

let's do this one."

It's been a big hit for the band too, predictably, an even softer re-run of 'I Got You Babe.' But again, Astro regards reggae as the long term winner. "Reggae's gone past that invisible barrier," he says, "the barrier that says you can hang round, but don't expect a long life."

What does he, as a toaster, think of rap's chart success?

"I love it. The more alternatives to listen to the better. If you can't catch them with reggae, catch them with folk. If you can't catch them with folk, catch them with funk. If you can't catch them with funk, catch them with heavy metal!"

"Guys like Shinehead do that. He's a Jamaican guy who lives in New York, he's a real reggae fan but he plays to a hip-hop crowd. He'll toast to hip-hop and rap to reggae, and it's working brilliantly. People like Shinehead and Papa Stone, they're innovators, they've got the balls to try something else. There's a good strong healthy line of musicians that are getting into rap, so toasting will be around forever, now. That'll be the quickest way for reggae to be accepted, through rap and all that; so many people can relate to House music and rapping, they'll regard toasting as a West Indian version of American music!"

So would Astro consider releasing a toasting single?

"Yeah, why not? It's only a question of whether we think it's good enough — that's the only criteria required. As simple as it sounds, that's true. People can get precious about their bit of art, their bit of work, but if everyone doesn't like it then it obviously isn't the best thing since sliced bread."

"If somebody in the band has been working on a song that everyone else in the band thinks is really happening, then you know that there's half a million people out there who think on exactly the same terms as you do. If we think that the record deserves to be Top 5, then it's worth doing."

CHAD TAYLOR

Loving the Alien

THE JOE SATRIANI EXPERIENCE

Those who attended Mick Jagger's concert last month would surely have been impressed, not only with the singer's great performance but also with his band of high calibre musicians.

The band stormed through his songs, Stones classics and hot versions of James Brown and Jimi Hendrix numbers. Guitarist Joe Satriani made his own special contribution to the sound with fluent playing and raunchy lead breaks but that was only a taste of this man's capabilities.

Just listen to his own instrumental albums *Surfing With The Alien* or *Not Of This Earth* and you'll soon discover what this amazing guitar player and teacher is really all about. The energy, warmth and honesty of his music reflects his own personality; he is certainly a very friendly and inspiring character (at his Auckland in-store record shop appearances he made extra efforts to ensure that he spoke to everybody). Since his fascinating musical background has already been well documented, let's see what he has to say about it all.

Did you fly into Auckland last night?

"Yes, a connecting flight from Sydney. I saw a lot of beautiful countryside coming in."

No spacecraft, then?

"No spacecraft, no. That would be nice but unfortunately all very earthly transportation here."

You must have played to some huge crowds with Mick?

"We played a place in Jakarta that was built for 120,000. We had just under 100,000 there after they let the rioters in. There were riots going on outside the stadium. There were people who couldn't get in so they let them in for the last song. I think they destroyed 90 cars outside — I saw black smoke billowing over from outside the stadium, soldiers with machine guns. What a place. It's nice

to be back here in civilisation."

How did you land the tour with Jagger?



"His bassist Doug Wimbish and I met at a Chicago show and he saw my trio play with Steve Vai as a guest

player. Doug reported back to Mick and suggested getting me in the band. About four months later their offices got in touch with Steve Vai about the possibility of him coming down to jam with Jagger. He declined because he was in the middle of doing *Skyscraper* with David Lee Roth, but he said they should give me a call. Nothing happened until January when I was playing in L.A. again with Steve Vai as a guest. By then *Surfing With The Alien* had been released and was doing very well. Doug Wimbish again saw the show and went back to rehearsals, insisting Mick should bring me in for an audition.

"Mick just flew me in. The band and I played for about an hour or so while Mick was outside listening through the door, trying to check me out, then he popped in and we just started playing. We had a good time. He's a lot of fun, the whole band's like that really."

Drums & Wires

What equipment are you using for the Jagger show?

"I'm using two Marshall 100 watt half-stacks but I'm using a Randall pre-amp and no wah-wah pedal, just a little delay for some of the solos and that's it actually. It's a very straight ahead gig and I play a Fender strat for almost the entire show, except for the solo in which I use the Ibanez. In this band there's always guitar, always two keyboards, drums, bass and five people singing so subtleties just didn't work — I needed something that was a little bit thinner and more cutting in order to be heard. It was a challenge, a nice break to get away from using the vibrato bar just for a change. I'm pretty much at home just playing straight guitar."

What's the story behind the *Surfing With The Alien* album cover and title?

"It wasn't going to be called *Surfing With The Alien*. It was just a strange title that popped into my head without much effort. I used the title as a catalyst to write what I

thought should be the most fun-sounding guitar song where I could just play every kind of wild guitar, but it couldn't be heavy — it had to sound kind of fun. I wanted the song to be a guiltless expression of rock'n'roll roots and everything — that's why there's little hints of Chuck Berry and whatever all through it. It was such an absurd title that it started to create a little movie in my head.

"So I finished the record and sent it off to the record company. I was on the phone to the production manager, Jim Koslavski, and I told him what it was going to be called. He laughed and told me his nickname used to be the Silver Surfer and it would be a good idea to put the Surfer on the cover. Believe it or not I had no idea what he was talking about! So he started telling me about this comic strip character on a surfboard. I said look, this evil character no, 'cause I had made a deal with the record company that there would be no tasteless violence or anything like that associated with my records. Jim said no, this guy's a good guy, so he sent me two comic strips. Here was this funny but intense-looking figure with these metaphysical problems running through his head all the time. I was looking through these pages thinking any page could be an album cover. So we made a deal with Marvel Comics and went and licensed one of the original plates."

Hendrix & Gamalons

So, Jimi Hendrix was your main influence ...

"Yeah, and continues to be. As I have become more experienced in life it's easier to see Jimi and his life and how human he really was. As a young kid growing up I was infatuated with this bizarre musical character. If I listen to 'Electric Ladyland' or something I'm just so impressed because I know how few tools he had to work with. He really made a statement and it's a lasting statement — it's really remarkable that through all his human frailties he

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I DON'T WANT YOUR LOVE

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