



Progressive Rock Interviews

Spirits Burning

Interviewed by Gary Hill



Interview with Don Falcone of Spirits Burning from 2018

MSJ:

I believe that it's been a couple years since we last did an interview with you. Can you catch the readers up on what's been new in your musical world?

In 2017, three big things happened for Spirits Burning.

First, there was the record store day release of the Spirits Burning & Daevid Allen 7-inch vinyl. This was a goodbye to Daevid, and thank you for all the collaborations we did: A dozen Spirits Burning studio albums, the Weird Biscuit Teatime adventures, and his guesting on other projects (like Astralfish).

Second, there were two Spirits Burning live performances in the UK. There was a gig in Bath, and then an appearance at Kozfest 2017. The band featured Hawkwind family members Richard Chadwick on drums, Bridget Wishart on vocals and EWI, and Steve Bemand on guitar. The rest of the line-up was Key Ellis (Kaos pad and vocals), Colin Kafka (bass), Martin Plumley (guitar), and me, primarily on keys. The set included a cover of Hawkwind's "Images," which was filmed and is on YouTube. Plus, I got a chance to sing two songs and project a bit. Just being at the festival, seeing the bands, meeting musicians who had contributed to Spirits Burning studio albums, talking and drinking with fans... it was really beyond my wildest dreams.

Third, the debut Spirits Burning & Michael Moorcock album came together, in so many special ways. Al Bouchard became a co-collaborator and helped improve every song. He also brought in some Blue Öyster Cult family members. The planned sessions with Mike came to fruition, and he ended up singing on most tracks, and playing harmonica on three. Before the end of the year, the label decided that the release could support a limited boxed edition. Suddenly, Karen and I (here on the home front) were working on more than just the CD booklet. We now had to create a lyric book, postcards, a poster, a signature certificate, and a sticker for the box, plus a couple of videos for promotion.

MSJ:

How did you link up with Michael Moorcock to do the upcoming album?

The seeds began when I went to a sci-fi, fantasy store where Mike was reading. After I bought a hard copy of the "Dancers" trilogy and talked to Mike in the book signing queue, I talked to Linda, Mike's wife, and told her that I had an interest in doing something musical with Mike.

The exchange of contact info eventually led to me cleaning up and releasing Mike's demo sessions, as well as orchestrating four of the demo pieces on the Spirits Burning *Alien Injection* album. Next up, Mike was receptive to my offer to finalize and release the Michael Moorcock & The Deep Fix *Live at the Terminal Cafe* album that he was working on, and is hoping to finish recording this year.

While the *Terminal* album was progressing, and this goes back a few years, I was working through a regular Spirits Burning cycle: an instrumental album, a vocal album with Bridget, and a concept album. After completing the Spirits Burning *Starhawk* concept album, I asked Mike if I could do an adaptation of the "Dancers" trilogy, starting with *An Alien Heat*. He gave a long-distance blessing. As songs started to take shape, I'd post them to Dropbox for Mike to listen to. Then, we worked out getting together to record his vocals and harmonica parts.

MSJ:

What's the best thing that's ever been said about your music?

"Cool."

That was a comment on YouTube for the new album video teaser. It captures things perfectly.

Some other things that come to mind: Whenever it's mentioned that the music sounds fresh, or is taking space rock or prog to new places, that's special. Or, that the collection of songs sound like a story unfolding. That's the goal of every album.

Finally, it's a challenge to bring together so many musicians from different parts of the world, musicians with different styles and different recording gear. So, when someone points out that a Spirits Burning song (or album) sounds like a band, that's a great compliment too, for everyone involved.

MSJ:

What's ahead for you?

Al and I have started work on adapting book two, *The Hollow Lands*. At some point, Mike will have the *Terminal* album for me to mix and complete. I have a couple of other Spirits Burning projects starting as well.

One additional piece of news that's been off the radar: In 2018, Noh Poetry will be re-releasing download versions of the first nine Spirits Burning albums, as well as the second Quiet Celebration album

MSJ:

What was the last CD you bought and/or what have you been listening to lately?

Last CD bought was Hawkwind *Into The Woods*.

I've been regularly listening to Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds *Skeleton Tree* and Kate Bush *Live*, enjoying how they let their songs breathe, ebb, and flow.

I've also been listening to Godspeed You Black Emperor a lot too. They have a like patience. And, like Nick Cave's songs, there are often unexpected sounds and pairings of sounds.

I really appreciate and enjoy when bands and artists tell stories through music. Creating soundtracks of the lives we lead, or imagine we might lead.

MSJ: Have you read any good books lately?

"The Dancers At The End Of Time" trilogy.

I'm kind of reading it over and over. Often rediscovering the originality and depth of individual phrases and sentences.

MSJ:

What about the last concert you attended for your enjoyment?

King Crimson - awesome line-up, set and performance. This was the second time I've seen them since they returned with the three drums at stage front. Jakko's singing was stronger, noticeably more emotive - shades of Greg Lake - chilling.

MSJ:

Do you remember the first concert you attended?

Yes, Jethro Tull. Opening act was Brewer and Shipley.

MSJ:

Have you come across any new gear recently that you love?

Would you count access to a sample library (of field recordings)? Otherwise, I've been too busy writing songs and working with the tools I have.

I can mention that my day job supports me learning different DAWs. So, I'm up-to-date with the current Pro Tools version, relearning Ableton Live, and looking forward to touching other DAWs. "Love" would be too strong a word though, for any of these inanimate guys.

MSJ: Are there any closing thoughts you would like to get out there?

Thank you to all those who have reached out in person, or over the net, and supported our music. This was especially evident at the Bath and Kozfest shows, and more recently, with the excitement that is being generated over the Moorcock release.

Cheers!

MSJ: This interview is available in book format (hardcover and paperback) in Music Street Journal: 2018 Volume 1 at garyhillauthor.com/Music-Street-Journal-2018.



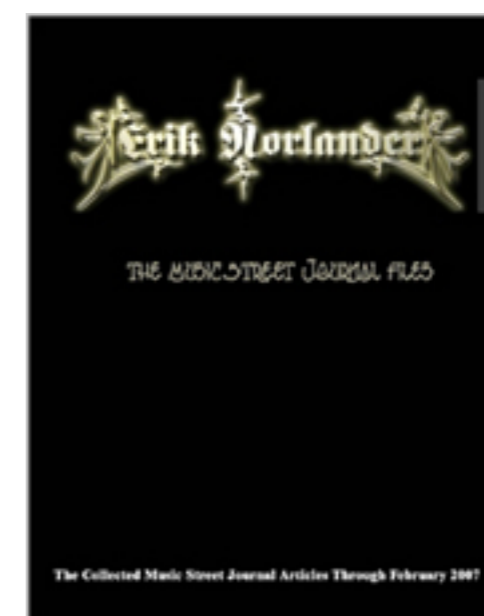
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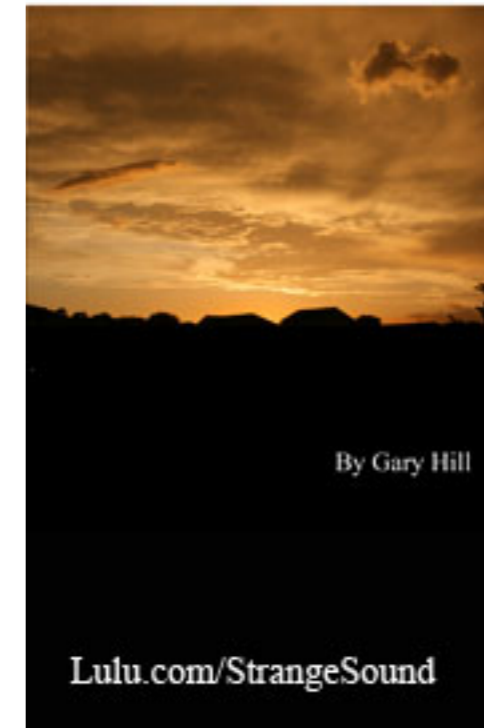
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