

He goes by many names, notably 'The Voice Of Rock', but lately the legendary Glenn Hughes has become 'The Man In The Middle', the driving force of super group Black Country Communion. As bassist, vocalist and chief songwriter, Glenn could perhaps change his latest moniker to 'The Man With A Plan' - his brand of classic rock, performed with the mighty Jason Bonham pounding the skins, keyboard wizard Derek Sherinian thundering away on Hammond organ and guitar hero Joe Bonamassa meshing with Hughes' bass and THAT voice, has satisfied fans from his Deep Purple days as well as winning brand new ones. This return to a hard rock direction, which has been explored over two excellent and successful albums, was made for the stage and Black Country Communion are a force to be reckoned with live. The latest step of the masterplan was to capture these performances, which results in the brand new DVD 'Live Over Europe'. A searing collection of some of Black Country Communion's best songs, the DVD is a must see. James Gaden wasted no time in calling up the ever gracious Hughes, who now can add author to his ever expanding resumé...

I want to talk to you about the Black Country Communion DVD first and foremost. I watched the DVD and I really enjoyed it, I thought it was fantastic! It thought it really captured the power and energy of the live band. I felt personally, that it was some of the best live stuff I've ever seen you do, and I've seen you do a lot! Is that because the songs are written with the live environment in mind?

Y'know James, you know me pretty well - I decided from 'Soul Mover' onwards that I would write songs to take to the stage. The stage has always been so important to me, and as a rock and roll artist, I have to write vibrant songs that will translate to live performance. I'm that kind of artist, I love just being 'in the moment' on stage, I'm not a person that does choreographed moves, I'm just in the moment. Anything can happen with me on stage, it's pretty volatile up there! I like to write songs that engage me first of all, whether it's the 'Man In The Middle' song or 'One Last Soul' or 'Black Country' or 'Faithless', I like to write songs that engage me, to engage the audience! That's what the Black Country Communion songs are all about.

The last time we spoke I told you that I was a huge fan of Black Country Communion, due mainly to your presence, it was you who drew me to it. My dad is a Bonamassa fan, my brother is a huge Zeppelin fan, and we all watched the DVD and everybody loved it! We all felt it was an extremely energetic and vibrant performance, and

the songs really came to life in that environment. I thought the setlist that you put together, as you told me that you wanted to have two albums worth to choose from, was spot on. Was that the set throughout the tour?

It was exactly the same set. Oh, 'Smokestack Woman' was in there for a while, then it disappeared. We had too many songs I thought - but the meat of it is what you've seen, there wasn't really any extra stuff. The songs are well paced, in good order, and I got that setlist in order to preserve my voice. The songs are chosen for my voice in certain parts of the show, and towards the end, obviously the favourite's come in, the 'Man In The Middle', 'Sista Jane', these are the songs that have got to be really high octane! Of course, with 'Burn' my voice has got to be in tip-top shape. So, the songs were well paced.

Absolutely. I saw the setlist before I'd even seen the DVD, I saw 'Burn' was in there... I was pleased on the one hand, because it's one of my all time favourite Deep Purple tracks, but on the other hand, I thought that you must be sick as hell of doing it!

(Laughs) I am! Here is the thing, we are a collective band. Although I am perceived as being the leader, as being the main songwriter, and that's the general public's notion - as you know, James, this is my band. Joe's got his career, I've got my own career, but this is closer to my heart more than probably anyone else. But we all vote on everything by the way, I mean Jason, Derek, Kevin and Joe wanted

BCC to play 'Burn', they wanted to pretend they were at the California Jam! As they will tell you, 'Burn' is kind of like one of my theme songs, David Coverdale will tell you that, I've been playing it for 20 years now, and when I go out next year... I might not play 'Burn' next year, when I go solo. I don't think so. But it's something that the fans kind of expect. It's a song I can take or leave, but I'll tell you what though, the reaction after we've played 'Burn' just exhausts everybody in the audience - and the band! It's like you know that's the end of the show!

It is a great way to finish, and I thought Joe really nailed it! He played it superbly, because I've heard a lot of various guitarists do it, and obviously because there's that Blackmore thing, not many can capture it that way...

Joe's a fan of Blackmore actually, he did aim to play the solo in that style. Joe really wanted to play 'Burn' and when somebody really wants to do something like that, and honour something you helped create, I'm not the kind of person to be stubborn enough to say no to that! Also, I love to work with people who wanna work!

You mentioned the effect 'Burn' has on both the audience and band... throughout the tour, was there a specific Black Country Communion song that yourself or the band really got a massive kick out of playing live?

We all love 'The Great Divide'. It's one of the finest moments of my writing career. For me personally, I love singing 'Faithless'. And there's no greater high for me than singing 'I am a messenger, this is my prophecy' in the song 'Black Country', and having three to five thousand people singing with it - singing my words! They're not singing back David's words, or Gillan's words anymore, they're singing mine! I'm now, at this age, actually getting recognised as a songwriter. It's a great achievement for me, and sometimes I can be of service to people with my lyrics. I don't write about dicks and pussy, I'm not that kind of writer! I write about what effects us on the inside. The spirit of Black Country Communion is yes, there is some dark stuff, but rock and roll isn't supposed to be pretty, it should be raw

and jagged and rough. It's supposed to be a little dramatic and that's what I write about.

When you mentioned there about finally being recognised as a songwriter, obviously for someone like myself who has all your solo work, I've known it for a long time. Now people tell me 'Hey, he's quite good, that Hughes bloke, isn't he?' and I'm looking at them, smiling, thinking 'Yeah, where have you been?' (laughs)

With Black Country Communion, it's just wonderful, we've just won the breakthrough act of the year at the Classic Rock awards. Yet in America, we've just been voted on VH1 Classic the best new band of the last ten years! If you think of the bands of the last ten years, there's acts like Velvet Revolver, Chickenfoot... numerous others and BCC were voted the top band. BCC is really taking off in America - I live over there as you know, but I've never really played there as an artist. Now we're hitting that market, and this DVD is selling big and places from Hong Kong to India to Taiwan, South Africa... everyone is getting a dose of BCC! That's why we did it, because we aren't going out again for a while, so the DVD was meant to help escalate the brand.

Do you think you might put out a CD or digital version as well?

Absolutely, there's one due in February. It's the same mix, but cut a little hotter to make it really jump.

You've also announced that there's going to be a new rock solo record next year. Have you started yet... actually knowing you, you've probably just finished it!

Nah, I've got half of it written! BCC will be inactive next year - Jason is doing the Led Zeppelin Experience, Derek is out with Billy Idol and Joe is incessantly touring, so I said to myself, I consider 'Soul Mover' to be my last rock album, and that was 2005. That's too long a gap for a Glenn rock album. I'm not going to do a funk one, I'll do a traditional, hard driving, groovy rock album that my rock fans, BCC fans, Trapeze fans... through to Led Zeppelin fans, will like. Maybe something like if Trapeze were around in 2012, this is what they would sound like. I'm not going to do a U-Turn and start doing acoustic songs and funky stuff, which I like as you know, but I've got my rock hat on, this 'Man In The Middle' persona which you've seen, that's the Glenn I'm devoted to. I think it would be inappropriate to do a 180 on that now, it'll just confuse people. The acoustic shows didn't confuse anyone because they were about my book and my life, that worked wonderfully, but this will rock.

Do you know who will be on it yet?

I don't - there's two options. I could either put together a new band, or maybe have a bunch of guests like Slash did. I might just want to assemble a blazingly new band, but I haven't got a clue yet. I'll know in January, because I want to record in February.

You've just mentioned the one man acoustic shows in support of your autobiography. I really wanted to go and see you on that but I just couldn't make the dates. It sounded, from what I've read online, you had as good a time as the fans. Was it what you thought it would be?

Oh yeah. It was extremely exhausting and emotional for me. There's some dark stuff here, because I chose all the song content. There's some sad stuff, but that's what I write about. There's happy stuff in there too. I was on stage about three hours a night, doing two hours singing and an hour of talking. It really, really took it out of me. I actually collapsed in Manchester, I don't know if you know that.

Yeah, I saw your message on Facebook. Low blood sugar, wasn't it?

I walked off the stage and just dropped and hit my knees on the floor of the corridor. It was low blood sugar and over-work. I'm human, I'm not a saint who will live forever. I was really lucky it didn't happen after the third song, it happened at the end of the set. I couldn't come back for the encore but I did play the show. My fans, as you know, are very devoted. Some Glenn Hughes fans are fans of me, and not particularly fans of another artist. It sounds a bit strange, but I think that's the case. I'm getting to know who they are now, I feel bad when people come up to me and say that this is the thirty second show they've seen...

I should know who they all are, but I don't get to meet that many. It's really humbling for me to hear there are people coming from Scotland to Nottingham, or flying in from Poland, Italy, Spain - even Australia! It's so humbling, I can't imagine ever forgetting to acknowledge that. I give everything I have at a show and they support me.

Did you record any of these acoustic shows?

I did, I recorded Manchester - although as I said, I wasn't feeling great. I'll have to listen to it and see how it turned out. I record most things these days.

I'd love to hear it, I just literally couldn't find a date that fitted with what was going on.

Check out YouTube, things don't often sound that great on some of the little camera phones, but YouTube is great - there's literally hundreds of videos of stuff I've done. You have to embrace it - I see hundreds of cameras going up every night when I play. Before YouTube, I was always one to allow people to record me. A lot of artists don't like it, but I see it as promotion. I'm not a guy who has a Wizard Of Oz behind a curtain auto-tuning me, I don't have a guy under the stage singing parts. Glenn Hughes live is real. You can film any of my performances, it doesn't bother me.

For sure - you're one of the most bootlegged people I've seen! I think I have a recording from just about all of your solo tours, and there's plenty of bootlegs out there I haven't got.



I know, and it's not a bad thing, because I don't think I've ever given a bad show... I did a recording called 'Live In Wolverhampton' and I had pneumonia AND bronchitis, I still played the show and it went out.

Seriously? I've heard that and I'd never have known you were that ill!

Yeah - I was wetting myself because I was really ill, when I was done I came off the stage and was close to being physically sick. But I did it - I believe that life goes by so quick, you have to get on with it. When I was at the Classic Rock Awards, I saw Pete Townshend, the man who said 'I hope I die before I get old'. I'm sure glad I didn't fucking die! Paul McCartney sang 'When I'm Sixty-Four' when I was fourteen. Back then I thought that sixty four was really old, now Macca is sixty eight! Still going. You have to think James, in fifteen years or so, and this is scary, there's gonna be none of these people left. There will be no Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Who, The Stones... one or two may still be alive but that'll be it, they won't be playing. No iconic bands, they'll be gone, mate. And when they've gone, what will we be left with? The next generation of bands, none of which have sold hundreds of millions of records, played stadiums... the music business as we know it from the seventies and eighties has gone. It's a totally different thing now.

On the subject of talking about the past, your autobiography is out and it's doing really well,

riding high in the Amazon charts and getting good feedback.

Yeah, we've completely sold out the first edition! It's the fastest selling book on Jawbone (www.jawbonepress.com) ever! And they've had some big books on there. My book, as you know, I actually wrote the thing, I decided that I wasn't going to be too grandiose, I could say things that were a bit heavier or a bit more disgusting to make it jump off the page, but I didn't go that route. My friend Nikki Sixx, you know with Motley Crue's book, there's a lot of that stuff in their work, it sells and reads really well. But my book is more like a diary of what it was like growing up with nothing, becoming very famous and rich and living a dark life, wheels falling off and finding the solution. I've told a very honest account and it seems to have struck a chord with not just musicians, but people who have followed the plight of this lad.

Well, like you say, a lot of us have been following your career for a long time! I haven't read it yet, I'm not allowed to buy it so I get the impression it's a Christmas present!

That's sweet! (laughs) It will make you laugh and make you cry, because there's some stuff in there that happened to me and you'll go 'Oh jeez, I didn't know that...' And I haven't done that to direct you to have those feelings, I just told the truth. You'll also read about what it's like to fall off the wagon which you won't know about. There's stuff about relapses, dark stuff that nobody knew about for quite a while. I talk about my second bout of recovery, which I celebrated yesterday - fourteen years ago yesterday I had my last drink. I talk about what happened to get to that point. Some people choose to keep all this to themselves, take it to the grave with denial. I found it therapeutic to tell the truth and some of my friends in the business, in the press, they've read it and been shocked about the stuff they didn't know. I didn't tell them because I didn't want to be judged again. I needed to have some years of good sobriety before I could release it. I had a heart attack nobody knew about. I kept it quiet, because if you have a heart attack, everyone is writing your obituary, nobody will book you because you're high risk - but that was twenty years ago now. I'm a walking fucking miracle. I'm not saying I've done more drugs than Jimi Hendrix, but I've snorted plenty, done stuff Ozzy has done. I've basically come back from the dead and I'm now in, according to VH1 Classic, the best new band of the last ten years! If it all ended tomorrow, I can say I've done it.

I have to say, I won't tell you who, but certain big name people, ten years ago so I'm told, were saying 'Aw, it's so sad about Glenn, trying to make a comeback now. It's too late for him!' Mutterings of fellow rock stars. So all this, I've almost done it to spite them. (laughs)

(Laughs) That's as good a reason as any!

You're talking to a man who, when you see me amped up on stage, that's the real Glenn Hughes, I'm not in revenge mode there. That's the full on character of that man you know, that's the guy who people call 'The Voice Of Rock', something else that really humbles me. I take this seriously bro', I'm like an athlete. I do fifty push ups before I go on stage, I'm in the gym in a morning, I drink a lot of water... I want to defy all the odds. My friend Lemmy is sixty five now, me and Lemmy are polar opposites. Lemmy likes his Jack and Coke, he likes the strippers, he likes his fags. In the eighties, I tried to drink with Lemmy and he left me for fucking dead. I can't do what Lemmy does! But he doesn't want to do what I do. I believe we all are here for a reason. Years ago, I probably would have disagreed with Lemmy's lifestyle, but Lemmy's medicine has probably kept him alive! (laughs) We've reconnected recently, I wrote the foreword to his book. He's a true one off.

I also seem to have a lot of people in the music industry behind me now, they look at me and think I've done good. That means a lot to me, that people are behind me. As for the detractors, we've talked before about bloggers and stuff on the internet - 'Look at him, the fag, is he gay? What's he done with his hair?' When you get famous, people take pot shots. I said to you last time that I need a thick skin and I've now grown a bloody thick skin. As Coverdale would say: 'Fuck 'em and feed 'em beans!'

Black Country Communion's 'Live Over Europe' is out now on Mascot Records. Glenn's autobiography 'From Deep Purple To Black Country Communion' is also out now, published by Jawbone.

