



FAR
AS
I
CAN
SEE

MATT SCHOFIELD

Going into my fifth studio record, and first for Mascot/Provogue, I had some very distinct goals in mind, and a few definite broader concepts I wanted to explore. However, I also wanted to remain open to where the process might take us, maintaining the excitement that improvising and collaborating with talented musicians allows. The inspiration and goals came from many places - things I felt hadn't fully realized on previous studio records, my influences old and new, including musicians I have wanted to work with for years, and a need to keep growing, pushing myself, and represent where I'm heading now.

First and foremost I wanted to go as far as possible to capturing, on record, the same connection with the listener that I aim to make at a live show. This would require a careful selection of material, running the full emotional and dynamic range, with an emphasis on true performance, and "capturing that moment". Next, I wanted the tone colour and range of my guitar captured more faithfully in the studio than I have achieved before - to more closely represent what it sounds like when I'm standing in front of my amplifier performing, rather than a "tamed" studio version. I also wanted to push my ability and range as a singer, which requires the right studio environment.

I brought in Simon Law, my long time guitar technician and live front of house mixer, to engineer in the studio. Simon knows my tone as well as I do, and his trusted pair of ears on the other side of the glass, went along way to achieving this goal.

I then wanted to apply these same concepts to recording the whole band to truly capture the dynamics, intensity and emotion of what you feel live, and purely in the moment. This, of course, meant recording the musicians playing together live in a studio environment set up for artistic expression and dynamic interplay, and not in any way restricting the performance by the technicalities of the recording process. We chose takes based upon the emotional and immediate response of all those involved, rather than some arbitrary idea of perfection. If it felt right, it was right. If we didn't get something in a couple of takes, we came back to it another day. There are no click tracks, autotune or other unnecessary trickery on this record. It's musicians to instruments to microphones to mixing desk.

We extended this emotional connection to the music all the way through to the mixing process, with a different approach than I'd used before. Instead of finishing the recording, and then returning to mix the album at a later date, we made the whole process more immediate, and directly in response to how we were feeling a song as we performed it. As we recorded we built a mix for me to sing a final vocal to, and then finalized the

mix, then and there, and printed it. Our emotional involvement with each track was carried through from start to finish. Each song, it's own moment in time.

Embarking on this record, I thought back to fans reactions from my different albums over the years, and what they seemed to respond to the most. Time again people have commented me how much they enjoyed the "feel" of our very first live record from back in 2003. Upon reflection, there was an innocence, honesty and directness to the album that listeners connected with. Perhaps this came from the fact that at the time we didn't know we were making a record. We were just playing music. It was a performance by musicians who knew each others playing intimately, but hadn't performed together in that particular configuration too many times. Enough familiarity and shared direction, without being too comfortable about where things are heading and falling back on safe or "stock moves" that come from hundreds of gigs together. A kind of confident but slightly edgy performance that creates an intense dynamic.

The hope of capturing some of this feel again led directly to the selection of musicians for this album. All guys I've known for many years, worked together in countless situations, but never all together as band. Familiar, but not too familiar!

The initial seed for the line-up came from wanting to record with my friend Jordan John, from Toronto Canada. Jordan is a talented multi instrumentalist, who leads his own band today, but his first instrument was drums. I've always found it inspiring to have him drumming behind me. Having gone on to become a skilled guitarist and vocalist himself, his approach to percussion, and supporting the bandleader, comes from a slightly different perspective, bringing a unique direction to the song - both rhythmically, melodically and emotionally. It was also an opportunity to have him contribute his incredible vocals to one of my records.

Of course I knew that Jonny Henderson was going to be involved in the record. A founder member of my band, his Hammond organ playing has been the backbone of my trio's sound since the very beginning. On this record I wanted Jonny to be able to stretch out and bring in his other keyboard colours, such as piano, wurltizer and clavinet. This meant freeing him from playing the bass lines as he has done for so many years in our organ trio format.

Bass player Carl Stanbridge and I go way back, having gigged together frequently in my London days in the late nineties. Over the years Carl has sat in with my band here and there on shows, and I'd always immediately been inspired by what he brought to the music and the direction he'd taken the band. A rare combination of always maintaining a solid foundation, as a great bass player should, while being able to tastefully push things melodically and technically, and feed me as a soloist.

With the core band assembled, I presented them with the outline of the songs I had written over the past year with my writing, and life, partner Dorothy Whittick. I tried to keep things as open to interpretation as possible. We rehearsed the tunes enough to know them comfortably, everyone contributing ideas to the arrangements, without playing away the excitement or possibility of where they might head the moment we hit record. I feel this process has resulted in my broadest, and most musically exciting work so far.

From Far Away

This is a song that has been brewing for several years. I had the verse, chorus, and bridge/solo section when I took it to the band, but it wasn't a fully realized song. Jordan and Simon helped flesh it out musically and melodically, until we arrived at what has become one of my favourite original songs. We knew pretty early on that this was going to kick off the album, as it definitely takes aspects what I've done before, and then kicks it

up a level. I'm a big lover of science, humanism and it's related philosophies, and lyrically I have known for a long time that I wanted to do something inspired by Carl Sagan's incredible and inspiring monologue "Pale Blue Dot" - this song is my tribute to his beautiful, stirring words. A little nod to the Allman Brothers and maybe even Santana in the solo sections.

Clean Break

One of the two organ trio tracks on the record, with Jonny playing organ bass. In many ways a classic Matt Schofield Trio shuffle, that none of my records would be complete without! A modern blues story, with a twist, lyrically inspired by how to make a graceful exit, in the interest of both parties!

Getaway

I'm always trying to find new ways to play the blues, and enjoy playing over odd time signatures, which is something you don't find much in the genre, new or old. To make it work work the unusual time, in this case 7/8, has to be especially groovy, with just the right feel. The end result makes for uniquely tense solo sections where the lines played on guitar have to weave around the time. Lyrically the inspiration came from the desire to create intimacy with the audience, by inviting them to share in the moment with the music - the same way the musicians must be in order to play it - something that, in these days of an audience filled with camera phones, seems harder to achieve.

Breaking Up Somebody's Home

When I make an album I always go back to a long list of songs I love. I've been compiling this list over the years, reaching back to my first discovery of blues. I first heard this song by Albert King, one of my biggest heroes. We tried to put our own spin on the groove, and Jordan's incredible vocal improvisation trades with my guitar solo on the outro. It also marks the first appearance of a horn section on one of my records.

The Day You Left

It's become a signature on my albums to have an epic slow blues, always with a music twist. I like to each time to find a way to re-harmonize a traditional 12 bar form. This is one of my favourites. The version that made it on the record is the very first take, recorded totally live, late at night, the first time we played it all the way through! We recorded another take, immediately afterwards, but the tension of the band on the first take, not being exactly sure where we were heading with it, until we got there, created a unique intensity and immediacy that we couldn't recapture. This is a story of a heart that won't mend despite conventional wisdom.

Oakville Shuffle

A little instrumental fun, named for the suburb of Toronto where Jordan grew up. The mark of a great blues drummer is his shuffle, and Jordan's is one of the best. Jonny gets to really cut lose on this one. Our friend Denny Ilett, my favourite U.K. jazz/blues guitarist, stopped by the studio to say hi, so we gave him a guitar and he joined in to put down a killer solo.

Hindsight

What if Albert Collins and Maceo Parker sat in with Tower of Power - that's the basic musical concept behind this tune. The horn section is back, with James Morton's funky alto sax weaving through my guitar lines. Fun and funky!

Everything

The second of the two organ trio tracks on the record. How do we combine our love of swinging blues and funky grooves - here is the answer. Musically and lyrically, my kind of nod to classic Ray Charles songs like I Got A Woman. Upbeat, simple, and groovy.

Yellow Moon

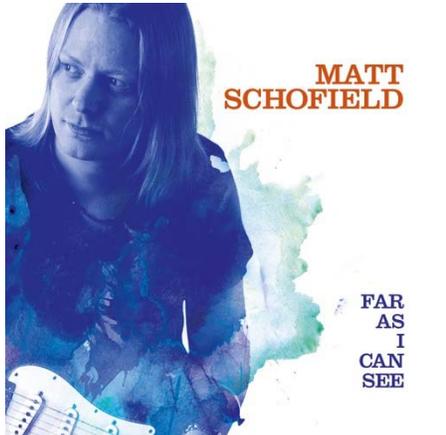
I've loved this song since I was a kid going through my Dad's records. Funky New Orleans blues, originally done by the Neville Brothers, and produced by Daniel Lanois, who we're also a big fan of. I've tried to make this great song my own with a unique approach to the arrangement, featuring Jordan's incredible vocals interplaying with my guitar.

Tell Me Some Lies

Along with the classics like Chuck Berry, I've always loved the Texas style of Rock 'n' Roll - bands like the early Fabulous Thunderbirds. I've never recorded that kind of tune before, so it seemed about time. This has a definite nod to Jimmie Vaughan in there, but somehow Keith Richards showed up in the vibe of it too! Carl brings out his double bass for full authenticity and Jonny lets it rip on the piano.

Red Dragon

As a guitarist, for me this song is the closest I've ever got to capturing "it" in the studio - again, first and only take, all live, late at night. The band following my every move. An obvious and loving tribute to the way Hendrix approached a blues, and in that regard, a bit of a departure for me, but something I've always wanted to do.

Far As I Can See	Track List	Extra information
 <p>Release Date: 17-2-2014 Catalogue nr: PRD 7416 2</p>	<p>From Far Away Clean Break Getaway Breaking Up Somebodies Home The Day You Left Oakville Shuffle Hindsight Everything Yellow Moon Tell Me Some Lies Red Dragon From Far Away Clean Break</p>	<p>http://mascotlabelgroup.com/ www.mattschofield.com/</p>

Matt Schofield - Vocals & Guitars
Jonny Henderson - Organ, Acoustic & Electric Piano, Clavinet,
Jordan John - Drums, Percussion & Vocals
Carl Stanbridge - Electric & Upright Bass

With special guests:

The Last Minute Horns:
James Morton - Alto Sax & Horn Arrangements
Ruth Hammond - Tenor Sax
Gary Alsebrook - Trumpet

Denny Ilett - First guitar solo on Oakville Shuffle
Simon Law - Additional backing vocals on From Far Away and Clean Break.

Produced by: Matt Schofield & Simon Law

Recorded and engineered by Simon Law & Cam Duncan at
Modern World Studios, Tetbury, UK

Mixed by Simon Law & Matt Schofield
Assisted by Sam Staples

Mastered by Mandy Parnell at Black Saloon Studios, London