

RETROSPECTIVE

LOOKING BACK ON CLASSIC ALBUMS WITH THE ONES WHO MADE THEM

For the second entry in this series, Retrospective highlights former Rainbow and Deep Purple vocalist Joe Lynn Turner's first solo album, 'Rescue You'. A big sounding eighties pop rock record, produced by the legendary Roy Thomas Baker, 'Rescue You' was Joe's first effort at escaping from the shadow of Rainbow and striking out on his own. The album has been heralded as quite a popular addition to the vocalist's impressive back catalogue, and as someone who has interviewed Joe a few times before and always got on well with him, James Gaden asked if the singer would be willing to tell him all about it...



You're a more than competent guitarist yourself, did you think about playing the guitar parts with it being your album, your baby, or had you always planned to bring someone in?

At first I was going to do it, but Bobby was such a good guitar player... and I was so busy with the other things, I got him in. I probably cheated myself out of the opportunity but I thought if he came in, he'd nail it quicker, it would come out faster, y'know. Roy suggested I could overdub some parts if I wanted but we were running out of time and money. So effectively I got caught by the short hairs and had to go with what was there.

I have a bootleg of a show you played on the tour you did for 'Rescue You' and you opened the show with 'I Found Love', a song which, eventually, would be recorded for the last Sunstorm album, 'House Of Dreams'. Why did that song never make 'Rescue You' when you were prepared to open shows with it?

Ah, God, there were so many songs - good ones at that, but we were trying to make a coherent album... I can't tell you anymore why we didn't put it on the record, because it is a brilliant opener and we always opened the live show with it. It should have been on the album, instead of turning up on Sunstorm twenty five fucking years later! (laughs) I look back over my career and there are so many comical things - I can only look back and laugh because if you took all this seriously your mind would explode. You have to look back and laugh, think 'Oh, I can't believe that, oh, that bit - yeah, oh fuck, what was that!' Shit happens! There were a lot of other great songs that never made the record either.

That's what I was going to ask, obviously 'I Found Love' was used for Sunstorm, were there any others slated for 'Rescue You' which you later used somewhere else?

We always figured there was going to be a second solo album for Elektra, so the songs that didn't make 'Rescue You' would make for a suitable sequel, tracks like 'Standing In The Fire', 'Tough at The Top', 'Number One' - all of these songs will probably be used someday, my theory is that nothing is wasted. Once you create it, it's there timelessly, and you can soon plug it into something else. So I looked at it that the second album was half written already, it already had some great songs and it followed on well. I was writing with Jon Bon Jovi, with Desmond Child and all these guys, and we had some great stuff. I think Jon could use some of these today because his last couple of records tanked. (laughs) No, I've got no room to talk, he's done really well for himself, but what I'm trying to say was these were some really creative times and a lot of the songs were great. I did some with Jack Ponti, there was 'Faded Valentine'... all these songs I'm remembering! God, I wrote with one of the guys from The Baby's... 'Save A Place' was written back then, and as you know, that one ended up being recorded on 'Nothing's Changed' and the last Sunstorm CD. All of that was going on then.

I'm glad you mentioned 'Number One' - that's a great song, I mentioned it to you last time I interviewed you. I've been dying for you to put your stamp on that, maybe for another Sunstorm record or a solo album somewhere down the line. Lee Aaron recorded it didn't she?

Yeah, I wrote it with Lee. I went to Canada at the

time, it was such a creative period. I had a big publishing deal then too, very sizeable, six figures. I was just writing, writing, writing with all these people. With 'Number One', Lee Aaron recorded it but she didn't do it the way it should have been done, I don't think.

I agree, I've got that bootleg version of your demo when you sing it and it totally smokes the Lee Aaron version, it's more up-tempo and you even sing it higher! So yeah, if you were looking at old songs to polish up and redo, like 'Save A Place' and 'I Found Love', I think 'Number One' should be on the list.

Funnily enough, with Sunstorm, to digress a minute, some of the songs I've been sent for consideration to maybe do another of those, there were some Cher songs, some Michael Bolton songs, and one was 'Gina' off his album 'The Hunger' which I actually sang background vocals on originally! I really wasn't sold on some of the choices that were coming through, but I talked to Dennis Ward from Pink Cream 69 who would produce it again and he says 'Oh, we can rock 'em up and do this...' But, some of these songs I was sent... I thought some were crap! (laughs) I just didn't see... you can't polish a turd, you know? (laughs) I don't know, but I wasn't convinced about some of the other material and they turned out okay.

Anyway, I'm busy on tour playing shows until May, so nothin' is really going to be happening yet anyway, I'm playing Russia and Turkey, then I'm in Norway doing the shows for the record I did with Jan Holberg... which is a pretty damn good record actually! (laughs)

I've only heard a few sample clips but it sounded promising... not that I base too much on clips alone, but I liked the vibe of them.

Oh, it's better than I thought! I started listening to it as a full album instead of in bits and pieces that were getting sent back to me. As an album, different? Yes. Good? Absolutely! The band is cooking, unbelievable. It's a stretch, it's great. When I say stretch, I don't mean for

me to do that style, that's part of who I am but I was very impressed the way it turned out. I usually just do a project like this, then move on. It's not until I go back and really listen to it as a whole that I think oh, hey, there's more to this than I thought!

Going back to 'Rescue You', with you having so many great songs coming out around that period, did you have a specific track that you thought 'Hey, this is the benchmark, this is going to shape what the album will sound like'?

Come on, it had to be 'Endlessly'. When we hit on that one... I really thought we had the commercial part right on the nose there. People are still getting married to it. I've had thousands and thousands of emails and letters telling me how people have gotten married to it, that it's their song, like some Journey songs have become, it's an iconic track for people. And it's not the rock part of the song, although we put some beef in it, it had a lot of great elements, with the prelude, a beautiful riff and everything else. Yeah, that was the one we thought would be a super commercial single, perfect for radio for the time and it was backed on the album by things like 'Losing You', 'Soul Searcher', 'The Race Is On'... so many good rockers in amongst it.

As so many fans do consider it a classic, sometimes the artist, in hindsight, regrets something about it. I know you said that you were happy with it sonically and it still stands up, but looking back, do you wish you'd have changed one of the songs for one of the tracks that never made it? Or would you have done anything differently?

I wouldn't have let Roy Thomas Baker run wild! He went wild, but he was Roy Thomas Baker wasn't he? He was huge and I was just this up and coming singer, so I figured I had to follow his direction and advice. I could see he was draining the fund, but what could I have done? It was like I was at the mercy of the machine called Elektra. I was the artist, but he was part of the machine. I already had a reputation for being an upstart and a diva - I'm none of those things, I just know what I want and I speak loudly about it. And they didn't really like that, they didn't like me standing up and saying that I didn't fucking agree with something. They were like 'What do you mean? How dare you! You're just the fucking artist, we're the machine!' That was the mentality in those days. Now it's more like fuck the company, the artist is all important. So I do regret that I didn't try and take more control, but I'm not sure it would have even been possible. It was like Don Quixote fighting the windmills... I was just waving my arms in the air. Typical Spinal Tap crap. You get locked in by a company... as regards musically, maybe it could have had another heavier rocker or two, but I think it came out good. And the thing was, those unused songs were always meant for a second record, they were supposed to have been the cornerstones of the follow up. But it all just fell to hell. Disappointment, that sinking feeling when they said they couldn't afford to promote it and didn't know if there was even going to be a second record... I'll never forget that feeling, when I realised it was all fucked.

ALBUM DETAILS

- Losing You**
(Turner, Greenwood)
- Young Hearts**
(Turner, Greenwood)
- Prelude**
(Turner, Newman)
- Endlessly**
(Turner, Newman)
- Rescue You**
(Turner, Greenwood)
- Feel The Fire**
(Turner, Greenwood)
- Get Tough**
(Turner, Delia)
- Eyes Of Love**
(Turner)
- On The Run**
(Turner, Greenwood)
- Soul Searcher**
(Turner, Greenwood, Newman)
- The Race Is On**
(Turner, Greenwood)

BAND LINE UP

Joe Lynn Turner - *lead and backing vocals*
Bobby Messano - *guitar, bass, backing vocals*
Al Greenwood - *keyboards*
Chuck Burgi - *drums*

Produced by Roy Thomas Baker

Recorded and mixed at: Beartracks Studios and Sterling Sound, NYC, by Ian Taylor, Kenneth Lonas and George Marino

Released on Elektra in 1985

Oh man, I mean I was sat there and I was thinking that I was really fucked, oh God - but shit happens James. If you're strong enough, you'll keep on going. And I think someday, I learned a big lesson. You can't change things, because if you did, you'd end up in a different place. All the roads you've been down lead you to where you are right now. So not really any major regrets, just with hindsight I'd have liked to have intervened in the spending - but then, I couldn't see the forest for the trees. I was enveloped by this company, told I was going to be the new wonder boy, promises made, money put behind it... and then seeing Roy Thomas Baker spending a million dollars, with a big house on the hill with maids and servants, a limousine, and the company let him get away with it, all on my dime. That was bullshit. Typical! (laughs)

On your 'Undercover 2' album, you re-did 'The Race Is On' - how come? Did you feel there was something missing from the original, or was it not quite how you hoped?

Well, everyone said I should maybe redo one to throw in on 'Undercover' and I thought 'The Race Is On' was a bit too polished by Roy on 'Rescue You'. I thought we could do a bit more raw version, without the polish. I don't know whether we achieved that, but it was kinda fun to do over again. But I'm not sure what the point of it was anymore, now I look back! (laughs)

I like the updated version better, because I prefer your vocal on it. I like the raspier, grittier style for the rockers that you used from 'Slaves And Masters' onwards, as oppose to that very clean style you had with Rainbow. I assume you felt you needed to sing in that style on 'Rescue You' because that's what most people were used to.

Real clean, yeah, and I stayed with it, you're absolutely right. It's funny, Ritchie Blackmore wanted that clean, almost operatic voice when I joined Rainbow. I would very rarely get to put any rasp in there, I'd try and put it in places where I thought I could get away with it, he was like an eagle watching everything! If I tried doing something with that rasp or a bit more bluesy, he'd jump on it, tell me to keep it clean because that was his vision. Personally speaking, I think the audience were fooled into thinking that was all I had. Now I think people see that oh, he can sing dirtier, he can do the ballads but he could do a tough metal song, country, you name it, this fucking asshole's

unlimited! (laughs) Seriously, I take no credit, I've just been blessed with a voice that works for me and the only plaudit I can take is the discipline I've shown looking after it, making sure it's still okay. I think I'm probably better now than I used to be. There are guys who haven't looked after their voices, there are guys who simply struggle with age. Thank God I've been blessed that for me, personally, it's all still good. Thank you for that observation - I like using that rasp, putting a bit more roar in the rockers, that's how I think it should have been.

Yeah - like you say, with people thinking that's all you had, the first thing I heard you on was 'Difficult To Cure'. Then the next record I got with you on was 'Slaves And Masters'. I wasn't immediately sold on your clean style with Rainbow after hearing Ronnie Dio and Graham Bonnet, but when I put 'Slaves And Masters' on, I had to double check to see if it was the same guy! You had that smokey style there which I thought was perfect for that album... and when I went back to listen to Fandango, there are examples of the rasp even back then on songs like 'Sure Got The Power' and 'Hard Bargain' - in fact, on some of those songs you sound more like you do on the stuff from the nineties onwards than you did on 'Difficult To Cure'. So knowing all that, I can see you adapted a style for Rainbow, but a lot of people didn't realise.

Yeah, I know what you mean exactly. I take criticism based on less than the facts with a huge block of salt. First impressions and all that... that's the way this business is. You never get a chance to show yourself fully at the beginning, whereas now I think I have. I think I've exceeded some people's expectations, which is nice, but at the same time, I'm not done, there's more to come! I've been working with a songwriter in Greece doing this dirty track, Kip Winger is producing it and it's just - oh! I've been working through some demos last night, I've got some beautiful ballads and a Bon Jovi style rocker, these are basically songwriting demos but I like playing around with my voice, singing as characters... it's my voice but I see myself as an interpreter. And as long as you keep in shape, you can just keep going. I'm rather pleased with where I am right now. I've got my fingers in a lot of pies, not just records but touring, TV shows, stuff like that. And I'll keep an eye on the future. There will come a day when I'll have to stop shaking my ass like I do on stage and tone down a little. But that's ahead. Like I say, I just got divorced, that's more money down the river, but I've met this beautiful Belarusian girl who is a lawyer, I'm totally in love with her and my life is just beginning. I'm very happy where I am right now.

Good! Well, think yourself lucky you didn't marry Roy Thomas Baker, that would have cost you.

Yeah! (laughs) I've got an old saying: 'gas, grass or ass' if you wanna keep moving. You pay for everything in the end my friend! (laughs)

(Laughs) Very true! Well Joe, thank you so much for agreeing to do that interview for me, it was a blast as always.

Thank you James - always a pleasure to talk to you. Are you well, is everything okay at your end?

Yeah, it's all good, thank you.

Great! Well alright, I'm off to Eastern Europe and I'll be back in the States in May. I'm starting on a TV show which I think you'll really enjoy, it's a show called 'Two Worlds' where rap meets rock. You take a rapper and a rocker, you put 'em in a studio and say 'write a song'! Then you step back and watch the fur fly! (laughs) A real reality show - I think it'll be fucking great. We sold it to NBC here which is one of the majors, and it should be syndicated all over the world, so it might well show up in the UK on cable or whatever you guys have. I know it's going to be shown in India, so it must be on in England I would think.

That sounds fun, I'll keep my eyes open for that.

Yeah, keep your eye out... alright, thank you James, stay well, all the best and always a pleasure to talk to you.