



ACID DRAGON

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This issue

Interviews:

- Flame Dream
- Lunear
- Gregory Curvey
- Frédéric L'épée & Yang
- Jacques Nazaire
- Tony Klinger

Story:

- Carmen
- Eyes of Blue & Big Sleep

+ Reviews

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Acid Flaming Dreams

Stephen Gilbert-Rivera

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Interview for
"Carpe Diem Newsletter 3"
by Tim Stecher

Introduction by Roland Roque

Questions about the first years
of the band -

No. 1 to 5: PW = Peter Wolf
Questions 6 to 22:

RR = Roland Ruckstuhl PW
= Peter Wolf

Flame Dream

Yes, Switzerland is a prog country! You don't believe me? Try Clepsydra, Dawn, Deyss, Galaad, Metamorphis, Shakary (today's outfits), or Brainticket, Circus, Mainhorse (featuring Patrick Moraz, no less!) if you prefer 'old' bands, to quote but a few.

Yes, Switzerland is a prog country! You don't believe me? Try *Clepsydra, Dawn, Deyss, Galaad, Metamorphis, Shakary* (today's outfits), or *Brainticket, Circus, Mainhorse* (featuring **Patrick Moraz**, no less!) if you prefer 'old' bands, to quote but a few.

I enjoyed especially *Flame Dream*. Not only because of their poetic name which has no relation with *Tangerine Dream*. But because of their sound: a stress upon keyboards, syncopated rhythms, wind instruments. And featuring a Gabrielish singer. Founded in Lucerne, in 1977 the group disbanded in 1986. *Flame Dream* recorded six albums by the end of the 70's and at the beginning of the 80's and developed a symphonic prog somewhat similar to *Genesis* (keyboards, vocals and even flutes) as I said, especially on the first three discs. Note that American guitarist **Dale Hauskins** participated on "*Out in the Dark*", their third album.

They signed for a major, Vertigo, and got a professional production but paradoxically were never distributed abroad except Italy and Germany (and under the name of *Travaganza* in UK!). This may also explain why the music became less prog and more pop oriented all along the years, following in a way the fashion. But this should not be a reason why their albums were never reissued on the CD form (read our study in AD #16).

While prog fans are still waiting for these CDs reissues, *Flame Dream* surprise them with an unexpected come back! 38 years after! With a





fabulous record linking with the best of their career (listen to the gorgeous *“Winding Paths”* epic for instance). So why such a silence? What happened? Here is an interview explaining this sudden and very welcome return... **RR**

1. How and when was the band Flame Dream formed?

PW: *FLAME DREAM* was formed in the summer of 1973 by drummer/percussionist **Pit Furrer**. He was joined by a guitarist from the same neighborhood and then bassist **Urs Hochuli**. A second guitarist/singer joined in 1974. It was not until 1976 that **Roland Ruckstuhl** and **Peter Wolf** joined the band. This changed a lot in terms of music, i.e. instead of constantly improvising in «jam sessions» and putting different pieces of music together, Roland Ruckstuhl contributed complete and very coherent compositions.



2. You made an impressive debut with «CALATEA». What was it like to compose and record these early songs back then?

PW: *«In search of Calatea»* was a two-hour live program that we developed together in 1976/1977 as very young musicians in a 6-piece line-up with two guitarists. The 22 tracks covered a very broad spectrum and we were able to gain so much musical experience. Around half of these tracks were instrumental and some of them were influenced by «psychedelic rock» on the part of the two guitarists. The concert intro was a spoken text by **Hermann Hesse** from *«Klingsor's Last Summer»*. About half of the tracks were compositions by pianist/organist Roland Ruckstuhl.

Due to the groundbreaking developments in keyboards, more and more instruments were added during this time, including the Clavinet D6, RMI electra piano, Fender Rhodes, Mellotron, synthesizer. This gave us completely new possibilities in terms of composition and arrangements. In addition to the flute, the saxophone was also used. The stage sets by bassist/designer Urs Hochuli were made of lightweight wood and cardboard and were modified by hand by the road crew during the concert depending on the track and even during the piece.

Recording our first LP was a big challenge: we had very little studio experience. In the summer of 1978, five of us made test recordings at the Sunrise Studio on a 16-track machine. Since you can only integrate a maximum of 45 minutes of music in good sound quality onto an LP, we had to make a selection of tracks. This compromise was only partially successful. For the recordings of the first LP we found an experienced sound engineer, Jean Ristori (bass, cello) (1), who was very helpful. The Aquarius Studio (24 tracks) in Geneva was well known among musicians and producers at the time - also because composer/pianist/keyboard-player **Patrick Moraz** was the co-owner. He kindly made his Hammond B3 and the Oberheim polyphonic available to us for our recordings.



3. Your guitarist and singer was only part of the first album. Why did he leave the band and why wasn't he replaced at first?

PW: Due to the musical developments, there were differences regarding the future direction of the music and how we wanted to develop further. There were also irreconcilable opinions about the lyrics.

It was his wish to leave our band and we respected that. It's a fact that strong personalities in a band have areas of friction in the creative field, which also makes the music exciting. At the same time, it's impossible to incorporate all the different ideas and/or musical styles in a band. For the four of us, this situation in the summer of 1979 was a turning point. As we couldn't find a suitable guitarist, we decided to continue working as a four-piece. You have to bear in mind that the training opportunities for the e-guitar were very limited here at the time. There were no music schools or courses where you could learn pentatonic chords, bending or tremolo arm technique for sustained notes. Today, this is standard when learning the e-guitar. In addition, the new possibilities that we had thanks to the keyboard instruments and polyphonic flutes and saxophone presented us with an exciting musical challenge. The arrangements had to be different. Another difference was the fact that we no longer had a singer. As a result, I took singing lessons and trained vocal technique for years. A subject that is still with me today and is very important. This is particularly important in rock music. Regardless of the style of music, a voice makes a lasting impression depending on its sound and expression. As a result, it took a lot of work until we were able to set the vocals to match my voice with the complex arrangements and rhythms. The musical arrangements and Roland Ruckstuhl's vast know-how form the basis for this.

4. How was the debut LP «CALATEA» received by the press and fans?

PW: The album received very good feedback and was positively reviewed. That was a motivation for us.

5. Was it difficult to make classic, sophisticated progressive rock in the years 1978 - 1980, at a time when other styles of music such as punk, new wave, disco and pop were on the rise?

PW: As musicians, we don't think and listen in terms of «labels» - there is exciting and surprising music in every musical style, there is so much to discover. This requires a willingness to be open to new things.

Pop has been around in various forms since the 1960s. With «Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band» in 1967 *The Beatles* created a milestone together with producer **George Martin** and sound engineer **Geoff Emerick**, among others. This was followed by many exciting musical developments – such as a band like *King Crimson* with the groundbreaking track «*21st Century Schizoid Man*». Later, we really liked the raw power and directness of punk. You can never look at Music in isolation. Rock and pop in particular, like fashion or architecture for example, is about zeitgeist, provocation, sound, image and constant change; this also involves content that moves people emotionally.

Accordingly, a lot happens in a kind of wave movement - see New



Wave or NDW (Neue Deutsche Welle). Rhythm and movement are very important, so dance or movement to Music has an important meaning for people in many forms. We have always been interested in a wide variety of Music - classical music and Jazz are important influences in our work. We have also explored avant-garde, contemporary music and film soundtracks. Composers such as **Astor Piazzolla** or **Antônio Carlos Jobim** as well as arrangements by **Claus Ogerman** or **Bob Mintzer** are also very exciting. As musicians, we keep our ears open, discover unknown composers or writers - and are very tolerant. With so many influences, it's important to develop your own style and signature. In retrospect, it turned out that we had a special mix thanks to our own compositions, special arrangements, woodwind instruments and voice. A unifying element of the 7 albums are the extraordinary melodies in different instrumentation.

6. The second studio album «ELEMENTS» impressively continues the path of the first album «CALATEA» and is even more convincing, even though no guitarist was involved in the recordings. Was it difficult to write the music without guitars and adapt the sound so that you don't miss any guitar work?

RR: Some of the compositions for «ELEMENTS» were written earlier, but the instrumentation wasn't set yet. This allowed us to further develop the versatility of the music by adding flute, saxophone, oboe, additional keyboard instruments and polyphonic vocals. We were also able to notate the arrangements differently. In addition, the bass was given more weight in the sound and also more freedom in the interplay with the drums. To give the sound more depth, the piano and especially the tenor saxophone doubled individual bass lines.

PW: As already mentioned, the big challenge were the vocals and the choice of lyrics. We wrote the text of «*Sun Fire*» to match the music. For the other three tracks, we set poems to music: «*Sea Monsters*» by **Edward Spenser**, «*Earth Song*» by **Ralph Waldo Emerson** and, for the epic final piece with the extended piano and instrumental part, «*A Poem of Dancing*» by **John Davies**. The metric of these texts had a great influence on the setting and arrangement of the polyphonic vocal parts. These texts also contributed to the archaic sound.

7. Live concerts by Flame Dream were already important, exciting and very popular in the early years of the band. How did the band compensate for the lack of a guitarist during the live performances for the album «ELEMENTS»?

RR: The preparation time until the start of the *ELEMENTS* tour was simply too short for the search for a guitarist as well as for arrangement adaptations. The live performances with *ELEMENTS* were a real challenge for the four-piece line-up. Peter Wolf had to switch back and forth between vocals, wind instruments and various percussion instruments and bassist Urs Hochuli also played a double-neck bass/guitar and





I N T E R V I E W

F L A M E D R E A M

Taurus bass pedals in order to be able to perform earlier songs adequately. We also had to expand the keyboards. The setup, the tuning (e.g. Clavinet D6, EML synthesizer or Fender Rhodes, later CP-70 stage piano) and playing these different keyboards required a lot of rehearsal work. We played everything live. The crew even changed the frame of the Mellotron during the concert! This was because of the different orchestral sounds (e.g. strings, brass, pipe organ or 8 voice choir, depending on the track). That's unimaginable by today's standards.

PW: Bassist Urs Hochuli sometimes took over the melody lead from the keyboard instruments, e.g. in the track «*Sea Monsters*» in unison with the clavinet. By playing several notes together, it was also possible to set broader bass accents, e.g. in the track «*A Poem of Dancing*» after the beginning with vocals in the following instrumental part in unison with the alto saxophone and clavinet - this in combination with the special chord sequences, played on the polyphonic SC Prophet 5, accentuated with the Remo Rototoms and percussion. Later, a double-neck guitar was used, which, in combination with the bass pedals, a wide range of keyboard instruments and the flute and saxophones, made variations in the arrangements possible. This enabled us to play the complex compositions authentically live.

8. How did Flame Dream manage to make a name for themselves outside of Switzerland with their music and live concerts?

RR: We were one of the bands that added new parts to the existing songs for live performances to make the concerts even more interesting and unique. It was supposed to be an extra incentive to come to our tours, because the songs offered a lot of surprises. Interestingly, some of these parts were then turned into new compositions for the following albums. In addition, the music was supported by an atmospheric stage set and a comprehensive visual production. This combination offered the audience an exceptional live experience for that period of time.

PW: As independent producers, we had a distribution contract with Phonogram (Vertigo label) due to the strong live presence. First through their branch in Zurich (**Peter Frei**), later in Hamburg (**Louis Spillmann & Team**). We are still very grateful for this opportunity and cooperation today. It also enabled us to go on concert tours in Italy and Germany. You have to remember that our music was not played on the radio because of the length of the tracks. So there were only live concerts to make our music known. As we had to organize everything ourselves, this was extremely time-consuming for us.

9. Were there other bands in Switzerland at the time of Flame Dream that made progressive rock with whom the musicians of Flame Dream were friends?

PW: We were constantly working (daily rehearsals, part-time jobs and music lessons to finance the instruments and technology, tours, organization, recordings in the studio, 5 LP productions from 1979 to 1983 - i.e. one LP production per year in a very short time) and, as already mentioned, we had to organize everything ourselves. In 1978 we had a concert in Zurich at the Volkshaus together with the excellent band



CIRCUS from Basel. They produced three (to this day) very listenable LPs themselves. We also had contact with the P.A. engineer of the band *ISLAND*, who had split up after their first excellent studio album in 1977. Their composer, **Peter Scherer**, then worked in NYC for around 30 years and, in addition to his versatile work as a musician and arranger (including with **Laurie Anderson**), composed excellent film soundtracks - e.g. «*MORE THAN HONEY*» by director **Markus Imhof**. There was also the band *IRRWISCH*, who played complex pieces on their first two albums. The common denominator was that, as a progressive rock band in Switzerland, you had to do (almost) everything yourself and budgets were extremely tight. The fact was that none of the musicians in these bands could make a living from their concerts, LP sales or music. The effort involved in playing and producing this music was not only very time-consuming, but also required financial resources. Thanks to their strong live presence and the distribution contract with Phonogram, *FLAME DREAM* had considerable LP sales and were also able to play live in neighboring Italy and Germany. Nevertheless, we also lacked the financial resources and a professional artist management with a long-term horizon and the necessary budget and stamina for Europe-wide tours. Fortunately, we were always able to ask **Peter Zumsteg** for his advice, who had a lot of international experience and know-how in the areas of live concerts and artist management. We were the only one of these bands to produce 6 LPs in a short time. In order to be able to realize these 6 LP productions, we went through a lot of hardship and dedicated ourselves solely and exclusively to this project from 1978 to 1983.

10. After the second album «ELEMENTS», «OUT IN THE DARK» was released in 1981, which contained more modern, sometimes shorter songs and brought the guitar back into play with Dale Hauskins. How did these serious and enriching changes to the new songs on «OUT IN THE DARK» come about? What role did co-producer/engineer John Acock play?

RR: As mentioned earlier, we had been planning to play with a guitarist again for some time. However, the compositions for «*OUT IN THE DARK*» were also written during our time as a quartet (without guitar) and the rehearsals with the fusion guitarist **Dale Hauskins** from L.A. only started in the summer of 1980 shortly before the demo recordings (8-track) with **John Acock**. Only after the fall tour in Italy did the recordings take place in November 1980 in the Aquarius Studio in Geneva. John Acock was a real help to us in integrating the guitar parts, also thanks to his experience from the recordings and productions with **Steve Hackett**. The sound that he helped to develop and mix there, as well as his extensive studio experience - both as an engineer and co-producer - brought us a further development in sound and sound image and was a perfect fit for our musical style.

PW: In terms of the lyrics and the music, there were some links to the previous album. In keeping with the title, we





again used poems, this time by **Robert Graves** («*Full Moon*»), **Edward Thomas** («*Out in the Dark*»), **Thomas Hardy** («*Wintertime Nights*») and **Wilfred Owen** («*Strange Meeting*»), a harrowing text on the subject of war, which is still very topical right now. This three-part composition was very demanding in its combination of vocals, flute and saxophone. The text for «*Nocturnal Flight*» was written on the basis of the very moving and beautiful piano music, inspired in the title by the novel «*Vol de Nuit*» by **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**. With this piece, we succeeded in playing a ballad in the style of progressive rock, which is still heard today as an «iconic song».

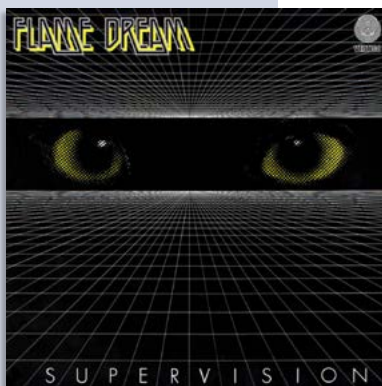
11. For many fans, «OUT OF THE DARK» is Flame Dream's best album to date. What is the band's own opinion?

RR: We were able to gain a lot of studio experience with the first two albums. With «*CALATEA*» we were in a recording studio for the first time ever as young musicians and «*ELEMENTS*» was new in that respect with a reduced line-up without a guitarist and with Peter Wolf as vocalist and on flute, oboe and saxophone. We were able to apply this valuable experience to «*OUT IN THE DARK*» and came much closer to our vision in terms of the arrangements and the overall sound. The many good inputs and the cooperation with John Acock also contributed positively to this development. We never really talked about it within the band, but I assume that each of us probably has an individual opinion depending on the album.

PW: The album «*OUT IN THE DARK*» has a very unique character thanks to the choice of themes and the compositions. When you work on a creative project yourself, it's not easy to give an opinion. To sum up: with all our albums, we always aim to develop further. It is a fact that, depending on the constellation and zeitgeist, the results of recordings are not always the same. Looking back, I would say that «*OUT IN THE DARK*» is an exciting album with a lot of musical substance - also thanks to the support of John Acock and because we were able to make better use of the studio technology. **Dale Hauskins'** guitar-work also integrated very well into the sound. His solo in the track «*Nocturnal Flight*» carried the melodic arc of this song in a most beautiful melodic way. However, none of this would have been possible without Roland Ruckstuhl's exceptionally coherent and gripping compositions.

12. With «SUPERVISION» (1982), the band's compositions and sound became much more rock-oriented and contemporary, but the music was still exciting, sophisticated and progressive. How did the musical change come about?

RR: At the beginning of the 80s, there was once again (after the emergence of classic or progressive rock in the 60s and 70s) a considerable development in rock music. This had partly to do with new technologies (such as sampling) and the developments in musical instruments and devices for sound variation, which made a decisive contribution to the design of sounds and production. e.g. the Yamaha CS 80, with an excellent velocity-sensitive keyboard, Synclavier,





Fairlight CMI etc. On «*SUPERVISION*» we wanted to merge some of these influences with the reuse of «traditional» keyboard instruments such as Hammond, Fender Rhodes and Minimoog - in combination with the CS 80, which we were only able to acquire as a «demo model» thanks to a great concession from Yamaha U.K. Milton Keynes. The album also has a reduced, direct sound and clearer arrangements, which also has to do with the fact that the basic tracks were recorded live in an open space (without subdivision - «open recording space»). The Herne Place Studio outside London, which belonged to musician Eddie Hardin, brought about a noticeable change in the sound. We were living in an empty apartment in Guildford at the time and had to drive to the studio every day. When the Lexicon reverb in the studio broke down, we had to drive our VW bus to Syco Systems in the middle of London the next morning and wait for it to be repaired. Syco were very surprised that we were there with the device an hour after we called. After a short time, the Lexicon was ready for use again thanks to a spare part and we were able to continue working on the mixes after this «tour».

PW: The 1980s brought huge changes in terms of zeitgeist. This was also reflected in the music and in the approach to writing and producing albums. Among other things, the aim was to bring as real a «live drum sound» as possible to the recordings. The monitoring theme was a mixture of «heavy» and «solitude» - accordingly, the sound and the lyrics were very direct, which was also reflected in the music and the way we played it. The TRIDENT mixing desk at **Eddie Hardin's** Herneplace Studio, where we first recorded, also had a very warm and powerful sound, which you can still hear today. John Acock did a great job on those recordings and mixing the *SUPERVISION* album.

13. The story of the band Flame Dream seemed to be over with the release of your sixth LP in 1986 (2). It was a big surprise when I first heard in March 2024 that the band was active again and that a new album was about to be completed. How did the band get back together?

RR: We had been working on digitizing our earlier progressive rock albums for quite some time. At the same time, of course, we were also thinking about how we wanted to release these works after such a long time. This gave rise to the idea of a bonus track in the form of a completely new song. Because I was working for one of the leading musical instrument manufacturers at the time, I was able to use the latest technical equipment to develop my musical ideas and record them. However, it turned out that the integration of an additional composition was impossible. This gave rise to the project for a new, complete album. After I had recorded the compositions as demos and presented them to Pit, Urs and Peter, we started the rehearsals with great enthusiasm. Peter's lyrics were written during our rehearsals and in Dublin/Ireland. It was also about being able to draw a topical connection, or an arc, to the NOW.

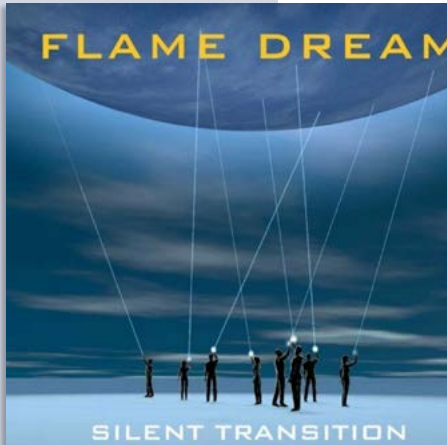
PW: We have never stopped playing or writing music. Our friendship has also continued and even deepened over the years. There were many reasons for working together again - including the ever-increasing



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demand for the re-release of our earlier progressive rock albums. You have to seize opportunities when they are available. 2022 was the year. Passion for Music.



14. With “SILENT TRANSITION”, Flame Dream present a new album after 38 years, which seamlessly builds on from their earlier progressive rock albums in terms of style and song quality. How does it feel to be able to present a new album after such a long time?

RR: We think that because of the sound and presence of **Alex Hutchings** guitar, the album sounds very powerful. A guitar riff like the one at the beginning of the title track *Silent Transition* has never been heard on a *Flame Dream* album in this form before. It goes without saying that we aimed for the highest level of professionalism in this production, be it in terms of playing, composition, recording and, of course, mixing and design. In my opinion, it is a work with exciting tracks, has a playful freshness and a lot of dynamics.

PW: It's a good feeling - the reactions so far have been very positive across the board.

15. Let's move on to the new songs from “SILENT TRANSITION”. The opener “NO COMFORT ZONE” impresses with a long instrumental intro with extreme pressure, crashing drums and a menacing atmosphere. I've always found it difficult to draw any real comparisons with Flame Dream's music because it's so unique. This hasn't changed with the new songs either, whereby the powerful instrumental intro reminds me of Peter Gabriel and U.K.. Great! How did you come up with the idea of starting the album in such an atmospheric and powerful way?

RR: For some time I had in mind the use of sound spheres and atmospheric landscapes as resting points between individual parts of a song. Where we used to go out into nature with a recorder and mic and record water, fire and other natural elements (for “*ELEMENTS*”), you now have a library of sounds and sound bases to choose from via plug-ins. Of course, I adapted the basic sounds according to the compositions; they had to fit seamlessly into the songs and specifically reflect the atmosphere of the piece. The brute drums in the opener “*NO COMFORT ZONE*” symbolize a wake-up call - very powerful.

PW: We are currently living in very turbulent and tense times. Many of the images and certainties we are familiar with have dissolved. The title “*NO COMFORT ZONE*” is a fitting introduction. One of the things that music thrives on is the ability to build up tension. Opening an album with a singing “fretless bass” is very unusual. We also start very quietly - and build up a mystical atmosphere. The archaic drums and atmospheric density are all the more gripping. The lyrics move in an arc of tension between here and now, almost in slow motion. This is combined with the awareness that there are no certainties - except that our existence on planet Earth is fragile and finite.



16. The title track “SILENT TRANSITION” offers many musical surprises. The track begins with another long instrumental intro, which starts very powerfully and contrasts well with the first, sweetly sustained vocal part. The instrumental middle section of the song exudes South American flair and is surprisingly rhythmic and danceable. This gives the versatile composition a special touch and an unexpected twist. How did this particular idea come about when writing the song?

RR: After the vocal part, the song starts with an organ riff in motion in the middle instrumental part, which actually only gets a slight South American touch through the use of drums and bass, which is then later reinforced by the guitar and percussion inserts. This musical lightness forms a counterpart to the piercing guitar intro. A combination of these different musical styles in the style of progressive rock is also a kind of transition.

PW: The intro part is like a wild ride on rails, characterized by the “heavy guitar riff”. The vocal part forms a seamless change of mood in this long composition - with a resting pole. A counterpoint, so to speak - with the title of the album as a reflection and text on the current state of affairs. What follows is a musically exciting and surprising journey with a complex yet danceable flair based on South American rhythms. Dancing and movement are an outlet - more important than ever, especially in this day and age. The fact that progressive rock with a punchy organ and creative rhythms can also be played very percussively is an outstanding feature of this composition. Add to that the guitar’s sweeping melodic line and the sparkling piano solo - you can feel the fun and joy we have playing this track.

17. “VELVET CLOUDS” immediately enchants with great guitar runs accompanied by atmospheric keyboard carpets. These special ingredients remain throughout the vocal verses and run like a red thread through the exciting composition, which is carried by driving drumming and beguiling instrumental passages. Sometimes you feel slightly reminded of Mike Oldfield, sometimes U.K. come to mind. The instrumental interplay between keyboard fanfares and playful guitar runs is impressive. A fantastic track! How did the virtuoso interplay between keyboards, piano and guitar develop? Guitarist Alex Hutchings plays as if unleashed and enhances the song in a special way.

RR: With this new album, it was clear to us that we wanted to integrate the acoustic and electric guitar into the compositions as a fully-fledged instrument. The aim was to create surprising melodic arcs of tension. When I heard and saw the guitarist Alex Hutchings at a joint musical event in 2010, for me, the decision was made. His playing style and versatility won me over straight away and as we met up several times a year from then on, we found that we were also a good fit on a personal level, which is essential for creativity in a project like this. Pit, Urs and Peter were also totally enthusiastic. You can hear pure *FLAME DREAM* on this gripping track.

PW: The text was written during a visit to my home town of Dublin, Ireland. In the south of Dublin there is the “Velvet Strand” with wonderful, constantly changing cloud formations over the sea. At the same



time, there is a lot of wind and there are again and again rough storms. A reflection of our existence. Accordingly, the atmospheric keyboard sequence at the beginning with the wonderful slide guitar quickly builds up a huge carpet of sound. The lyrics are an interplay of these impressive moods and capricious weather conditions. As you move along the beach towards the south in the wind, a lighthouse is the only signpost. Impressive forces of nature, you get the impression that the storms are opening up the rough surface. Musically, the great challenge was to match the text as seamlessly as possible with the melodious piano part and to embed the vocal line in the rhythm section (bass, drums, percussion). The vocal middle part forms a “flashback” - with 3 voices - and then closes with the chorus “converting in the dark”. What follows musically is crackling tension and very moving. Alex plays a wonderful 6 string nylon guitar. The beat-off-beat piano/organ parts as well as the dynamic interplay of synthesizer and guitar make the magic of “*Velvet Clouds*” sound like a moving and magical journey.

18. How was Alex Hutchings able to integrate so quickly and perfectly into the band when recording the songs?

RR: As already mentioned, I know Alex for some time and was therefore able to plan the ideas for the guitar parts of *Silent Transition* early on. After listening to the demos, he was also enthusiastic and I sent him the digital files including the sheet music. In June last year, Peter and I were in Bristol (UK) where we talked to Alex about the music and he rehearsed the songs with us. Although our music consists of many through-composed elements, we also gave Alex a lot of freedom to contribute his own ideas or variations. For the solos, he was of course “free floating”, as his playing style complements our musical style perfectly. The guitar parts were then recorded in August at the Soundfarm Studio by **Marco Jencarelli**, who, as an outstanding guitarist and musician himself, was able to bring all his experience in guitar sound to bear.

19. The shorter “OUT FROM THE SKY” shows that *Flame Dream’s* music is also very well suited to an orchestral ballad. A nice change after three very demanding long tracks. A song with a high recognition value and beautiful orchestral moments. A potential single release that is suitable for radio and charts?

RR: We’ve always had ballads on our albums, think “*Nocturnal Flight*” on *OUT IN THE DARK*, “*Tragedy*” on *SUPERVISION* or “*Lifetime*” on *TRAVAGANZA*, which in my estimation were easier to listen to than the current “*Out from the Sky*”. Peter wanted a more extensive vocal part and wrote this touching text for this song, which complements this piano piece perfectly with a supporting vocal line. Therefore, apart from the introduction, there are no instrumental parts here. A so-called “radio-friendly single” was not intended, although one can never completely rule out which platforms the music might lead to today. The song is not exactly predestined for this because of its length and storytelling. But as already mentioned: you never know.....

PW: Writing lyrics to atmospheric ballads is a real challenge. This song is a link to the tracks “*Nocturnal Flight*” (album *OUT IN THE*



DARK) and “*Signs of Solitude*” as well as “*Tragedy*” (both on the album SUPERVISION). It is about the passage of time, to which we are all exposed to. “Wide-size canvas cut - it’s a ticking clock” sums it up. We live in a time of extreme polarization, so “human touch” is important - in this context, the final sequence with “reach out for your hand”. Will this track be played on the radio despite its length and tranquillity? It would be a big surprise, because we are very aware that single productions today are “built” according to completely different criteria, which can also be very exciting and innovative. As we have no influence on the zeitgeist, radio or playlists either way, we continue to write new Music and Lyrics. There are examples of how unconventional songs such as “*O Superman*” by Laurie Anderson or even an instrumental track such as “*Spain*” (at the beginning based on the adagio from Joaquin Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez*) by Chick Corea became a hit via alternative radio stations. A recent story is the song “*Running Up That Hill*” by Kate Bush, which only became a hit again “37 years later” for a whole new generation of listeners due to its use in the Netflix series ‘*Stranger Things*’. However, I would like to emphasize that I would never compare our tracks and lyrics with these “century artists”. Back to your question: Who knows???

20. As if that wasn’t fascinating enough, the band’s instrumental “SIGNAL ON THE SHORES” is convincing across the board. Magical sounds full of atmosphere and orchestral pathos make this composition a special listening experience, with playful keyboard runs as well as virtuoso guitar runs and driving drums. Wow! Was it clear from the start that there would be a purely instrumental piece on the album? When composing the music, how does the band distinguish between working on a long instrumental part and a purely instrumental piece?

RR: That actually arises when composing and arranging: there are ideas that are already intended for vocals from the beginning and Peter has the intuition to then write extraordinary lyrics according to “given” melodies. The fact that “*Signal on the Shores*” has no vocals is partly due to the relatively long introduction with the choirs and the extensive, five-part (!) guitar solo in the second part. Peter has written a very coherent text for this composition. Maybe there will be a “*Signal on the Shores - Part 2 - the vocal version*”, who knows?

PW: The mystical and powerful MUSIC to this gripping track “*SIGNAL ON THE SHORES*” inspired me to write a text. It could be very exciting and a great musical challenge to work on a vocal version of this piece. Whether, how and when this will happen is completely open at the moment.

21. “WINDING PATHS” is the album’s final “magnum opus” at almost 15 minutes, although it is difficult to single out any one track in particular given the quality of the individual songs. Of course, “WINDING PATHS” has all the ingredients that an epic long track needs to guarantee a great album finale. The instrumental passages are performed with virtuosity and never let you get bored for a second. The keyboard work is very innovative and evokes a certain stylistic proximity to Tony Banks in the long instrumental part in the second part of the song.



I N T E R V I E W

F L A M E D R E A M

Surprisingly, the song doesn't simply end after the seemingly virtuoso finale, but a beautiful little unexpected keyboard outro brings this song and the album to a classical orchestral and symphonic close. An exquisite ending - how did that come about?

RR: Interestingly, this is a composition consisting of parts that were composed a long time ago, for example the driving bass lines and the organ/synth chords in the middle section I mentioned. This is why "*WINDING PATHS*" differs somewhat from the other tracks in terms of style and arrangement. The numerous pre-existing ideas were therefore also responsible for this extended composition.

We also wanted to draw on the full potential of the album once again and surprise the listener with unexpected twists and turns, changes of harmony and rhythm in sometimes unusual metric. After overcoming these convoluted paths, listeners can relax with a harmonious, calming and conciliatory conclusion.

PW: Lyrically, this track contains the arc to the first track on the album. Every journey - especially the current migration flows - is a departure into unknown zones, associated with many dangers and uncertainties. As already mentioned, we are all living in very torn and troubled times - including a terrible, cruel war in Europe. There are very big challenges ahead. Nevertheless, it was a conscious decision on our part to end the album with a peaceful anthem: "*One World - One Voice*". With a surprising final sound!

22. Flame Dream are releasing a wonderful new album after 38 years with "SILENT TRANSITION". Who do you want to reach with it and how do you ensure that the album is heard beyond the borders of Switzerland and Germany?

PW: It's MUSIC to discover - listeners who are fond of our progressive rock albums *ELEMENTS*, *OUT IN THE DARK* and *SUPERVISION* will be enchanted by this album after listening to it several times. The aim was to develop a gripping album with magic and power in the here and now, with lyrics about the current state of affairs. Music without compromise, for listeners with open ears. As independent producers with our own label, we are building up this album over a long period of time - we still have a lot of work ahead of us. *SILENT TRANSITION* is also intended to lay the foundation for the gradual re-release of our earlier progressive rock albums. We are also continuing to work on new music and lyrics. We are open to further developments. Passion for MUSIC!

- (1) *Pulsar* recorded their "*Halloween*" album with this guy too
- (2) Both *TRAVAGANZA* and *8 on 6* are more melodic than prog but deserve your attention (see below)



OUR SELECTION by Thierry SPORTOUCHE

SUPERVISION

(SWITZERLAND - 1982)

I am still wondering why this talented band from Switzerland got no CD reissues (official ones I mean! (3))... They created beautiful symphonic prog and released their productions on a big label, Vertigo (but paradoxically this may be a reason why when you know the versatile politics of those majors). Even at the peak of their glory, it was hard finding their LPs in Lyon, which is very close to Switzerland as you know (4). I like all their records especially «*Out in the Dark*» (1981). «*Out in the Dark*» shines in the dark with jewels such as 'Out in the Dark', precisely and its *King Crimson* touch (think of 'Starless'), the melancholy 'Nocturnal Flight' (those keyboards, guitars and vocals!). The last track, 'Strange Meeting', and its labyrinthine structure is just a jewel. The approach of «*Out in the Dark*» is easier than «*Elements*», their previous album (1979) which was built around poems. The line-up for this superb disc? **Roland Ruckstuhl** (keyboards, sequencer, vocoder), **Peter Wolf** (winds, vocals), **Urs Hochuli** (bass, bass pedals, additional vocals and the gorgeous artwork!), **Peter Furrer** (drums, percussion, tapes) and **Dale Hauskins** and his welcome guitar. But «*Supervision*», recorded in London and released the following year, is my preferred. Sure the 80's rhythmic may seem a bit outdated now but I do like the vocals (very close to **Peter Gabriel's** and **Phil Collins's**), the gorgeous keyboards. It features more accessible music than in the previous records but it is still excellent: think of *Genesis's* «*Duke*» or «*And then they were 3*». You may regret the lack of guitars except on the wonderful 'Paradise Lost' suite but there is never a dull moment thanks to the syncopated structures, rich melodies and instrumentation, expressive vocals and lyrics. Highly recommended then!

Travaganza

(SWITZERLAND - 1983)

«*Travaganza*» (1982) is the twin brother to «*Supervision*» but not so good. *Flame Dream* tried to be more commercial, composing songs like **Phil Collins's** «*In the air tonight*», or *Genesis's* «*Turn it on again*». Curiously the name of the band turned to *Travaganza* when a small British label, Aura, decided to publish this record in UK...

8 on 6

(SWITZERLAND - 1986)

«*8 on 6*» (1986), despite its gimmick cover, is not really nice. After this long silence, the fandom expected much more. It contains simple compositions, automatic rhythms, concise and direct tracks, typically 80's sounded (in the way of *Genesis's* «*Abacab*» or akin to *New Music's* – remember this new wave band?). This album sadly ends the story of





I N T E R V I E W

F L A M E D R E A M

a great band which left no live recordings behind them (5)... Until the 2024 resurrection!

(3) Since many years *FLAME DREAM* albums are being sold by an online-distributor located in the US. Those mini-sleeve CDs are illegally manufactured and of very poor quality – i.e. copied from vinyl. These mini-sleeve CDs are illegal for the composers never ever gave permission to release those CDs. *Flame Dream* are now working to reissue them as independent producers on their own label. Therefore the albums *ELEMENTS*, *OUT IN THE DARK* and *SUPERVISION* will be re-released as CD-digipack in 2025. Great news! The music of these albums will also be available in digital distribution. More information will follow in due time when these albums are being ready on the official website: www.flamedreammusic.com

(4) Urs explained me :

Why were the albums so difficult to find at that time?

That's a very long story - too complex to explain in a mail. The band always opted for Music resp. Independence, yet had a distribution contract at the time with Phonogram in Hamburg/Germany. Thus the fact these LPs were released on the Vertigo-Label (except for the first one on Philips), which was one of the labels for progressive rock. Though the band are the owners of their own productions and audio-master-tapes, it took a very long time to sort everything out. Credibility and authenticity are very important for the members of the band - not an easy thing in progressive rock. Therefore the clear decision to first compose and arrange a new album - before re-releasing the earlier well-requested progressive albums.

(5) Urs explained me :

Your question about «live-recordings»:

The band always had to work on very tight budgets. Therefore professional live-recordings were not possible.

In retrospective this may sound very surprising for a band that was so active and had such a good following and well-attended concerts at the time.

Anyway: there is a recording of a radio-concert taken during the «Supervision-Tour» and also there are «simple» live-recordings done at the time with a 2-track REVOX A 77 (only with a stereo-mic in the audience).

It's an open question if ever any of these recordings will be released...

As explained: for the time being, we are focusing on the new album *Silent Transition*, then followed in 2025 with the «step by step» re-release of the early progressive rock albums. Also the band is continuing working on new Music and lyrics.

Gracias!

Thank you very much Thierry. I hope you like my answers and if you have another question just let me know.

Que viva la música!!!