

BBS: You've been able to make a living from music all these years by playing GB and rock gigs, right?

Yes. Berklee teaches you how to make a living playing GB.

BBS: Your first solo disc came out a few years back. Tell me about that.

That was called Steve Stanley & The Beatniks and it came out in 1996.

BBS: What inspired you to go the Danny Gatton/Roy Buchanan Telecaster route?

I didn't mean to release that. That came about when I sent a scratch demo to Bruce Iglauer at Alligator Records. He was very nice to me. He told me that he really liked my playing and that I had good tone and a nice touch. He said my music was Roy Buchanan inspired and that it was very spiritual. But he said he didn't listen to a lot of pure instrumental music.

He talked to me about music having a healing power and over the years I have developed this strong spirituality in my music. I believe in God, I believe in Jesus, and I think that creativity comes from the Lord. I would talk to Bruce about it and he would say it's essential to the healing of the human condition. You know, Berklee has a music therapy program.

I think this beautiful force comes from within some of us, through God, and it's meant to be shared with everyone. So with Bruce encouraging me I thought, let me put together a demo and have these cuts that I've been working on and playing live in obscure clubs and send them up to him.

The last letter I received from him was a year ago and he said, when I play the blues, it really grabs him, but that he doesn't really like rock music. He said that when I rock out, I lose his ear. He told me I mix it up too much. I can appreciate that because they're purists.

BBS: Then how do you explain Johnny Winter as a one time Alligator artist? When I listen to your new CD Left Here All Alone, I don't hear rock. I hear roots, blues and jazz.

He doesn't like roots rock or rockabilly for his label. Roy Buchanan also liked to mix it up, but Roy had a world wide audience like Johnny Winter. I think it's easier to market. I think my music conflicts with the purist approach that Alligator takes. But if they sign Johnny Winter, it's expected.

BBS: What kind of equipment are you playing these days?

I usually play various Fender amps. Mostly a Musicman or a Fender Twin.

For guitars I have a Mexican Tele, an old '68 Tele and a Fender Relic.

BBS: Do you play Telecasters because you're influenced by guys like Danny Gatton and Roy Buchanan?

That's hard to say... I actually started playing in New York with a guy named Paul Dickler who wrote a book on blues and slide guitar. Man... his chops were tight. He had a vibrato thing happening where you can get a five note bend; where you're in one position and you move up in half steps five tones. Paul Dickler taught me this technique and I found that I could do the best on a Tele in terms of projecting it. So even though I've had Les Pauls, Strats and an SG, I traded them all away and ended up playing the Tele.

BBS: Let's talk about Left Here All Alone. I hear a lot of Danny Gatton and Roy Buchanan influences. Did they influence you?

Well, I knew Roy and one of my drummers I used to work with, Tom Hambridge used to work with Roy a lot. The only things I could say is that I don't copy Roy in the sense of imitating him. Roy had a spiritual effect on me that went deeper than just imitating him. He truly, deeply inspired me. What happened, some how, was that I absorbed some of the feel that he had. But the stuff that I write is original, so the melodies I have... the licks, are mine. But Roy had a very deep spiritual impact on me.

BBS: How about Danny Gatton?

Not as deep, no. Danny Gatton I liked more intellectually. I always thought of him as being sort of fun.

BBS: Do you feel as if the schooling you had at Berklee with the heavy

jazz influence they have there, helped to carve your sound and playing?

What Berklee did for me was more of an arranging thing. Because I like to do film scoring, Berklee helped me to arrange three guitars into a song. I learned how to do horn parts and things like that. I think as far as guitar playing, I think some of that rubbed off on me but the Berklee method is the sound they have in the Berklee books and that to me was not so much of a useful thing than a theoretical one. If you're teaching kids you have to think, what am I going to show this kid. So you go to the method books because you have to teach them something. But in terms of getting your own style, I think I had a narrow style when I got there and then built on it.

BBS: Let's talk about the tracks on the new album. Track #1, "Shufflin' Around" sounds like a Gatton tune. What inspired that song?

For the last three years, I've been doing a lot of gigs showcasing my sound and I needed a punchy tune to open the set with without vocals and I came up with that. I actually wrote it in one of the dressing rooms one night. It just sort of happened.

BBS: Let's move on to "Sunny." That's a breezy, sweet sounding tune. What was the influence for that?

Sometimes my music is visually inspired and some times my visuals are musically inspired. "Sunny" was visually inspired.

BBS: The next cut, "Secrets from Somewhere" is the first vocal track and features your wife Sunny on lead vocals. How did you write that song?

I wrote a screenplay to a short film that I did called Secrets From Somewhere that made the Top 100 at the New York Film Festival this past year. I did the visuals and the scoring for that, which by the way, got picked up by goodstory.com and it's for sale to agents and producers looking for material. Again the music was inspired by the visuals.

BBS: The next song "Hot Coffee" is a full out rocker. Tell me about that.

That was just an adrenalin thing where I wanted to cut loose and crank it. I think it kicks ass.

BBS: "Deep Blues Eyes" is another vocal track featuring you singing lead. Tell me about that tune.

That goes back to some people I knew. That's real hard core blues. You can hear a little bit of Albert Collins. People say they hear different kinds of players in it but it's kind of a personal statement.

BBS: "Black Lace" sounds unmistakably like Roy Buchanan with that picking style and Tele tone. Was that an ode to Roy?

You're right. Roy inspired my tone and feel in that song. I love the song "Green Onions" and I thought to myself, gee, I wish I had written "Green Onions." So I came up with this riff that reminded me of "Green Onions" and polished it up. We've been playing it live for years. Instead of playing, "Green Onions" we sneak that in.

BBS: "Lost Love" is a sweet sounding ballad. Where did that come from?

I have Julie Miller, who plays for the Boston Symphony playing harp on the intro to that. That song came about when I desperately needed a track for a dance scene. To me it has a very ethereal quality.

BBS: "My Baby Left Me" has a strong vocal showing by you. It also has some great guitar work. How did you write that?

That shows off my rockabilly roots. I really wanted to do a rockabilly song. "Papa" Dick Sousa plays on that track with me, but I threw him a curve. He had never played rockabilly before and he said, "Why don't you let me shed on this thing for a couple of days." I said, no, don't worry about it, but he did a great job on it with minimal rehearsal. I think he picked up the groove pretty good.

(Continued on page 28)

