

# THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

*Former Black Sabbath frontman Tony Martin has used his voice on several projects, one of the most impressive being The Cage, a record created from his partnership with Italian guitarist Dario Mollo back in 1999. With Mollo's knack for writing strong melodic rock and Martin's lyrics and vocal delivery, The Cage proved popular and spawned a sequel back in 2002. Mollo dallied with Glenn Hughes on the Voodoo Hill albums, but things went quiet until the news that a new Cage record was being released. After hearing the promo copy, James Gaden thought it was the best installment yet, so he got in touch with Tony Martin to discuss it...*

**Tony, it's great to hear your voice on a record again - the last thing I heard you sing was 'Spirit of Night' with Mario Parga. What have you been up to since?**

Lots of writing, lots of family drama, lots of waiting and lots of drinking... and lots of other stuff!

**The second Cage album was done back in 2002, but here we are with a brand new third installment. Was there always plans for a third one?**

Oh yes, its taken me about three years to get this finished! I had to honour other things and had stuff to deal with which meant it was delayed a long time. But it was always planned.

**How did you hook up with Dario originally, to begin what would become The Cage?**

I had a session to work with a guitarist called Aldo Giuntini and that was set up by a producer called Kit Wolvern... part way through the session I was presented with some other tracks and asked if I liked them, it turned out that they were the work of Dario Mollo who was the studio engineer/owner... I tried a couple of things and he liked them so we decided to get together... The name 'The Cage' was from when I was working with Cozy Powells Hammer... and at that time the thought was to have a different name for the band - one of the ones suggested was 'The Cage' but it didn't get used. So when I met Dario, I told him about it and he thought it was a cool name - so we used it!

**I personally think this one is the strongest of the three, I think it's a harder rocking record than the previous two and I think the songs are a lot stronger. Would you agree with that description?**

Well, I took a long time to write these songs, after I had edited the tracks so I could sing on them, I wanted to make sure the stories and lyrics were exactly right for the music that Dario had given me. So yes, the songs are stronger... but harder rocking? No, I think it's still an easy album to listen to, songs like 'Violet Moon' are not really rocking songs. One or two tracks are heavy for sure, but

not the whole album.

**How do you and Dario work together - does Dario give you any insight of what kind of subject matter he is looking for lyrically, or do you have free rein?**

The song writing is completely down to me - the melodies and lyrics and story ideas are all mine. Dario sends me riffs set in song format - it could be verse, chorus, bridge etc... but mostly I end up changing them around so I can sing on them. Not always... sometimes the riffs fall in a good place and I am able to create the songs as the riffs are presented, but mostly I have to change it so it works for me to sing on.

**Do you have any input in the music, or is that all left to Dario?**

On very rare occasions I am able to present another riff or if I need a bridge section in a certain key or something similar I play the section I need and Dario re-records it to make it work.

**Do you work together in person, or is a lot of it done with file swapping online?**

Oh, its all done by internet... In the past I have recorded at home too but this time I went to Italy.

**Where do you generally look for inspiration lyrically? Do you use real life experiences or simply imagination?**

It is all from the depths of my imagination... Sometimes I can give a feel from personal events but mostly it's created from my mind's story telling ability and I have NO IDEA how that works!

**The previous Cage albums both had a well known cover version on them, namely 'Stormbringer' and 'Dazed And Confused'. Was there a cover considered for this record?**

Not that I know of.

**I loved the album from start to finish, but if I had to highlight specific tracks, I'd pick 'One Of**

**The Few', 'Don't Know What It Is About You' and 'Can't Stay Here' as my favourites. Do you have a favourite - if so, why?**

Ah, you like the 80's stuff... Well, I guess my favourites would be 'Cirque Du Freak' and 'Still In Love With You'. Oh, and 'Violet Moon'... but for no other reason other than I got great pleasure out of creating them.

**I think these are some of your best vocals I've heard from you for a long time - have you been doing something specific to keep your voice in good working order?**

I struggle with vocals as everyone does with age. I train it when I can and also remember this took four years, so I was able to sing when I wanted. Besides, when you are writing AND recording, it never comes first time... lyrics change and melodies change and sometimes the whole song changes... so it's a process.

**Dario has done two Voodoo Hill albums with Glenn Hughes, and now three Cage albums with you. Do you think you are going to leave it as a trilogy, or will you look at doing more together?**

I dont know... For me it has been a pleasure until this last few months - I am very disappointed with the video and not being included in it's creation. Also, I wasn't given the album in its final state before everyone else had heard it. The first time I saw the video was on the internet and wasn't included in any of the final decisions. It doesnt feel as close as it has in the past so maybe it's time to hold it at this point... This is the better of the three albums so it would be a good end if that is how it is to be... who knows?

**I interviewed you once before, way back in Fireworks #22 in 2005 when your solo album 'Scream' came out. You said you felt good about making that solo album, because your previous one, 'Back Where I Belong', was more an effort to make you a more commercial artist in the Bryan Adams mould, it wasn't really you. Have you thought about putting another solo album together - you told me you had some old Cozy Powell tracks that you were thinking about maybe cleaning up and inviting guests to play on?**

I am always thinking of another solo album... but music is a worthless art these days and each time I get inspired I just think it's pointless... yes, Cozy gave me drum tracks to write songs to and I would love to still do that... if I could do it in a new way and make it pay, then I would be happy to do more!

