



Hi, Guy, thanks for your availability and congratulations for this great album. When did you start this new band?

The band actually started really becoming an actual band about 2 years ago. After the United Progressive Fraternity promo tour of 2014, I returned to the UK to start writing songs for a proposed UPF#2 album. I assembled quite a few pieces that I thought UPF could do and that would be a good progression on from the first album we had all done, which was in itself really remnant demos from an unfinished Unitopia last album (...complicated huh?). When Mark 'Truey' Trueack (from UPF) started wanting to move in another musical direction entirely working now with Steve Unruh on new UPF material, I thought that my own pieces should still be recorded (as I thought they were pretty good tbh) and all I needed then was a new Project band to do all that. As Dan Mash and Marek Arnold (and myself) made up the European 'arm' of UPF, I asked them to join me in this new venture. We sat together and selected 8 songs from my large pile of demos to do for our first album. Sean Timms joined us a few weeks after that and so the DAMANEK quartet was complete.

And Damanek is a name chosen from your names, was not it? Can you explain how this idea came about?

I was looking for a good band name (sometimes that is quite hard). It had to be one that did not really define us or give any clue as to what the music would be about (a bit like Yes). I created the name from combining our names **D**An mash guy **MAN**ning mar**EK** arnold. Sadly, we had the name sorted before Sean came on board and it stuck!

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What is it that the Damanek bring back from your previous projects?

Well I can only talk for myself here, and as the composer of the album music/lyrics, I guess I have to take the majority of responsibility for how it has turned out...it was all about the melodies and lyrics. My partners all helped me shape and arrange and most certainly produce the end product. I have always paid particular attention to have a good set of tunes/hooks and something interesting to write about in a poetic way with my own solo material (15 albums). With UPF, the thing that brought me into the project at the very start was the wish to openly discuss in music those socio-economic issues that we, as the human race, face. We had a united goal. I still had lots I wanted to say through my DAMANEK material and I hope that this shines through it. i.e. Climate change, our own extinction, air quality, our greed, war mongering, religious zealousness and bigotry etc.

Apart from the hard core of the band, let's call it that, there are a few guests. How did they participate and what input did they have in the final result of the songs?

Well, we needed some key musical components to complete the musical tapestry...drums, electric guitars, percussion especially. So, we started to ask those musicians we knew / friends that we already believed were really good players and that we thought could help bring the music alive. We all recorded our bits in various studios around the World, UK, Germany, Australia, Los Angeles and then I assembled the working model/demos for the pieces in my own studio,. When we finally decided that we had enough performances to do the album, I passed the baton over to Sean to be our formal Producer (he is so much better than me at it) and he got to work, sifting through the songs / performances and selecting the bits he needed to make the final

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mixes. In terms of control / input, I had a lot of clear ideas as to what I personally wanted from the players most of the time, but they were certainly very free to express themselves and make their own suggestions for parts. Many of these got used. On the song 'The Cosmic Score' for example, I worked with Nick Magnus to produce a new arrangement for it. He was in charge there, plus provided nearly all the keyboard takes based on my original demo!

Interestingly, as the band's first show was at Summer's End, can we say that these songs were composed to think about this event?

No not really, We were close to finishing the pre-mixes when I got asked to do Summers End. It really was a gamble for the organisers as they did not know the band or any of the music, but they just had faith in us (so very glad they did!). Marek was already going to be there with his own "Seven Steps to the Green Door" outfit...but I was delighted when Sean said he'd fly in for it and Dan persuaded Luke Machin to join us guesting on guitar on stage. Henry Rogers (Heather Findlay Band, Touchstone, DeeExpus etc.) completed the live line-up on the drums.

When did GEP meet on your way?

When we played SE, we had no label, we had a few decent demos but nothing finished. Dan approached InsideOut, I approached a couple of smaller labels and Sean approached GEP (Southern Empire is signed to them). GEP showed some initial interest, but as IQ were also playing Summers End, Mike Holmes I knew would be there and so we got a chance to discuss it all and I think/hope that our debut show for

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the festival finally helped to cement our relationship with the label. We went down very very well indeed. We are proud to be apart of their roster.

References to Africa and Asia are well-known in your sonority. Are they related to the musical background of some of the elements or the theme addressed in the lyrics?

As I say, to me it is important to write about something 'real'. I tend to do this in a narrative story telling type of way though (I always have). I put the central characters into the song so that the listener can empathise with their POV easier / get the message. Obviously, I set the songs where they need to occur...Africa for 'Long Time, Shadow Falls', Kuwait for 'Oil over Arabia'...but other songs are universally global and can occur anywhere in the World. I had to miss a big 25 min epic off 'On Track' but hopefully that will come later. That one (BIG EASTERN()) contrasts the lifestyles of poor farmers in the East (Nepal etc.) and their more privileged western (New York) counterparts. The soundscape / flavour of a song, the atmosphere of a song has to support the lyrics...unless you go for a complete satirical contrast (as I did with 'Big Parade').

Is this a project to continue? Have we had more albums or was it an isolated experience?

Yes, I do hope so, We are due to sit down in October this year to look ahead. But of course there is no guarantee that the same line-up exactly will produce a next album...that all depends on availability and commitment to the Project. I certainly plan to do another, that is all I can say for sure at this time.

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Thank you. Do you want to add anything else?

No, only a big thank you for taking an interest in this Project. The vast majority of kind words published across the Net on the various review sites have all been very complimentary and really encourages me! I think that we may be onto something here! I have plenty of material ready for the next album(s), so let's see where that takes us. Please check out our new promo video for "Long Time, Shadow Falls". I love it. Created by our good friend Ted Ollikkala.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRb-k5GbA-c>

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