

# TOO BUSY TO SING THE BLUES

**Anybody who has been reading this magazine for any amount of time knows James Gaden is a huge Joe Lynn Turner fan, and has been privileged enough to interview him on several occasions. Joe is one of the standard bearers of melodic rock on the scene at the moment, as evidenced by a string of excellent solo records, and the acclaimed Sunstorm project. With the release of the Sunstorm follow up 'House Of Dreams' on Frontiers, and fronting two supergroups in the form of Big Noize and Over The Rainbow, James called Joe up for a lengthy chat about the New Jersey native's packed schedule.**

Hey James, how are you?

**I'm doing really good, how are you?**

I'm doing ok, I'm hanging in there. Working my butt off...!

**You're not wrong there!**

Yeah, can I work any more? I mean, is it even possible?

**I know, only recently you had 'Live In Germany' come out, you've got Sunstorm out, you're out playing with Big Noize, and of course Over The Rainbow...**

Yeah, it's crazy isn't it? But you know what, what would I do without it? So, to me, that's how I roll, I just like to work and I like all of these projects. I just love it all.

**First off, again, you keep bringing the goods. I got 'Live In Germany' a while back and I loved it, I thought it was a really good live recording, with a great set list which had some solo songs, Rainbow classics, some less obvious Rainbow choices, you even threw in 'Burn' at the end... I thought it was a great document of where you are now. I loved it - and then you followed that up with the new Sunstorm album. I put that on when I got the promo the other week and... you've done it again!**

Well thank you James, coming from you, I really appreciate that. We're old friends and all that but I thank you. I'm trying to keep myself well and keep in shape. In this day and age where there are guys out there using samples of their vocals in concert, I just feel super proud of my band and myself that we don't need any of that crap, we just go out and kick ass. Thank you so much for that compliment.

**The thing that struck me with the new Sunstorm is that Frontiers have followed the same formula by asking you to bring so many songs to the table, then bringing in Jim Peterik and other writers to bring the others, then having Dennis Ward of course oversee it all... it all worked so well last time. But what really thrilled me was one of the songs you brought was 'I Found Love' - finally! I've had that song in my collection for years... I have a bootleg of you on the tour for 'Rescue You' and you opened with that, but it never made it's way onto a record until now did it?**

No, it never saw the light of day. Every time I thought about doing that song for one of my solo albums, there was always something else that got in its way and took its place... for God knows what reason now that I look back! It just kept getting pushed aside.

**I think it was worth the wait because it sounds massive! It was always a really good upbeat song anyway, but with the Dennis Ward magic in there and the huge guitars, the keyboards, its awesome, I'm so pleased with it.**

Thank you - Dennis did an amazing job!

**He's a production god - everything I've heard from Frontiers that he's produced just leaps from the stereo, it's huge.**

Yeah, amazing production. I mean, I listened to it about five of six times now on different things, my big speakers, on headphones, in the car, and I keep hearing great things inside that production. He's really more brilliant than people give him credit for. It's a shame he's not more well known, it's life but he's a

talented guy, and he played some great bass on this shit too. That fretless stuff he did on 'Say You Will' - unbelievable!

**I noticed the same thing - I played the promo on my speakers, but I had it on my iPod the other day and noticed things in the mix I hadn't heard before. That's the mark of a top producer to me.**

That's exactly what happens - you play it on different speakers, which I have in my little studio, and different things pop it. If you get a decent pair of noise cancelling headphones and hear it through them, other things pop out. There was the first version and I thought the vocal was fighting the guitar a little bit and the vocals and guitar are in the same frequency range so you have to EQ them differently. I called Dennis in Germany and said 'Hey Dennis, I love what you've done but I have to keep reaching in to hear the vocal'. He said 'No problem, I'm here alone, nobody is giving me feedback, I thought maybe the vocal was a bit down, you don't mind if I push it up?' I was like 'Are you kidding? I know it's not a solo album so the vocal doesn't need to be right up front, but at the same time it doesn't need to fight the guitars.' I swear to God, about two hours later he calls me back and said 'It's already up on the site!' I thought he was kidding! He went straight in, changed it, I downloaded the updated version and it was perfect. Just right. I'm really pleased with it now, it sounds like a band, it's powerful and has all this sophistication and class in the production, yet it still rocks. 'Gutters Of Gold' is just rocking, the Martin brothers stuff... every song, I can't say one is better than another!

**When you mentioned 'Gutters Of Gold' then, when I first heard it, I hadn't downloaded the promo information yet so I didn't know who had written it. I heard 'Say You Will' and 'Tears On The Pages' and knew straight away they were Jim Peterik songs. When I got the info and it said 'Gutters Of Gold' was Jim as well, I thought it was fantastic. The riff at the beginning is brilliant and it really does rock.**

Oh, I mean, it reminds you of all the great Survivor songs, and his ballads... what can you say? Amazing! This guy... I can't say enough good things about Jim. He's a good friend. I just did a couple of lines on the new Jimi Jamison record and I was at Jim's studio in Chicago. Un-fucking-real, he was. He just has the gift. He puts together these songs... he phoned me up and said 'Oh, the bridge on 'Say You Will' is so sky rocketing high, what are you going to do?' - I said I don't know, but I'll figure something out. So I came up with the idea of that sort of gospel chorus where I sang all the parts and just ad-libbed over it. It came out great and Jim phoned me up and said 'You motherfucker, I can't believe you did that... I like it better than my version!' (laughs)

**You've got 'Save A Place' on there which was originally on 'Nothings Changed'...**

Serafino loves that song and he felt it wasn't done properly back then, and I have to agree.

**Well I was going to ask about that. I have a bootleg of demos of your songs from about 1985-1989 and 'Save A Place' is on there. The original demo is a lot like the Sunstorm version, whereas the 'Nothing's Changed' version is a different arrangement. I wanted to ask do you have contact with Dennis over how a song should sound, or do you send him the demo and he makes it sound like Sunstorm?**

He gets the demos. We go through a process of collecting these songs and bringing them out of the vaults. We go through them and see what we think will fit. There were a couple of songs I brought that I thought would work well, but Serafino chose the ones he likes best. It's his baby project so fine. We do that, then Dennis hears the demos, and takes from the demos, what he feels, in my opinion, are the strong points, and he tries to leave the weak points behind. Especially if it's a bit too eighties or something, he'll change a piano part or a guitar sound. That makes all the difference in the world. He stayed truer to the original demo of 'Save A Place' because on 'Nothing's Changed', I tried to do it more acoustic. I can do the song with just an acoustic guitar and my voice and it sounds great. That was what I was going for back then. I told you a while back Al Pitrelli was supposed to be producing that record but he was in the middle of the Megadeth thing and he got sidetracked. I don't think it ever came out properly.

**When I first put the new Sunstorm record on, that was the only track I wasn't sold on, but as I told you before, 'Nothing's Changed' is one of the records of yours I play the most, and I'm so accustomed to that version it took a bit of getting used to. But if you'd done 'Save A Place' as it is now, like the original demo, it would have been all wrong for 'Nothing's Changed', just like the more acoustic arrangement would have just been all wrong for Sunstorm.**

Right, and as a producer, that's the magic of Dennis. As long as he stays true to the original, he might make changes to a sound here and there, and I just say do it, because that's what it's about. Trying to bring it up... these are eighties songs but we're trying to make them contemporary. I think, if you played any one of those songs on the radio, people would think it sounded great.

**Absolutely - they may be eighties songs but it's produced in a way to sound modern.**

That's exactly the point - Dennis can transcend that eighties sound and bring it up to date, while still staying true to the song. He keeps the essence and makes it modern.

**And you close the album with 'Walk On' - I'm a big Jimmy Barnes fan and I was delighted to have your version of that. He closed 'Freight Train Heart' with that song, and you did the same on this album.**

He did a great job on that one - I think mine is a smoother version. I wrote it with Desmond Child and I'm very close to the song. I loved Jimmy's version, but I think my version has a smoother quality to it.

**Jimmy's all about the gravelly, gritty style.**

Yeah, he sang it hard. I think it needs to be a bit more emotive. His was edgy, and I prefer it with the edge off, which he could do, because he has a great voice.

**He didn't drop the edge until he released 'Soul Deep' - when he tried some Motown stuff I think he brought a wider style to his approach, but up until then I think he was always in the 'I'm a rock singer!' mind set.**

Yeah, but he is a great blues and R'n'B kind of singer. He's got a lot of soul.

**Yeah, and in his later work as he's matured I**

**think that's more prevalent, but back then he was still approaching songs as the rock singer from Cold Chisel.**

Yeah, well, y'know he really pulls it off on a lot of those tracks. One of my favourites, still, is 'Waiting For The Heartache'. I sang background on that, and a couple of others, but on some versions my vocals weren't there. I don't know if they wanted it less commercial or what. But it's just a great album.

**Absolutely - a classic. When I was listening to your old demos, there was one on there that I thought would be a great song for Sunstorm, and that was 'Number One' that Lee Aaron ended up recording.**

Isn't that a great song?

**Yeah - its got a good riff, that massive chorus, I thought that had Sunstorm written all over it. If there's ever a Sunstorm III, bear that in mind!**

It would be great... that whole 'I know, you know' chorus, the 'I wanna be your number one'... it's so poppy-rock, but doesn't sound twee, y'know?

**It's feelgood music.**

Yeah, it's just good! I love that song and I'm glad you brought it up, because I trust your judgement.

**Well in that case, you could always put it on your next solo record if the opportunity arises!**

You know what, I just might do.

**It's a really good track, but with mine being a bootleg, it's shit quality, there's background hiss on it and it's a shame not to have a proper version.**

Oh, right, it's a bootleg of a bootleg of a demo, yeah? It's probably from a twisted, stretched out cassette tape. You know what, I've always wanted to do that song and you've just convinced me to bring it out, be it for Sunstorm, a solo record, whatever.

**Fantastic - I heard Lee Aaron's version, but I thought your demo was miles better.**

Well that's just it. People interpret things differently. Paul Rodgers did a version of 'Too Much Is Not Enough'. I don't know if you heard that, but he considered doing it and I was so thrilled he was going to do it. Then I got his demo, and it never came out on a record... rightly so, because it goes on forever, like seven minutes, and it just doesn't do it. I got my style from listening to him, but he did a version and it just wasn't making it.

**I've never heard it, I'd be interested in that. I can't really imagine in my head what he'd do with it, and it sounds like it didn't suit him.**

I didn't even think Purple did it justice really.

**No, I think the best version is the 'Hurry Up And Wait' one... the Purple version is a bit stop-start with Paicey's drumming in parts. It didn't flow as well as your solo version.**

Yeah, exactly. Even on 'Hurry Up And Wait', I don't think that matched the original demo, but a demo is a moment in time. Sometimes you just can't recapture or recreate it.

**I know what you mean. When I interviewed you back in issue 25 about the first Sunstorm, you said you didn't know if the quality could be repeated. Now you're heard the finished version with all of Dennis Ward's touches in place, I think you have. How do you feel it compares?**

I think we equalled... actually, no, I think we beat it. I think this one is better than the last one! (laughs)

**I'm not sure I'd say it's better... yet anyway. I'd certainly rate them equally, but I played the first one to death and know it inside out, so I need to live with the new one a bit longer.**

I get it - you know what, I hate to say 'better' because I try and keep the philosophy of trying not to compare things I've done. That said, I'm so pleasantly shocked and surprised at how well this thing came out, I'm totally over the moon with it. This stuff is standing up!

**I think a lot of people wondered if it could be done again, and obviously it can. Do you see this as an ongoing series now, or are two Sunstorm albums enough?**

I'll tell you this, I think Serafino will be digging for more songs, because this is a successful project for him, and us guys on the record have a great time doing it. It's Serafino's baby and he takes great pride in what he puts out. I think I've got a couple more songs, but whether he sees it that way, that's another story. I'd like to think it could be a series - maybe a trilogy would be good. Maybe after the third one knock it on the head - but who knows? I've got a few songs I could offer, and maybe three could make it for another record.

**And Jim Peterik isn't short of songs is he? He writes about five a day!**

He's prolific like that, but at the same time, some of these are songs that he wrote way back when that never saw the light of day! I'm thinking does he have any more in the vault like this? When I worked on the Jimi Jamison album, they were all new songs, and frankly, I think these songs are better than those songs. I asked Jimi the other day about why he didn't do any of these for his album, and he said 'I didn't even know these existed!'

**The stuff Peterik knocks out - he's that prolific, and it's not like there's a drop in quality for the amount he writes is there?**

No, and it's not like three chord stuff, this is some serious music. And his rock stuff - I love this 'Gutters Of Gold' he wrote. It's a great international rock song - it's all about riots and trouble that's happened all over the world, with 'London is burning' and 'Paris is burning', New York, Tokyo, Moscow... it goes on about how gangs in the street fight to take over their ground, and it resonates to me on an international level.

**Absolutely - did you make this record the same way as the last Sunstorm, by sending files to Dennis back and forth over the internet?**

Yeah, exactly. He sent me skeleton demos and the original demo, be it one of mine, Jim's, one of the Martin brothers or whatever. Then I'd learn the song and hear the skeleton track. I'd listen to that and then call Dennis up and ask him what he was going to put here and there, then he'd describe what he intended to do. So the only real drawback to these projects is I don't get a finished track to work with, I have to try and guess how it will sound. I think I did an excellent job with that, because there were big spaces and when I heard the finished version back, everything seemed ok.

**It does sound like a band, it sounds like you were all in the room together - it doesn't sound disjointed or too polished where things have been overdubbed.**

I have to say that's because all the guys who played on here are a bunch of professionals. When you have a group of guys like that, who are amazing on their instruments and are experienced, they bring something as well. What I did this time was send him tracks as I finished the

vocals, and then the guitar players played around the vocal, which is what makes it sound like a band. The pianos too, they work around the vocal and make it sound like you're all there in the room.

**I see. And on top of that, if putting out another excellent Sunstorm record wasn't enough, you're also fronting Over The Rainbow which, from what I've seen on the net, seems to have been well received?**

Unbelievably - in the Ukraine and Russia we were getting four to five thousand people a night which is insane in this shit economy we have today.

**I saw the set list and I just thought it was perfect - you've covered every base, paid homage to every line up, all the classics are there... did the band all get an equal say, or did you take that responsibility, as you were the one having to handle four different singers worth of material?**

Yeah - everyone had a hand in it. Even though it was my idea, the only way it could happen really James, was with Jurgen. The brief story is I'd finished a solo tour in Russia and I was sitting with the promoters at the bar, and they were busting my balls about getting a Rainbow tour together. I said 'Look, Ritchie is not



going to do it, he's not interested, he's happy, respect the guy for what he wants to do!' - I started to say 'You have to have a Blackmore on guitar...' and then I stopped in my tracks and thought 'Jurgen!'. So I said to them if Jurgen was willing and able to play this stuff, that would be the ticket. They didn't know about Jurgen, and while it's not a secret, not that many people are aware of him. I knew he was a fine guitar player and I was due to be in Germany, so I set up a meeting. That's how it happened. He agreed, and we agreed on the philosophy of the band that we weren't going to be aping Dio, or aping Ritchie on guitar. We wanted to be ourselves, and pay tribute to the originals. That's what we do live, try and get it as close as possible.

There's no way I'm gonna be Ronnie, no way he's going to be Ritchie, but does that matter? It comes off great, we're a capable bunch of players and singers, so we tried to make it true. It's not a cash cow, we wanted to give as authentic a Rainbow experience as possible without Ritchie, which is why the band is full of former members from every incarnation. Getting Roger Glover would have been impossible, but Greg Smith was there and I'm a fan and friend of Doogie (White), so we figured we'd do two of his tracks. Lets face it, that wasn't the most popular Rainbow album, but we picked two great tracks from that, Dio had five or six that we'd like to do, there was a bunch from my era the guys wanted to do, but I said it was impossible. I didn't want this to be the Joe Lynn Turner fucking project - I'm going to get enough shit already from the press! Some of mine had to go in, so we tried to make it as fair, even and authentic as we possibly could.

As far as original material, which I know is your next question, (laughs), we want to crawl, walk and then run. We want to see if fans will accept it first.



So far, at least in the Eastern bloc, we've got amazing feedback. Of course, there's always naysayers - 'Oh, he can't sing like Dio' or 'He can't play like Ritchie' but, dude, look, this is the only opportunity you're gonna get for a Rainbow reunion! I think it's a damn good line up and the shows are very powerful - we rock these songs... harder than Rainbow did, believe me. I think it's a great celebration of a legendary band. If you get some guy who's up Dio's ass or up Bonnet's ass, or Ritchie's ass, they'll have a problem with it, but for a fan, I don't think you'll be able to put together a better line up to do this.

**I was thrilled you picked a couple from Doogie's era - I thought 'Stranger In Us All' was a very underrated album. A lot of people moaned because there was only Ritchie from previous Rainbow lineups, but I thought it was excellent. So with two tracks from that, and you opening with 'Tarot Woman' which I think is one of the best Rainbow songs ever, I think you're doing the right thing.**

Thank you! We really laboured hard over this, picking the songs, making it fair and balanced. We still have 'Gates Of Babylon' and 'Stone Cold' that we'd like to work up, but as it stands it a great set list, played by a great bunch of players who are great guys. We certainly didn't want to enlist any drug addicts, alcoholics or assholes, of which there are many who have run through this band! (laughs) We wanted to keep it positive, have the energy up and I think it's the best scenario you could get.

**Quite right. Is there a thought to doing a DVD or live album?**

Absolutely - we're totally planning that at the very least. If that is accepted, then we'll look at an original album. We've already jammed some new stuff at sound checks that Jurgen and Tony had, so there's a lot of legs in this project. We've had mostly positive feedback and we're sticking with it. I got off the phone to Carol Stevens yesterday and we're trying to keep everything separate, because some dumb asses think Ritchie is J. R. Blackmore, and he's not!

He just happens to be called Ritchie Blackmore, and Jurgen happens to be called Jurgen Richard Blackmore. It's his fucking name, what are you gonna do, make him change it? They were a bit concerned that people thought Ritchie was in the band, and I said well, y'know, that's because they're dumb asses! (laughs) These people don't read, don't know what they're talking about... there's been enough articles about it, how could you not know?

**You look at Ritchie's attire and his album covers and what people wear to a Blackmore's Night gig, you should have a clue he's not in Rainbow anymore.**

(Laughs) Yeah, y'know, come on! Because in actual fact Ritchie blesses this thing, he thinks it's a great thing for Jurgen and he has no problems. His only reservation was that we had the name Rainbow in there, but I said look, we have a different logo, we're 'Over The Fucking Rainbow'... he took the name from the Rainbow bar and grill, there's a Rainbow cleaners here, a Rainbow ice cream parlour, Rainbow this and that... you don't own the word, and it's your son in this band after all, it's a legacy thing. And he agreed, said ok and good luck. So hopefully it'll fly now both camps are on the same side.

Oh, regarding Doogie, you should have seen the email Doogie sent me, it was hilarious! He's a funny guy, and I'd asked him about the lyrics for 'Wolf To the Moon'... I'd asked if he sang 'One for the road' or 'Wolf To The Moon', I couldn't make it out because he sang both, and he wrote back with 'Gee Joe, I don't know, I listened to the album, there were no hits on it so I kind of threw it in the bin!' (laughs). He told me to improvise it, make it my own, so I got

him to promise he'll show up at a gig or two and join us for some songs.

**Great, I'll look forward to the recording and the shows when you come closer to the UK.**

I'm so happy that you're positive about this!

**There's no reason not to be - if you want to hear Rainbow songs live, it's this or nothing.**

That's right, this is the last chance, this is it. And it's just a celebration, I want to make that clear - we want to pay homage to the incredible legacy of Rainbow, incorporating all its variations and styles.

**Quite right too, it deserves it.**

It does deserve it!

**Before I wrap up, I'd like to touch on Big Noize - you did a track called 'Battlefields' for when you played in Iraq for the troops and I thought it was a great song. Have you looked at doing more, or was that a one off specifically for the visit?**

We actually didn't get the chance to record it before we went, but we did it live and there were cheers, tears and all kinds of emotions. The soldiers loved it, told us it wasn't political, it was a human song about how they try and keep their humanity in the face of something completely inhuman - war. With bullets flying and everything sometimes you lose your humanity and they connected with the song. Even if they make it through out there, they come home and have to accept reality, and even then they get psychological problems dealing with this, and they get very little help from the government. We put this out as a free download on their sites and any downloads and whatever we get goes straight to helping those in the military. What we saw over there really opened my eyes. We're changed by it, and hope to go back.

**So, with all this stuff going on, is there anything else I need to know about, or is that you busy for the year?**

Unless Glenn Hughes gave me a call to do HTP III, although I doubt he ever will because he's pursuing the solo career with a passion and I'm so happy for him that he's finally singing funk, because that's who he is and he's so amazing at it... but aside from that, there's nothing else that would interest me at the moment. I've got a full dance card, and I am going to stay that way. There'll be a solo album in the future, making sure I have some quality music for that, but for now, no.

**Well, as always Joe, a pleasure to talk to you...**

James, you're one of my best friends there, it's always a pleasure, you always have great insight, thank you so much for your support. There's websites for all these projects and information about everything on them all. Oh, and we were supposed to be in Dudley with Big Noize, but it's been cancelled.

**Ah, I thought as much.**

It wasn't down to us, believe me. It wasn't working out. We're playing Spain, but it's unfortunate we aren't going to be in the UK. Doogie was going to come down, and some of my friends from London, I'd have loved to have come and Phil (Soussan) has his family in the UK so he wanted to do it, but it wasn't us who stopped it. It would have been fun, but what can you do?

**I'll just have to wait for Over The Rainbow to hit the UK.**

Y'know what, lets do that. Wait for that to be set up - I can't see how a veritable promoter wouldn't want this band to show up there. I don't get told about every email that comes in to my guys, but there's been a lot of interest from promoters all over the world, trying to sort out a schedule. We're as happy as pigs in shit that it's all going well!

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