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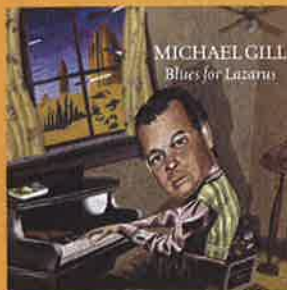


Roswell Six
Terra Incognita: A Line In The Sand

This is part 2 in the ground breaking book and music project from bestselling author Kevin J. Anderson with his author wife Rebecca Moesta. Multi-instrumentalist Henning Pauly is in charge of the music this time where the subject of war is the center piece. Once again Kevin provides original prose to tell the story with the music that is separate from what is told in the book and can be enjoyed stand alone. The other players on the CD are:

- Steve Walsh (*Kansas*)
- Sass Jordan
- Michael Sadler (*ex-Saga*)
- Nick Storr (*The Third Ending*)
- Charlie Dominici (*ex-Dream Theater, solo*)
- Alexander Froese (*Frameshift*)

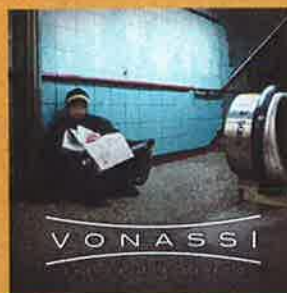
CURRENT RELEASES



Michael Gill
Blues for Lazarus



DANTE
Saturnine



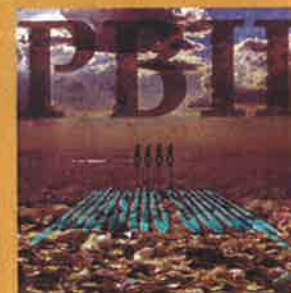
Vonassi
The Battle of Ego



Echoes
Nature | Existence



Supernal Endgame
Touch The Sky - Volume I



PBII
Plastic Soup

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LATE BLOOMER MAKES GOOD

Michael Gill's proggy muse finally gets heard

Don't let the title fool you. **BLUES FOR LAZARUS**, the first solo release by keyboardist/composer **MICHAEL GILL**, is not a blues record. It definitely was a long time coming for this 48-year-old musician-of-all-trades, whose longstanding love for progressive rock finally has an audience.

Music runs deep on both sides of GILL's family and recording an album seemed like destiny. His fascination with complex forms of composition began early. "My parents had two pianos and I used to sneak out of bed at night and listen to them playing Mozart and other things together. So I was listening to classical music at a young age," he says. "I grew up listening to classical and it wasn't until sixth or seventh grade that I got into rock, but it bored me after the novelty wore off."

Hearing **EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER** and attending a **YES** concert in his native California proved revelatory. "My first rock concert was Yes at the Hollywood Bowl -- the **RELAYER** tour. I remember it blowing my mind and changing my musical life, seeing that rock instruments could be played for something other than three-minute radio songs."

But sometimes, indulging artistic passion takes a backseat to earning one's keep. In GILL's case, we're talking decades.

MICHAEL settled in the San Francisco Bay area, where he's spent nearly 30 years working for others and playing in various bands. He has written music for theater, commercials, a planetarium show and for film, the documentary **KYIMOLUNG: A HIDDEN VALLEY IN THE HIMALAYAS** among his most notable projects. He offers multiple services via his website -- some a bit offbeat, including Israeli and other Middle Eastern music for concerts and social functions. His group **THE SHTETLBLASTERS**

is billed as covering all bases "from Jerusalem to Motown." Also for hire is "solo piano for any occasion," school/summer camp ensemble instruction, and his "soulful, funky" party band, **WITH A TWIST**.

BLUES FOR LAZARUS, now available through **PROGROCK RECORDS**, represents GILL's long-tethered creative spirit finally taking flight. ProgRock President **SHAWN GORDON** recalls being surprised by the album, since MICHAEL had no track record on the progressive scene. "I had occasion to meet Michael a year or so back through something unrelated and didn't even know he was an accomplished keyboardist and songwriter," Gordon says. "So when he came to me with this release, I was excited and jumped on the chance to put it out. That it had a strong sci-fi influence made it that much better."

The first four tracks on **BLUES FOR LAZARUS** interpret GILL's favorite works of speculative fiction. Eight-minute instrumental "Arrakis" was inspired by **FRANK HERBERT's DUNE**, and the funky, futuristic "Tomorrow's World" drew from **WILLIAM GIBSON's** cyberpunk classic **NEUROMANCER**. Creative production on the latter lends it an "alien" feel. This deserves mention because GILL also is an experienced producer, having issued **ARTHUR PINCHEV's** acoustic folk album **WAKING UP TUNES** and jazz vibraphonist **SAM GOLDSMITH's** **SUMMER VICTORY DANCE** on his own label, **STING-A-BEE-BACK RECORDS**.

Mixed and mastered by **NEAL HARRIS**, GILL's album features guest virtuosos including drummer **DAVE WECKL** plus saxophonists **DAVE KOZ** and **GARY MEEK**. All contributors are prominently listed on the CD's back tray card, a nice touch showing that GILL

MICHAEL GILL

recognizes the importance of their contributions. "Even though it's my name on the cover, it's really a collaborative effort," he says.

BLUES FOR LAZARUS exhibits a mature sound melding the classic elements of symphonic prog with acoustic and jazz texturing. The opener, "Merlin's Journey," illustrates this blend as grand keyboard passages contrast the more subdued verses where piano and **AMY BRODO**'s cello dominate.

Of course, the album is much more than a collection of "jazzy prog" tunes. GILL's distaste for stylistic branding is apparent, though he ultimately accedes to being a diehard progger. "I've never much liked the word 'progressive' as a descriptor of style, or any of the other terms like 'art rock.' It seems to me that the style can best be described by what it's not: commercial, predictable, repetitive, standard short length, and so on. Prog rock, to me, has always been exemplified by musicians defying limitation and convention to create something novel, engaging, engrossing, and entertaining."

With that in mind, does GILL consider BLUES FOR LAZARUS a prog record? Apparently so. "I consider myself a prog artist by virtue of the fact that my compositions do not follow pop music format, that I love playing in odd time signatures, that I enjoy instrumental movements and, of course, that you can't dance to it!"

Michael cites **KEITH EMERSON, RICK WAKEMAN, CHICK COREA** and the orchestral nature of symphonic progressive as influences, but carefully avoids boxing himself in. "I've been influenced by everything I've heard, some positive and some negative as in, 'Boy, I never want to sound like that! And I know I've been subconsciously influenced by things I couldn't even name," he says.

GILL had to fit composing and recording his prog opus around family and other work obligations, which meant that BLUES FOR LAZARUS was years in process. He considers it well worth the wait. "I've always wanted to make an album. I'd record bits and pieces of ideas, listen to them back and try them again. I love the process of creating musically. It's a joy and I could do it for hours on end."

This labor of love demonstrated another necessity of life for independent musicians: the importance of networking. Most of the contributors are people GILL has known for years. He met guitarist and sometimes co-writer **TOM VALDEZ** when he moved back to the Bay Area at 18 after spending most of his childhood in Los Angeles. In L.A. he attended grade school with Gary Meek, who plays saxophone on three of the album's nine tracks. They had lost contact but reconnected years

later. Other performers were met through various connections and meetings through his long career.

GILL also linked up with ProgRock Records via networking. His recent MBA studies included a research project on marketing prog music in the 21st century, for which he interviewed Gordon. A year later, **MICHAEL** sent Gordon sound samples and was signed soon thereafter.

With BLUES FOR LAZARUS, GILL sought to create a unique statement stressing the album's importance as a cohesive work of art. "Even though there are nine individual songs, I really took time crafting song order and space between songs. So I really think the whole experience is important," he says. "That's something I've always liked about classical and prog: It's not just about melodies, but the whole context."

"Balance is essential to the music I enjoy. Too much overdubbing or too many instruments tends to dilute the power and focus of a song. I like to be able to hear how each member contributes an essential component to a song, without excessive padding. I try to maintain an appropriate focus and balance in my compositions. I want the listener to be able to hear, and feel, the musical contribution of each musician on a given track. I try to record music that can be replicated live rather than succumb to the temptation of endless overdubs."

Having sufficient discipline and objectivity to self-edit is something GILL considers critical to the creative process. "'Less is more' is the idea, but that's sometimes a hard standard to maintain," he says. "The most difficult part of recording BLUES FOR LAZARUS was what I had to omit. To maintain the balance, I ended up deleting parts that sounded great but somehow diminished the focus of the tune. And I left a couple of tunes off the album because I didn't think their inclusion added enough to the overall work."

One track making the final cut is a cover of **PETER GABRIEL**'s "Here Comes the Flood." The song's melancholy atmosphere is highlighted by the inspired vocals of **CALLIE LOU THOMAS**. "I've always been a fan of Peter Gabriel and appreciate the fact that whenever he releases something, it's something new," **MICHAEL** says.

GILL intends to write and record more progressive music. Any follow-up is likely to feature some of the same players plus new guests. "This project [BLUES FOR LAZARUS] had some people I knew well and others I'd just met," he says. "I'd like to continue in that mold as long as people are willing to collaborate." Ω

MICHAEL