

BERNIE MARSDEN

Bernie Marsden will forever be immortalised as one of the original members of Whitesnake and the co-writer of the huge hit 'Here I Go Again', which somewhat glosses over the fact he also worked with Paice, Ashton and Lord, UFO, Cozy Powell and many more. He also has a string of solo albums to his name, with his latest effort 'Shine' set to impress. The album is a collection of great songs with some high profile guests, so James Gaden spoke to Bernie to hear all about it...

'Shine' has taken me by surprise – with it being on Provoque I was expecting a Blues album – and it's not! There is certainly some Blues on there, but there's a lot of Rock, some more mellow stuff... it's a bit of all sorts.

I think it will surprise a few people. I took a long time over this one, I worked on it for most of last year – not every day, but once I had the deal, the boss of Provoque did a nice thing. When they said they wanted me to make an album, I said 'Great!' and asked what kind of album they wanted. He said 'I want a Bernie Marsden album.' None of that 'I want this sort of song' or 'I want this kind of sound', he just told me to do what I do, I thought that was like the old days with Whitesnake, we made the records and the record company sold them. In the 1990s, they tried to control the artist too much, saying that they couldn't hear a single in there or whatever. I didn't get disillusioned by that change, I just decided to avoid that. I would produce my own records and sell them at my gigs. I did that for a long time.

There are so many standout moments on there, but I can't avoid mentioning the cover of Whitesnake's 'Trouble' with David Coverdale guesting on vocals.

It's a bit good isn't it? The boy didn't let me down! (laughs) That was a combination of two very positive years of reconnecting. We're very close again now. We looked at each other and wondered... were we ever *not* close? You can't go through all we went through together in Whitesnake and not have some bond there, it's like a family really. We are always connected because of 'Here I Go Again', and an interesting thing, the first time I played with Whitesnake again was at Sweden Rock Festival, where I joined them onstage. I pointed out to David that we had never actually played 'Here I Go Again' together before! He was freaked out, he never realised, so it was this big thing – for the first time ever, the writers of 'Here I Go Again' are going to play it together! And it was magical, really good.

What made you decide to re-make 'Trouble'?

I'd thought of recording it in a laid back, acoustic, almost Folk-Blues style. I did it, and I called David and told him I'd done it again. I asked him if he fancied singing it and he said 'Yeah!' and asked me to send it

over. I did, and he replied 'It's a bit tame, old son!' So I told him that I didn't want to be presumptuous about how he should deliver it, having him screaming or anything, and he said 'Well, I'd like to do what I can for you.' We talked about it and we ended up with this version, with all that power he has. I think people will be surprised. It's in the same key as when we recorded it the first time and he's singing great. People have these opinions of him, but I'll tell you this – I asked him on a Monday, by the end of the week the track was done and dusted. None of that 'Speak to my manager' kind of thing, he simply said 'Of course I will!' and that was nice, because 'Trouble' was one of the first songs we ever wrote together. We used to say we should have done it a bit tougher, which I think we have now.

And he's not the only high profile guest, as you have Joe Bonamassa on the title track...

Yeah, Joe plays my old Les Paul more than I do! (laughs) People can't believe I'd loan it out as it's worth quite a lot of money, but between Joe and the guys he has looking after his equipment, it's probably safer with him than it is with me! Joe and I bonded – he played the Albert Hall and had Eric Clapton guesting with him, and I was at the after show party. It wasn't a big affair, I was lucky enough to be invited, and he came over and introduced himself. I said 'I know who you are, I've been watching you for the last two hours!' (laughs) He told me he was a big fan and we became good friends. He recorded one of my songs on 'Driving Through The Daylight' so it's all been very positive.

Is there anybody left on your bucket list that you want to play with?

Oh yeah, I'll never tick them all off. I recently played with the Allman Brothers, a year ago – I'd never have thought that! And I've just done Jack Bruce's solo album – these things come up, Elkie Brooks called me up the other day. She'd been playing Joe Bonamassa's 'Place In My Heart' and she said 'I loved that song, I'd been playing it for about a week, looked in the credits and found out

you wrote it, you bugger!' (laughs) I've been fortunate in my time to have played with Jon Lord, Ian Paice, Cozy Powell... some really top people, which is why I like to move on and be positive. I played with Jon Lord for eight years, he was a giant and I got to play his tribute concert at The Royal Albert Hall.

On the album there's Fleetwood Mac's 'Dragonfly'. I went to see Peter Green before I started recording. I told him I was making an album, I told him he was an influence and asked him if I was to record a Fleetwood Mac song, and have him play on it, which song would he choose? I know what he's like, I thought he'd take a few minutes but after about five seconds he said 'Dragonfly'. That was written by Danny Kirwan, and that is so Peter – out of all his back catalogue of great songs, he picks one by Danny Kirwan! There's a lot of people you have to go through to get to Peter. I kept trying to get hold of him while I was in the studio to get him to come down, and to cut a long story short, it never happened, I finished it. I tried to play like Peter would have and channel Gary Moore, thinking what he would have done with it. It's all finished, then I get an email from his people saying 'We've given it consideration, and we're happy for Peter to come and play on your recording.' I asked them in April, it was now October! So I love the atmosphere of it, even though Peter wasn't on there.

You've got a couple of Purple people too, Don Airey and Ian Paice are on the record.

They are – Don plays organ on 'Shine' and Ian is on 'Trouble'. He didn't get to play on the studio version because he wasn't with Whitesnake then, although he did play it live sometimes. It helps complete the circle. Don and I have known each other for about forty years, I played on his last album, he's played on mine. It's nice. I also re-recorded 'Here I Go Again' which I haven't put on the record, Don played on that too. It was a run though with the guys in the studio, everyone knew it, so we played it. As we were in Abbey Road, I thought we might as well record it properly!

Yeah – Abbey Road is a pretty legendary place, and you even dedicated the last track 'NW8' to it.

I did, because it's magical. It has a charisma about it, but first and foremost, it's a great studio. People forget that, it was the first custom built studio in the world. They look at its history, which is easy to do, I did most of my stuff in Studio 3, where the Beatles made 'Revolver' and Pink Floyd did 'Dark Side Of The Moon'! There was a 40 year playback of that with Nick Mason while I was there, and one week while I was in Studio 3, Paul McCartney was in 2, so I was back with the big boys! (laughs) It was inspiring, so 'NW8' came from that. Everyone is so helpful. The people there know what they're doing, they've been there that long. We worked in the modern

idiom using Pro-Tools, but it was done with an analogue attitude. We used the modern techniques for the editing but we've still got a warm sound. It sounds great on vinyl. There's going to be a limited edition double album on vinyl, so if you're into vinyl, get one of them before they're all gone!

It does sound great and it was produced by one of your old band mates, Rob Cass.

Yes, that's how it all began! Two years ago he got in touch, asked how I was doing, and then he said he worked at Abbey Road. I hadn't been there for years, so he invited me to lunch. We had this catch up and I mentioned I was planning a new record. I said 'Wouldn't it be great to do it here!' and he said 'Why not?' That's how it developed, much to the horror of the record company. (laughs) It's nice to have an album out with radio plugs and interviews with people like yourself. I've done bit and pieces via my website, a covers album and some Rory Gallagher stuff. I'd like to get some of that stuff out to more people, a lot of my stuff has never even been available for download so I'd like to make some of that stuff available to people when I've had it for years.

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My favourite on the album is 'Kinda Wish She Would' – wasn't that a song from the Company Of Snakes album 'Burst The Bubble'?

Yes, it was called 'Kinda Wish You Would' on there. I changed the lyrics a bit and Rob had heard it. He suggested redoing it like ZZ Top. It turned out really well, there's some good tones in there and I think it's a catchy tune. I was thinking of an Allman Brothers vibe initially. It was nice, I had been doing everything on my records, recording, writing, performing, producing. It was nice to have a producer so I could go back to being the artist.

Prior to 'Burst The Bubble' one of my favourite things you ever did, was the 'Once Bitten' album with The Snakes, with Jorn Lande on vocals. I thought that was the best album Whitesnake never made!

Yeah! (laughs) That was a strange period, I have to tell you. I could do a whole interview with you just on that one year, which was Micky Moody and I basically working with a foreign band. I've got all kinds of outtakes and stuff we never used, which I titled 'Britains And Vikings'. (laughs) 'Once Bitten' is a good record, it still stands up. Hard to get hold of now, isn't it? I should maybe look into that.

I was introduced to Jorn Lande by Willy Bendiksen, who became the drummer in The Snakes. He played me this recording, and I thought it was a Whitesnake bootleg! He was singing 'Mistreated' and I thought 'Where was this? That's not me on guitar!' Willie said 'That's not you because that isn't Whitesnake!' I was amazed, and I said 'Well who is this guy singing?' It turned out to be a guy who worked in the tax office in Oslo! I couldn't believe it! So I met Jorn a couple of days later, we had a run through and he didn't speak much English, he was very quiet. I called Micky up and sent him some demos and Micky had the same reaction, he thought it was David. Without going into too much gossip, it didn't work out. I do remember saying to him once 'Look, you might be able to sing like David, but don't start acting like him.' (laughs) We're okay now, I don't like falling out with people and Jorn is a really talented boy. He can also sing like Ronnie Dio as well, he can sing just about anything.

Do you have a particular favourite on the record?

I have a connection to 'Ladyfriend' because it's semi-autobiographical, and that's Mark Felton from Nine Below Zero playing harmonica on it. It wasn't meant to be that long, it wasn't meant to have that intro, but it just all worked. I'm also very happy with 'Who Do We Think We Are'. A few people are surprised I wrote it, but I'm really happy with it, I was inspired by the John Lennon vibe and radio are picking up on that one.

Has all this reinvigorated you into being a solo artist?

I never really saw myself *not* being a solo artist. Ever since M3 finished, I've always seen myself as a solo guy. Even my Rory Gallagher thing, that's not really a tribute, just like M3 wasn't a tribute – it can't be, because we had three of the guys from the original band! Rory's thing was reinforced by his brother Donal, because Donal got very emotional at a show and he gave me a hug and said it wasn't so much how I played the guitar or did the songs, it was the atmosphere I created that reminded him a lot of a Rory show. People can call it a tribute if they want, Donal Gallagher told me it was 'magical' so that'll do me!

And you're playing some dates in November?

I am, a small tour, I'm going out with Joanne Shaw Taylor. I'm opening, then I'll join her and her band for the last twenty minutes of the show. I think it will work well, it's a good pairing, despite Joanne being a lot younger and better looking than me!

'Shine' is out now via Mascot Records. See Bernie live with Joanne Shaw Taylor in November - for full details of 'Shine' and tour dates, visit www.bernziemarsden.com

