

CAN'T STOP THE FLOOD

Glenn Hughes interview by James Gaden

I've long been a fan of the legendary Glenn Hughes, who has a CV which spans spells in some of the greatest rock bands to ever walk the planet, such as Deep Purple and Black Sabbath. He's provided amazing vocals for a plethora of artists and side projects as Gary Moore, Phenomena and the KLF. If was the latter who gave him the nickname 'The Voice Of Rock' and his funky solo work has attracted the likes of Chad Smith and John Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers to play on his albums.

Rather than finding his funk and soul flavoured individual offerings hard to take after listening to Deep Purple like some rock traditionalists, I personally embrace and encourage it, so when I was asked if I wanted to interview Glenn about his career to tie in with a new double CD anthology to chronicle his vast body of work, it was what you could call a dream assignment!

I've been lucky enough to meet Glenn a couple of times and have always found him very down to earth, affable and honest, and this interview was no exception. After pleasantries were exchanged, I kicked off by stating my admiration for his new anthology, which is entitled 'This Time Around'.

"Thank you!" he replies and the pride is obvious, even over the phone. "Y'know, the anthology thing... when Sanctuary came up with it, I wanted to just make it the best possible scenario I could. It had to be worked on to make sure the songs were the right selection of material, and I think chronologically it speaks volumes about where I came from and where I'm at right now."

I agree with that, and I state that I think it's a thankless task to try and condense such an expansive career over two compact disks. I've been a fan of Glenn's for a long time and I tell him if I were asked to do his career justice, I think I'd end up with at least six CD's full!

"Well, firstly, thank you for being a long term fan of mine," Glenn replies modestly. "The other thing is as you know, I've been pretty steady in terms of my releases. I've got a LOT of stuff I've recorded, I mean there's about three hundred songs just solo."

That's a pretty amazing figure and a big chunk of those span a staggering eleven studio albums, an album of songs from the vaults, not to mention the various bonus tracks that appear on European and Japanese releases. I point out that the solo career itself is vast, and that's before we even start on the Sabbath stuff, Hughes/Thrall, Phenomena, HTP, Gary Moore... I tell Glenn I was worried about him trying to cover so much stuff and yet I thought he had managed to really do well to condense it all down onto two disks starting with Trapeze, working through to Deep Purple, his first taste of a solo career, covering the highlights from the eighties and taking the listener to the proper start of his solo career in the nineties. I also muse that it's a brilliant way to introduce someone to his work if they'd heard his name banded around but didn't know much of his material.

"Yeah, it is," agrees Glenn. "The first disk is really the back catalogue, and disk two is the groovier, funkier, more modern Glenn. I wanted to put that spin on it, because from this point in my career James, I want to be clear on where I'm going. I know where I've been, that's very clear, it's been a hard rock, groovy, funky road. But from this point on we're into new territory now. I'm about to make a new album in November. This anthology is a great item for newer fans to pick up, like you say."

I speculate that it's also cool for fans like me to listen to. I usually listen to Glenn's work as albums, so when I heard a track on the anthology, it was pre-programmed in my head to expect the track after it on the album, whereas the anthology takes the listener from one album to the next via one or two songs. I mention to Glenn that it's like getting a new Glenn Hughes with every track, because he kind of reinvents himself with each album.

"Yeah!" he laughs. "That's the plan anyway. What I don't do James, is rest on my laurels. I don't go into the studio unprepared. I always have a wealth of material ready to be recorded. I have a great bunch of musicians, a great bunch of engineers and I take this shit pretty seriously, unlike in the eighties, because I was crippled by drug addiction. Since I recovered from that, I write every day of the year. One thing you can say about Glenn Hughes is I work hard on my songs. It would be really easy to write another 'Burn' or 'Stormbringer' or 'Getting Tighter' every album, but those songs were written in the seventies. I'm an artist who has forged a career and I'm one of the few artists from the seventies who has a solo career like I have and I'm really proud of it."

And rightly so as far as I'm concerned. I bring up my three favourite Glenn Hughes albums, which all came in a row, namely 'Feel', 'Addiction' and 'The Way It Is'. Each one is an entirely different album. It could easily be three different artists and I explain that's why I've enjoyed his solo career so much, because it's not always the same thing.

"Let me tell you why they were such varied albums," Glenn begins. "When I did 'From Now On', I wasn't that happy. I chose the wrong band, I was living in Sweden, the record company were an AOR label so they wanted an AOR record. I was three years sober at the time but I still wasn't owning Glenn Hughes, I wasn't where I wanted to be. So 'From Now On' was an AOR record but I decided I had to make a record for me. I needed to make a record that was completely Glenn Hughes, and that album would have been 'Feel'."

"I cut six or seven songs, and the record company in Japan said 'Oh my God, this is too funky!'. So I wrote 'Talking To Messiah', 'Redline' and 'Big Time' to put on there and make it a bit heavier. It's all about the Japanese as well - it's a big market for me and they got hold of it and said 'Aw, it too fun-keh! Too fun-keh for Japanese fan!'" he says in a classic stereotypical Japanese voice which cracks me up. "So I said 'Yeah, but this is really me' and they were like 'No, Japanese fan like Deep Popples!' I'm still laughing, but Glenn ploughs on anyway.

"So I thought ok, after 'Feel' I'll give you a fucking rock record, and I gave them 'Addiction'. So then I got 'Awww, too heavy!' So I thought great, I can't win! So after 'Addiction' I gave them 'The Way It Is', which was basically the soundtrack of my life. The songs are very personal as you know. It's a dreamy, soundscape kind of postcard of Glenn Hughes. Then they tell me it's too ethereal for the fans. So I stopped taking notice of what record companies said - I don't listen to them anymore!"

I comment that it's obviously working for him because with every release he seems to be getting more momentum and more long overdue recognition for what he's doing.

"In a field where few people sell records, I'm consistently selling more records each time so I'm on the right road," Glenn says happily.

I tell Glenn about the first time I heard him, which was on a copy of 'Stormbringer'. I bought two of his albums on the same day because I decided after discovering what fine work David Coverdale had done since leaving Purple, it was time to check out the Hughes catalogue. Glenn asks me what I bought, so I tell him I got 'Feel' and 'Play Me Out' on the day in question. I put 'Feel' on and it just blew my mind! Then I put 'Play Me Out' on and I thought 'What the hell is this?' It was such a shock after hearing him in Purple and here he was doing this cool seventies funk and soul. However, over time I've come to really love that album and appreciate what a fantastic record it is.

"Thank you!" Glenn responds. "You know, 'Play Me Out' was recorded at a period when Tommy Bolin was still alive and I was in Los Angeles writing some of this music. However, the bulk of 'Play Me Out' was written in the studio the morning before I went in to record in the afternoon. I was alone. I was pretty loaded and I wanted to make a record that was deeply soulful - as you know me, that's the kind of guy I am. I make soulful music, whether it's



rock or funk, the soul is there. 'Play Me Out' was really Glenn Hughes left to his own devices, playing most of the instruments, arranging it, producing it, writing it alone and that's probably the most honest Glenn record to date. And 'Feel' was the sister album to that.

"Now I can tell you, for the first time in an interview ever," he begins, "that the next album that I start in November will be kind of a trilogy. It will follow on from those two records. It's due in spring of next year and it will be the most significantly honest Glenn Hughes record of all time."

That sounds like just what I'm after from the Funkmeister and I tell him I'm looking forward to that already!

"It's going to be... fucking monumental!" Glenn laughs after searching for a suitable phrase to do it justice. "For me, well, Chad (Smith from the Peppers) and I think it's the best record I'm ever going to make. It just smacks of Glenn Hughes, it throws the gauntlet down. It says this is it, this is what I've been striving for to get to this point."

I speculate that I think a lot of Hughes fans are, like the Japanese fans, rock fans and they want 'The Voice Of Rock' and all that, but what drew me to Glenn's work was the funky soulful stuff.

"Well that's really great, it's nice to hear that," he replies.

I steer the conversation back to 'From Now On'. I ask Glenn that, with him saying that record wasn't where he wanted to be, is that why he didn't include anything from it in this anthology, or was it because of some copyright or legal problem? Either way, some fans feel tracks from that album are conspicuous by their absence.

"No, you hit the nail on the head first time," he explains. "I wasn't happy with 'From Now On', I wasn't too keen on it. The songs are ok, but I don't like the production, and the playing, without disrespecting the white race, is so white and square!"

I start laughing at that. I tell Glenn I like 'From Now On' but to me, it sounds more like he's singing for another band - it sounds more like one of his side projects as oppose to one of his solo records.

"Yeah, it does," he replies. "I mean, the guys put in some good work there and they're really nice guys, but it was just... it was at a time for me when I was being pushed and pulled by record companies and they wanted... well, everybody has their own take on what Glenn Hughes should be, James. With that album, the record company wanted a perfectly moulded AOR record, and they got it. 'From Now On' sold a lot of copies and obviously a lot of people love the album. But personally it's not my favourite."

I mention to Glenn that I think the problem he's got, and it's probably a nice problem to have, is he is so versatile and he can do so many different styles, he is going to appeal to a lot of different people. He can't possibly please them all.

"No, you're right," Glenn confirms. "I've stopped reading a lot of what people write about me. I still read some things, but for those people who don't get the Glenn Hughes thing and don't know where I'm coming from, then I say this - I think an artist, regardless what genre they come from, should be given their own artistry. I want people to know that at this point in my career I only want to release records that are for Glenn Hughes fans, and for me. I write selfishly for me, hoping that the listener will enjoy it."

"For instance, I don't particularly want to be on the bill for a metal festival because I'm not a metal artist. I won't be seen on a Metallica bill, or with Pantera. It makes no sense - it makes more sense to put me on a fucking festival with Jamiroquai! It's not relevant to me, and the records I make are deeply artistic now."

I reply that is how I feel - the way I've always looked at it is the solo records are all about Glenn, and the side projects like HTP are there to cater for the Purple fans, and the Rainbow fans. The

HTP albums were brilliant for that market, but you shouldn't buy a Glenn Hughes record and expect it to sound the same.

"Quite right," Glenn says. "I've stopped doing a lot of side projects because I want to concentrate on my own career now. 'Soul Mover' and 'Music For The Divine' are two records that started pushing it forward. The next one that comes out next Spring is the one that is going to signify the breakthrough of me doing what I want to do. It's a very, very funky album James! There will be a really good cast of players on it."

One of the things I was going to ask Glenn about it in the anthology is there is a bonus unreleased track called 'Justine'. I ask if I am I right in thinking this is from the session he did with Stevie Salas for 'The Way It Is'?

"That's right," Glenn replies. "I deliberately didn't put 'Justine' on 'The Way It Is' thinking I'd hang onto it and use it as the bonus track. Anyway, it's finally come out nine years later! It's a funky romp, sort of Glenn Hughes meets Prince. It's just me, Stevie Salas and Matt Sorum. It's a simple song but very groovy so I think the funky Glenn fans will love it."

I add that there is also a cool bonus live version of 'This Time Around' which is always good. Glenn is amazed I've actually got a promo already, as I think he was under the impression I was working off the tracklisting without an actual copy in my stereo. I tell him I've been supplied the full thing and I was very pleased with it. I add that if I'd been



given the job of picking the songs as a fan, there's almost none of these I would disagree with - and so many anthologies or 'best of' compilations fail to accurately represent a career, but this one does.

"That's great!" Glenn enthuses. "I'm so glad you like it bro'."

The other thing I wanted to ask about is a DVD which was filmed in Australia. It sounds cool because Glenn pulled some really rare tracks out like 'I Found A Woman' which I thought was a great choice.

"Yeah! It's very cool," he says. "I did it with a string quartet. Most of it is acoustic, very rare, close up and personal, sort of fly on the wall thing. It's shot well, there's some cool bonus material on it, it's good stuff."

The other thing that really caught my interest on there was Jimmy Barnes turning up. I'm a massive Jimmy Barnes fan so seeing Glenn and Jimmy together will be special I'm sure. I saw a video on Glenn's Myspace page of them duetting 'Monkey Man' from the 'Music for The Divine' album. I ask Glenn if that done for fun or was it recorded for a specific reason?

"I was working with Jimmy, writing material

with him for his next album at his home," Glenn explains. "We just thought it would be great, and I'm going to do it with Jimmy on his next record. What you saw on the internet was just the track from 'Music For The Divine' and Jimmy just re-cut part of the vocal, and we shot a little video for it. I think it works really well."

I do too. I thought it was like a funky sort of HTP thing, it was great!

Glenn laughs. "Yeah man, that's cool!"

The other thing I've got to ask, because Glenn Hughes fans would never forgive me if I didn't, is how is Hughes/Thrall II doing?

"James, the bad news is I can't ever see it coming out," Glenn replies with an audible sigh. "If I was producing this alone, and I had the master copies here, I would complete it. Pat has everything in his studio. I have sung all the vocal parts for the entire album. Pat hasn't finished the guitar parts and I've been asking him for two years to finish it and he hasn't done it. Maybe we need some kind of message board up or some kind of online petition going to get Pat to complete it. Maybe that would do the trick."

"See, Pat doesn't do interviews. I do and for like ten years I keep telling people it's coming, it's coming, and it never comes. All I can say to you James, is I've completed my parts. Pat hasn't finished the guitars and he hasn't mixed it."

I can tell Glenn is more than a bit miffed about it, but I had to ask. I confess to him I'm split about there being a second one. One one hand, everyone who likes Glenn's work loves Hughes/Thrall, so part of me really wants there to be another one, but on the other hand I'm thinking 'Is it ever going to match up to the first?'

"Well, I can tell you it's very eclectic," he says. "It's rock and funk and soul and pop, it's very eclectic in it's approach. There's something for every fan on there but... we started the project in 1999, and it's now 2007. Like I say, you know how fluid I am about releasing records. If I say to you I'm going to go into the studio on November 26th and give Sanctuary a record on December 14th, that's what's going to happen with Glenn Hughes."

"However, when I work with other artists, be it Tony (Iommi), or Joe (Lynn Turner) or Pat, I have a partner so I haven't got total control. As you can probably guess by my tone of voice, I'm really not happy with Hughes/Thrall II not being finished. I get asked by a million people when it's going to be done and I can't give them an answer."

"What I can do though James is give you an exclusive on this - I've pulled one of the tracks from Hughes/Thrall II and I'm going to re-record it for my next album. It's a Glenn Hughes original so I decided I'm going to put it on my album."

I thank Glenn for that titbit of information and reassure him that I'm sure will be worth the wait! I ask him if there's anything else he wishes to add before I bring things to an end?

"I have to say I have the greatest fan base in the world," Glenn says sincerely. "Chad said to me the Peppers have got great fans, but Glenn Hughes fans are just so amazing, they're so into my music... I've just got such great fans and I want to thank them for following me. The next five years for me are so important to make great music, and I promise my fans I'll completely give myself to my songs and make the best music I can and to do the best live concerts."

I explain to Glenn the reason why us fans are so into his music is because he puts such effort into it, to which he replies "I really do, I really put a lot of time into it."

I thank Glenn for the interview and the exclusives to which he kindly replies "That's great James, no problem brother!"

Glenn's anthology 'This Time Around' is released on the 24th September 2007. Find out all the latest Glenn Hughes news at www.glennhughes.com and on his superb fansite www.ghpp.net.