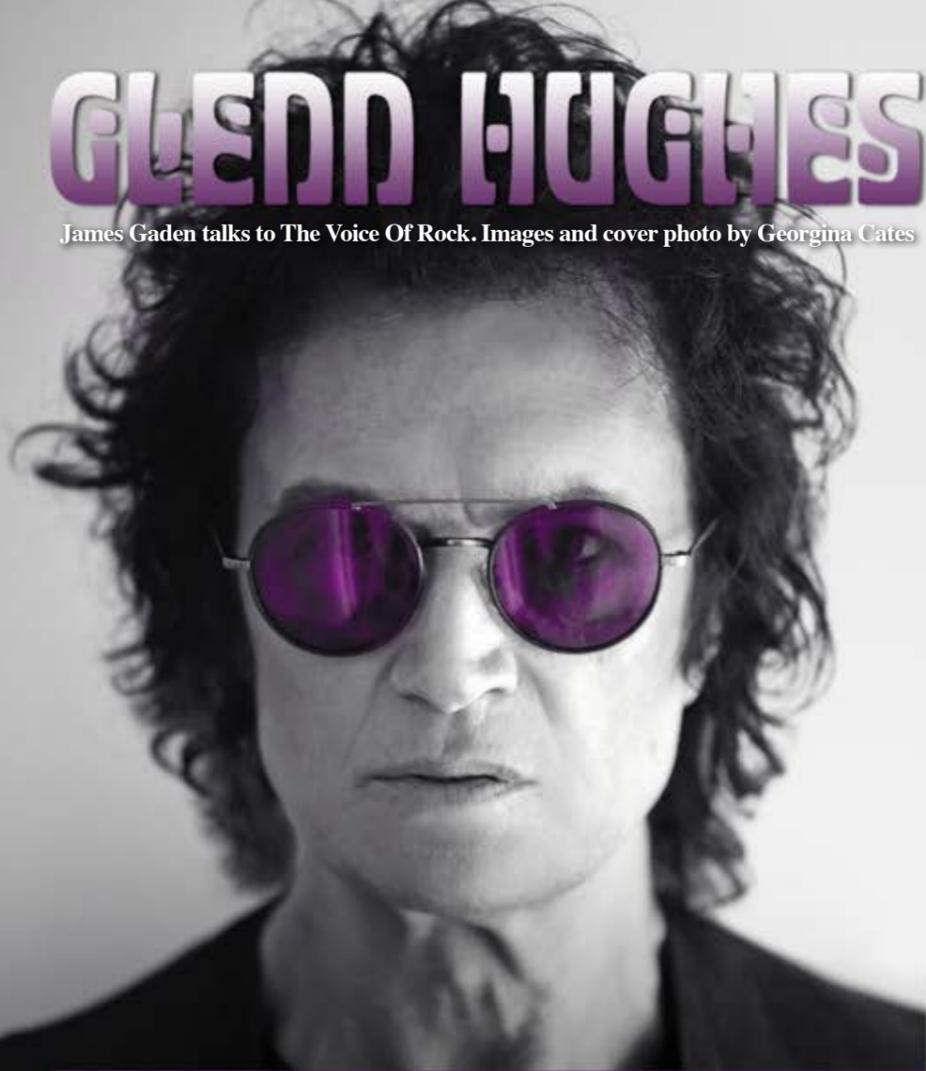


GLENN HUGHES

James Gaden talks to The Voice Of Rock. Images and cover photo by Georgina Cates



After spending the last few years fronting the super-group Black Country Communion, and later the short lived California Breed trio, Glenn Hughes has returned to his prolific solo career with his first album under his own name since 2008's 'First Underground Nuclear Kitchen'. Whereas that groove filled effort certainly lived up to the acronym 'F.U.N.K', the new record 'Resonate' sees 'The Voice Of Rock' back in all his thunderous glory. Fireworks spoke to the singer days after the album's press release had hit social media...

Ever since Fireworks switched to a quarterly format, the contributors and PR people have had to work a little harder to meet our new deadlines, often doing things way in advance or leaving things until last minute. In this case it was very much the former, with an interview set up just four days after the album was announced, long before any of the tracks had been previewed online. With Hughes set to jet off to South America shortly after the interview, windows of opportunity were small, so I accepted the first one offered. A lifelong fan of Hughes, I've interviewed him many times and after the initial small talk, he turned the tables and began the interview by asking me a question. The singer stated I was the first English journalist he'd spoken to, and as he knew me and considered me a friend, he wanted my honest opinion on the record. At the risk of sounding sycophantic, I replied candidly that I was blown away by how good 'Resonate' is, and commented that I can't believe that someone who has been around so long is making music as vibrant and

contemporary as this. It's everything I wanted to be and out of all the people from Deep Purple who are still around and working, nobody else is putting out music as energetic and vital as Hughes is.

"James, what you're saying is music to my ears," he responds. "I never think about what anyone else is doing when I'm writing. I wrote this album when I was recovering from knee surgeries. When you saw me last in the UK in October, I was in so much pain. So I wrote this album while I was recovering, knowing I was going to be doing so many shows to back it up. I'm going out for nine months. This is something I've really never done before solo. Sure, you've seen me do four or five shows in the UK, then a few in Europe, then go to South America, do half a dozen shows there, but now I'm looking at 100 shows, it's a rebirth, a new chapter for me... at sixty five years old! What's wrong with that?" he laughs. "You won't remember this, but in 1989 Tina Turner was about fifty, she came back and had this amazing rebirth. Anybody

can come back, I've escaped the jaws of death so many times, so it was time for me to write this album. It was an opportunity to tell people 'Glenn is going to make a heavy record' and a lot of people were thinking 'Yeah, sure he is, ha ha ha...' Well, the first track rams it down your throat. Don't count me out. I know there are people who think I'll be drifting into Funk of Tamla Motown stuff... which I love, but it's time to Rock, and this album really ROCKS."

It does indeed, and as Hughes stated, the opening track and lead single 'Heavy' is exactly what the title suggests, and the response to it on social media has been extremely positive.

"It's no coincidence that is the first track. 'Heavy' was the first song I wrote, my guitar was sitting there just saying 'Play me!' I gotta tell you, these songs basically wrote themselves. I wrote one a day in my studio and they all started to make sense to me. 'My Town', 'Steady'... I'm just really happy with them."

For the new record Hughes elected to use his live band of Soren Anderson on guitar and Pontus Engborg on drums. While they have toured comfortably as a power trio in the past, the vocalist saw fit to add a keyboard player in the form of Lachy Doley.

"Yes, he was Jimmy Barnes' keyboard player and he's coming on tour with us, we'll be a four piece. I thought it was time to bring in a keyboard player, and for me, he is one of the greatest keyboard players alive, he's astoundingly good. So him joining Pontus Engborg and Soren Anderson, guys who have been with me years, this is a good band, man. We're a family off stage, a lot of love and laughter, no bullshit, no drinking, we're a bunch of athletes. I went to Sydney ten years ago and the plan was to write an album with Jimmy. While I was there I did the 'Live In Australia' unplugged DVD and I invited Lachy to play with me. He didn't need a rehearsal, he knew the 'Play Me Out' record, he knew 'Getting Tighter' and all these songs. It was insane. I wrote these songs with a trio in mind, but as I wrote I thought 'I need a Mellotron on here' or 'I need some symphonic stuff on this'. I remembered Lachy and called him up, and not only was he on the album, he's joined the band and will tour with us. So I'm an American from Britain, we've got two Vikings and an Aussie, so it was tough to get us all together... but were doing it!"

With Anderson doubling up as lead guitarist and co-producer, he and Hughes made excellent use of Doley's talents, weaving his work in to the point where it sits perfectly, never overshadowing the songs, but adding just the right enhancements.

"I decided I didn't want the album full of solos, we didn't go crazy there, it's very much a song album," Hughes explains. "There's a groove, of course there is because it's a Glenn album, but it's nothing like 'First Underground Nuclear Kitchen', that was the other side of me, everyone knows there are two sides to me. I was given this mantle 'The Voice Of Rock' years ago, it's followed me around, it's not something I've ever called myself but fans and the media

keep associating it with me, so I'm gonna be in the Rock genre. I think I've found the right formula for me now to Rock."

That was the first thing that struck me upon hearing 'Resonate'. I enjoy the Funk stuff as much as the Rock stuff, but here, there are elements of the Funk side of Glenn on 'Landmines', but mostly it's hard hitting riffs and power chords, with a soulful groove making up the rhythm work. It rocks hard, but has enough soul to keep Hughes happy artistically, it doesn't feel like there's any obligation to Rock on past efforts like 'Songs In The Key Of Rock' and it's not as dark as his masterpiece from 1997, 'Addiction'.

"I wasn't thinking about 'Addiction' or those other albums you mentioned, as you know I never re-write anything," Hughes alludes. "I knew 'Flow' would be dark and dense, I knew 'How Long' would tip the hat to Classic Rock fans, I knew 'Heavy' would be exactly that, even 'Let It Shine', which I think is quite a light, commercial track, has a heavy riff which fits really well."

I ask how much of the credit needed to be attributed to Anderson for his co-production in finding this new, balanced formula where everything has all come together so beautifully.

"Soren's been with me a long time and I needed someone to bounce ideas off, and he's the perfect guy to do that with. He engineered the album too and did a great job. It's not like I set out to write the whole thing myself, but that's just what happened, so I wanted that sounding board and Soren was great for that. We kept it simple, I had an idea to make sure Lachy had some space on this album. Lachy plays a whammy Clav on this record, that's a Clavinet with a whammy bar on 'Steady' and 'Flow', not Soren's guitar. His virtuosity on stage is brilliant and every song on this album is begging to be played live. Honestly, I don't remember the last time I was this happy, I'm just so grateful to still be doing what I'm doing."

The reason for this sense of contentment isn't just down to artistic pride, Hughes sums up what going back to his solo career feels like in just one word: "Freedom". I enquire if that's because he feels more in control of his career now.

"I think the people who play with me are fans of my work over the last four decades. They're all younger than me, but they're genuine fans of the work I've done. When Pontus came to audition for my band years ago, he knew over 200 songs I'd done, he was a Glenn Hughes fan. It's also important to me that the people I work with are serious about what they do, they don't drink crazily. I've been clean and sober a long time and I like to be around people who are studious and serious about their work. It's nice if they look good on stage but they must be serious about their craft. For the first time in a long time I have a band, a crew, and incredible management company and agent, I have *the* team which will see Glenn Hughes 100% as a solo artist. I will do other things but I will be a solo artist first and foremost. I plan to tour this album for a good nine months."

I assume that recording an album with a band used to playing live resulted in a lot of spontaneity.

"Oh yeah, there's only a handful of overdubs on here," Hughes reveals. "Ever since I started working with Black Country Communion, we would record everything pretty much live and I've stayed in that ball park with California Breed and with this, even some of Soren's solos were live. What you hear on the album is all either first or second takes. There's no such thing in my book as take sixteen or seventeen, if you haven't got it after a couple of takes you're not going to get it. It wasn't like I had to rush the album. I wasn't on the clock because I had Soren's studio for as long as I wanted it, but



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we completed the album – and by completed, I mean wrote, arranged, recorded and mixed – in seventeen days. That was pretty damn quick!"

It certainly is, which means the guest appearance of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Chickenfoot drummer Chad Smith on two tracks was almost serendipitous.

"The Peppers were in town and Chad gives me a call, as you know he's my best friend. He shows up at the studio at ten in the morning, as he always does, and you can see on our EPK, it was spontaneous, live and he came in and killed it. I can't imagine doing a Glenn Hughes album where Chad won't be a part of it. Chad is not only one of the top drummers in Rock of all time,

but for me, and I say this not just because he's my best friend, he's one of the nicest, sweetest guys you can have around. I've learned so much from him and that's the essence of this interview. I'm now surrounded by people in my career who are loving and nurturing people. You and I have talked a lot over the years about my career and how I maybe didn't have the right management, the right agent or whatever, and now I've got all of it. I've got such an incredible group of people acting as management, agents, crew, web team, the band, things happen when they're supposed to happen. I'm not angry it didn't happen sooner, I'm not resentful, I don't read what people write about me online, that's none of my business. All I do is make music and play for my fans, that's all that matters to me."

Something else that was a long time coming was a reunion of Glenn Hughes and Pat Thrall – not, before you get excited, for a sequel to their classic record together, but Thrall joined the vocalist on stage at one of his shows in the States. Glenn lights up at the memory.

"It was amazing, Pat is basically a family member to me. Hughes/Thrall was a huge thing for me, I don't remember much of the 1980s, I was out of my mind for most of it but I do remember making Hughes/Thrall. It was a huge album for a lot of Rock fans and Pat hadn't been on a stage for a long time. We surprised the fans when he came out and it was fantastic. Every musician I've ever played with, whether it was good, bad, strange, incredible, wrong, I'm appreciative of it, because it led me to where I am today. I'm truly grateful for that."

The appearance of Thrall was a big added bonus for US fans who have been starved of chances to see Hughes play live, with only a handful of club shows to his name over the years.

"That tour, the American shows were pretty much sold out. I did like forty meet and greets a night and it was overwhelming to me, I teared up quite a lot because the followers I have over there blew my mind. I've lived there for four decades and never had the chance to properly tour there solo, until now. We're going back to do 'America Part 2' in February and March and then I'll be back again in September. I'm going out and laying it down. Let's be clear, Glenn Hughes has put his Rock hat on and he's not planning on taking it off. I'm not going to confuse people, I'm like an actor on that stage, there's more than one Glenn but when I go out on this tour, I'm in Rock mode, I have to become something else. I've found that makes it easier for me to slip into that style. It was like my dear friend David Bowie, he would invent characters for his styles of music and I'm doing something similar, which makes it work for me."

'Resonate' also has the honour of being only the second Hughes solo album to receive a vinyl release, the first being his 1977 debut 'Play Me Out'.

"Yeah, Black Country Communion and California Breed had vinyl of course but you're right, if you put Hughes/Thrall aside, this is my first solo vinyl release since 'Play Me Out', my

first ever solo record. Pre-orders for it are doing really well I'm told, and I have a lot of fans in the UK who are vinyl buyers."

With their name coming up a few times during the interview, it would be remiss of me not to enquire about the pleasant surprise that Black Country Communion are getting back together. I ask who the instigator was that made it happen.

"Joe (Bonamassa) called me up late April, after I was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame with Deep Purple," Glenn reveals. "He called me up to congratulate me, because that's the sort of guy he is. We had dinner and talked and one thing led to another and the next thing we know, the idea came up that it would be great to do another Black Country Communion album, and Joe was really up for it. Kevin Shirley wasn't even aware Joe and I had been speaking, so that'll be something we're looking at in January. BCC will come back strong, but in the meantime, Joe is doing great as a solo artist and I'm fully into being a solo artist and promoting 'Resonate'. The people in my life are telling me it's likely the strongest solo album I've made, so I've got a lot of work to do... and I'm so ready, I'm in great health. Joe and I are friends, we've not fallen out, we want to and will make BCC 4, knowing he's a solo artist and I'm a solo artist. BCC will make another album and we'll see what happens."

With 'Resonate' being such a strong record and having such a buzz surrounding its release, that sounds sensible and I comment to Hughes that he's given Black Country Communion an incredibly hard album to follow.

"Thank you!" he laughs. "My primary aim in life now is to be a solo artist, just like Joe, he's successfully built himself a career over thirty years and has worked non-stop. For me, I'm older but I have this window of opportunity to create an album like 'Resonate' and tour all over the planet playing it to people. That's never happened before and I want to make the most of it. I will play some new material and add in songs from all through my career. I'm fully behind this record and I can't wait to see what the fans think of it."

Update: As most people will be aware, Glenn Hughes was forced to cancel his UK/European tour after the co-headliner Living Colour booked a conflicting support slot on Alter Bridge's European tour. New management for Living Colour knowingly booked them onto the Alter Bridge tour although they were already confirmed for the Glenn Hughes co-headline tour, which had been on sale since April. Alter Bridge and Glenn Hughes have been long-time friends and neither Alter Bridge, their management and agents or even Living Colour's agent TKO were aware that this was taking place.

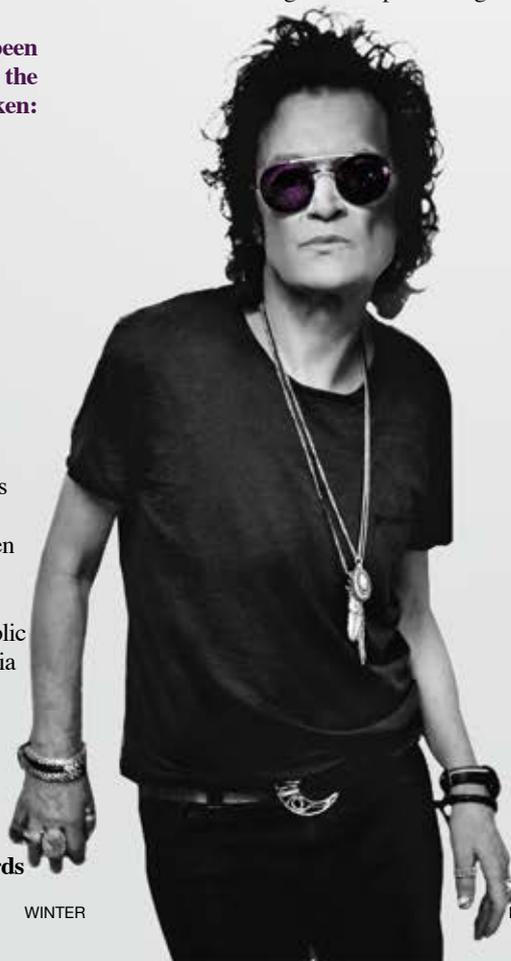
When word got to promoters that Living Colour were no longer planning to perform on the co-headline dates, they were forced to refund all tickets.

"I am saddened and disappointed that I will not be able to perform for my UK and European fans as I had originally intended. When I partnered with Living Colour to do this tour, I thought we would be able to make something special happen at these shows. Unfortunately, an undermining manager got involved and in turn ruined what would have been an amazing tour," explains Hughes.

Fortunately, new shows have now been announced, with Glenn Hughes playing the following dates, supported by Stone Broken:

Jan 20: Newcastle The Riverside, UK
 Jan 21: London Islington Assembly, UK
 Jan 23: Bilston The Robin 2, UK
 Jan 24: Glasgow Garage, UK
 Jan 26: Nottingham Rescue Rooms, UK
 Jan 27: Manchester O2 Academy, UK
 Jan 29: Reading Sub 89, UK
 Jan 30: Cambridge The Junction, UK
 Feb 01: Leeds The Church, UK
 Feb 02: Bristol The Fleece, UK
 Feb 04: Vaureal Le Forum, France
 Feb 05: Zoetermeer Boerderij, Netherlands
 Feb 07: Odense Posten, Denmark
 Feb 08: Helsingborg Toldkammeret, Sweden
 Feb 10: Drammen Union Scene, Norway
 Feb 11: Orebro Frimis Salonger, Sweden
 Feb 13: Prague Meet Factory, Czech Republic
 Feb 14: Spa Piestany House Of Art, Slovakia
 Feb 16: Vienna Simm City, Austria
 Feb 19: Milan Serraglio, Italy
 Feb 20: Dornbirn Conrad Somm, Austria
 Feb 22: Bochum Zeche, Germany
 Feb 23: Tilburg 013, Netherlands

'Resonate' is out now on Frontiers Records



By Rob McKenzie

Graham Bonnet, now fronting the ever busy Graham Bonnet Band, has just released 'The Book'. This is a double album composed of brand new material plus recreated classics from Bonnet's past. The contents of the latter is impressive and includes, as you would imagine, 'Since You Been Gone', 'All Night Long', 'Dancer'... the list goes on. What is more impressive though is the quality of the new songs, and as a result 'The Book' has received rave reviews from around the world and charted in some countries. Fireworks met up with Graham Bonnet in London on the first day of the UK tour and discussed his continuing musical odyssey.

Your new album, 'The Book', is getting consistently great reviews, what's your reaction to that?

I can't believe the response, I've done a lot of interviews in the last weeks and the comments I am getting are so great. They start quoting lines – they really did listen to the album; people are listening to the story, not just the music. It is very encouraging; I am surprised but very happy.

I particularly like the way the songs are not simple Pop Rock but instead have a lot of time changes and light and shade.

It makes it more interesting if you break a song up; because we did things like that with Alcatraz, we thought it might work again. The album has been compared with early Alcatraz but we have tried for a more modern sound. The arrangements that Conrado [Pesinato] came up with have worked out well. If the band had ideas we would use them, the whole band was involved in the creation of the songs. It always starts with me on the acoustic guitar and then it builds.

What made 2016 the right time to bring an album out?

The song 'Kingdom Come' written by Russ Ballard was put out as a taster for things to come [the release also included 'The Mirror Lies']. I was advised to put something out as I haven't done anything for sixteen years!