



LISTEN TO MOTHER

Back in 1993, a brand new supergroup emerged, a quartet with exceptional pedigree that put out a great debut hard rock album. Written entirely by journeyman bass player Bob Daisley, probably best known for his work with Ozzy Osbourne, alongside guitarist Jeff Watson, famed for his work in Night Ranger, the album was made with legendary Vanilla Fudge drummer Carmine Appice and Deep Purple/Rainbow vocalist Joe Lynn Turner completing the line up. Calling themselves (and their first album) Mother's Army, the group recording a second album 'Planet Earth' in 1997 before Aynsly Dunbar replaced Appice on drums. This new line up made the amazing 'Fire On The Moon' record in 1998 before the band broke up.

Now the albums have been re-released together as a box set. Despite the group having a high standard of songs in their arsenal and a great collection of musicians involved, Mother's Army passed most people by. In an attempt to redress the balance, James Gaden called up Joe Lynn Turner to find out more about Mother's Army - and talk about Joe's future plans, Youtube sensations and mankind's eternal stupidity while they were at it.

We're going to talk about Mother's Army today...

Oh yeah! I didn't forget about them! That was such an unsung band.

Exactly! The reason I thought you might be interested in talking about it is, I'm a massive fan of the 'Fire On the Moon' album you guys did, I think I told you that before...

Well, that was probably the best one we did, in my opinion. They all have merit, but there was something about that record.

Yeah - well, the record label Edel have repackaged the trilogy of albums as a three disk box set, with the press release saying much the same as us - it was a very underrated act and they hoped the box set would help some more people discover Mother's Army. They've done a really good job - the front cover of the set has a big Mother's Army logo, and then all of your names on the front. So instead of the usual thing of people saying to me "Who the hell were Mother's Army?" when I've mentioned them, this actually has 'Joe Lynn Turner, Bob Daisley, Jeff Watson, Carmine Appice, Aynsley Dunbar' written right there on the front! They've done a really good job, there's a booklet with all the lyrics and credits, photos, it's a classy set. When I went back, I thought, just like you, this is a really good band that should have been much better recognised.

(Laughs) Well, you know how things go in this business!

Yeah! But the reason I wanted to talk to you about it, is despite the fact I'm a fan and like the albums, I don't really know a hell of a lot about the actual story of how it came to be.

Absolutely, I'll tell you whatever I know and how things transpired. You're right, this thing was, in my opinion, an "art" band. We had concepts, we talked about the world - not just "wham bam, thank you ma'am" stuff, we covered social issues, spiritual issues - the whole 'Planet Earth' album was basically a huge concept piece. It wasn't taking stuff lightly - Daisley, who I respect greatly and is a great friend, we knew

our provision and we wanted it to be something that was a cut above the rest. You know, something other than the 'I love you, you love me' shit! (laughs) Really, that's all good too, but this was high end - 'Moruroa Atoll' and stuff like that, come on, that was about nuclear war... 'No Religion', 'Fire On The Moon', stuff about life after death and the apocalypse! Even the ones we did like 'By Your Side' which were essentially love songs, were done with a touch of class. Yet it was a stripped down band, it was very raw. I think we were right on top of where this 'modern' sound of the time was going, just a four piece like the old days. Almost a Led Zeppelin idea with the stripped down setup, but this music was quite unique. I don't think I've heard anybody who sounds like us. It was our own style. Jeff Watson and Bob came up with some great tracks and melodies, so to me, nobody sounds like Mother's Army. It had its own individuality.

I was wondering how it started - you left Deep Purple mid-1992 if I remember rightly. The first Mother's Army album surfaced in '93 so it didn't take you long to hook up with them. When you left Purple, did you immediately want to join another band, or were you thinking of being solo again? How did you end up with Mother's Army?

They already had a singer then, I think he was from Sacramento. His tracks weren't bad, but he didn't have a really identifiable voice and he wasn't really a marquee name, he didn't have any previous work of note you could relate him to. I think the boys felt that as I was available, perhaps I would add to the band. People had heard my voice and I was known from Rainbow and Deep Purple, so I think they maybe felt that hiring me would be more than just a voice, I could add some 'marquee value' if you like. They sent me the basic demos with the original guy singing and they weren't bad at all, but I did agree that his voice or style was maybe a bit generic. But it was a solid set of tunes and everything - Bob and Jeff said they thought I could help take it up a notch. I like to think that's what I do, if I'm involved in a project I've got to bring something to the table. They wanted that and coming out of all the crap going on with Purple, it was such a delight to work with old friends. Looking at the offer, I felt it was an attractive situation.

I noticed Jeff and Bob wrote the first album between them, so did you think at that point as you were coming in as a voice to interpret their songs it would be more like a session or side project, like Sunstorm, then a full on band affair?

At first, because I was coming in and they didn't need me to write or anything, I was like "Okay, I'm the singer of this band". I'll be very honest with you, I didn't make any money out of this. In fact, I think we all lost money! (laughs) We paid for our airfares and everything and it was a labour of love. I loved what those guys were doing and I wasn't involved in the first record other than doing the vocals. By the time 'Planet Earth' came around I was busy doing other things, so I didn't feel I had a foot in the door where I could demand to be in on the writing. So yeah, at first I think it was a case of me thinking "sure, I'll be the face and voice of the band", but it did feel like a side project. Finally, I said that I'm not feeling like I can put my best into something unless I feel I'm a real part of it. So that's how 'Fire On The Moon' happened - that was my title, my song. Bob and I good a good idea of what we wanted to write lyrically, Jeff came up with some Robin Trower style bluesy riff for it and it just sounded great. When we heard that track, I thought "Now we have something!" That whole album, in my opinion, speaks louder than the other two. The other two are a bit arty-farty and this retained the elegance of the lyrical work and subject matter, while having a more rocky, down to earth feel. I thought that was the album people would gravitate to - people are people, fans are fans, they're used to certain things. I think they missed the point on the other two because it was too far removed from what we'd done in bands before - I think the third one had enough for them to relate to, while keeping what we wanted. Some of the other stuff from the first two went over some people's heads I think - when you try and do 'art' it does, you tend to only get recognised for that when you're dead! (laughs)

Was Carmine's departure after two albums due to him having commitments elsewhere?

No, there was some insurrection in the band which Carmine started... he was interested in doing other projects, but the main reason was he had what I felt was a really shit manager. This guy wanted to take the band over and because we didn't know better at the time and as far as we were aware he was doing okay by Carmine, we gave him a try. The guy was a thief, frankly. That separated Carmine from the band because he wanted to... 'defend', shall we say, this guy, when we felt it was clear that he was stealing money, doing all the wrong things. He was telling the Japanese record company the record wasn't done, telling the band the record company didn't like the album, he basically double talked to everyone. When we confronted Carmine with it, he had so much going on with this guy, good, bad or indifferent, that he stuck by him. Fair

play, but that meant he was out of the band and we brought in Aynsley.

Not a bad replacement, really!

No! Caused by typical bullshit, but Aynsley was just great.

After listening to this box set, I think you're right about the style of the records. I think the first album is a good, solid hard rock album but I think it lacks... not necessarily a commercial element, but it doesn't have the hooks or the memorable parts like 'Fire On The Moon' has. The second album I think is more of a mood record - you have to be in the right frame of mind to truly appreciate it, because like you say, it's a heavy concept and not something you could exactly put on and party to. 'Fire On the Moon' has it all, it's an absolute classic.

Yeah, it just comes bustin' out at ya!

It does! I'd bought that album first, simply because you were the singer on it and could find very little information on the band. But after hearing the other two, which you don't write anything on, compared to 'Fire On the Moon', where you co-wrote everything, without blowing smoke up your ass, I can only attribute the step up in song quality to your writing.

People will moan I'm blowing my own horn, but I think that's obvious. But then, I walk into a situation with the express intent of trying to put my own stamp on it. I did that with Rainbow, I think I managed it with Malmsteen, it's what I try to offer. So I don't think it's unusual for me to have made a difference that way, but at the same time, thanks for noticing because I don't want to always be having to beef myself up! I felt that the band needed some extra element that would take the songs to the next level. I think that happened on 'Fire On The Moon'. People have accused me of being 'commercial' but as Jimi Hendrix said, there's no harm in having your record in a jukebox! (laughs)

I think one of the things that Mother's Army does do is it lets you show a different side. After your stints with Rainbow and Purple, but Rainbow in particular, there were some who didn't like that commercial side of your work and made disparaging comments like you were a pop singer and couldn't do rock, all that crap. With the first Mother's Army record, I think that is one of your best hard rock vocal performances. There's very little in the way of ballads on there, it's mostly dark, hard rock. I've mentioned before I liked your smokier, raspier style that you brought to Deep Purple, which you weren't allowed to use in Rainbow. With the first Mother's Army album, that's probably the first album where you could really let go and get nasty. Compare your vocals on there with how you sound on 'Difficult To Cure' and most people wouldn't know it was the same guy. Then on the second album, one of the highlights for me is the cover of the old Memphis Slim song 'Mother Earth' where you change your style again completely and do it in a more old time bluesy way. I loved the vocal stylings on that. Were you familiar with the original?

No, it was more my own interpretation really. I'm very thankful that I have a gift to interpret songs. I thought the original demo was quite weak sounding but I got a handle on where they wanted to go with it, so I tried to interpret the song that way. It needed a character that fitted the song. It needed a voice that suited the music. It was something I always thought the Beatles did really well - the melodies were great but they could get into character to do something like 'When I'm Sixty-Four'. It's like acting, you have to climb inside a character. I think that's what a lot of singers miss - a good singer, I think, needs to live a song to deliver it. If it's sad, you're sad. If it's happy, you're happy. And so on. There was a couple on 'Fire On The Moon' I was really proud of in that respect - 'The Lonely' and 'Do What I Like'. That one was just pissed off wasn't it? (laughs) I try to remove myself from the song and sing it as the guy who this stuff has happened to, a character.

Yeah - with your vocals on 'Fire On The Moon', you sing a lot lower than other rock stuff you've done. Aside from 'Another Dimension' which is the full on turbo charged rock voice, a lot of it is more moody and low, and it suits the music so well. It was like the feature we had last issue, on the album you made with Jan Holberg, where there was a quote from you that said the music Jan had written allowed you to stretch out because it wasn't what you normally are known for. You were right, it's a really good album and it's great to hear you do some different styles. Mother's Army was one of those projects which I thought allowed the same freedom.

Absolutely, much more freedom to express than in Rainbow or Purple, where a specific sound was envisaged - and that's another release from the Purple scenario. It was really liberating to sing lower, sing raspier, let myself go. My only regret over Mother's Army was we never got the dues, but that's like a lot of things in life. For example, I've been going through my catalogue of songs here in my vault, and I realised there are a lot of damn good songs I've done! (laughs) People close to me have asked why I maybe wasn't bigger as an artist than I am. I don't know - maybe I didn't kiss enough ass! (laughs) But I'm in the process of giving Paul Rodgers some of these songs, I think he'll make them more popular and maybe people will get into them and then they'll come back to me. It's strange how it works out.

I think you're a bit like Michael Bolton in the respect that you're so well known as a vocalist, it overshadows the songs you've written for others - 'Walk On' that Jimmy Barnes recorded, 'Sweet Obsession' for Bonfire... stuff you eventually did yourself but had written for others way back.

That's true - but you have to live with that. It's unfortunate people don't often know who was behind a song, but I think time will tell. All of this bullshit I got in the beginning - even now, there are still people who won't have anything to do with 'Slaves And Master's' and that's a great record. I don't care what anyone says. But you can't live your life fighting people with those views, you just have to move on.

I had a very similar conversation with Glenn Hughes in the last issue where he said since Black Country Communion have been doing really well, there's loads more people coming out to have a go at him, mocking his clothes or his hair or whatever. I asked him if he'd read a bad review of the band's music, and after some thought he said he hadn't. So I said he shouldn't worry about it. For all the good the internet has done, it also means anybody with a keyboard and a connection can post their opinions as facts, regardless of knowledge, or, in many cases, any sort of grammatical skills!

You're absolutely right man, a lot of assholes out there! A lot of the time it's probably the same ten people with twenty different names, all taking a shot at you... get a life! Most fans are great though, I've read some great comments about Black Country Communion and you'll know, Bonamassa was on some of my solo records. People don't even know that!

Yeah, he did some solos on your 'JLT' record and he was on 'Holy Man' playing on there with Akira Kajiyama and Al Pitrelli...

Right - he co-wrote some stuff with me, 'Angel', 'Honest Crime', 'Wolves At The Door'... I mean, you know that, it's no secret. But a lot of the dissenters have such limited knowledge, yet such HUGE opinions!

You should see some of the things I've read on the 'net - I told Glenn, there were some Bonamassa fans who were asking who Glenn Hughes was and if he was any good as they thought Joe would be doing all the lead vocals! And the amount of so called Queen fans who had no idea who Paul Rodgers was when he joined up with them for the tour - it's scary, but most of them are young and think they know it all, or so blinkered to that one band they're ignorant of all that goes on outside of it.

(Laughs) It's unbelievable. I don't personally go on

and do my Facebook or anything - I know it's necessary to have and I'll answer questions and stuff, but it's all done via my assistant, Lisa. I don't get too into that - it's tough when you're travelling, doing shows, recording, writing... I remember John Mayer had said he finally realised a true artist wouldn't be that involved with 'social media'. He said it was getting in the way of him writing songs, and he is a great songwriter. To say what he did was revealing and that's how I feel. You can get caught up in it and it stifles you. If you're stifled you're not being creative and true to yourself... and you end up having the dissenters dictate what you're doing, when all you wanted to do was move on.

It's a shame that for all the access the internet gives fans to an artist, some abuse it with negativity.

It's disappointing to realise a few fans don't like you being outspoken, they can be quite childish - that's not all fans by any means, but they are the ones who seem to make the most noise.

I know what you mean - I'm like you, I'm outspoken and I say exactly what I think and people often hate it. The majority of people don't want to cause trouble.

Yeah, when I speak I tell the truth. They can't handle the truth! (laughs)

It never helps when you say something and it's made into a big headline as well, just to get people talking.

Exactly - some fans live with a delusion and they're horrified at what you have to say, even if it is the truth. But then Ritchie Blackmore knows all about that - he was always saying shit about people! (laughs) He was always outspoken - "I hate this motherfucker, I hate that motherfucker!" But I love him for it, the crazy bastard! (laughs) Anyway, Mother's Army - I don't have this box set yet.

I've only had it a week or so, it's really nice. With you guys making three records, did you think about touring with it or was it too self financed to be able to?

(Laughs) Sorry, I have to laugh, because one of the members was insisting "We should tour this, and we should do that..." I said "Do you know how difficult it is to get something like this off the ground, while keeping the lifestyle that you're living?" Believe me, I've done things for basically nothing for the love of it and this project was one of them. But I'm not going to take bread out of my family's mouth because of it. If there had been a great need and demand for a tour, then sure. But to go out and struggle in some shithole clubs, trying to force this music down people's throats would be ridiculous. There was talk of a fourth album and we weren't asking for a huge amount of money. We were looking for twenty, thirty grand... but that soon goes on flights, recording, sandwiches, whatever! I would make very little from it so I had to ask myself, did I really have a month to fuck off and make another record when I could be earning? No. I told Bob and he agreed - we had several songs that could have been used but for us all to go to Jeff's studio in California - it takes money! People, for the most part, don't really understand how it works, they don't know. They think you just get up and go out and play - bullshit man! It's difficult at best. If there was interest we'd have toured... and I'm not even talking about loads of money, I'm just talking about enough to sustain it. But that wasn't there. Today, I'm diversifying into lots of different things - TV shows, soundtracks, Vegas performances, whatever - other things so I'm not on the fricking road playing Siberia for twenty five dates! (laughs) I make a bit of dosh from that and I feel like I'm beating my head against a wall. Nowadays, we're basically in the ticket and t-shirt selling business. Guys at this level don't really sell CD's anymore. Some people want music for free, and they GET it for free. Frontiers, whom I love, I've done a string of records for them James, Sunstorm came out and my girlfriend was in Belarus and she told me she'd found nine sites that had it and I hadn't even seen the packaging. I assume that's come from the journalists even though what they have is coded... so now what? With touring - it's not like the old days. I love playing live, I've still got it and I can still kick ass but I'm not

going to go out just to prove something.

Right - as you know, I loathe piracy, I buy the albums even if I get sent the promos as mp3's. I want you guys to keep making records, and I don't consider £8.99 or £10.00 to be an extortionate amount for the quality I'm receiving - but some people are less scrupulous. And with Mother's Army, the costs involved... this was pre-internet, it wasn't like you could send files to one another back and forth online like you've done in the past with Sunstorm, when you've done your vocals in your studio and sent them to Dennis Ward in Germany.

No - even this, there was talk of maybe phoning in my parts, sending stuff on tapes... that's not a fucking band! When we did those records, we played together, in a room. THAT'S a band. We knew the songs, we went in and cut them - most of those vocals were first takes. Sure I fixed a word here or there but we played together. We're all in a room, there's bleed, like the old days. We recorded the bulk of the first album in seventeen fucking hours, mate! Seventeen hours - because we played together in a room! Last time I listened to it, I thought it sounded brilliant. It's unbelievable, what you can do. That's where you get the energy, the magic, that's where it happens. Not all clinical and sterile like you're doing surgery or something, splicing and dicing. Fucking rock and roll!

I notice there is Eastern influences for the third record on 'Common Ground'...

Always - again, that mystical influence, Beatles influence... we even had one of the greatest sitar players in India on that track, because he happened to be in San Francisco at the time. And we had that great girl violinist - this band was not screwing around. And I think those two made more money than we did! (laughs) That shocks people - those two were paid for a session, we did the record as a labour of love. But we can't live on air, you have to put food on the table, petrol in the car.

Yeah, my brother interviewed Graham Bonnet last issue and he said the same - he's got an Alcatraz album in the works, but he keeps having to put it on hold in favour of paying gigs.

Yeah, you have to draw the line. I love Graham, I know his band well - we played Japan together. I understand his situation, he's a sweet guy and he knows that he has to work. It's life. That's why I'm diversifying and trying other things, so I'm not just living off this anymore. I'm trying to use my talents in different areas and it's challenging and new. I'm in the works of doing another Sunstorm soon too, Serafino is pushing me to do this. I'll do it and wrap it up but I'm a bit disappointed with the choice of songs. There isn't a single one of mine on this one - not that I mind that so much, but I've got some Michael Bolton songs, which I told you I sang backgrounds for on his original! (laughs) I think there's a Cher song... that's all fine, but there's a couple of songs that I think are just crap! I'm hoping maybe Dennis Ward can rock them up a bit and make them into something.

How come none of yours made it? There's still some great songs in the vaults that I know of that you could use and I've been pushing for you to do your version of 'Number One' that you wrote for Lee Aaron for ages.

Well, it sort of went by me because I was in Turkey and didn't have access to my catalogue. Time ran out and my interest wasn't as high as it used to be because I'd only been back in the States for a month, my mom had passed away... they were very understanding about that and I was wondering about maybe changing a couple of songs at the eleventh hour but it seemed a bit uncomfortable. So like I say, there's a couple on there I consider 'lesser' songs, but what can I say? You're only as strong as your weakest link, so I'm going to try and change shit into hit! (laughs) But look, it's a project that has done well, so if these songs do let the side down I hope people know the singer wasn't responsible for everything! (laughs)

Hey, if your name isn't on the writing credits, it's not your doing!

Yeah, but people don't even look! (laughs)

I do! (laughs)

Yeah, I know you do, I do, that's why I buy albums. I love the covers, I'd listen to the record while perusing every single notation, look where it was recorded, read the lyrics, note who played the tambourine, everything! Nowadays, people just get an mp3 and go "Arrgh, that's fucking shit!" They have no idea who is doing what! (laughs)

Which Michael Bolton songs have they given you?

One of them was 'Gina'...

Yeah, you mentioned that was in the frame last time we spoke. That's okay, I like that, but you're right, you did sing the backgrounds on that.

Yeah - I can't remember which one the other one is, but I'm sure that was off 'The Hunger' record too. I wished I'd been sent 'Fools Game' or something like that, or an old Blackjack tune - I loved that band when they were around here. But yeah, I'm getting back into it, like I told you last time things were completely upside down for me, I didn't have time to totally devote myself to it because the money for that wasn't enough to sustain me by itself. But Frontiers have been really fair about it, really compassionate - so I'm going to do the best I possibly can with it. I have no complaints with those guys.

One of the things I liked best about the second Sunstorm album was the Japanese bonus track, which was a reworking of your old song 'Standing In The Fire'. That worked great and I thought it should have been on the album



properly - I thought it was better than half the songs on there!

Yeah, that was fun wasn't it? Such a simple, cool rock song. But there's no accounting for taste. (laughs) People see things different ways. I thought that should have been a meat and potatoes track, not the gravy! I've had the same thing with people close to me, advising me and what have you, they'll say 'oh, that's a filler' and I'll look at them sometimes with my mouth open and say 'What are you talking about? That's a great song!' (laughs)

Yeah, bollocks to them. (laughs)

(Laughs) It never ceases to amaze me. I think Einstein said "Two things are infinite - the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the the universe." I subscribe to that! (laughs)

On a side note, regarding Michael Bolton, have you seen the video he's done with Lonely Island? The Jack Sparrow thing?

No - what's that?

Oh - I shall send you an email with a link to it. It's one of the greatest things I've ever seen. It's so un-Bolton it's fantastic - and it's resulted in some of the best press I've ever seen him get.

Really? What is it, a new record or something?

Yeah - I've only gleaned this information from what I've learned online, but Lonely Island are like a hip-hop rap act who are

connected with 'Saturday Night Live'. They do like a comedic spoof set of songs and then get big stars to come in and guest on some of them. They've had Natalie Portman, Justin Timberlake and a few others and they've just done one with Michael Bolton. The one Bolton has done features him joining the group for a collaboration where he has written them a "big sexy hook" - but he's obsessed with the 'Pirates Of The Caribbean' films, so everything he's written is to do with Jack Sparrow and is at complete odds with the rest of the song, which is all typical rap stuff about being in bars with girls and flashing money. Bolton gets dressed up and is really funny in it.

Oh, please send me that! So it's a spoof, and it got him a lot of recognition?

Yeah - last time I looked on Youtube I think it was about about 22 million views!

Yeah, that'll work! (laughs)

I've noticed that all the people who used to dismiss him as being a guy who sings ballads for housewives are now coming to the conclusion he's actually really good and isn't afraid of sending himself up.

Well, shall I repeat Einstein's statement? (laughs) Michael's a fantastic singer and he was great even all the way back in Blackjack. He was very gracious and generous to me, he handed me the whole jingle business which sustained me for many years. We're still friends, I saw him in L.A. a couple of years ago, it was great. I'm happy to hear he's having a revival - I'll look forward to the link, it sounds interesting.

Will do - and the irony is, despite it being a spoof and a very funny video, the hook he sings is really good and stays with you!

Oh, it's a earworm!

It is - right, I'll bring things to a close. Looking back at Mother's Army, how do you see that period in regards to your career?

It was a very freeing experience, I loved the guys. Even Carmine, after all the bullshit, we're still friends. Business is business. Aynsley was just a dream, he was amazing. Bob and Jeff - their work speaks for them. Bob is just great, I just wish he was closer geographically. But we stay in touch and Jeff, he is a fantastic guitar player and I loved his work in Night Ranger. He had some great ideas and you had a real professional group of guys. I do feel it should have been a break out band, that Mother's Army should have made people go 'Wow!' We don't sound like anyone else. But it fell on deaf ears which was unfortunate. Other than that, we had a great time and I'm delighted Edel want to put out this boxset because they see that we had something and it's worth putting out there again. If it had been feasible to take it further, we'd have loved to do it, but doing albums for twenty grand James, take out airfares with Bob coming in from Australia and what have you, I've got to come from New York, Jeff has to pay for the overheads in his studio... by the time we're done, it's probably cost us money and time, where we could be making money from different ways. Maybe this boxset will get us some recognition, who knows?

I hope so - when I went back, I had underestimated the strength of the first one. Even if Mother's Army does go down as a band who made three records, you saved your best till last because I think 'Fire On The Moon' is a stone wall classic.

Yeah, I agree with you, I thought that album had it all. Thank you for noticing I put my stamp on it, but I'm just part of the team. It's what I was brought in for, it's what I'm supposed to do. You don't get a gold star for doing what you're supposed to do, that's how I look at it. So I'd like to thank Edel for putting the records out again and thank you for caring enough to want to write about it. I hope it reaches some more people, helps people rediscover us... or just discover us, as I suspect is the case. "Mother's Army? Who the fuck are they?" (laughs)