

Features

"Ultimately there's a hollowness to what he does. I don't think he will last a long time."—Tim Finn of Split Enz on Gary Numan.

If Tim Finn were to have the opportunity to speak with Gary Numan, he'd see that Numan realizes his predicament more than anyone else.

people are so courteous. Quite a change from Europe. In my opinion, Europe is a continent of pigs, both the land and the people. The French are the worst. Perhaps it's because I'm British, and there's always been a hatred between the French and British."

Accompanying Numan on his

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In Toronto for a tour-opening gig, Numan spoke of his desire to stop touring. This one would be his last. "I still want to sell records," insists Numan, "but I don't really want to be famous in a public way. I don't want to be recognized much longer. I'd like to do something else now."

In conversation, Numan's much publicized shyness is only partially in effect. He ponders the answers to questions, moving in and out of a hard shell. He's friendly with information, but is easy to interrupt. Contrary to popular thought, he does laugh—often in fact.

Because the record and concert going public are such a fickle lot, it is rare for an artist to ride the heights of fame for any lengthy period of time. Numan sees his success of the past two years as part of an overall scheme.

"There's been a 12 year plan since I was 18," he says. "It will take up to my 30th birthday, when all plans are finished, and everything is either done or not done by then. Everything will have worked as vehicle for me to earn enough money so I could live the rest of my life in complete comfort without ever having to work again. And if everything goes according to plan, I'll have a very small flying business, I'll be happily married with two or three children, and I'll be living in the suburbs. I'll have enjoyed it while it lasted, and be glad that it's over."

Numan's plan took seed while he was in his early teens in London. Music became an obsession, and during the following years he lived it, studied it, and conducted surveys into the business end of it.

The surveys asked who had the power, and who didn't; which writers were accessible and open. He became a spy of favourable. He became a spy of sorts as he confesses, "I went to concerts to see what the band's light shows were like. How they talked to their audiences. What sort of audiences they got. I spent two years learning everything from being on stage to designing shows, album covers, and all facets of the record making process."

Because Numan knew the market, and the media so well, he felt he could manipulate England to a certain extent. However, he admits that the rest of the world was different. Looking back, he now considers his success to 'be weird', although he never did before. He feels lucky that it took off the way that it did.

"In the rest of the world I had no idea what I was doing. I put out the records and hoped for the best," he recalls.

One nice thing about Numan's music has been its popularity throughout the world. Within his two world tours he has found both favorite places and others, which he hopes he never has to return to.

"Japan is a great place to play," he says recalling his visit last April. "It's a lovely place, and the

tours are both his father and mother. His dad works as manager, and his mother keeps dad company. "Originally I wanted to manage myself," confides Numan. "I'd get these contracts coming up, people would approach me and offer me things, wanting to manage me, well known people. I'd go back to my dad and ask his advise. It soon seemed logical that he take over managing me because he had my best interests at heart."

Perhaps it's a good thing that Numan doesn't have to pay out too much to a big-time manager. Instead, he puts a great deal of the money into his shows. Says Numan, "The last show cost over \$400,000 by the end of the tour. The one we use now costs that much just to put it on the road. And at least another \$200,000 before it's finished. This is twice as much as I'm earning. So I'm losing an awful lot of money touring."

"To build something that big costs a bit of money," he went on. "The real money comes when you have to run it, to take it on the road, because you need so many people to keep it going, and they all have to be fed, paid, and put into hotels."

Numan's present dilemma is to try and get rid of his public side, and still maintain a degree of success in record sales. Without the touring it will be next to impossible, at least in the minds of many in the music industry. Yet that all feeds into the Numan philosophy of bucking the obvious.

"I try to do things as an outsider and that way you approach it in a completely different frame of mind than would a more experienced person," he says. "I can try 10 things as an outsider, and the experts will say that you can't do this or that. Half the time they will be right, but half the time they'll be wrong. And I'll be able to do five things that they hadn't realized was possible because convention in that business told them otherwise. Hopefully I'll be able to bring in some new ideas into the projects that I attempt in the future."

Numan's next project is video. As he explains: "I'll be setting up libraries containing videos of higher conventional films, rock and roll concerts, what I'm doing which will be a varied collection of plays written by both myself and others, short plays, educational videos, safety procedure videos, and instruction videos like how to fly an airplane."

"People will be able to take them out and see them or listen to them and then bring them back, or listen to them in a booth, for a small fee."

"The first one will be in Earls Court, in London," he continued. "I've been given a basement of a record shop to do what I like, and I just bought 25 per cent of a video recording studio in London. Eventually I hope to expand around the world."



One person he wants to find, and cannot, is the enigmatic infamous Jobraith (job-rye-ith), a 'man' who was once photographed as being half-man, half mannequin. The man that Bowie and Numan call weird. "I still haven't been able to find him" Numan says. "He seems to have vanished from the face of the earth. I'd still like to meet him, at least, and find out what he's doing. He was fascinating."

He himself drives a Corvette. Numan on cars: "Cars are like a tank. A place where I can be without someone stabbing me in the back of my head. Unlike Bruce Springsteen, I don't talk to my car. Although you do get attached to cars. Basically though, they are a vehicle of safety."

As mentioned earlier, Numan's ultimate dream, the one which lies at the top rung of

front of so many thousand people, in a show that's gone down really well. I find it more satisfying than even that. It's more personal to me. It's just me on my own."

Numan's ideas come in great numbers. His intelligence is also in abundance. He knows a good thing and he knows when to get out. "I've got a lot of ideas," he admits. "I don't know if anyone else has got less or more. The only

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"He's the only person I want to meet in the world. I don't really want to meet anyone else. There's no one else I really find particularly interesting. That sounds pretty narrow, but it's true."

his success ladder, is the small plane business. Why airplanes?

"It's got everything this business has, including the excitement and the glamour. And there's absolutely no pressures, whatsoever, apart

reason people think I've got a lot is because I'm in the public eye. There's probably people who've got far more ideas than I've got; a lot bigger and grander ones."

"There was one man we met in Preston, on the last British tour,

PHOTOS PL NOBLE

Throughout his ascension to popularity Numan has had to battle an acute sense of shyness. Or as he says, "I keep myself to myself." He enjoys reading and admits to favouring bizarre science fiction. He read William *Naked Lunch* Burroughs for awhile and also Philip K. Dick. His favourite activity though is cars.

from the fear of crashing. Which isn't really a fear if you're a pilot, because you rarely think about it. For those reasons it's the most enjoyable thing I've ever done."

"After you've completed a flight," he continues, "and you land, and you get out of the plane, you feel even better than when you've come off stage in

an explosive expert. He said that he lost three men this year already. His work is mostly in the Far East, and the Middle East. A brilliant, amazing bloke. And he made me feel like I was nothing. Like being rock and roll star was nothing, compared to what he was doing."