

Interview Jonny Lang

It's been a long time since you had your last release. Now that you are 33 years old and started making music in the age of 12. And it's been a long time you had your first release with „Jonny Lang & Big Bang“. So it's been a long way from CD's like „Smokin“ or „Lie To Me“ to your latest album „Fight For My Soul“. How would you describe your wide spread music style?

Jonny Lang: Well, my playing always sounded blues influenced. That's what I started. The songs that I write are almost never blues sounding. It was an uncomfortable thing for me for years, because – I'd say around the time of „Wander This World“ I started writing the songs and they didn't sound anything like what people gonna expect now.

...no twelve-bar blues...

...Yeah, and so for years I just wanna put any of those songs on a record. But then – five , six years ago – I just decided I have to do it , cause my heart is driving me crazy. Not that I regret any records that I've made, I feel great about that.

What's special with the new record?

So this record has a few songs that – I felt – were very different. Taking a chance. You know, people who just like blues, maybe they really don't like the record. So I won't call it a Blues album. I'm aware that you know so. But I guess from me, I can look at myself as somebody who loves music and wants to relate the people with music. So I've tried to be a blessing to people with those songs. So, if I sat down and tried to write everything Blues, I would be faking it.

I've learned that on the new album are a lot of different styles like R'n B some Rap and Soul. Not really amazing, if you look at the development of your albums: First pure Blues albums and then more different styles. What's counting is the artist and his guitar playing. If I may say, you have created a music painting...

Thank you, I've tried to put as much guitar as I could without tipping the balance.

What was the reason it lasted so long – seven years – to have a new release?

Basically the reason is I'm touring almost constantly in the States. About six years ago I started having children with my wife. There were twins, a boy and a girl and now we have four children. We just had our fourth some month ago.

Congrats...!

...so, always on the road. And when I come home the little spare time that I have, I don't wanna go making records now – Daddy's not ever coming home... And so it's really hard to have time to make records.

What importance has "family" for you?

It's number one. So I started a lot of these songs at home because of this. I've tried to make a little sure on computer with my friend Dennis running the logic program. So I made the outlines of a lot of the songs at home. And then we found a studio really close to my house, just down the road. It took a while and then we had the songs basically, about fifty songs that I'd written since I've started with writing.

When you look in the past, what would you say were the musicians you are mainly influenced by, what are your Blues heroes? And when you look at nowadays and in the future: What are your influences now?

Well, when I was a little kid my first memories were that I wanted to be a singer and loved Motown. My parents used to hear Michael Jackson – who was my big –, Stevie Wonder as well, Marvin Gaye. So I always in my mind I wanted to be a singer. And then I went out to my first concert I've ever been to in the age of twelve. And then I heard this guitar player one time, my Dad's friend Ted in a Bluesband named "Bad Medicine Blues Band". He played the guitar in a way I've never heard before – it was a Blues guitar. And so I started taking lessons from Ted and because of him I came in the Blues. When I got older I really started exploring different types of guitar playin': some folk stuff and anything you can imagine. I can say now that one of my biggest inspirations musically are James Taylor, Stevie Wonder still and a lot of big Blues guitar players.

Yes, you also had always a good contact to Eric Clapton as we can see on your appearances on "Crossroads". It's amazing to see you: You come, you smile and then will be the angry young man on stage (laughter of Jonny) with a lot of passion. And then you leave stage and smile again...obviously satisfied! Is that true? What do you feel when you perform?

It feels good, it's inspiring when I play. I feel going forward. I feel like I'm leaving the world to the side and I get to go to a place where are no problems. It's just peaceful and always feels good – it's my escape.

How do you relax when you on tour?

I play golf... I'm addicted to golf, I love it.

What's your handicap?...

...2.7. I've always my golf clubs with me, when I'm on tour!

What's your favorite guitar and what are your pedals?

Live I use two Fender Reverb Deluxe amps...they are rewired like the old ones. I've changed the speakers to two Celestion Greenbacks. They are much softer speakers. And guitarwise I've been playing a Fender Customshop Telecaster Thinline: Nine years ago I started playing Gibson Les Paul, it's a 1958 reissue, a really special guitar. I got lucky with this guitar. And I've got a 1957 Esquier that I really love.

<< Note: Jonny Langs effects are especially: Dunlop Joe Bonamassa Wah, Visual Sound Route 808 overdrive, Whirlwind "The Bomb" Boost, Boss AW-3 Auto Wah, Fulltone Ultimate Overdrive, Tubeworks Tubedreamer Plus >>

And what are your plans for the future? More Blues again or experimental stuff?

I don't exactly know. I try as best I can to allow music to be completely inspired. For me – and I just believe that's the way – if I try to manufacture something it never works out! So I just never tell the band how to play very early. Just like them to play how they want and let it grow. It'll be pretty decided by the songs how anybody interprets the songs. Maybe come up a little Blues...I don't know. (laughs)

*How does your songwriting work? Early in the morning and you just have to put it down...
...sometimes – and catch up my ideas with my phone. But normally I sit there with my guitar or at the piano riffing.*