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Interview with Jeff when the “Beggars” CD came out from one of Europe's leading music mags

Q.I think BEGGARS, ROGUES & THIEVES is a new chapter in your musical career. It`s a new kind of style in your music. Rock, Blues, Southern, and a wonderful singer…

JS. Well, yes it is different in many ways than my previous Cds, however I started out playing lots of bluesy rock stuff, from AC/DC to the Allman Brothers. So really this is just getting “rootsy”! Yeah my singer is just amazing! If only we could all sing like that! :o) He has so much natural soul in his voice, and comes up with great melodies as well.

Q. PAWN SHOP or DIG were also Blues influenced. But they sound more like a combination of instrumental Jazz rock, Funk and Blues.

JS. I agree. Pawn Shop had elements of where this new CD was forming back then. But as an instrumental CD you have a bit more space to fill up and something has to sort of carry the tune, so there is a bit more playing on it.

Q. Tell me a little bit of your Guitar heroes in music business…

JS. Well it started out with Randy Rhoads as one of my first favorites. Then I got really into more stuff like B.B. King, SRV, and more Rock guys like Steve Vai. Now I am listening a lot to Jimmy Herring, he is fantastic. I have always dug good guitar players, no matter what style they play, as long as it is good and tasty.

Q. Guitar player like you, Jay Hooks, Chris Duarte, or Joe Bonamassa are the future of Rock and Blues. But too much people say-Eric Clapton is one of the greatest. Ok I love his music he had made in the 60`s, 70`s and early 80`s…. But what has he done for Bluesrock the past 15 years. Pop Ballads for the Charts and a lot of covers. But the most new influences and styles came from new players like you. Musicians like you bring fresh elements in the old blues tradition.

JS. Yeah, I really dig Joe Bonamassa, not only can he play and sing great, but I really like his songwriting. I guess Eric has done so many things that he is sort of a “Hall of famer” - he was ahead of his time way back when, and while he still plays wonderfully, I don’t think he is too concerned with doing anything that is not in his element. I would imagine he really loves what he plays and is happy with that.

Q. Europe is a bad place to sell good music. BMG,SONY and EMI are not interested in good handmade music. The charts are filled with Rap, HipHop and Techno. It`s a wonder that a man like John Mayer climbed the charts. What`s happened in the USA…

JS. Well I think that music has gotten too segregated. I mean there are too many categories of musical styles. It makes it hard to reach as many people because they are all just looking for their favorite style and forget to try new things. And as far as the music biz goes, they are not interested in promoting art - just making money.

Q. You are a guitar virtuoso. How do you find out the best guitar for you.

JS. Thanks. I feel like I am just a player who loves to play and am trying to get better all the time. I just pick up a guitar and start to play - usually within the first few notes I can tell if I am going to like that guitar. Sometimes it can sort of “grow” on you - but usually if the flame isn’t there from the start - I pass.

Q. There are so much good influences like GOV`T MULE, ALLMANS and DOOBIE BROTHERS on your new CD. Your Top Five CDs?

JS. That’s awesome! I am so glad you hear those influences because I really dig all those bands and have for years, so I would like to think that our stuff could be in the same vein. EEEEks - Top 5? How bout some that I listened to a lot - not necessarily new ones? Maybe, Joe Bonamasa, So it’s like that - Frogwings, Croaking at toads - Aquarium Rescue Unit, the Calling - Hellecasters, Return of - Liquid Tension Experiment 2 -

Q. You have a great new band. How did you pick up these guys?

JS. Well both the drummer Kent Burnham, and the keyboard player Ted Gardner have both played on a couple of my previous Cds, so when it came time to put a band together they were the first choices. The singer/bass player Matt Waddill was actually a guitar student of mine at one time. He also played bass so he joined as the bassist, and then one night after singer auditions he sang a song and just blew us all away with his voice - so that was that! :o)

Q. Without the internet a lot of musicians without a record company could not exist. Do you think so?

JS. Absolutely! The internet, for all of it’s bad things, has certainly allowed many underground bands to flourish.

Q. The most unknown bands and musicians I found at CDBaby, CDStreet and other Independent Labels. And the rest after a lot of long nights with the help of google. These Online Dealers are the greatest for music freaks like me. Tell me a little bit of your experiences with CDBaby.

JS. CD Baby has been great! Not only do we sell lots of Cds there, but these guys are very pro - they pay you on time, keep you posted as to inventory and do a great job. Derek at the Baby has really got it going on.

Q. I`m 48 years old. I need new music everyday like a junkie his drugs. But the most of my generation are not interested in new bands and musicians. They live in their world of Oldie music. They love Jimi or Little Feat .But they don`t know that the Feats alive and well and have made a lot of new music behind the 80`s. And the teens are not able to hear a full length CD. The most of them love Samplers only with the newest music sensations. Yesterday was Mariah Carey is Christina Aguilera. I think it`s a great problem for music business. How do You think ?

JS. You are right on again! I think the WOW CDs have pretty much killed any interest in young people listening to whole CDs and deciding what THEY like. They just get the hit song from everybody and keep swallowing whatever the machine feeds them. And that is so true - all of the “classic rock” radio in the US plays the same old songs by the same old bands - even though there are NEW bands that play that style of music!!!

Q. You also your own sound engineer. What`s the most important things for a perfect sound.

JS. That is a tough one. I guess it is different with every project. Engineering and mixing are an art to themselves just like playing, so you have to develop mixing chops just like playing chops.

Q. And you mixed the new Crunchy CD. It`s dirty good old Rock`n Roll with humor and punk influences. Tell me more about this project.

JS. It’s Monty Colvin from the band the “Galactic Cowboys”. Monty is a great writer and wrote most of the Cowboy’s stuff. His new project is “Crunchy”, and it is kind of punky, but with really clever lyrics and twists. Really good stuff, and aside from the drums Monty pretty much did all the playing himself.

Q. Stereo was yesterday. What Do you think about the new sound standards like DVD Audio, Dolby Music Surround and SuperAudioCD ?

JS. Wish they would quit switching so I wouldn’t have to keep replacing all my music!!! :o) I think Surround is going to really take off - I mean that is the real way that we hear, with lots of depth. It may take a while, but I would guess we will be in a “surround world” in our lifetime.

Q. Which future plans do you have?

JS. Just to keep making music! I really want as many people as possible to get to hear the new CD. I really think that it is one of those Cds that if people would just hear it, they will like it. It appeals to anyone who likes just good music. I am also doing a CD with a friend of mine from Wales- world renowned fantasy artist Rodney Matthews. It is a CD based on his artwork - real 70s prog band sounding stuff, so that is a lot of fun. Should be some very cool prog rock guests on it as well. I always love coming over there to play as well! We can hook up next time! Thanks for the support!