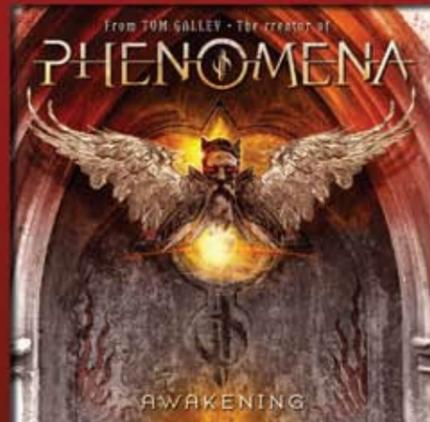


# PHOENIX RISING



**In 1984, the first Phenomena album was released, an ambitious concept record featuring some of the finest British rock talent around, such as Glenn Hughes, Cozy Powell, Don Airey, Neil Murray and Mel Galley. Originating from the mind Mel's brother Tom, Phenomena spawned two sequels, 'Dream Runner' in 1987 and 'Inner Vision' in 1992. After a long silence, Tom Galley returned with 2006's 'Psychofantasy', utilising experienced stars such as Glenn Hughes and Keith Murrell alongside newer talent like Lee Small. Released via Escape, a reinvigorated Tom has been keeping the albums coming, with 'Blind Faith' in 2010 and now 'Awakening', featuring the likes of Rob Moratti, Lee Small, Ralf Sheepers, James Christian and Terry Brock. James Gaden talked to Tom about Phenomena's fascinating history, the spirit of Mel Galley and plans for the future...**

**When the first Phenomena album began, it was a concept record with a story linking the music together. Did you plan it would span more than one record at the time?**

The original idea behind it all was obviously to get great musicians together, who Mel and I really liked working with and respected. I planned for it really to be staged, and the off-shoot would maybe be a film, but the primary focus was to have a record that wasn't just going to be a record, it would be a bit more interesting and develop a visual side as well to ultimately put on a stage. Of course, we got a lot of the people like Glenn, who had been with Mel in Trapeze, Mel had connections with Whitesnake and was big friends with Cozy Powell...At the time, Glenn was in a bad way, but he, as he always had, retained his voice. Even now, when I listen back, considering the state he was in, his vocals are just stunning!

**I'm a huge Glenn Hughes fan, I've interviewed him a bunch of times and he freely admits he was far from his best back then. He didn't put out that much stuff in the eighties, but those things he did do, it was all pretty much superb!**

Yes, Glenn and I have our differences, just as he had with Mel, and I could write a book full of stories about them, but nobody can take anything away from how good his voice is. Up until that first Phenomena album, he wasn't really doing anything. He'd just come out of Hughes/Thrall and nobody really wanted to work with him because of the way he was. Then he did Phenomena and people heard that, then Gary Moore wanted him... I think the reason it didn't work out with Gary, is because Gary didn't know what he was letting himself in for! (laughs)

**When the second album 'Dream Runner' came along, there were more singers involved, not just Glenn, but Ray Gillen, Jon Wetton, Max Bacon...the album had more of a commercial edge, with a single 'Did It All For Love'. Was there a plan in advance to try a more commercial angle?**

When you have the disappointment of the reaction to the first album... it came out on Bronze, who then went into liquidation, leaving the project in limbo. We were with Ariola in Germany who paid, I later found out, a huge amount of money for the album. It ended up, they made some money out of it, but I certainly didn't! I think I got half the advance I was supposed to get, and I ended up having to go to High Court because they sold the album to Castle Communications. I think it cost me about £17,000 then, in the eighties, and I'd never go that route again because all I ended up with was stopping the album being put out. I didn't get recompensed for the money I had spent.

So the second album, I met a guy called Wilfried Rimensberger when we were doing the first one, he was working for Metal Hammer at the time. He basically joined us on 'Dream Runner' as a project manager. I'd started with Mel doing the demos and this was around the time Mel smashed his arm up

with Whitesnake. We'd had a bad time with Glenn on the first album, so we decided not to rely on him solely for the vocals. We respected his work but he was a handful. And he was huge then, he was like Demis Roussos! I knew a guy who was a roadie for Asia and he told me Jon Wetton was a big fan of what we were doing. I spoke to Jon and he said he'd love to do a track. So he came in, but with all rock stars, there are problems - Jon's problem was if you didn't get his vocal in the first hour, he was too pissed! (laughs) So it took us a couple of days to get his lead done, but his harmonies - he was unbelievable, he just put them down, boom, boom, boom, done!

Ray Gillen came about because he'd just left Black Sabbath and was broke. He was in London and Mel and I knew one of his friends. Ray came down, his background had some Sioux or Native American in there, and this guy walks in, about six foot two, he was just such a good looking guy. We looked at him and thought 'What, and this guy can sing as well?' (laughs) And he could! He was such a great looking guy, great voice and so nice. So he came in, so did and Kyoji Yamamoto, who was in Bow Wow at the time. I'd seen him at a gig in London and was really impressed. He came in one afternoon and did all his guitar parts in that one day! We got Max Bacon down too and it was a very relaxed session. I was introduced to Leif Johansen who was working with A-ha at the time and ended up with Scott Gorham in 21 Guns. Talking of Scott, that solo he played on 'Did It All For Love', was the first thing he had recorded since Thin Lizzy ended - he'd come out of rehab and that was the first thing he played since. After that, he got his confidence and really went for it.

As for the commercial sound you asked about, we signed with BMG and the powers that be said that we needed to make the record sound more commercial for the American market, where they had connections. It resulted in a weird situation, because the second album was the most successful, but everybody who ever talks to me about the project references the first one, and asks when I'm going to return to that sound! (laughs) Right from me doing the 'Psychofantasy' album and 'Blind Faith' and this new one, 'Awakening', people still ask about the first record!

**Well, I'll break the mould - my favourite one from the original three albums is the third one, 'Inner Vision', believe it or not!**  
(Laughs) Really?

**Absolutely - I have the first album on vinyl, with the booklet inside with all the paintings in, then I got it on CD as well. I got 'Dream Runner' on CD, and I'd been searching for ages for 'Inner Vision'. I eventually got to hear it when the three disk set was put out in 2006, and I absolutely loved it.**

(Laughs) Oh, there's a terrible story to that record! Basically, 'Inner Vision' was the album that BMG was banging the gong about. They wanted us in the best studios in the world, got us one of the best engineers in the world in Spike Stent. A colossal amount of money was spent. We had more of a band on that



album, with Leif, Scott Gorham, Keith Murrell who did all the vocals... it was done in Denmark and finished it at Olympic Studios in London - when we were in there, Freddie and Queen were in the top studio, Paul McCartney was in the middle one, and we were in the basement! (laughs) Wilfred saw the whole thing going a different way and he had put all the deals together, but it basically gave him a nervous breakdown. There was a lot of backstabbing and poison put down and BMG lost confidence. They ended up dropping the album, which was part of a production deal. I'd spent a huge amount of money and then had to pay all the studios and people who had worked on it. It put me in a really bad spot. A friend of mine who owned a garage and some other things said that he was doing a label, and how much would I ask for to buy the albums? Frankly, at that point, I couldn't even get arrested! Seriously, it's one of those things in the business... the phone stops ringing and people just didn't want to know about that album, it was finished, mastered, the lot and just sat there. I got to a point where I needed to pay my mortgage and stuff, so I entered into a deal with this guy. It turned out he didn't actually own the majority of the company, that was owned by a guy called Merv Spence. The deal I did was to absolve myself from paying the artists, I set it up so all the artists would be paid by the label that was being set up. Mel was involved and as far as we were concerned, this started off okay, but then disintegrated to the point where none of the artists got paid. Fortunately I kept in close contact with Keith, Leif and Scott and told them what was happening. It didn't sour our relationship, but from then on, the first batch of 'Inner Vision', Merv took my name off and put his own name on, and credited himself as the bass player. I had to call my lawyer and get that retracted and ever since, he'll have you believe he's been paying a fortune and I'm a terrible person... put it this way, that box set you bought? I certainly didn't see a penny from it - or anybody else I know who was involved saw any money either! There are tracks on there which Mel and I did from Trapeze years back - but those versions on there are taken from a cassette, not the mastered versions I have. It took me about three years to get over that whole episode, it wasn't a good time.

**There's no wonder I had trouble finding that record after hearing all that!**

There you are - 'Inner Vision' was immaculately recorded, and I really did think it was a great album and I'm so glad you liked it! It was overlooked completely. Fortunately I kept on good terms with Keith and the other guys... as you know, Keith did some vocals on 'Psychofantasy' for me. I don't know if you have noticed, but from 'Psychofantasy' onwards, the albums have said 'From the creator of Phenomena' - that's a legal thing due to the disputes that started then. When I began working with Escape, the guy rang Khalil and claimed he was Phenomena - because he'd played bass on some demos! Well, so what! (laughs) It got silly.

But I am still working on albums, I'm working on a new thing which is much more in the vein of the first album, but much better. It all really makes sense. It's

not the same story, but a similar idea, we have loads of artwork done and plans for a stage show to tour. I'm more concerned in concentrating on the positives than dwelling on negative experiences, court rooms and stuff.

**With that in mind then, do you consider your first album on Escape, which was 'Psychofantasy', part of the Phenomena canon, or is it a standalone album?**

Really, all the subsequent albums are done in the spirit of Phenomena, to bring a collection of performers and players together to work on a project in that style. What is different is there isn't a story line connecting them all together. I utilise all the talents of the guys who perform - I give them all a lot of freedom to put their take on it. I do demos to a pretty good standard and give it to whatever artist is coming in, and let somebody like Rob Moratti or Ralf Scheepers to do their thing on it. I will give them a little guidance if I think they are straying too far from what I want, but I let them have leeway. These days, the record companies haven't got the budget to bring all these guys in, so a lot of it is done in Sweden and plenty of it is done by sending files to one another. I look at the version as I want that guy being himself, I don't want that guy copying something.

**You mentioned doing the demos there - obviously, we all remember Mel as a guitarist and I know you write lyrics, but you are credited with musical composition on some tracks too. So how do you write, are you a guitarist?**

I'm a one fingered keyboard player! (laughs) I worked with Mel since we were about eleven, and when he turned professional, we worked together



and I didn't have the talent for playing he had. So I watched and I do melodies in my head. From that, I know what the guitar should be playing underneath. Even though Mel is dead now, his influence is still there because I learned all that from his work. I can write a song, have a tempo and sing a melody line and maybe a chord sequence, and then get a musician like Tom Brown, who I work with now, to put it down for the demo. I can hear a lot of the bass lines or things in my head, but I'm not a player to be able to get on stage or anything.

**After 'Psychofantasy', you did 'Blind Faith' and on that record, there are at least two songs that I know of which are old ones from the eighties - 'Fighting' and 'Don't Ever Give Your Heart Away'. I have demos of those on a Glenn Hughes bootleg with Glenn singing, although 'Fighting' is a long way from finished. But my bootleg states Gary Moore was involved - is that bootleg bollocks, or is it right?**

It absolutely is. I have the masters from those sessions! Not bootleg stuff either, not that much time was spent on the mix, but they are finished tracks. Gary played on all of those. We cut those two you mentioned, along with 'Real World' and another, which I can't remember the name of!

**Were any of the other songs on 'Blind Faith' record older ones that had been revamped?**

Most of it was new... when Mel died, he left me a bunch of unused material to utilise on something to create some income for his widow and children. I love those songs anyway, but it was a case of making money for Mel's family. There is a track on the new one, 'Awakening', which is actually a re-working of an old Trapeze song...

**Is that 'Homeland'?**

Ah, no. 'Homeland' was a Trapeze song, the original version was done near here and I've always liked it - it's a good example of getting material Mel worked on out to more people. It's to keep his name out there - he doesn't play on the new version on 'Awakening', but he wrote that with Glenn. Mel wrote a lot of stuff he didn't really get enough credit for.

**'Homeland' I knew because there is a demo version of that on my bootleg which has the Gary Moore stuff on I mentioned, and Glenn ended up cutting it for his 'From Now On' album. They also played it live when Trapeze reunited in the early nineties... so if that isn't the Trapeze song you were referring to on the new album, which is?**

It's 'Going Away'. Although it wasn't like that originally, it was half done by Mel and I re-wrote the lyrics and put it in the format that you hear on the new album. It was a quite laid back, acoustic track originally.

**You've been quite prolific with the releases on Escape since 'Psychofantasy', putting out albums every couple of years. How long do you usually spend on a record?**

It would probably take, writing and recording, a couple of solid months. But I work on other things at the same time, such as this new project I mentioned which is turning out to be more involved than I first imagined! (laughs) It takes over your day. When I started working with Khalil at Escape, you will know yourself that CD sales have gone down. Within weeks of the album coming out, there are download sites with it on for free. Nobody does this just for money

now. About three or four years ago, I started working with animation ideas to go with the music and that works rather well. You start thinking 'Oh yeah, I can do that and it won't take too long' and the next thing you know, three years have passed and where am I! (laughs)

I have a lot of Mel stuff as well - stuff he did with Glenn, stuff from when Trapeze were a five piece after Glenn left... there's the demos Mel sang for two songs which were going to be Trapeze, but ended up as 'Gambler' and 'Give Me A Little More Time' for Whitesnake. The words are different, because Coverdale re-wrote them, but the song structure is basically the same.

**I enjoyed Trapeze even when Glenn joined Deep Purple and Mel took over as the singer, they were still a great band, there was some superb stuff on the 'Hot Wire' and 'Trapeze' records.**

'Hot Wire' was actually the biggest album they had. If Mel could have sung for two nights on the trot, I think Trapeze could have cracked it. That line up played some huge gigs. I'd like to package together a lot of this old stuff, and I'd like to get the rights and re-mix 'Hot Wire'. There is a track I have from then which was never released, and I'd like to do a version where we have Glenn come in and share the vocal on some of the songs.

So what with the new album 'Awakening', this stuff in the archives, this new project I'm working on, there's a lot going on. This new project, in the vein of the first Phenomena record, the stage visuals we are having designed are being done by Mel's son! If we can get it off the ground, it looks pretty spectacular. I don't think there's anything out there like it... the music is a bit raunchier than the first Phenomena album, and

we have orchestration in it. The visual side - I want to match up visuals and music on stage a bit like 'War Of The Worlds', but a more spectacular kind of thing.

**Is this a multi-singer project then?**

Yes, because there are five main characters in it. I've been in contact with Rick Wakeman and he's interested in being involved in the music, but you have to be able to get people who can do it on stage if it gets that far. But I've been working on it for quite some time now - it's like when you are just talking to me about 'Awakening', the new album... I did it last year! By the time it's put together and ready to come out, I'm having to think back! (laughs) But Rob Moratti on that album - I think Rob is in the Steve Perry class, what a voice! It's been fun discussing all this with you, it's really nice you are so interested.

**Well like I say, I'm a big Trapeze fan, have all the Phenomena stuff and I have the Cloven Hoof record, 'Eye Of The Sun' which you produced, because I know Matt Moreton and Andy Shortland who played on that... and they both appeared on 'Psychofantasy'. I saw them in a show called 'Whole Lotta Metal' which my friend Simon Wright put together.**

That's right! Yes, Andy, the guitar player, he's terrific. I was sickened when Lee Payne decided to disband the line up of Cloven Hoof with Matt and Andy and go back to the old one. I thought that band could have been really good. I love Matt's voice... but that's the music business, it's really frustrating when things like that happened. But at least Andy and Matt have some stuff on record, a lot of guys never even get that! I remember Tony Martin was in that show with them too, and he was on 'Psychofantasy' - he emailed me

the other day asking if he could use one of the songs in his live set.

Actually, Lee Small was on 'Psychofantasy' too, and I've used Lee to put down all the vocals on this new thing I'm working on. He's singing out of his boots on the demos - in fact, I'll tell you something few people know. About nine months before he died, I'd been onto Mel for years to tell him to get back out playing. He appeared at a gig and did four numbers, for charity. He went down a storm and he rang me, telling me he wanted to go out playing again. He booked a week at a local club. I know the guy who owns it, so he says 'Oh, your Mel has booked in to play. I've already sold quite a few tickets'. I was pleased, so I asked who Mel had in his band. The guy says 'Well, you're sorting his band out.' I looked at him, I had no idea! (laughs) I rang Mel and asked him and Mel said 'Oh yeah, my manager hasn't a clue who is a good player and who isn't, so I figured you'd sort it.' (laughs) I'd worked with Lee a lot, so I had Lee down to sing and play bass, we had a half-caste kid who was a bit like Phil Lynott on guitar and keys, he had a great voice... we were just in the search for a drummer and it was all set, then we found out Mel had cancer. We even had t-shirts done for it, it's a shame it never went ahead. It would have been a stunning band - the problem with Lee was he copied Glenn too much at the beginning. I told him there was one Glenn Hughes, he had to be Lee Small. There would always be bits which remind you of Glenn, but he shouldn't be a clone. Now... he's fantastic on 'Awakening' and have you heard him with Shy? Amazing. And what he's been doing with me lately is even better. We recorded his vocals on the landing in my house - but don't go into the bathroom while he's recording, because if you open the door it changes the ambience! (laughs)