

There are really few artists like Gary Numan. A really small number of them can attribute a wide variety of music styles to their own account. From synth pop, new wave and darkwave to funk rock and industrial. Few of them have wealthy experience of 40 long years on the music scene. Over the course of his career, Numan has released over 20 full-length albums and toured the world far and wide. Not without a reason he's acquired the moniker of the godfather of industrial rock and the pioneer of commercial electronic music. After having released the warmly-received *Savage (Songs from a Broken World)*, Gary Numan commenced a world tour that included more than 100 shows all around the world. At the end of last year, Numan talked to *Kvlt Magazine* in an interview in which he spoke about i.a. the recent world tour and the beginnings of *Tubeway Army*. The artist didn't avoid the topic of his health state and past ventures. Answers to these questions can be found in the transcript below.

1. Hi Gary! Your current tour is inevitably coming to an end. Could you already make a quick summary of it? Did any of the gigs particularly engrave in your memory?

**We've played 115 shows in support of the *Savage* album so far, and we have about 15 still to do, so it's been a very intensive period of touring. The most I've ever done for any album before in fact. We've played in huge venues, tiny clubs, festivals, and everything in-between, in about 20 different countries. We've had to deal with a very real and demoralising tragedy, and we've also had some glorious triumphs. It's been a remarkable tour in so many ways. The highlight I think is still to come as our show at the Royal Albert Hall in London in a few days from now, with the Skaparis Orchestra, will be a lifetime dream come true for me. My daughter Persia has also joined us on stage many times which is always a special occasion for me.**

2. Let's talk about the past for a moment. If you have nothing against it, I'd like to return to your musical beginnings. *Tubeway Army* was said to have been the next band that was formed under the influence of the punk rock movement in Great Britain. What happened that your story came out to be drastically different from what it had been earlier assumed?

**I went to a studio to record our debut album, as a guitar/bass/drums three-piece band, with the intention of making a punk rock album, essentially the songs we were playing at our shows, and I found a synth in the studio control room. It was a Mini Moog. I had no idea how it worked, I couldn't really play keyboards at that time, but they let me try it out and I was just amazed by the sounds that came out of it. I hastily converted my guitar-based punk songs into synth-based punk-electro songs and made that type of album instead. The record company was not happy, but after a lot of arguing they eventually agreed to release it. That album was called *Tubeway Army*, the name of the band at the time.**

3. After two warmly received *Tubeway Army* albums, you suddenly took up a solo career. What caused that you recorded *The Pleasure Principle* instead of releasing another *Tubeway Army* album?

**To be perfectly honest, *Tubeway Army* wasn't really a band. I wrote everything, decided everything, ran everything, so it wasn't really a case of me taking up a solo career as much as dropping the fake band name. *Tubeway Army* was just me under an assumed band name. I wanted to drop the name before the first album was even released. My feelings**

were Tubeway Army was a punk band, but the album I'd made was electronic. I didn't want that confusion. I felt that releasing it as Gary Numan would give the electronic direction a clean start, but the record label didn't want it, and I couldn't convince them otherwise. It was only when we had some success that I was able to force the change, and then it looked as though I'd dumped the band and gone off on my own, but that wasn't the case.

4. Thanks to The Pleasure Principle you quickly became a fan favourite and attracted large numbers of devoted followers. What do you think, why that album, in particular, succeeded that brilliantly?

**The one before it, Replicas, was actually more successful in many countries. But, The Pleasure Principle album had Cars on it, and that made me successful in America and elsewhere in a way that hadn't happened with Replicas. Those two albums together though, both released in 1979, introduced electronic music to a mass audience around the world and, for a while, became the symbols of an entirely new genre of music. I think having songs like Are Friends Electric and Cars on them really helped. Those singles did very well and brought a lot of interest to the albums they came from.**

5. And then came the 80s and you, all of a sudden, disappeared from the scene. Why did you decide to quit giving live concerts in 1981? What made you amend that decision later on and resume touring?

**I didn't enjoy being famous. It was nothing like I expected it to be and, in a rather childish way, I wanted to try to make it all feel like a hobby again. I blamed touring for taking me away, out of my comfort zone, away from people I loved. It also prevented me from concentrating and improving on my songwriting, which I thought was very important. Touring put me in front of people, and I felt awkward and ill-prepared for that. I wanted it all to go away. That was a mistake of course. I was too young, too immature, and too inward-looking to realize how amazing it actually was. I just needed to bide my time, slow everything down as best I could, and learn my way through all these strange new experiences until they started to feel normal. That's why I came back to it a year or two later. I'd started to understand and adapt to it far better. I was growing up quickly, but, unfortunately, I'd already done a huge amount of damage and, in many ways, I spent the following 40 years trying to make up for it.**

6. The 80s in no respect could be described as 'fruitful' or 'merciful' when it comes to your music. There was no significant success, and the critics' responses to your material were rather tepid. How do you look on this matter in hindsight? Maybe you were just way ahead of those times? Eclecticism is really sought after nowadays.

**I don't think about it much at all. I think a lot of the criticism was overly harsh but not all of it by any means. I think my songwriting suffered and was below standard by the early 90s. My choices in many areas became increasingly flawed and misguided. I genuinely believe that people like me, people that make music for a living, have to continually earn our position. We should create good work with each new album to stay popular, not be given it freely because of a song or two you wrote in the past. I think I failed a number of times to do that in the late 80s and early 90s. I was so obsessed about trying to find new things, new directions that I often lost sight of my own interests and skills. It became change for the sake of change rather than genuinely finding a new interest to move into. So, I have**

**no bad feelings about what was said. I learned from it at times, disagreed with it at times, but it was never enjoyable. I'm glad it's a long way behind me now.**

7. That's exactly what I wanted to ask you about next. You used to incorporate lots of different styles of music into your own works. From new wave, electronic industrial, all the way to synth pop. Were you just looking for your own musical self?

**I'm always looking for new sounds, new ways of doing things, new ways of adding layers upon layers to create something new. I hate nostalgia; I hate the very idea of looking backwards or dwelling on the past, so I'm not interested at all in meeting the musical standards of the time. I'm always looking to create something beyond that. I fail often to be honest, but sometimes it works out well.**

8. Sacrifice seems to be the watershed of your career. You recorded it entirely by yourself. How did you come up with the decision to handle everything all alone? How do you look upon the album after two decades?

**It was the end result of trying to make music a hobby again. Turning away from all thoughts of commercialism, just trying to make the music I wanted to make without worrying about success, the desires of a record company, money, radio play, any of that. I just wanted to go my own way and stop trying to recapture my early success. I wanted to love it again, making music that is, and I'd realised that I hadn't enjoyed making music for a very long time.**

9. That album was way darker and rawer in comparison with your earlier releases. It seems that it was the period when you had set your current course. Did you realize during the recording process that *it* was the sound you were looking for? What significant happened in your life that you got your *voodoo* back?

**I did recognise it as a new direction that felt very comfortable to me. In fact, not so much a new direction as a rediscovering of my early path. It was as though I'd wandered off of a secret path years before and now, quite by chance, I'd stumbled back onto it, recognised it, knew where I was and started to run. Everything since Sacrifice has been a pleasure; I've never enjoyed making music more in the years since then, and, strangely enough, each album has done better than the one before. When I was searching for success, I couldn't find it, but when I stopped looking for it, I seemed to bump into it in the dark.**

10. Your latest album *Savage* (Songs from a Broken World) has been received really well, I guess it's your best-received album since *The Pleasure Principle*. Had someone told you in the 80s that you'd have to wait 30 long years for a commercial success, would you believe it?

**Not in the slightest. I didn't expect to be in the music business for more than a few years. I thought it would all be over decades ago. *Savage* is actually the best-received album I've ever had. When *The Pleasure Principle* came out a lot of the media hated it. It's become a classic over the years but at the time, not so much.**

11. In different interviews, it can be read that when you were a child you got a Les Paul guitar from your father. It was an instrument that you used even later on. You were allegedly fascinated with T.Rex (Marc Bolan had the same Les Paul guitar) and David Bowie. Is it true? Who else were you fascinated with?

**I wanted a Les Paul because Marc Bolan had one, and I was a huge Marc Bolan fan. Later on, I also became a fan of Bowie's guitarist Mick Ronson. He had a Les Paul, so that was the only guitar I've ever been interested in. I still have the one my Parents bought for me when I was a teenager. I still tour with it and still use it on albums.**

12. What do you like in today's music? Do you see any differences or similarities between contemporary music and the music from the end of the past century?

**I don't listen to music much at all. I work on my own music so much, so intently, it's so incredibly important in my life (my family depends on it) that when I'm not making music I don't really want to have anything to do with it. I don't listen to the radio, I rarely listen to music at home, rarely listen in the car. I go to gigs sometimes, but that's about it. I love making music, very much, but my life does not revolve around music in general. I have no idea what's on the radio, who's popular and who isn't. I don't care to be honest. I'm always touring as well, so when you add that time away from home to the pressure of studio work it's not really surprising that I like a break from it when I'm not working.**

13. You are considered an icon that many people deeply respect. Trent Reznor does not hide the fact that your works were a big source of inspiration for him and his music. It so happens that you were also a big fan of his musical endeavours. How can you refer to this?

**Trent's a genius and I'm proud that he feels I've been an inspiration to him and Nine Inch Nails. In turn, I love what he does, so it's a two-way flow of respect and admiration. He's become a good friend of mine and has helped me out in a number of ways over the years. He's a very cool man who's done some truly amazing work.**

14. It's great to hear that! I, on the other hand, got to know your music thanks to the band Fear Factory. With them you recorded a music video to the song entitled Cars. Could you tell if there will be any more collaborations with bands of similarly extreme calibre?

**I've worked with so many people. Nine Inch Nails obviously, Fear Factory, Jean Michel Jarre, Battles, just so many it's hard to remember them all. But, nearly all of those collaborations were pleasant surprises, not part of long term planning, so at the moment I have nothing coming up but you never know. I'm touring now and people come to the gigs and say hello, ideas are thrown around and something may come of that. I'm sure there will be more collaborations in the future, and I just don't know who that might be with.**

15. Is there anyone in the world with whom you'd like to set up a partnership?

**I can't really think about anyone in particular at the moment. These things come along and you either like the people or you don't. If I don't like them as people, I won't work with them. It has to be enjoyable, and ideally, it's something that takes you out of your comfort zone and pushes you to do something you wouldn't usually think of.**

16. There are lots of bands that have covered your songs. How can you relate to this? Which cover is your favourite, if you happen to have one? Do you think there are some covers that are better than the original versions of your songs?

**The last time I counted there had been something like 100 cover versions, maybe more, from unknown bands up to huge bands like NIN and Foo Fighters. I've heard some**

**amazing versions of my own songs, many of them better than my own version. My favourite though would be the NIN cover of my song entitled 'Metal'.**

17. If you're open to discussing private matters, in one of the interviews you admitted that you had been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. Were there any changes in your life and your surroundings after revealing that information?

**I've always talked about it. It's never been a big deal for me at all. I've always seen it as a good thing. Asperger's gives you things that most people don't have. Useful things that are very helpful if you choose this sort of life. It's not a handicap, not a disability, it's simply an exchange of abilities. There are some things that I struggle with that most people find easy, but equally, I can do things that other people can't, things I need to be able to do. I see the world a little differently perhaps, but I function well enough within it. I would never want to live my life without it.**

18. You've lived your entire life in London. A few years later you went on to move to California. Do you prefer living in the U.S.A.? Did you decide to move to California because of better weather conditions that prevail in that part of the world?

**The weather was a small part of it, but there were many reasons. My children are all girls, and I felt that America offered greater opportunity for them, fewer obstacles. Not perfect but better. I wanted an outdoor lifestyle, a language I already knew, musical opportunities that exist there more than anywhere, like film and TV music. I'm very happy there, but I'd be much happier if Trump was gone.**

19. Many musicians do not hide the fact that they used to have some connections with psychedelic drugs in the past. Have you ever tried any psychoactive substances like LSD, psilocybin, and the like? If so, have those experiences had any impact upon your creativity and work? You don't have to answer this question if you don't feel like doing it.

**No. I have no interest in changing reality to that degree. I do not want to see weird colours or see walls bending. I do not want to hallucinate. I want to write about things that are real, things I've genuinely felt, the world I know.**

20. When I was preparing for the interview with you, I bumped into information that you're keen on releasing a book. I'm aware it's going to be an extension of the history which was already taken up on your last offering entitled Savage (Songs from a Broken World). Could you reveal in what direction did that story develop?

**The book is something I've been slowly working on for years. It seems to have become more of a home for ideas that I then steal and turn into music, but, one day, I would love to finish it and get it published. One day soon hopefully. The Savage album is very much a musical version of the book in some respects, although more as a series of snapshots of what life is like in the future world rather than telling the story. The album sets the scene as it were, paints the backdrop that the story is set in.**

20. Let's return to touring in support of your latest album. You're coming to the end of the tour. The next stop for you is Europe. While there, you'll i.a. call on Poland where you're admired by lots of devoted fans. What would you say if you were approached by a group of fanatical and zealous fans in Warsaw? Would that be a surprise?

**A very pleasant one. I'm always happy to talk to people when I'm travelling.**

Thank you for your time and involvement in this interview!