

## INTERVIEW FOR PROGARCHIVES FORUM

Prog stalwarts such as the Flower Kings, IQ and Porcupine Tree need no encouragement only acknowledgement as they have a sizable fan base and imposing sales, yet they are still mostly prog enthusiasts who have day jobs and create this music out of love. Guy Manning is one of those incredibly talented and prolific musicians who need both acknowledgement and encouragement, having delivered 10 albums in 10 years that are easily some of the finer jewels in the recent prog pantheon. While his contributions with The Tangent are very noticed, his solo output contains some amazing music that is original, invigorating, adventurous and exciting and would appeal to a vast panorama of fans of plain old good music. I have had interesting communications with Guy, a dedicated, passionate, intensely proud and gifted composer and multi-instrumentalist. Both torodduglesteg and myself (tszirmay) have joined in a conspiracy to "shine a little light" on this fascinating artist that fully deserves a "STAR" status within the Progressive World. Guy responded immediately and with amazing grace, sign of a true believer!

Please enjoy his sampler available on his site for a free download at <http://www.guymanning.com/>

### Questions by PA member tszirmay

1-Fans are curious to know if you are a professional musician or do you have a day job like so many current prog bands?

No I DO have a day job. I work in IT, so finding the time needed for all the musical activities is quite hard some times. But I love it..so I do it!

2-You have been very prolific, releasing 10 albums in 10 years!

Yes, 10 of my own albums, plus the Tangent albums, plus 2 project suites for COLOSSUS  
Very busy, but that is as I like it

3-You are also a multi-instrumentalist .How do you compose your albums?

Everything starts with an initial idea

- A) This can be from a lyrical phrase or a story line I think of
- B) Can be a chord sequence that sparks it off (on guitar or keyboard)
- C) Can be a rhythmic pattern / beat

I doodle with ideas and store them off on my PC hard drive and then I come back alter and review them to see if I still like it. If I do, then I develop it a bit further until I understand where I am going. So, it is very much a journey of discovery

4-Which was your first instrument and which one do you enjoy playing the most or that gives you the coldest sweat beads?

I started on piano (lessons) when I was 8 but did not like it; then, I found a beaten up old Spanish guitar in my parents wardrobe and started bashing out Alice Cooper, Lindisfarne, Wishbone Ash songs on it...it all started there. I then went back to the piano again!

I guess my instrument of choice (comfort) is my Acoustic Guitar but I DO love to play keys too

The hardest to play is my mandolin because it is so small I have fat fingers or maybe my Bouzouki because it is a round back and keeps slipping off my lap when I sit down!

5-Many reviewers have commented on your voice being very close to legends like Al Stewart, Dave Cousins or Ian Anderson. Are they correct in assuming that these are musicians that have inspired you? Who were your childhood musical role-models?

Oh yes, these guys are the best!

But your voice is your voice and is what you've been given../I don't think Jon Anderson could sing like Barry White!!!

I do agree that my tonal range is like that of Ian Anderson/Dave Cousins though  
My role models (when I first got into music) were (Vocally) Ian Anderson, Jon Anderson, Peter Gabriel, Greg Lake, Roy Harper, John Martyn, Al Stewart  
(Musically) I guess that JethroTull were my goal posts

6-I have detected a Roxy Music/Eno/Manzanera tinge in your compositions, am I wrong?

No, I can hear that in certain songs (Another Lazy Sunday, Stronger certainly come to mind). I do like those musicians and have most of their albums!

7-Your lyrics are always quite picturesque, how do you write? Music first and lyrics after or vice-versa? And how important are the messages within?

Depends (See point 3)

I do consider myself to be a wordsmith and I take great care over my lyrics.

I like to get them clear but poetic and always try and express an emotion or tell a story  
The lyrics are vitally important to my songs. The Words & Music must go together (as does the artwork a lot of the time too)

I am afraid that I do not have a lot of time for people who do not bother to read or understand my lyrics

8-You have always thankfully included the saxophone in your palette of sound, some fine blowing on each recording. Are you a fan?

Yes! I was lucky enough to meet a great player (Laura Fowles)

But the saxophone is an instrument I think that you should try and NOT over use. It should be a feature, the icing on the cake!

9-You have a loyal fan base that keeps you going and yet your association with The Tangent seems to be the most visible. Why do you think that is so?

My fans are VERY loyal, but still relatively few. Not sure why that is. It is certainly very, very disappointing as I think a lot of people would really like some of my music if they got to hear it. The Tangent is obviously more prominent because of its famous line-ups. Having David Jackson and The Flower Kings in the band does you know harm...these players are well known!

All my albums get top reviews on pretty much every review site annually and yet they seem to come out, get a slight ripple of buzz and then get ignored again...why is that?

As a smaller artist, I am constantly in competition with the bigger acts like IQ, Flower Kings, Spock's Beard etc. and your Porcupine Trees....

I don't compete with any of them on a sales level at all, but there ARE a lot of albums out there and fewer listeners each year (so we need to get younger people really fired up about this genre and quickly!)

**10-My secret wish is to have Jonas Reingold and Zoltan Csörsz of the Flower Kings as your rhythm team. Any chance of that happening? Jonas is a monster bassist!**

They are fabulous musicians but.....

- o They are very busy on their other main projects
- o They need to be paid! My albums are done on a shoestring budget by talented amateurs!

**11-Your favorite prog albums and bands.**

A long list of artists (and not all are prog):

Jethro Tull, Genesis, ELP, Yes, King Crimson, Hatfield & The North, Al Stewart, Roy Harper, Joni Mitchell, John Martyn, CSNY, Caravan, Zappa, RTF. Mahavishnu Orchestra, Jeff Buckley, Weather Report, Renaissance ...and on and on

Top 10 albums (For ME alone and in no particular order...)

A Passion Play (Tull)

Past, Present & Future (Al Stewart)

Bullinamingvase (Roy Harper)

Rotters Club (Hatfields)

Foxtrot (Genesis)

Court & Spark (Joni)

Grace (Jeff Buckley)

Scheherezade & Other Stories (Renaissance)

Close to the edge (Yes)

Larks tongues in Aspic (King Crimson)

**12-Your favorite current musicians.**

The Decemberists

Magenta

I'll probably remember a lot more after I send this to you!

### 13-Your dearest Manning album and why?

I love them all!

I still have not made a perfect one (IMO) and so it is a lot easier to discuss favorite pieces than favorite albums!

Each MANNING album is different to others in the back catalogue after all

### 14-Future plans?

No studio album this year I think (I wanted a rest / pause at 10).

More LIVE Work. We want to play abroad (Come on ROSFEST!!!!)

I hope to do a live album / DVD as the next release

Recording for the next TANGENT album is underway as well

=====

### Questions by PA member toroddfuglesteg

1-You released the first album under the moniker GUY MANNING. I take it from both the music and your bio that was more off a solo album than a MANNING album?

Well not really!

All MANNING albums are done the same way and always have been. What this was about was that I released my debut album "Tall Stories..." under the GUY MANNING name and got a lot of reviews all stating that I was just a singer / songwriter. That particular branding is not always good IMO unless you are Al Stewart or Paul Simon...so for the next album (The Cure) I just used MANNING.. This album was taken a lot more seriously by the reviewers because it was by a BAND!!

Funny thing reviewers and perception.. Sometimes they get the craziest notions!

2- How is it to be signed on a small record label and much of the production of the albums do you take care of yourself? Studio, mastering etc etc.

I take care of everything except the manufacture and distribution of the CDs. All recording, production and artwork production etc is handled by myself.

I think the label selection is important.

CYCLOPS had enough faith in me to release the first 5 but then had not the budget to continue

ProgRock took the next three albums on and did a great job of boosting my profile, but ultimately I found it difficult being so far away from them (based in California) and looked for UK based label

Festival (F2) took up the challenge and have been supportive of me

The only downside is that small labels have very limited financial resources to help the smaller artist

We are now at the stage where a financial injection into promotion, support tours etc. would take us to the next level, but I feel the resources are probably not there

**3- Your choice of artwork is excellent and worthy some comments from you. Please give us a rundown of each of the artworks.**

The artwork IS very important to me. Just like a brilliantly lit / dressed empty stage sets the scene for the performance ahead, so the artwork supports the music and lyrics (or should IMO)

Note: CYCLOPS preferred a Black and White booklet to keep the printing costs down and that is why the early albums only have colour outer pages (not artistic choice!)

Tall Stories For Small Children - Artwork created by my children (then quite young) to put across the narrative tales and give it that naïve look I wanted. Each Story was to come from this big Story book. So that is the look I wanted

The Cure - Other worldly, being out of physical contact. This was created using Bryce and other images. Plus, I needed a schematic for a Total Sensory Deprivation tank (to support the storyline in this concept album) and got in touch with a company that makes them in the USA. They provided lots of drawings etc.

Cascade - I loved this picture that I found in a book. It reminded me of my new live band of troubadours!

The Ragged Curtain - Whilst in Greece I found the cover painting hanging on a wall. I wrote the song "Weaver of Dreams" based on the picture and then asked if I could use the work as my cover, the artist was unfortunately dead but the owner gave me permission to use it

The View From My Window - I wanted to show visually the same scene, but viewed from a Western and Eastern perspective. I still think it is a striking cover.  
The Eye image appears through the book

A Matter of Life & Death (The Journal Of Abel Mann)  
This was the first of the 3 Ed Unitsky artworks

This was a narrative concept album and so I wanted to tell the story in the pictures. Ed & I worked hard on coming up with the best ideas and the pervading dark images / omens. I think he did a brilliant job. Symbols from the album lyrics are all brought onto front cover. (A bit like on Foxtrot)

One Small Step... - deals primarily with the Man and Space. The artwork from Ed shows a man dressed in a Bermuda holiday shirt with a suitcase and small dog looking out into the distant universe. These images perfectly summed up my argumentative POV - we want to conquer space, take trips/holidays into the Galaxy are we ready yet to do so? Is the human race fit to go out there? Should we not get our act together here first?

Anser's Tree - was again a very special design. I asked Ed to create that Empty stage back drop I talked about earlier, for each of the stories. Each song on the album is about one character from the same Family tree. So, each page in the book represents the stage on which their story is played out

When I moved from PRR to F2, I wanted a more modern look to the artwork for the next album cover and also felt that the 3 Ed covers were very special and as such, should be ring fenced.

Songs From the Bilston House - used a similar 'collection' idea to Anser's Tree. This time however, each song was set in a different room in one house.

My daughter Rosie (Now grown up and a graphic designer) took on the task of recreating the atmosphere in this derelict old house and suitably convey that to support each song.

Number Ten - I asked several artists to look into doing this as I had a specific idea for the cover, but they did not work out. Phil Wilkes & I set about creating the artwork to match my concepts. The mysterious 'Mandala' symbol appears on nearly every page to bring some continuity to the whole album look, but etched into walls, trees, etc to keep it interesting and intriguing. The iconic front cover is of 10, Downing Street, suitably embellished with the mandala and a couple of my folkier instruments added in for good measure

**4- You have issued a very tasty free download compilation CD on your homepage. Please tell us more about this album and each track.**

The FREE album has a track from every album on it and a bonus unreleased track. I even provided the artwork for you to make a proper CD out of it, should you wish!

Each track provide is 'probably' the most appropriate to try and represent its parent album, but this is always a difficult choice as the track you might want to give away is actually 30 minutes long and so not a good idea!

I do not want anybody to buy one of my albums and then hate it...so I offer this as a chance to hear my music and make your own minds up - try b4 u buy!  
So there are NO excuses if you do not like my singing voice and yet have not taken a trial copy first!

Well Thank you Guy, your courteous and prompt insights were most welcome.

=====

### **Questions by PA member Dino**

1-Are there any plans for you and Andy (Tillison) to do more LA VOCE DEL VENTO compositions?

No plans at present, but one day we hope to do a whole album!

2-Anybody you'd like to work with? Anybody you'd like to meet?

There are so many - Peter Gabriel I think would be a 'good match'! Kate Bush, Roy Harper, Ian Anderson, any of my heroes I guess

3-Do you think that the fact that you've done ten albums (which is far more than most artists achieve) has its ups and downs?

I read that you still feel 'unknown' and so the fact that so many albums have been released and to mainly great reviews must make you slightly disappointed in this respect? If it take your meaning rightly...Yes I think sometimes, if you release a lot of albums then the NEXT one becomes just one more; you are not viewed as 'special because of that regularity.

I think that ALL my albums hold their heads up well and so it is NOT a lack of quality in the song writing.

A lot of people are just looking for the next new thing, I pass right under their noses because they have not bothered to listen before (why should they?) or they assume they know what my music is about/sounds like....and they think there is no urgency to do so, because I have ALWAYS been there!

But I won't always be!

4-Do you miss the LP sleeve? Bigger for the artwork, more room for the lyrics etc.

YES YES YES . I loved to hold it read the lyrics study the artwork and it was at a size where this was excellent. Now I need my glasses and a magnifying glass!

5-What are your views on downloading music?

Aha a tricky one! I take it you mean illegally?

Depends on which 'head' you are asking I think!

Legal downloads are a useful alternative to buying a CD but see points a) and b) below

Illegal??

The ARTIST in me says...I want as many people to hear my music so that is the way of the World, let it out there

The other practical side of me says yeah, but if nobody buys any CDs :

- a) No artwork is seen which is a real shame, with my albums in particular
- b) no lyrics are read...another 'no no' from me there as they are Soooooo important!!!
- c) I get no money back in coffers towards making any more (SMALL ARTISTS DO NOT GET LOT OF ADVANCES or ROYALTIES you know!)