

Questions for the JPT Scare Band

How did the three of you meet? Had you played in any other bands prior to the JPT Scare Band?

I played with Jeff, possibly Terry in 1971 at a local junior college jam session in a parking lot at the school. He was playing keyboards at the time with a couple other friends, Joe Clyne and Dana Smith among others. I met Terry when he was working at a music store owned by Rocky Rude. He taught guitar lessons in the back. I just bought my 72, left handed, right strung Rick 4001 bass and we decided to jam in a practice room at the music store.

Before JPT I played in a few bands, the Hollow Faces was a fun cover band I played in when I was 14 or 15. We did stuff by the Who, Eric Burden, Rick Derringer, Yardbirds. Canadian Goose and Bomar were a couple other bands. I wrote a few tunes back then like Power Plant and It's Too Late. We worked those over with our cover stuff. Con Edison and Lompoc were a couple other bands at opposite ends of the spectrum. CE was strictly a club cover band that worked 6 nights a week religiously all over the place. We were loud and could cover about any rock or blues tune. Lompoc was an original band that spent most of the time in a garage or basement. Very good players and songs but we could never turn the corner and get it out there.

What were your formative influences? The music of JPT doesn't really sound like anything else recorded at the time.

The Beatles are at the top of the list, Stones, Yardbirds, John Mayall, Bowie, Zep, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Airplane, Mountain for sure, Cream most definitely and shitloads of others I'm sure. Vanilla Fudge was the first concert I saw and Tim Bogart was a huge influence. Bands who jammed a lot like Cream, Zep, Mountain were very influential. For good or bad, our stuff still doesn't seem to sound like anything from any time.

How would you describe the JPT sound?

I like to think that when we are getting it to happen, we are creating a melting sound with lots of distortion, punchy groove, crazy licks with jams that pull together and come out sounding somewhat coherent. It doesn't always come out like we plan but when we click into something it can be very surprising. We are into the pocket or the groove and try to work that over in our tunes.

What was Kansas City like in the early seventies? Was there much of a band scene? Early seventies? Man, I don't know, maybe a few bands were out there but nobody doing what we did. They were all into conventional trends, not too much experimentation that I can recall. Since I was poor and unemployed most of that time and not getting out much to the clubs I was unaware of any band scene, just trying to create our own. Anyway, like I said, people didn't really like our stuff. I always thought that's why we called it the scare band because when people came to hear us they would stick their head in the room, take a look around a split. I figured we scared them away so we were the scare band. Now, years later, I understand there may have been other factors that led to naming the band. I did get an offer from Larry Knight to play bass with Brewer and Shipley around 74 or 75 but I was not able to imagine myself playing that stuff without driving them crazy, possibly even myself in the process so I declined the offer.

Tell me more about the Electric House on Manheim Road. Was there a commune type vibe? Was it as wild as you've previously reported?

The Electric House was a nice place to live. It had an anything goes aspect to it without seeming to be totally out of control. Only those who really wanted to stop by actually did. We lived in a scary part of town so it was not for the faint of heart. Commune? No, not really. We weren't really what I would call Hippies. We were long hair types who just wanted to hammer out some heavy blues and rock music. The peace and love stuff was wearing thin and nobody in our neighbourhood was buying it, that's for sure. And yes, it was wild, very wild at times and we also had some kick ass parties with the house full on all three levels, probably a hundred people in there, ripped and drunk and having a great time. We would always play music in the basement at these parties and typically, Gregg would be up in the top level back bedroom with headphones and a mixing board, fighting off cute girls, trying to remember to ride faders. He did a great job on our stuff. He seemed to be able to catch level changes pretty quickly, which really made sure that a lot of our music made it through the years, sounding pretty damn good considering the one take, two mic sessions we typically had at the beginning. Oh yeah, there were scenes that took place at that house that defy description; I would leave it at that.

You've said you lived on the wrong side of the racial divide – what was this like? Did you see a lot of craziness back then?

Well, it was interesting and educational. I learned a lot about purpose and watching my back. We stayed to ourselves as did most of our neighbours. At times it felt like we were in a cone of serenity. We would hear lots of gun shots and sirens all around, the whuppa whuppa of helicopters just overhead and the light show of spot lights from the helicopters shining all over our house and the surrounding area, as they looked for some fiend who was "at large". Some cats in full military uniform, driving a military tank showed up two doors down from us one day. They had the cannon pointed at a house a half block from the tank. They would have been shooting across a busy street. Either they were afraid to get too close or just wanted to get maximum freakout happening, who knew. Gregg videotaped me and Jeff blowing a doobie by the tank with the driver looking down at our little scene. Everything was quite Gonzo'd out and very over the top it seemed. We would lend our madness in the form of loud, crazed jams in with the external sound effects. It was pretty surreal at times.

Was there a lot of acid around in KC back then or had that faded away by this point? Yes and certainly not.

Did you ever fear for your life or safety living the way you did?

Yes, a fair amount of the time, but you got used to it and riding the knife's edge became a way of life. We were forced into the moment. There was none of the daydreaming shit going on. We had no such luxury at that time, we were in a state of constant focus, unless we were of course unable to focus due to external forces beyond our control and then who knows how we pulled through that. We must have found a protective zone in the universe because none of us ever came to harm.

Were you gigging regularly at this point? Was this locally or nationally? How did audiences react to your sound?

To be honest, I don't remember any gigs.

Did you incorporate any gimmicks into the stage show? What were Terry's lead guitar performances like?

Gigging, hah! We gigged in the basement. We may have played a couple parties or done a backup as a side band deal at some bar, but we did not work. Nobody was paying to see the crazy shit we were up to at that time. The tapes speak for themselves. Check out the Ramona video on youtube. Terry was quite mobile on stage. That guitar was making him jump all over the place!

Were there any particularly memorable incidents at gigs?

I recall playing Burn In Hell at Jimmy's Jigger, third set. It was great to be able to play the stuff we had been working on to a real crowd. The problem was there wasn't much of a crowd. The popcorn, grease stained floors were very visible with the lack of humanity on top of them.

Did you play gigs 'straight' or were substances ingested prior to performances? You got to be kidding, right? We were living out on that edge, or ledge, I forget.

What were Terry's key influences? He appears to have developed an almost unique style.

I'll let Terry field that one.

How did you come to record the tracks that made up Acid Acetate Excursion? Was the tape rolling a lot in those days?

We were playing every night during those times. Acid Acetate, Theme from the Monsters and others were recorded on a two track, seven inch reel Sony recorder and were mixed, in two tracks, using a Traynor board that Rocky Rude let us use. Gregg was the fourth member of the band. Without Gregg we would never have got such a good recording on tape. We still have lots of hours of stuff that hasn't made it on cd or vinyl. If we keep selling the current stuff maybe we can put some more of the old stuff out there.

What equipment were you using? How did Terry's guitar sound evolve?

I played a 4001 Rickenbacker bass, stereo, into two amps. I had 15" JBL 140fs in one folded horn cabinet, designed by Rocky Rude, and two altec 15"s in the other folded horn. I ran my Sunn Concert Bass amp into one box and my Standell MC2B and 250 watt amp into the other. I got a clean, heavy sound out of the standell and a distorted, melting sound out of the Sunn. I really liked that rig.

Did you have any offers to record for any labels in the '70s?

No, but we did get a few offers from some cute girls in the neighbourhood. Like I said, nobody was buying what we were selling at that time.

More tracks were recorded in the '70s that made up Sleeping Sickness. Were you still living in the Electric House at this time? Were you living a psychedelic lifestyle throughout the decade?

75 and 76 found us living apart. Terry was off doing his thing and Jeff and I were doing a gig with a couple other friends, travelling around playing weird country music but getting tight as a drummer / bass player team. I moved into the Parkville, stone house where we recorded stuff like King Rat, I've been Waiting, Jerry's Blues and Time to Cry to name a few. We still had really good night vision too!

No JPT material appears to date from the eighties? Were there any other musical projects at this time? Did you ever record with other bands?

I was living in Boulder, Colorado during the 80's and met lots of players. I did several projects that got some airplay but we never did any vinyl or plastic on any of those songs. I ran into Harvey Goodman, friend of Richey Hayward and Lowell George from his California days. He played kick ass drums and wrote a lot of tunes. We had a couple really good guitarists, Mike Loukin and Tom Graham and Kip Winger's brother Paul sang on a couple of the tunes we did at his studio, Mountaineer's, in Boulder. This went on for several years but never went anywhere. It was pretty fun though.

Am I right in saying that bootlegs of your material circulated for several years and there was never any material officially released back in the '70s? How did Monster Records find you in the '90s?

I'm not sure there were any bootlegs of JPT but it is possible. Hell, I never even had recordings of that stuff until the 90's hit and I got in touch with Jeff and Terry. Monster liked a tune Terry and I wrote in the dark, at the Electric House one evening when the gun shots and sirens reached a fever pitch, Burn In Hell. That is the song that Phil and Dennis liked and the reason why JPT began working with them on what was to be a 5 vinyl album project. We only cranked out 2 vinyls and then cds picked up lots of interest over vinyl and we did one more official release, Sleeping Sickness. Monster also did a bootleg of our first vinyl album, Acid Acetate Excursion but we were unfortunately uninvolved with that deal.

Were you aware that your material had been extensively bootlegged? Were you surprised when Monster contacted you?

I had no idea anybody liked our stuff but us. When did you start seeing our stuff, before 95? I was surprised but very happy to hear from Jeff and Terry because we have always been able to crank out some heavy, melty music.

Presumably there are many other tapes in the box? Any plans for any other archival releases? Did Monster just cherry pick what they considered to be the best or are there other tracks that you would love to see released?

There are many tapes left in the box plus lots of recent recordings not yet released. Time will tell on when or if these will make it out of the box. I think we worked with Monster to cherry pick tracks according to personal preference for the first albums. Of course there was some compromise but it was pleasant where the music was concerned. The artwork on a couple of the albums was a huge bone of contention that dramatically slowed the progress of the release of our second vinyl and first cd releases of Rape of Titan's Sirens and Sleeping Sickness. We finally folded and said fuck it, go ahead, just get the fucking record on the shelves already.

Did you feel a sense of vindication when you attracted many new fans with the various releases put out in the last 15 years?

Vindication? No. Happy? Yes. It has been nice just to be able to hear our stuff on a nice media with accurate labels so you can find them when you are shuffling through the plastic. I am amazed that we seem to have attracted a global fan base. It is not the largest fan base but it does appear to be from just about anywhere on the globe including Kosovo and Poland. We have also been the adopted psych band by a local public radio station, KKFI. Arjay, the DJ loves our music and often invites us to the studio to do on air banter while he plays our tracks.

You recorded Jamm Vapour and Jamnation in the last decade to universal praise. Are there any plans for any future material?

We have a project we recorded in 2004 that we hope to release later in 2009. We had a wild three night session at a protocols studio in Kansas City. I think we have

about an album and a half we could come up with if you figure an album at 70+ minutes. We like to fill the disc up as much as we can. I hate to buy a freakin 45 minute album on CDs. That's like filling the tank half full or only eating a salad and not your dinner.

Jamnation is a whole other thing Dan McGuire contacted me several years ago when he started into this deal and sent me a cd with King Rat playing and him over to the left, hard left, channel with a somewhat quiet vocal. I asked him why he did that and he said he wanted the music to rule. After talking for a while I convinced him that the poetry he was doing over the music was cool and he should put some vocal effects on it and center it up so it rides on top of the music. He was very receptive and came up with a really nice disc. I even floated him some of my Amsterdam photos for the cover art. It was fun to work with him on this project.

Do you admire any modern bands? Are there any you think have a JPT-like vibe to them?

I really like Radiohead, Beck, Byork. I like Crowded House for their Beatle-esque bass lines and harmonies. I don't know if any bands today have a JPT thing going but I haven't been able to get back far enough to see exactly what that JPT vibe is. I think it's just what happens when the three of us play music together. We don't really discuss how it's going to go down we just start playing and make sure we have a recorder going to catch it.

What is your finest achievement through the years?

Musically? Ok, I learned how to make fewer mistakes and still get out on the edge of improvisation. It's just fun to make it up as we go. Since no amount of rehearsal helps you when in the throes of an improvised rant, there's always that bit of tension not knowing what comes next. Even on the Jamm Vapour session stuff where we played stuff that resembles conventional song writing, Jeff and I were not familiar with any of the tunes prior to the actual recording sessions and just faked through them catching it on the first or second take. In a larger sense, I raised two kids who didn't go crazy living with me and then grew into very nice people. That's probably the thing that sticks out in my mind.

Any parting words for Shindig readers?

You may never get there, wherever that may be, so be sure to enjoy the ride. Kick it in the ass!