, the Mid-East, Russia, and all over the world the minute it happens. We can see all the images. Before, we couldn't see so much."

Sabrina Salerno epitomized the euphoric, youthful energy that defined so much of Europe's dance-pop music scene in the '80s. With her infectious sound and zesty Italian spirit, she became an unforgettable personality of the era. Though she is fully aware of the contribution she has made to the decade's pop culture history, she has no desire to trip on it.

"I will probably always be associated with 'Boys' and dance music," she says with a big smile. Her eyes sparkle as she speaks. "It's not a bad thing. I know I've been very lucky. When I think of how many beautiful voices, how many talents are in the world who will never have even a little piece of the success I had, I thank God. I know I have been very lucky, very blessed. But you know what would make me happy? If I would just be remembered simply as an *Italian woman* – and as everyone knows, that's a *real* woman!"



“In my experience, usually men were very afraid of a sexy, strong looking woman,” says Sabrina today. She remains a prolific entertainer in the 21st century and a striking beauty with a huge worldwide fan base. *Photo courtesy of Sabrina Salerno.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

interpretation of the classic song featuring Alexandra Damiani & Tayma.

Decades after his first hit, Zanetti doesn't spend much energy dwelling on the passage of time. "I think that every age we reach as human beings has its beauty," he asserts. "I do not care if I lose my hair or if I have wrinkles. That doesn't feel important to me. I feel good in my life right now and with the body I have now. I have a young daughter that fills up my days with joy, and I have nice friends I like to have around me."

The shadowy dance music of Roberto Zanetti and Savage still has the power to conjure up a wonderful sense of poetic mood today. His work remains respected as an integral contribution to the Italo-disco revolution and the dance-pop sound of Europe that permeated the '80s. The artist seems pleased that he has made a memorable impression on so many people. With a smile he says, "I am very proud of the song 'Don't Cry Tonight' and would like to think that musicians of the 22nd and 23rd centuries will perhaps do covers or new versions of my music. I'd love to find out that people danced and sang to my melodies far into the future!"



In the 21st century, Roberto Zanetti stays connected with his audiences. “I’m still doing tours because I like to touch the hands of my fans and to have direct contact with them,” he says. *Photo courtesy of Roberto Zanetti.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

their respective 2013 albums.

Yet nobody has been able to match the worldwide success that Taco Ockerse enjoyed with his rendition, released throughout most parts of the world in 1982. Going simply by the name Taco, the singer's pop-synth-new wave dance juggernaut capitalized on the dominant musical trends of the period and swept the planet, reaching the Top 10 of numerous countries and selling over a million copies in the United States alone. While such a monumental accomplishment might seem like a dream come true, the artist has never let the song or his success define his life. Over 30 years after reaching the heights of fame, today Taco is a warm, observant, and articulate man with a great sense of humor. He refuses to take himself too seriously, and over time, he's developed a remarkably grounded and steady approach for handling the rollercoaster ride that has most definitely been his life in show business.

“I was born in Indonesia and came from a musical family,” says Taco, whose parents were of Dutch ancestry. “My grandfather on my mother's side was a professional musician, and he had an orchestra. On my father's side, his dad played the violin. My parents did some work in musical shows in our little Dutch colony. In my home, there was always swing and jazz music playing. American music came very naturally to me. Later, we moved from the Netherlands to Singapore, and my brother and I were placed in the International Schools of America. So I had to leave the Dutch culture behind and get into the American one. I had to learn English, and they kind of made a second-hand American out of me until I graduated in 1973.

“My family eventually moved to Hamburg, Germany. I was getting a bit older, and I really didn't know what to do with myself, so my dad suggested I try acting school. It was an opportunity to learn German, which I didn't have a clue how to speak, and to make some money on the side. I worked as an extra at a repertory theater, and it was wonderful. I worked in many productions, making some money and taking acting and dancing classes. I was very naïve and ambitious, so I made the most of roles where I had nothing to say. I

guess the directors kind of noticed me; they started to give me a line or two. They started doing musicals, and one of the first productions they did was *Sweet Charity*. I remember a friend of mine got a part in it as a dancer, and I thought if *this* guy could be a dancer, why couldn't I? I then pushed myself on the cast and crew there and said I'd make a great stand-in...and that I was, of course, a great dancer. I told them, 'I can do everything!' With all the productions, I learned a great deal!"

Ockerse started hanging out at rock clubs, jamming with musician friends. He soon found work doing demo records. "Gradually, I got connected with recording studios and started working as a background singer. Hamburg was a very small artistic city, so I was able to get connections and referrals easily. Just by chance, my demos were heard, and I got my first record contract with Polydor and even got on a television show."

Taco began recording singles like "Träume Brauchen Zeit," a light, breezy ballad in the German language schlager vein. "It wasn't quite right – it wasn't what I wanted to do," he laments. "They wanted me to sing schlager songs, and that got very frustrating. I did manage to release a cover version of Elton John's 'Nobody Wins' [released in Germany as "Keiner Gewinnt"], but nothing happened with that either. After doing the *Grand Prix d' Eurovision* music competition in 1981, I went to the big boss of the record label and asked to get out of my contract. He had a heart and let me go. I just didn't want to sing this type of music all my life. My other artist friends all said, 'Are you nuts? Giving up a contract?' I kind of retreated into myself for a while."

The disco era had come to an end, and dance music had started to expand in innovative directions by the early '80s. The dance genre encompassed a variety of sounds, and electronics became the name of the game. Melding rock and punk with the beat sensibilities of dance, new wave music was making headway. Germany and the U.K. became major hubs for this emerging style.

"I started noticing that German new wave and dance music were

gaining momentum with Kraftwerk and groups like that, and I began thinking about mixing old world elements with the new sounds happening,” Taco says. “Nobody had done it yet. I tried to find people who might be interested in it, but nobody cared for the idea. It’s the story of my life. Through hanging out in clubs, I met this guy who was friends with David Parker. David was a producer with a very straight English pop background, and he’d never done anything like what I was suggesting before. He agreed to give it a try. He contacted Werner Lang, who was with the Peer-Southern Publishing Company, and the three of us sat down and discussed the concept.

“In David’s small home studio in his cellar playing on a little Casio keyboard, we developed Irving Berlin’s ‘Puttin’ On the Ritz.’ The song has nothing to do with pudding or Ritz crackers,” he laughs. “Back in the ’20s, it was a common New York colloquialism referencing going out and having a classy time at an upscale location. The idea was to do a whole new technical arrangement with it. It was a day-to-day process, testing different sounds. The tap dancing portion of the song was a whole mix of things. It was a choreographer (a friend of mine from the opera house in Hamburg who taught me a whole routine for the song) and I dancing on the record, and we also manipulated some tap shoes on the floor.

“Then I had this idea for the end of the song where you have all the different melodies. At first I thought I wanted all these big Broadway musical bits in there – sort of homage to the great show tunes. Later, when we recorded the final version, we had to take it all out because the Irving Berlin copyright said you could never take any other composer’s song and mix it with a Berlin tune. It helped us out in the end because we replaced our original medley with Irving Berlin tunes like ‘White Christmas’ and ‘Alexander’s Ragtime Band,’ which worked quite well.”

The project represented a new beginning for Ockerse. “I suppose I had big dreams about it at the time,” he admits. “I was in my early 20s, and for me it felt like the last straw. I had tried so many things – I toured with disco bands, I had sung schlager, done shows – none of



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

back and think it would have been great to have kept my career at such a high level, with big shows and nice orchestras. But if the support and the money are not there, you have to work with less and deal with reality. I'm happy the quality is still there in the shows I do today, and I still love performing. But the whole career thing – it's not that important. I had it; it was great, and I enjoyed it in that moment – but it's not everything. You walk down the street for a time, and then it's over, and you turn down a new street. It's time to move on. It's nothing sad; it's life.”

Though Taco doesn't allow his mind to become absorbed with the past, the significance of his contributions to pop culture are not lost on the artist. “Every time I hear somebody is doing a cover of ‘Ritz,’ I kind of growl a little,” he laughs. “But Herb Alpert did a really nice, hip jazz version of the song that I liked very much. But you know what makes me really proud of my version? I got to speak to Irving Berlin on the phone back when the song was at the top of the U.S. charts, and he was so excited. In the old Hollywood days, everyone recorded the song, from Astaire to Sinatra. But it was never a big hit for anyone. Mr. Berlin was 85 when I spoke to him, and he was so genuinely happy, saying, ‘This is the first time it's a hit!’ That was a very big thing in my life. A real legend, Mr. Songbook himself, and he's thanking *me* for making his song a hit. I still get goose bumps from that.”

Taco continued to work in live musicals and on music productions for artists such as Kid Creole and the Coconuts (*The Conquest of You* LP) through the '90s. Though Ockerse is often called upon to perform his primary hit today at European and Russian retro-'80s concerts, the artist makes maintaining a life balance his priority.

“I think a lot of artists make the mistake of seeing their career as number one and forget that you must maintain a private life. I am grateful my career took off when I was in my mid-20s and not at 16 or 17, like some of these kids today. They don't have a fucking clue how to have private friends or people that ground you. I think that's the whole key to everything. It's very important to enjoy your work,

but don't overrate it. It's not the whole world. It's so much more important to say no sometimes, take time off, spend time with friends, and pursue hobbies. In the end, that's what you are left with. Sometimes being in the kitchen cooking is more gratifying than being out in some nightclub in the middle of nowhere. Heck, I have fun just looking for sales in the stores."

Taco pulls no punches when discussing the past, but he is less eager to analyze his legacy and the impact his uncommon, seemingly immortal version of "Puttin' On The Ritz" has had upon the world. After a long pause, he says, "It's so difficult in show business to make a name for yourself. But I guess I did it. It's mind-boggling to me how many people still look at the video for the song today on YouTube. Millions are still into it, and that's very exciting. It was a great accomplishment for me. And hell, they still ask me to perform it on TV shows – things like 'Where Are They Now?' or 'Are They Still Alive?,' he laughs jokingly.

"But I don't live in the past. If you live in the now, you don't really think about your legacy. For me, it's been one hell of a trip. I guess I hope people will enjoy my music and will remember that we had a great moment together. I try to live that way. Live for today and enjoy life; live now, and live it up!" he cheers, raising his glass of brandy. "I think I even wrote something like that in my Class of '73 yearbook!"



“If you go into this business and take it seriously, forget it. There will always be someone who kicks you in the ass,” admits Taco, whose “Puttin’ On the Ritz” single became one of the most iconic songs of the decade. *Photo courtesy of Taco Ockerse.*



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

by Simple Minds from 1981 is a good example of the music they spun. You know, Fad Gadget, Depeche Mode – that style. By the mid-'80s, some of the disco clubs started to shift to the new wave style. One of these trendsetting nightspots in Belgium was the AB Club in Antwerp, where the DJ played some rather obscure tracks, like b-sides from synth-bands. When the tempo of the song was too fast, he slowed it down drastically. For instance, the mythical track 'Flesh' by A Split-Second was originally a 45 RPM twelve-inch single, but he played it at 33 RPM.

“So a new sound began with DJs playing obscure tracks as an alternative to mainstream disco. A DJ called 'T.C.' initiated me into this, and he gave me some advice on a track I was making at the time. He suggested I build up the instrumental very, very slowly and to bring the tempo down to 105 beats-per-minute. It became the first 'new beat' hit: 'Hiroshima' by Nux Nemo. It had a bit of an oriental flavor. I wouldn't give it that name if I were releasing it today, though. It charted for a whole 12 weeks. After that, everyone who could handle a synthesizer woke up, I believe. New beat records started to pour out like a flood. A style was born: electronic, quite slow, and more or less spoken vocals. Very machine-like, this music.

“Originally, it was underground music,” Jo observes. “The nightclubbers started to wear the typical black and white new beat style clothing of the period. They also danced in the new beat manner. It spread like a storm. As a result, this small country of Belgium drew international attention. International music magazines, MTV, record companies – they were all interested in what was happening here. After some three years, new beat became mainstream, and it disappeared soon after. Mind you, the style vanished, but the club scene remained very strong.”

As the '80s drew to a close, Bogaert was looking for a new course in which to chart his knack for musical expression. “By 1989, it was the end of the new beat era,” he remembers, “and I wanted to move to something else. Kevin Saunderson's Inner City track 'Big Fun' was an eye-opener. I heard it on a Detroit techno compilation.

Among all these instrumental dance tracks, there was this vocal track with the soulful Paris Grey. That is when I realized that underground techno *could* have pop appeal by adding a full vocal. I started looking for someone to do a rap on an instrumental track I had created. I mentioned it to a guy who ran a record store in Antwerp. In his spare time he managed a hip-hop band with this talented female rapper named Ya Kid K [Manuela Kamosi]. He introduced us. She was a teenager at the time. I explained to her what I wanted, and a week later she came to my studio. Half an hour later, I had all the vocals I needed. She was amazingly efficient and fast. The track didn't have quite the structure that I wanted though, so I did some serious editing and molded it into a song – you know verses, refrain, and the bridge.

“The guitarist of King Crimson, Robert Fripp, used a tape-loop system that was introduced to him in 1973 by Brian Eno. Fripp used it for solo performances and called it ‘Frippertronics.’ That sounded cool. I applied the suffix of the genre I was doing: ‘techno’ to ‘tronic.’ The result was ‘Technotronic,’ the name I gave to the project. (I didn't know about the similar-sounding Mantronix name already out there at the time, and the group Electronic came after us.)”

Released in the fall of 1989, first by Bogaert himself and then by arrangement with ARS Productions for international distribution, Technotronic's “Pump Up The Jam” detonated with unexpected force on the dance floor. Utterly compelling, the song's urgent beat and smoothly melodic, yet street-credible rap proved irresistible. The track eventually topped the charts in Belgium and Spain and narrowly missed the peak position in Germany, Austria, and the United Kingdom. Perhaps most impressive was the song's blockbuster reception in the United States, where, via SBK/EMI Records, it vaulted to the number 2 position on the pop chart. It was a number 1 American dance chart hit and stayed on the club survey for 17 weeks.

“You know, the wrong bass drum sound can kill a track. Being a bass head, I wanted the kick and the

bass to stand out, making it sound powerful.”

“The song is sometimes classified as new beat,” Jo observes, “but I didn’t feel like I was still doing that style at the time. I feel I was definitely somewhere else when I made the track. I always obsessed over bass drums and bass sounds. You know, the wrong bass drum sound can kill a track. Being a bass head, I wanted the kick and the bass to stand out, making it sound powerful. I succeeded in coming up with a recognizable colour. But the big difference was the vocal. Here was a rap that was like a sing-along and a chorus with a great hook – the ‘make-my-day’ reference, delivered by an excellent voice. Someone later coined the name ‘hip-house,’ but to me it was really techno.”

On single jackets, “Pump Up The Jam” was officially credited to “Technotronic featuring Felly.” Felly was, in reality, an attractive fashion model hired to promote the project. During this period of scrutiny over artist credentials (a front page issue with the Milli Vanilli debacle), the Technotronic project took some heat of its own for its so-called misrepresentation.

Explains Bogaert, “Here is the story. When ‘Pump Up The Jam’ was considered to have hit potential, the record company that I had teamed up with wanted to do a video and photographs with vocalist Ya Kid K. I passed the message on to her manager, but I don’t know if everything was communicated properly. He told me she didn’t feel like promoting the track, wanting to concentrate on her hip-hop band. That is when the record company decided to have Felly promote it. I emphasize the fact that this was *not* my idea. It didn’t feel right to me.

“I think of Black Box,” he adds. “They were smarter. They had learned their lesson from our project and Milli Vanilli. Let me explain. Black Box used an acapella from a Dan Hartman-produced track sung by Loleatta Holloway as their vocal source [for the single “Ride On Time”]. (By the way, I later met Dan, and we had plans to collaborate, but unfortunately he died before we could realize them.)



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.

Switzerland.

“Chart hits in other countries did actually compensate for not having quite as much success in Germany with our first two albums,” says the artist. “In the ’80s, we had three Top 10 hits in Italy and a few Top 20 hits in Germany, Switzerland, and Australia. The foreign success allowed Hansa to continue to believe in us and in our music.

“From a production perspective, we had a really great team during the making of this album. Most of the songs were based on an initial harmony or rhythm structure, which was the basis for sounds, effects, and vocals. Additionally, listening to pop songs in our youth, we knew what kind of structure a pop song needed and that we shouldn’t put together epic improvisations. We both are really proud of our *A Wild Romance* album, as it truly reflects the vibe of the ’80s,” he says with a smile.

“For ‘Ballet Dancer,’ Sven had composed some harmony parts and a really nice drum pattern, which actually was a factory-preset in a new drum machine he just had bought. Together, we composed the main melody, and I also added a few more things to the drum arrangement. Everything had a nice flow and came very naturally. When our lyricist Tim joined in, he was joking around with some words for the refrain, and he was really amused about some of the silly lines he had come up with. All of a sudden, Sven and I said, ‘That’s it. Let’s keep this.’ Tim was really puzzled that something that was essentially a joke was picked as the main line for the refrain. Tim’s surprise was even bigger when ‘Ballet Dancer’ later hit the charts in many countries. ‘Ballet Dancer’ is a good example of what you can accomplish with teamwork, especially if you don’t take your work too serious, which we never did.

“The making of ‘Not The Loving Kind’ was totally different. I had composed the whole song, excluding lyrics, in my little home studio. I recorded a very basic demo tape with just a cheap analog drum machine, a harmony, and a melody keyboard. The song had such a nice flow that even without vocals on it, everyone who heard it said that it had great hit qualities. Tim came up with some very

good mix of progressive songs and more hit orientated material. It was just a matter of making the decision if we should release one single or another. Of course, our record label did reserve the final decision when it came to the selection of which song was to be designated as the official single release, and they usually voted for the more commercial songs. We had no problem with this, as they deserved a reward for the money they had invested in our project. They were always good sports, especially their foreign publishing department, which sold our productions to a large number of countries worldwide.”

The Twins toured extensively throughout Europe, but Ronny expresses measured enthusiasm for the experience. He recalls, “In 1984, we played a concert in Budapest, Hungary, in front of more than 10,000 people in a large sports arena. That was the first time we ever played for such a massive crowd of fans. It was the final night of our Hungary tour, and we were the main act of that evening. We never had a comprehensive live show with gimmicks and surprises, and so it was just the fans, our band and our music, which created a very intense experience for us all. Being in the studio and playing live are two very different things for us. In the studio, we are creating new songs, and on stage we are reproducing songs, which already exist (sometimes for many years). This means that the level of excitement and creativity is harder to maintain. I wouldn’t say that playing on stage is boring, but working in the studio is actually more exciting.”

Two more albums followed for The Twins, 1985’s *Until The End Of Time* (featuring the hit “Love In The Dark”), which was the boys’ final set of the decade for Hansa, and a 1987 LP recorded for CBS called *Hold On To Your Dreams*. There would be a long gap before the duo would return to Hansa for 1991’s *Classics Remixed* album and a sharply produced LP of original material recorded in 1993 called *The Impossible Dream*, featuring eloquent dance visions like “Then We Start Again.”

“Actually The Twins never broke up,” the artist clarifies. “We just

TOM HOOKER



A gifted singer and songwriter, Tom Hooker was caught in a tug of war between his solo career and that of Italo-disco sensation Den Harrow. *Photo courtesy of Tom Hooker.*

Tom Hooker was one of Italy's most accomplished singers and songwriters at a time when the country's bumper crop of dance music was in hot demand throughout Europe. Enjoying great personal success as a solo artist in the '80s (with such hits as "Looking For Love" and "Atlantis"), Hooker also contributed to the record chart achievements enjoyed by another tremendously popular artist of the time named Den Harrow ("Future Brain," "Don't Break My Heart," "Catch The Fox (Caccia Alla Volpe)," and others). Tom has been widely acknowledged as the vocalist and co-writer of many of Den Harrow's biggest hits, but this recognition didn't come until decades after the songs were chart successes.

The artist has no misgivings about the era and all that happened. Nor does he mind discussing it. But these days, he prefers to focus on

and the clubs would pay the bill. The DJs didn't have to buy them. They bought a lot of mixes because they wanted to make sure no hit would slip by them.”

By the mid-'80s, Hooker gained momentum as a singer-songwriter in this prosperous Italian music environment. “After doing TV shows and always having a record company promoting me, most people in the business started to know of me or about me. I didn't have much competition as an English lyricist in Italy because everybody just spoke Italian!” he smiles. “I met [producer and arranger] Miki Chiericato in 1985 through my record company at the time, as I recall. I was with Merak Music, and Miki was with Baby Records. He wanted to work with me, and it was possible because [of a connection to] Roberto Gasparini of Merak Music (Valerie Dore, Alba, Novecento), who was in good standing with Freddy Naggiar, the head of Baby Records. Gasparini, who had me under contract, could have prohibited me from working with them, but he didn't.”

Hooker's path soon crossed with that of a popular Italo-disco star named Den Harrow. The story of Den Harrow, one of the most well known dance-pop acts to emerge from Italy in the early to mid-'80s, has been a source of controversy for years. Fronted by a good-looking young man named Stefano Zandri, the Den Harrow project scored numerous top hits in Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden. A few years back, Hooker made it known that he was the actual vocalist behind many of the act's biggest hits.

Despite the media brouhahas that disclosures like this always seem to churn up, the practice of lip-synching and ghost-singing was not all that uncommon in Europe at the time. Still, the Harrow-Hooker revelation generated a good deal of chat room conversation and a few tussles among interested parties on outlets like Facebook and Twitter.

Hooker offers his recollection of the creation of Den Harrow's records of the period.

“We tried numerous times in the studio to make [Zandri's] vocals work, but to no avail,” he asserts. “Today, everything can be found

“‘Future Brain’ did very well and was a summer hit. I had come out with ‘Real Men’ on the Merak label around the same time, with no video. Merak Music was a very small company compared to Baby Records. I did no promotion and no TV shows, compared to Den Harrow, who did the Festivalbar competition that summer. I only went to Festivalbar as a spectator, but I was able to be backstage. I remember Den Harrow’s agent telling me how great he was on stage, and he made a comment to the likes of, ‘You are nothing compared to him.’ It was such an absurd statement. I could understand such a statement by a fan, but not a professional who knew that he wasn’t the singer.

“I wasn’t offended or hurt by his comments, but instead I was amazed at how easily impressed people get when you are successful. People start thinking you are God-like when you have a bit of success. Everything you do becomes ‘amazing.’ Even if you can’t dance, you suddenly ‘move well.’ If you can’t sing, you ‘project well,’ etc. If your song is a hit, you become sexy, attractive, extremely good-looking, etc. However, when your song doesn’t get onto the charts, you are back to being the guy who’s doing something wrong, and you are just another human being.”

Tom eventually recorded a dance single under his own name for Baby Records, “Looking For Love,” released in 1986. Hip, savvy lyrics, a powerful electronic arrangement, and Hooker’s irresistible vocals sent the song to the top of the Italian club surveys and right up the pop charts. The track did well across Europe and was a sizeable underground import hit in the U.S.

“At the time it was released, I viewed myself as being already successful, even though I wasn’t as famous as Den Harrow was in France and Germany. The difference was that I had previously been signed to very small labels. I was able to reach a new level by working with Baby, one of the best record companies in Italy. ‘Looking For Love’ had a video shot by David Rose on film in London, just like all the Den Harrow videos. Was the song a hit on its own? Or was it all the promotion around the song? I will never

know.

“...I became ‘sexy as hell,’ and everything I did was suddenly fantastic. I had this wonderful voice – I was good-looking – blah, blah, blah.”

“To this day, I think that the success of that song was mostly due to Claudio Cecchetto, who happened to like the song, and it made it to number 1 on DeeJay Television. Cecchetto had a very big influence on the music scene at that time with his radio station and TV show. I don’t know if it’s a coincidence, but after the video came out, I became ‘sexy as hell,’ and everything I did was suddenly fantastic. I had this wonderful voice – I was good-looking – blah, blah, blah. I was the same person as before, but I changed for everybody else. I didn’t have to convince girls to go out with me any more; they were begging me to go out with them,” he laughs.

At the height of all this activity, Hooker worked on other projects as well. “I also sang the demos for every Eddy Huntington track and wrote all the lyrics for his songs. In the chorus of his hit ‘U.S.S.R.,’ my voice is louder than his in the mix. (Much later, I also did other projects under the name David Harleyson, and these records sold very well in Thailand,)” he adds.

Tom mentions the success enjoyed by Paul Lekakis, who hit it big in 1987 with the high-energy dance monster “Boom Boom (Let’s Go Back To My Room).” “I wrote the lyrics and sang the demo for it. Again, my voice is louder than his in the chorus. Paul was very successful in the U.S. with it, but he dumped us for an American record company. We had a follow-up single ready for him that would have been great, but we gave it to Eddy Huntington instead. That song was ‘Meet My Friend.’ It would have been perfect for Lekakis, who, unfortunately, was a one hit wonder in America. To this day, I believe that if he had stayed with us, he would have had at least one more hit. Paul was very good-looking and was also gay. That helped him do very well in the gay clubs. Had he released ‘Meet My Friend (Called Dick),’ I think he would have done very well. Paul was hot

and sexy, and Eddy was more like a fun, happy-go-lucky guy. Eddy Huntington was perfect for 'U.S.S.R.,' but his high-pitched voice and his image weren't right for 'Meet My Friend.'"

Meanwhile, according to the singer, the imbalances of the Harrow-Hooker situation became increasingly significant. "With 'Future Brain' being a hit, Freddy wanted an album. So we did it,' Tom recalls. "The name Den Harrow was a brand with a face attached to it. Mr. Zandri was the face, not me. His videos were splendidly shot in London, again by David Rose. 'Looking For Love' did better in Italy than Den Harrow's summer release 'Charleston' in 1986. My song was a huge summer hit, and 'Charleston' was the third release off his album that came out the previous winter. Suddenly, Freddy got cold feet about me. The train had already taken off with Den Harrow in France and Germany, and there was a fear that Tom Hooker would ruin the project.

"There was another problem. People don't realize that creating a brand and putting all the CDs in the stores took time. You can have a hit, but if the CD isn't available, you won't sell. It's all about timing and planning. The truth was that Freddy never released a Tom Hooker album in the fall of 1986, after the very obvious success of 'Looking For Love' during the summer. There wasn't an album to sell when I was hot on the market – you cannot buy what isn't available. Most people never consider this, but it happens. My next single was 'Help Me,' released in the fall. Instead of a video with David Rose, we did a cheap video in Milan just to have something. Still no album.

"Instead, Franco Donato of Italy's FullTime Records took some old demos from 1982 and remixed them and tried to make it look like a new album by Tom Hooker. He tried to take advantage of the fact that I was hot at the time; Freddy did not. The track 'Only One' was remixed, and they tried to make it sound like 'Looking For Love,' but they really had no clue how to make a dance record. I cringed when I heard it. Freddy never sued them and never even tried to block them. His main focus was pushing Den Harrow in Germany

and France because the money was coming in. Italy wasn't where the money was. My name was tarnished, but at least I was still making a ton of money doing shows, thanks to 'Looking For Love.' Girls were fainting at my live shows, and they all wanted a piece of me," he smiles.

"I always did the gigs for the money and to respect the contract (and not for the applause) because I was a professional. Sure, it was fun doing it at times, but sometimes it was a drag. You had to show up at a resort in the mountains during a snowstorm when you had a cold. You still had to pretend you were having fun, singing in a smelly, smoky club in front of guys who hated you because the girls thought you were the sexiest man on earth. In these instances, you are doing it for the money they paid you. But I will say that I always felt very honored and blessed that they would pay me so much to sing and to be there. The most enjoyable part was usually after the show. The people would invite me to restaurants and have me taste delicious Italian cooking and many times wouldn't let me pay for it. It's like they were honored to invite me. I must say the Italians are very warm and friendly."

Tom says there were plenty of simple amusements connected to the music business that he enjoyed. "I remember playing a game in my car," he grins. "I would turn the dial on my radio trying to find my songs. In the summer of '85, I would catch a song maybe eight times a day and on different stations. In the summer of 1986, I would catch several different songs on the radio, and I would count them at the end of each day to see which song won. It would be like seven times for one song, nine times another, and four times for this other song, etc. I would then stop to get an ice cream cone, and the people at the ice cream shop wouldn't let me pay. I would then go to another shop because I didn't want to feel like I was taking advantage if I kept going back there," he laughs. "Many places would give me the ice cream for free...and it was silly because I could certainly afford to pay."

As Hooker juggled the many balls in play at this point in his

career, he began to further evaluate his position in the Den Harrow project.

“I was also the lead vocalist on every song of Den Harrow’s that was a hit from the first two albums [*Overpower* and *Day By Day*]. I asked to do the single ‘Don’t Break My Heart’ as Tom Hooker, after ‘Looking For Love’ had been a hit, but Freddy told me it was out of the question. (I just had a feeling ‘Don’t Break My Heart’ was going to be a hit.) This refusal to give me that song was one of the reasons I didn’t want to sing for Den Harrow any more. I understood the conflict of interests. My promotion for Tom Hooker was stalled to let the Den Harrow project fly because it had already taken off. I wrote all the lyrics on the third Den Harrow album (*Lies*, using the name T.H. Beecher) and sang all the demos, but I was done. Turatti and Chierigato tried to convince me to keep on singing for [the project], but it was a losing battle. The lead vocals were then re-sung by Anthony James, but it didn’t do as well. By then, the concept had begun to run its course (or maybe somebody noticed the voice change, but I wouldn’t count on that.)”

Den Harrow’s *Lies* album largely marked the end of the act’s presence in the European pop mainstream. Several independent dance market productions and a number of greatest hits collections featuring the Den Harrow moniker have been released over the years since.

Throughout the latter part of the ’80s, Hooker, ruggedly handsome and well built, enjoyed the perks of stardom. However, Hooker says it was a personal sidestep that ultimately prompted him to explore the social benefits that came with fame.

“My longtime girlfriend cheated on me in February of ’86,” he is quick to recall, “and we broke up after six and a half years. I took it pretty badly, but the timing was perfect for me to be single. At that time, I didn’t know that ‘Looking For Love’ was going to be a hit. By summertime, I could have had practically any girl I wanted. I was on TV a lot, and that certainly helped. The combination of being single and bruised by my ex’s cheating made me quite cynical about

an actor. Maybe actors and politicians are the same!”

Hooker says his longtime friend and associate Miki Chieregato also decided to relocate to Las Vegas not long ago. Says Tom, “We found out that we both don’t like to play golf, so we had to find a hobby. We write songs and do some videos together. We do this in our free time, and the best thing is we have no pressure to perform. We don’t have to sell units any more; we can just do it for the fun of it. We’ve done slow songs and rock songs in addition to dance music. It’s just that people appreciate the dance music more. People still want us to do Italo. We have several different projects. ‘The Gods Of Love’ has a modern sound, for example. We are called Hooker-Chieregato for our dark, new wave style, and Tom Hooker for funk or remakes. Tom Hooker & The Elastic Band is used for rock and Tam Harrow for Italo.

“The record industry today is limited to making profits on live shows,” he insists. “When someone has a hit, they immediately go out on tour. Not long ago, U2’s new album was available for free on iTunes. If you can get a new album by U2 for free, why should you have to pay for smaller productions? U2 realized that there is no money in digital sales. Therefore, they gave the people some new music that they could sing along with at their next concert. That’s where the money is – live performances. The ticket prices have gone up 100 percent in 20 years, and the price of listening or owning music has gone down 100 percent.”

Tom says there are aspects of his personality that have helped him to keep moving forward. “I never run out of ideas. I don’t know where they come from, but they always seem to come. I never have writer’s block. I don’t even know what it feels like. I think several aspects of my personality have helped me along my way, such as patience. I also don’t need a kick in the butt to get to work. I never have. I work hard on my own, and I can go on and on forever until the work is done. My ability to work with a group of songwriters, as opposed to writing songs alone, has certainly served me well. I am very detailed in what I do. I see things that go unnoticed by many



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.



You have either reached a page that is unavailable for viewing or reached your viewing limit for this book.