

King David

David Coverdale & Whitesnake

At the beginning of a new decade, Whitesnake have a new sound, a new album, a new tour and of course a new member — guitarist Steve Vai, who has previously played with Zappa, Alcatrazz, Public Image and David Lee Roth.

After Vai had completed Roth's *Skyscraper* tour he left to work on his own solo project, *Passion And Warfare*. David Coverdale met and talked with Steve while Whitesnake guitarist Adrian Vandenburg was out of action with a wrist injury. Next time Coverdale visited Vai at his home, he sang along to some sketchy demos of new material and Vai was totally hooked.

Slip Of The Tongue is the follow-up to the power packed 1987 album and is record number 12 from Coverdale and co. When the group first started out, record companies insisted that there was no audience for hard rock; since then Whitesnake have enjoyed huge success in the States and elsewhere. Mr Coverdale sounded particularly cheerful on the telephone from LA and it was Happy New Year all round...

And how's your lovely wife, Tawny Kitaen?

"Wonderful. She's just gone nuts, saying she forgot I was supposed to be calling Australia and New Zealand and that my dinner's ready. So we can count on me being late. I've just got back from sweating over a hot orchestra in the village where we were rehearsing. We start the tour in February, on the East Coast."

Can you remember your time downunder with Deep Purple?

"Yes indeed. That was coming up to Christmas 1975. That tour turned into a nightmare after we left for Australia. We lost the security guy [Patsy Collins, who mysteriously fell down a lift shaft] and had a very substantial amount of money ripped off in the jungles of Indonesia. Some bad memories there."

Have you been having some good jams with Steve Vai since finishing the album?

"Yeah. The guy is a wonderful addition to what we're doing. I'd had my eye on Vai since 1985. How I'd missed him before that, I have no idea. Then I just bided my time [before suggesting a collaboration] and it worked out beautifully."

He's certainly an incredible musician.

"Oh, the guy is. And a charming man, too — that's a bonus. I very rarely bandy about the word 'genius' but Vai is a genius. The guy is 29 years old and I've never heard anything like it and I've worked with some of the finest six-string players in history. When he hits that bottom B-string, you feel it, it's phenomenal."

So both Adrian and Steve are going out on the road?

"Yes. As we speak, they're both working out the guitar parts to 'Kittens Have Claws'."

Has Adrian's wrist healed up well?

"He's playing beautifully. It was a major trauma on all sides. I could identify with Adrian's anxiety because I had been through a similar trauma in '86. He seems his usual happy self now, though."

Have you written any songs with Steve Vai?

"We literally haven't had time. We finished *Slip Of The Tongue* in



Steve Vai and David Coverdale

September and he was straight into recording his solo album. That's finished now, and it's a stunning piece of work, much more accessible than his original *Flex-able* album.

Everybody associates Vai with this rock playing but there's much more to him; each avenue he pursues with 100 percent commitment. Each style of music is as loaded with integrity as the other. There's no way I could have worked with a musician, regardless of how good he was, if he wasn't a blues player or an expressionist and I think for the first time on record he's actually achieved with Whitesnake and *A Slip Of The Tongue*, a more emotive

style. Certainly we let him fly. I told him I thought his work with David Lee Roth was somewhat muted and apparently that was part of someone else's plan, so we just told Steven to go for it. The wonderful thing for me is I really didn't expect to hear the guitars as faithfully recreated live as they are on the record. In the studio you can actually get away with a great deal but he's not missing a note. Phenomenal player, phenomenal!"

Do you feel your vocals on the new album are perhaps the greatest heights you've reached on record?

"I think so. It's certainly the most secure all round for me in terms of my music writing, my lyric writing and my

singing, yeah. After my surgery in '86 it seemed that my vocal range was enhanced, so on the new album I'm singing consistently higher, hopefully with the same blues grit."

And you've got quite some band to back you up.

"It's taken me 12 years to acquire such passionate people as Tommy, Rudy, Adrian and Steven. Initially I formed a band of very fine musicians and the bonus is we all turned into extremely good friends and there's a very good foundation for working together. This album is the first real group effort that I've been involved with for the majority of my career and it's a delight not to have to shoulder the whole responsibility."

It must have been a good feeling having Glenn Hughes help out on 'Now You're Gone'?

"That was very sweet and I'm hoping he'll make the most of the opportunity. By association he got a deal with Warners and stuff and I certainly wish him the best. It was a treat for me to sing with him after so many years — I just hope he gets himself together, I'd be delighted and a very proud friend if he does. It was a one-off thing and a treat for both of us; an idea that brought forth fruit."

The last two albums certainly have a more powerful and fresher sound.

"I've been arguing recently with the morally bankrupt UK press about this accusation that I've gone all American, which is total bullshit. All I've done is utilised American quality production; I've never compromised what I do. All of the albums are hard rock, blues-based R&B stuff. I didn't go into the studio on the 1987 album to sell 10 million copies — I went in to make the best rock n' roll album I could at that particular time, the same as I do any time I go into the studio. Fortunately, though, things went nuts!"

You've always maintained that "hot n' sexy" theme...

"There's gotta be grin lines and a smile line, a twinkle in the eye.

There's gotta be some tongue in cheek and there must be fun because all of life isn't miserable or a search for direction. I stand by the sex-orientated songs as much as I do the more emotive, identity-crisis songs."

What is 'Wings Of The Storm' about?

"It's a very optimistic love song. That one and 'Judgement Day' are love songs and they're saying right, we've got each other, we're together, but we can fuckin' blow it."

"In the past couple of years my private life has blossomed in such a positive way that my wife and I work together as partners. I had no idea that a relationship could be like this and that's one of the things that makes me optimistic. I feel there's a matured piece of reflection on my part in the song 'Deeper The Love', I'm very happy with it. I also enjoy the tongue in cheek stuff, like 'Kitten's Got Claws'. Little Richard is a huge influence on me, the screaming and stuff. I think that 'Kitten's Got Claws' is probably my most successful Chuck Berry style lyric, telling the storyline and of course, you know who the song is about! It's fun, and Vai gives such an articulate reading of it."

How about the cat noises intro?

"Oh my God! 12 different cats! The guy researched the sounds of cats because they're like countries with different languages; Persians, Siamese, all kinds of shit happening there."

What made you decide to re-record 'Here I Go Again', 'Crying In The Rain' and now 'Fool For Your Lovin'?

"They're good songs that were performed appallingly by former colleagues and they are very important songs for me, all of them. I'd love to redo 'Walking In The Shadow Of The Blues' but Adrian and I write so quick, and now Vai's involved so it will be exciting to compose with him. When we put together a Best of Whitesnake it's going to be a major dilemma for me;

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TOY LOVE: Rebel sleeve, Don't Ask Me.
CURE: Primary, Boys Don't Cry.
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GARAGE CRAWLERS: You Tonight.
JOY DIVISION: These Days.
BLAM BLAM BLAM: Don't Fight It Marsha.
U2: Gloria.
DEAD KENNEDYS: Holiday In Cambodia.
JOY DIVISION: Transmission.
FALL: Totally Wired.
SWINGER: One Track Mind.
PISTOLS: God Save The Queen, Pretty Vacant.
SHAM 69: Lost On Highway 46.
MARCHING GIRLS: True Love.
NEWMATICS: Broadcast.
GORDONS: Future Shock.
SPELLING MISTAKES: Feel So Good.
POP MECHANICS: Radio Song.
DANCE EXPONENTS: All I Can Do.
CITIZEN BAND: Home Tonight.
JAM: Absolute Beginners.
POLICE: Wrapped Around Your Finger.
ELVIS COSTELLO: Only Flame In Town.
BLONDIE: Dreaming.
MARGINAL ERA: Haven't I Seen Your Face.
BAUHAUS: She's In Parties, Spirit.
CHILLS: Rolling Moon.
INXS: This Time.
SYHOOKS: Let It Rock.
999: Trouble, Nasty Nasty.
MEMBERS: Working Girls.
FLIGHT X7: I Lose Control.
ALISON DURBAN: Don't Come Any Closer.
BEATLES: Let It Be.
DEVO: Come Back Jane (grey vinyl).
LEYTON BUZZARDS: I'm Hanging Around (green vinyl).

LP's

SUBURBAN REPTILES: Megaton.
LOU REED: Metal Machine Music.
PIL: Metal Box.
PISTOLS: Bollocks (pic disc).
AK79
BOWIE: Fashion 12" Promo, Space Oddity / Ashes To Ashes 12" promo.
ROBERT PLANT: Interview LP (double).
JD BLACKFOOT: Crazy Horse (with book).
MARC BOLAN: Beginning Of Doves (orig. UK).
JOHN LENNON: Two Virgins (US Apple), Wedding Album (Japan).
HOW WAS THE AIR UP THERE.
DAVID LEE ROTH: Eat 'Em And Smile (sung in Spanish).
GIRLSCHOOL: Live 1979 (limited ed. red vinyl).
SPRINGSTEEN: Born To Run (original Steadman cover), As Requested Around The World.
SMALL FACES: Ogdens' Nut (orig. cover).
SWINGERS: Practical Jokers.
BOBBY JAY & HAWKS: Sko (orig. 1965).
METERS: Struttin'.
BILL BLACK COMBO: Sglid & Raunch.
LARRY'S REBELS: Study In Black, Madinat.
SIMPLE IMAGE: Spinning Spinning Spinning.
FOURMYULA: 1st.
UNDERDOGS: Blues Band, Wasting Our Time.
AVENGERS: Medallion.
RAY COLUMBUS: The RC Album.
HIGH REVVING TONGUES: Tropic Of Capricorn.
BILLY THORPE & AZTECS.
LOVED ONES: Magic Box.
JOHNNY O'KEEFE: Show, Twist.
EASYBEATS: Best Of, Vol 3, It's 2 Easy.
BURNING SPEAR: Hail Him (yellow vinyl).
MEGADEATH: Aces High 12" (pic disc).
VIXEN: Edge Of A Broken Heart (pic disc).
SPLIT ENZ: True Colours (US laser disc).
ROLLING STONES: She Was Hot (pic disc).
CHAPTA: 1st, Open Door.
LUTHA: Earth.
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