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Interview with Guy Manning on 13th October 2010 by DPRP's Geoff Feakes

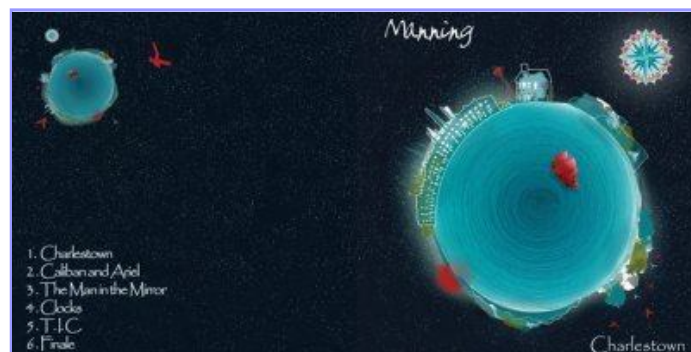
Two and half years have elapsed since I last visited Guy Manning in his home studio to talk to one of the most prolific and talented artists to have graced these pages. With 11 albums in as many years including 8 DPRP recommendations and only modest commercial success you could say that Guy is one of prog's best kept secrets and long overdue for wider recognition. On the previous occasion we discussed Guy's extensive back catalogue and his involvement with The Tangent amongst other things. This time around we focused our attention on the excellent new Manning release 'Charlestown' .



Charlestown The Album

GEOFF: On your previous albums there has usually been a concept of sorts, is there a story that links the songs on 'Charlestown'?

GUY: As a whole no, it's not a narrative concept album. It's not even what I call a container concept album. By a container concept album I mean things like 'Anser's Tree' and 'Songs From The Bilston House' where the songs had their own stories but were contained in the concept of a family tree or a house, so it's none of those. The album is really centred around the big piece, the title track 'Charlestown' and the rest I see as supporting pieces until we get to 'Finale' which we'll talk about but its an instrumental written for the band because they wanted something difficult to play and it echoes the themes and variations from 'Charlestown'.



Charlestown

GEOFF: You mentioned there the 35 minute title track which is certainly your longest piece to date and I'm thinking back to pieces like 'Ragged Curtains' and 'One Small Step'.

GUY: 'One Small Step' was about 31 minutes but that was more marginalised I think, split up into different bits and pieces.

GEOFF: I think it would be fair to say that 'Charlestown' is probably your most varied piece to date and most complex. One of the particular things that I like about the track is you create some marvellously lush orchestral sounds. Can you tell me how some of those were achieved?

GUY: Well we didn't have an orchestra I can tell you that (laughs) otherwise it would have sounded even more lush. It's nice to hear you say that though. The orchestral arrangements are done by the usage of samples basically, cello samples and violin samples. I was also lucky enough on this particular album to have a young lady called Kathy Hampson come in and play the actual cello. We used the real cello on some parts and the sample on others and I'll leave you to try and workout which is which. Probably the best sounding ones are Kathy I should imagine but I'm not going to tell you which because that would spoil it. It's a combination of those instruments plus strings plus other orchestral supporting instruments like French horns and things which are also samples. So the orchestral arrangement is built up through me overlaying samples on top of samples really to try and create an orchestral arrangement rather than a normal chord string pad. I tried to create the individual parts of the orchestra by using samples and building them up.



GEOFF: There is also some wonderfully proggy instrumental bits which leads towards a finale and it is a fantastic finale where you even throw in a snatch of 'Auld Lang Syne' at the end.

GUY: Well yes, actually you should have heard the original ending. The original ending went off and did all sorts of strange things but I decided it wasn't working for various reasons and I wanted to end it on something that was fairly uplifting. People tell me that I write a lot about death and that I write a lot about the sea so here's a song about death on the sea, so it ticks both boxes for people who like my style. But I also wanted to leave it on a more optimistic note so not everybody dies, I'll give that part of the story away there are some casualties but not everybody and they get back and it's a curious turn of events that gets them back which is the interesting bit. But 'Auld Lang Syne' is there to echo the theme of going home and coming home basically. The song starts by recollecting the voyage; it starts at the end and tells the story of the voyage and 'Auld Lang Syne' really was just a conceited way of getting through that bit and adding a bit of rural, folkly pastoralism I guess to the proceedings more than anything else and I needed an ending (laughs).

GEOFF: I read somewhere or maybe I dreamt it, that the theme of the voyage and coming

home is set around the 18th century. Was it deliberately based on something you read or did the story just come to you?

GUY: You will need to understand how I came to writing the thing in the first place I guess, it says so in the booklet actually on the back page. I had ideas for musical pieces but nothing really for any lyrical content or storyline and I like telling stories as you probably know. So I was looking for a story and I was getting fed up and moaning and Julie (King Guy's partner) was getting very fed up with me saying I'm finished I can't write anymore, I mean how many stories can you tell? And we were going on holiday so I thought let's just get through the holiday and come back. So we went on holiday to Cornwall this year, not Margate, and it was an interesting holiday the weather was OK but there was a couple of really grey days and on these days we were wondering what to do and Julie said there's a working port up the road where they actually have tall ships called Charlestown. So I said Oh really, well go on then if we must. So we went to this working port and we stood on the decks of these ships which are used in all the BBC series like 'Hornblower'. They're farmed out so every time you want a tall ship this boat appears and below the decks they've got pictures of all the BBC stuff. But the port still works and it's manmade it's not a natural port it was made specifically by one of the designers who built the Edison lighthouse. It was a working port to take boats out of that part of Cornwall carrying china clay up and around Lands End into Bristol or further up to Liverpool delivering china clay and bringing back imports into the area for porcelain and things. So I was looking around and I found this all fascinating and I thought that would be a good idea for a story, an epic voyage. And of course you know the problem is if you write about all the good things that happened on the voyage it would be very boring story. You know, we set out, we had a great time and we got there thanks, that's the end of the story. So obviously in my tale a lot of things befall the poor crew of this boat. I did the research and got in touch with the Charlestown maritime museum and we found there had been this boat that was a three master called the Water Witch and it was built around 1805. In actual fact it's rather like when I did 'Songs From The Bilston House' I had to move the house to the coast because I wanted to write 'Antares' which is set by the sea and nothing really happened to the Water Witch but it did exist and it did a lot of these journeys. In this particular story it never made it to its final resting place which was actually in India where it spent the rest of its days doing local hauls. So the Water Witch did exist it was built and I sort of like that level of realism, the fact that it was a real boat and it did do these trips that was the basis of the story. I wasn't on board so I can't tell you that what happened to these people happened on many of the voyages but it's my imagination that takes over from that point. But I like to ground it in some sort of realism and research I think that's quite important. So that's how the story got written and that's where the Water Witch comes from.



Caliban And Ariel

GEOFF: From your longest track to date to one of your shortest which is the second track on the new album 'Caliban and Ariel' which many people I guess will realise is based on characters from Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. It really is a wonderfully plaintive song and quite a contrast to the opening track so can you tell me a little bit about that song?

GUY: Yes you're right 'Caliban and Ariel' is based loosely on Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and for those people that have read the play you'll know that these two characters are pretty much polar opposites to one another. Caliban is the brutish creature borne of clay and earth and Ariel is a fairy basically, a fairy of light and mysticism. So they are polar opposites of one another in terms of elementals. So I had this idea, I don't know where it came from, I just thought wouldn't it be great if they are polar opposites and they're supposed to not really mix but every night they sneak out and go to this shoreline because its set on an island and they go and have a little dance together as the dawn is about to come up and then they go back to their opposing corners if you like. So it was just a funny little idea that I had in my head about these two doing almost like a folky gig together and being opposites the meeting was quite interesting I thought and they each get a little bit about themselves in the song. It is short, but I like it and it's a bit like 'For Absent Friends' on 'Nursery Cryme' It's a small piece that follows something much bigger to give you that sigh of relief, OK we're not going for another half an hour. This isn't 'The Whirlwind' you know, this is a small piece that follows a 35 minute piece and it's positioned carefully I think.

GEOFF: Yeah and it works very well with a wonderful arrangement that's basically piano and acoustic guitar from yourself I guess and also there's cello as well.

GUY: That's Kathy playing the cello on that, it's one of the real ones (laughs). The rest and the vocals are really me doing things like eight bars of harmonies in there doing a sort of Crosby, Stills and Nash sort of thing I guess, not as well but that was the idea (laughs).

GEOFF: At the beginning of 'Caliban and Ariel' I was half expecting you to break into 'Macarthur Park' because it really did remind me of that song or is that just me doing my typical reviewer thing and grasping for comparisons?

GUY: You can grasp all you like (laughs). I know 'Macarthur Park' but not very well, certainly not well enough to be able to reference it that accurately for you I'm afraid. Well I'll go back and listen to it now.

The Man In The Mirror

GEOFF: Track number three on the album which is the 'The Man In the Mirror'...

GUY: Not the Michael Jackson song (laughs).

GEOFF: No not a tribute to Michael Jackson although having said that it does have quite a funky rhythm. Again this is an album of contrasts and just three tracks in something quite different with a very catchy chorus and the fiddle solo from Ian (Fairbairn) is wonderfully placed. Can I ask, is the song autobiographical in anyway?

GUY: No (laughs) it's probably an idea that I've nicked. As I said I like writing stories and there is only so many stories I can think of and I think for this one, if I'm looking back honestly which I tend to try and do if I can, I probably borrowed the storyline from things such as 'Jean De Florette' and maybe even a bit of 'The Hunchback Of Notre Dame'. It's about isolation; it's about somebody who is not looked upon as a beautiful creature by most of us. In this case he's a giant of a man, probably about seven foot and he's slightly disfigured and he keeps himself to himself apart from the rest of the village. He's got his piece of land up on the cliffs. He's got a nice farm there overlooking the sea and he's a very gentle, honest hardworking man. He keeps himself apart because he understands that he might distress people but that's why he's doing it not because he's standoffish. He lives this isolated hermits life and the problem is the real beasts of the story are actually living in the village because as soon as things go wrong for that lot they basically run him off his land and take over. So it is a bit like 'Jean De Florette' in a way, it's that sort of storyline so apologise for borrowing a bit of that story it just appealed. And of course again it's not a happy ending, he doesn't come back, there isn't a 'Man In The Mirror 2 - This Time Its Personal' and he does them all in. He's run off and that's it, end of story really and it says that in the story, sometimes things workout but not in this case. And it's sad, it just shows man's inhumanity to man basically and that was the object of the exercise. And the fiddle part in the middle is to give it a bit more of a rustic feel. But if you notice that fiddle solo even though its playing a sort of jig reel it still negates to a syncopated funk background (hums the rhythm) almost like a Sylvester walking bass line going on behind there and I wanted to juxtapose that sort of funk with folk, folk funk. Maybe I've created my own new genre, I don't know but it's that sort of thing the juxtaposition of a basically traditional jig reel motif against a funk background and it seems to work OK.

GEOFF: Yeah it does and it's surprising how you describe the story behind the song because it really has quite an upbeat vibe. Was that I conscious decision because of the mood of the previous song and you wanted something different?

GUY: No, I don't think I'm honestly that calculating about these things, I just wrote it. Dave (Albone) our drummer who's just retired is a big Porcupine Tree fan and he likes Gavin Harrison's simplistic drum patterns although simplistic may be belittling. They appear simple, they're very straight forward and yet they're not, they're quite complicated and they've got a very straight forward on the beat type of thing about it and this was going to be one of those with more of a modern sort of production. I brought the snare out to make it sound like a more modern song. A lot of the things like 'Charlestown' and some of the other songs I've done tend to hark back to the 70's they've got an almost traditional progressive lilt to them in the tonality and the way they sound. This one, I tried to make it sound a bit more modern and that's why it's more upbeat I guess. I don't know why, I could have gone for that more Pineapple Thief melancholy introspective feel but I didn't on this one. I thought it would be nice to give it a full belt. We tried various versions with Julie singing the lead, we tried different things but this was the one that worked the most successfully.



Clocks

GEOFF: And another change of mood for track number four on the album which is 'Clocks' which is very atmospheric, almost haunting in places and again some very strong soling this time from Steve Dundon playing flute. One aspect of the song I really like is the reoccurring mandolin motif by you...

GUY: Yes it's a mandolin going through a Leslie.

GEOFF: It really is a haunting piece.

GUY: It's funny you should mention haunting because it's a song about ghosts (laughs). 'Clocks' is a funny song because it's quite an old piece. I actually recorded 'Clocks' the first time for 'Tall Stories' and it never got used, it was one of the tracks that came off for some reason. And that was a very different arrangement and then we started playing it in the acoustic set and that's a very different arrangement as well. Dave Million and I worked out an arrangement of it for the acoustic Manning shows. So when we came to do 'Charlestown' my first thought was lets capture what we do live and get a nice little acoustic song but I tried it and it just didn't work as a studio piece. It works great as an acoustic number but it doesn't translate much into an album piece unless I did something completely different. So I basically took the building blocks of that piece and then added all the melancholy and the chanting and gave it quite a claustrophobic feel. It's all about an earthbound spirit who gets one chance to return if his girlfriend will help him but in the last minute she can't face it and runs away and leaves him and he evaporates basically. So the whole thing is quite physical in terms of its atmosphere, you're supposed to be able to cut through the ectoplasm of it to get through, it's quite claustrophobic. There's not a lot of percussion in it, there's no drums in it, and it's just got a basic background almost like an implied beat to it. So now we've now got two versions, the studio version and the acoustic version which we'll still do. The acoustic version is a lot lighter and airier I feel but I just wanted to take it somewhere else to see what would happen and that whole middle section with Steve doing the flute I wrote specifically for this,

it's not how be do the acoustic stuff. It was quite interesting to do but when I look at it I think I prefer the acoustic version personally. But this is just an alternate take of the same thing it shows you can take one song and make it whatever you want. If there's not a bad tune at the back of it you can probably get away with it.

GEOFF: Yeah, I suppose for me in terms of this arrangement it works very well in the context of the album.

GUY: Yeah it fits nicely in the middle and it's not too long as well (laughs).



T.I.C.

GEOFF: Track number five 'T.I.C.' Again I suppose although it's a completely different arrangement to 'The Man In the Mirror' it does have a kind of good time feel and again with another very strong, catchy chorus.

GUY: The thing is every Manning album of late has had an uplifting song. On 'Number 10' we had 'Ships' and on 'Bilston' there was a couple of rocky ones like 'Icarus & Me' and 'Lost In Play'. Sort of more foot tapping stompy tunes. 'TIC' was a song I wrote a long time ago with my good friend Simon Baskin. We wrote it when we were in a band together in Leeds called Let's Eat in the early 80's and of course in those days we were all dressing up like Haircut 100 we all had black t shirts on, little lariats and berets and things like that. And this was a song that Simon and I worked on and he's a solicitor and he wanted to help write the lyric and he started putting all these legal terms in it, T.I.C. taken into consideration, pleading and defence. I've actually rewritten the lyric and taken a lot of it out but every second line was a pun on some legal term which he found very funny but it doesn't have any relevance now so I took it out and made it slightly more sinister than the original version was. But it really is just a blues rocker and it's certainly a nice one to do live which we're going to do in the live set because it gives all the people in the band a chance to do a solo. The Wishbone Ash thing with Chris (Catling) on one side and Kev (Currie) on the other, they do the twin lines which is fun and then you get the keyboards and flute, or sax and flute as it was but we've got keyboards and flute to play it live. And it's just a good song to sing because its got a rocky chorus and its got a cod reggae verse structure and I just like the way they all fit together and it was just fun to do and when we play it live its great. But this is a song to not take to seriously, it's a live rocky piece and that's it. It has no real relevance, its not as deep if you like as the other ones are in terms of meaning its just a lightweight song and I think you need one on there somewhere like 'Bloody Holiday' was for 'Number Ten'.

GEOFF: And you even squeeze in a proggy synth solo for good measure.

GUY: Yeah, well there always was even back in the 80's that solo was in there. I've rearranged some of the arrangements, it changes keys a bit more and does some other funny things but that solo section was always envisaged to be there its hasn't changed much since the early days really.

GEOFF: Again you said it works very well in the context of the album certainly something that's very easy on the ear before 'Finale'.

GUY: It's placing is to say here's something that's a lighter fair for you before we going into something that's a bit more 'what on earths going on here' which is 'Finale' really.

Finale

GEOFF: And that leads us to the final track the appropriately titled 'Finale'....

GUY: That's a joke isn't it, I couldn't call it 'Los Endos' (laughs).

GEOFF: No although there's a percussion part in there that did make me think of that.

GUY: It is an homage, I was thinking of Los Endos because it's the tail end of the album, it bookends the album just like 'Dance On A Volcano' and Los Endos' does on 'A Trick Of The Tail'. But it's a sort of in joke you know because like that piece it references a former piece but again it came because they wanted something difficult to play. Dave our drummer and Kris (Hudson Lee) said give us something difficult, and I said so you want something difficult do you, fine I'll make you the lead instruments then and see how you like that. And really 'Finale', certainly the opening and ending are based around drums and bass and they're almost playing a tune together. Each note is mirrored, bass and drums together in quite peculiar time signatures.



GEOFF: Yeah, in fact I thought the opening was quite a departure for you because it reminded me of those early 70's jazz albums, it has quite an American jazz vibe.

GUY: Yeah it is a sort of fusion thing, but at the same time I'm not of that calibre so what I'm doing is fairly simple, I'm just doing it in an odd time signature to make it sound complicated. But yeah maybe it could have been Weather Report on a bad day you know I may have tried something like that, some of the more impro things where they're playing together, imagine the bass and drums playing a walking line together, stopping and starting. The art was to stop and start at the same moment, 'Finale' is all about that really certainly in its beginning and end. In the middle it start to explore some of the themes from 'Charlestown' and goes through various changes including a proggy bit with choirs and things and almost like a PFM riff comes out or a moog part, a Genesis Tony Banks riff comes out in the middle, its one of those type of things.

GEOFF: Yeah you're quite right it does and turns almost into a proggy keyboard extravaganza which could have come from the early '70's. You also manage to create an authentic mini-moog sound.

GUY: Well the instruments we've got to work with these days and the PC are very sophisticated. I mean bearing in mind a mini-moog is only a series of circuits that produces a series of sine waves and square waves then so can the PC so if you can organise it in the same way as a moog you may not get a 100% there but you can get a good 95% way towards a mini-moog. So it seems to work OK and it was fun to write and fun to watch them suffer as they had to play it in the recordings.

GEOFF: And again as it winds towards a conclusion just as you start with an American jazz vibe it seems to almost go into UK jazz feel like Camel and Caravan and Canterbury towards the end.

GUY: Yeah my love of Canterbury is fairly well documented I think. I started listening to Caravan and the Hatfields right back in the early days, Caravan certainly before Hatfields. And I love all that stuff, I wish I could play it better. So it's a real melting pot of things basically, I made it up as I went along adding building blocks thinking what'll I do now? I'll do something stupid now, I'll put a little piano solo in the middle and come out of it and do Mellotron choirs and just when you think it's reaching a crescendo back to the beginning we go again. And that's just indicative of the way I write. It's a haphazard process, there's no scoring, there's no sheets of music everywhere were doing counterpoint and I just make it up as I go along and try pieces and see where I take it and if it works it works, and if it doesn't it gets cut off and put back in the bin. 'Finale' is the product of a cluttered mind I think.

GEOFF: And the title apart, 'Finale' does a wonderful job of bringing the album full circle.

GUY: Yeah I think so, that's why I wanted to put bits of 'Charlestown' in it because I thought if you're going to write an instrumental you might as well reference something, you know give it some purpose. I defiantly decided it was going to be an instrumental; I wasn't going to sing anything over the top of it so it had to have some sort of relevance to the album other than just being bolted on at the end. That's why it's important that it referenced some of the themes. And also I like those albums where you get those cross references which you pick up "Yeah, isn't that the piano riff from the bit in the earlier one, Oh yeah that's clever" I quite like that sort of clever, clever I have to say and I like things that thematically repeat. I think it does exactly what it says on the tin, it finishes the album off nicely. You couldn't really go anywhere afterwards, it's a big curtain going down number and it ends dramatically and that's it, the shows over.

GEOFF: Is 'Finale' something you're going to include live?

GUY: It's highly unlikely that we would even attempt it live; it took long enough to do it in the recording. Kris was sitting with beads of sweat on his forehead trying to do the bass, it's quite complicated and it's one where you really have to not listen to anyone else you have to go into your mental clock counting all the time and in a live situation there's too much distraction. And as I said we're not Yes, we're not Genesis we're guys who like making music, we're sort of professional amateurs at this. We haven't been to the college of music and the rest of it, so we try hard to play what we play but I think putting something like that on the table would be the straw that broke the camels back and I think although Kris said he would like to do it I've shied away from doing it. But you never say never, it might turn up if I get pressured enough to put it in the set.



Manning Live

GEOFF: You have the album launch gig on the 23rd October 2010 at The Peel, Kingston-upon-Thames, London. Can you talk a little bit about the set?

GUY: Well we're going to do a radical reshuffle of the set. We went to Rosfest with what I thought was quite a well balanced set. After Rosfest Dave decided he wanted to retire. I mean retire from drumming altogether, it wasn't that he didn't like our music he just felt it was time to go and Rosfest was such a high he wanted to go with that memory in his head. I talked to him just yesterday in fact and he's very happy to be retired, he's sold his drum kit and he's doing photography and lots of walking. Which is great but it left us with a problem, we needed another drummer. And when you're bringing new people it isn't always the best time to be struggling with new pieces at the same time because the majority of the band know what they're doing and the new member has to slot in without saying 'how does this bit go'.

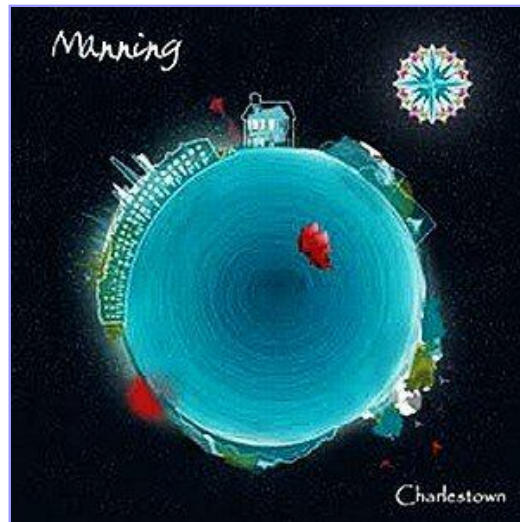
Having said that we got to a point where we decided to re-jig the set, we needed to bring more of 'Charlestown' in. So there were a couple of pieces in the set that left. We used to open with 'A Strange Place' and go into 'The Dream'; we don't do that anymore were going to open with 'Domicile' from 'The Cure' which is quite a tricky piece. It really is flying by the seat of the pants when we come in with that because it is quite tricky and very odd but we thought it would be quite a dramatic opener. I think then the rest of the set is made up of songs that are fairly familiar from the last set really but moved around. 'Lost In Play' is still in there 'Silent Man' is still in there. We've got 'TIC' from the new album in there now, of course we still retain 'Ships' because I think that's a good live number to play and there is a couple of acoustic numbers in there to bring things down. We've got 'Antares' in there because it's a nice way of bringing it back from acoustic to electric and it starts nice and light. We've also got a large slice of 'Charlestown' in there, 20 minutes of it good god and that's providing us with the nightmare factor for the gig. And if all goes well and we've got through all of that stuff and everybody's clapping you may get 'The House On The Hill' as the encore which we love to play but there was nowhere else to put it. You know, if we played all the big pieces it would be like playing for 2 hours and there was 3 songs and we thought that was not right so we're going to go through the shorter songs and each half's got a big song.

We've got 'Domicile' in the first half and you've got 'Charlestown' in the second half and the encore hopefully if we get to it is 'The House On The Hill' which is a good song to end on I think. So all being well, fingers crossed, if it all goes well you can either report how great it was or how we really need to tighten our act together and go back to the drawing board (laughs). I don't know how it's going to work out, rehearsals are difficult to say at this stage were still in learning and 'Charlestown' is a lot of work. I usually have some note for my lyrics but with 'Charlestown' I've got five or six pages worth of notes and reminders about keys and starting notes and what patches to be on and it's quite a complicated thing to perform live so we're either being very brave or foolhardy depending on how you look at it really. So the live set should be interesting from that point of view. It would have been nice to have one under our belt before we went to the launch but let's hope the gods are smiling. We've also got Dec Burke bringing Destroy All Monsters down to do the support and he's very good so we're going to have to be very, very

good to not get completely blown off by Dec and his band. That's Tim Churchman sat behind the drum kit there and he's good and Dec's a brilliant guitar player so good god, we have stacked the odds against ourselves. But it's better to burn out than fade away so we're going to try it.

GEOFF: It's got all the makings of a great gig that's for sure.

GUY: It's got all the makings of a great disaster at this moment in time (laughs). Until after the event "Well I was never worried for a moment, it was great, we knew we would be great". At this moment in time we're taking quite a lot on especially for people who work during the week and all the rest of it and only get a little time to rehearse. Anyway we'll see.



GEOFF: I'd like to dwell on the album cover if I may because I've got the artwork in front of me now which is by your daughter Rosie who did the cover for "Songs From The Bilston House" and it's a superb piece of artwork. It's certainly reminded me of Roger Dean's cover for Yes' 'Fragile' was that a conspicuous influence?

GUY: No, she's never seen 'Fragile'...

GEOFF: But you have though.

GUY: Yes I have, but I looked at it and I liked it and I could have said I like it Rosie but actually it reminds me too much of 'Fragile'. She's never seen 'Fragile' so there was no cross pollination and in the booklet I've thanked her for the Deanesque imagery so I've credited Roger and I think it's a modern take on the same idea but as she hasn't seen it I don't at all feel guilty about it. I think it's a startlingly good image anyway in its own right and it sets the tone for the whole album and I think it's great. If people says she's taken it from 'Fragile' well she hasn't, that's just the way it is. I could have stopped it but I liked it. I thought I don't care, it looks great.

The Manning Band

GEOFF: Can I ask Guy how the line-up of the Manning band stands at present?

GUY: We're an eight piece financially ruined because of the number of people in the band. I've taken it to RoSfest and still paying for it. The line-up at the moment in chronological order of people who joined, well obviously I'm still there.

Next up in terms of age is probably Steve Dundon who's officially joined the band line-up. He's still in Molly Bloom his own band which is more important to him I guess, more of his sole is invested in Molly Bloom than Manning, but he does like being in both bands because it gives him an opportunity to do different things and not carry the weight of Molly Bloom around. But when you come to the Stocksbridge gig (The Venue, 3rd December 2010) you'll see Molly Bloom doing their own thing and you'll be able to see exactly what Steve does on his days off and they are a mightily fine band I have to tell you and it's

another one where we've set ourselves up.

Next in terms of length of stay would be Kris Hudson Lee whose been around for a while now, he's the bass player and he's very supportive and he's sort of like second in command of the band if you like.

Then we get to Kev Currie who's playing rhythm guitar, a bit of lead but mainly rhythm and backing vocals and Kev's been in the last couple of line-ups. Great guy, wouldn't say boo to a goose just gets on and does his work, he's fantastic.

Julie King AKA Julie Manning plays second keyboard, vocals and percussion. It's nice to have a female voice and Laura (Fowles) used to always provide the female vocals on the album when she was here playing the saxophone for us but now she's gone off to Ibiza to make some money and have a different life style so Julie's kindly stepped in. She's got a different voice to Laura but its nice to have a different texture of vocal in there and I think we showed that on things like 'Valentine's Night' from 'Number 10' where there's a place for that sort of vocal in there.

Our keyboard player is a fellow called Tim Leadbeater. He plays in a couple of bands around Leeds, more sort of covers bands I guess you'd call them, although I don't think they'd want you to call them that, its more like the Commitments and they do that type of stuff, its very good.



And our lead guitar player is young Chris Catling. He's a fantastic player actually, a real shredder. He went down big in RoSfest, they loved him and he was always being asked to go to parties people getting him to play guitar and stuff and he did 'Free Bird' and everything and it was great and he enjoyed himself and he had a real good time in America and he's credited on the album sleeve as being a rock star in America which is exactly what he was. I think the bump to earth when coming home for him was the largest of all of us. But he's a great guitar player and he knows a lot about music and he's actually quite a good keyboard player as well although he doesn't get to play keyboards unfortunately.

And our newest recruit on drums is Mr John Kennard and John's been in bands in and around Leeds and Bradford for quite a while. He's well known in the prog community because he's a fervent supporter of Frost* and Tinyfish and that side of the business and he's been very vocal in supporting and I met him because he was being very nice about stuff and I knew he was a drummer and we needed one so I asked him down. And he's had the hardest job of all because he's come in very late in the proceedings and learn not only the new stuff with us but having to learn 'The House On The Hill' and all of the other stuff from scratch. And he hadn't even been on his own kit yet, he sits there (pointing to my chair) and plays that rotten Roland electronic kit. It's like me saying give me a ukulele to play my acoustic guitar parts on, it really is that poor. It's great for keeping time but there's no subtlety, there's no cymbals you can ting and tong on, but we have to learn this way because it's the easy way to learn before we go out to a big room to do it properly. So that's the Manning line-up and it's been fairly stable since John's arrived. I know John's arrived late on to replace Dave Albone but the rest of the line-ups been fairly steady and that's the line-up that did RoSfest earlier in the year so hopefully we'll get to Christmas without anymore people leaving and we'll see where we go for 2011.

The Tangent

GEOFF: Its been reasonably well documented that you're not part of the current Tangent line-up, was that a conscious decision on your part to concentrate more on 'Charlestown'?

GUY: I think so. I mean my time in The Tangent was great, the albums I did contribute to I felt we did a very good job together. Obviously the line-up's been consistently changing since day one so people came and went and this was just my turn on the wheel I guess. We'd done 'Down And Out In London And Paris' and I just felt that I didn't contribute as much to the album as I could have done and really the reason for that was because of time. I was getting ready for the Cambridge Rock Festival with my own band and thinking about other things and it was all a little bit rushed for me so in the end I didn't do as good a piece of work on it as I would have liked. So that set things in motion for deciding that maybe now was a good enough time to jump off and leave them to it. The line-up was consistently changing anyway in The Tangent and now it's a four piece UK based band, well five if you count Theo (Travis) who's still around of course. So the original large European line-up has largely dissipated now. I'm happy doing my own stuff really and I think I was getting a better profile in my self so I wanted to give it a bit of concentration to see where it would go before its too late really because I'm getting older.

Live Album

GEOFF: Finally Guy, I know playing live has always been important to you and after 11 albums in 11 years, you must be long overdue for a live album.

GUY: Yeah live albums are great, the only problem in making a live album is the financing of it. If I was a millionaire we would have made them by now. But yeah we would like to do a live album and it is about time but is the financing of it really I mean I've haven't got a lot of money basically and that's the problem the band doesn't generate enough cash. The albums don't make a lot of money, they sell. It costs a few thousand pounds to get six cameras and a 24 track recording studio into a hall and deck it out with all the lights to make a proper live album DVD unless you go to Poland. But nobodies asked us to go to Poland so we'd love to go to Poland to make a live album if somebody asked. So our problem is not that we don't want to do it, it's just the cost of it. I can spend all day long in here at my own expense and I can come out after a year and I've got an album because I'm not playing live where you have to put your money up front and we haven't got a lot of it, that is the real reason we haven't done it.



Greatest Hits

GUY: The other thing I wanted to consider doing this year is people say why don't you release a greatest hits package and I don't particularly like greatest hits packages really. Firstly because over the course of the 11 albums the sound has changed considerably from the early days till now and secondly it's always very difficult to try and find tracks that represent a whole career and adequately puts across what we are.

But my idea, if we can ever come up with a definitive list, is to go and re-record those songs with the new band and bring them up to date. So it's a greatest hits package with a difference because its rearranged for the modern band and modern sounds and that might be a better way of doing it so I'm toying with maybe doing that next year. Of course sooner or later my idea for album number twelve is going to come round and I need to know whether to do a studio album or a live album or a greatest hits or whatever. So there's lots of ideas but in the end, to be perfectly blunt and its very sad, its all down to money not creative input or the will to do it, it comes down to hard bucks and that really is a sad state of affairs. The first lottery win things will change around here (laughs) but at the moment we're on a shoe string budget because we're all out at work trying to keep a roof over our heads.

GEOFF: I like the re-recording idea. One of my favourite recent albums is The Enid's 'Arise And Shine' where Robert John Godfrey has recreated some of the old tunes with his current band.

GUY: Yes I've got the re-mastered versions of the first two albums 'In The Region Of The Summer Stars' and 'Aerie Faerie Nonsense' and they are brilliant works of imagination. Yeah all these ideas really depends upon what bubbles to the surface first. But at the moment its all steam ahead trying to get 'Charlestown' out then try and get these flipping dates out the way and then we get to Christmas and I'll decide what I'm going to do. Then I'll meet with the band and we'll decided if we're going to re-record the songs in which case it would be nice to get their input of which is their favourite songs and make a list and then we'll have to choose songs to do from the list. It's not just my opinion that counts, I don't know what people like to listen to anyway, my favourite song on an album might not be one that's appropriate for that type of package.

GEOFF: Yes, I guess it's not a case of what do you put on it but what do you leave off?

GUY: Yes we're obviously not going to record all of it we just need to take tracks which we believe as a group are indicative of the back catalogue and if you like these tracks you may go on to listen to the others. So it's not going to be all the little ballads in a row and it's not going to be all the rocky ones, its going to be something else. Which sort of precludes the epics because I don't think we can really do those on a greatest hits package. You wouldn't want 'Ragged Curtains' on a greatest hits package would you, not the whole 25 minutes, you'd probably go for something else or part of it.

GEOFF: Guy, On behalf of the DPRP thank you very much.

Interview for DPRP by Geoff Feakes

With thanks for Live Photography from **Esa Ahola**



Links

Guy Manning - Official Website
Guy Manning - MySpace Page
The Tangent - Official Website

1999 - **Tall Stories For Small Children**
2000 - **The Cure**
2001 - **Cascade**
2003 - **The Ragged Curtain**
2003 - **The View From My Window**
2004 - **A Matter Of Life And Death**
2005 - **One Small Step**
2006 - **Anser's Tree**
2007 - **Songs From The Bilston House**
2009 - **Number 10**
2010 - **Charlestown**

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