

# QUEEN: BRIAN MAY

From 'Keep Yourself Alive' to 'Another One Bites The Dust' and beyond, Queen have spanned a great variety of styles yet two main factors always identify them as Queen. One is the operative vocals and glamorous presence of Freddie Mercury and the other is the unique guitar sounds created by Brian May.

There's plenty of both in their grandiose new single which is on a similar scale to their epic 1975 hit 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and is suitably titled 'Innuendo'. The single and album of the same name went straight to the number one spot in the UK and *Greatest Hits Vol II* is due for release later in the year.

The band actually finished the new recording late 1990 and in December the very polite Mr Brian May spoke from London about *Innuendo* and what Queen are up to in 1991.

"It took quite a long time, I think we were on it nine months on and off and it was meant to be out for Christmas but things went on and on. It's a fairly complex album — you get to a point where you can't take any short cuts — we put some of the old trademarks in, I think."

Queen have only performed once in New Zealand, at Mt. Smart Stadium in 1984.

"Very nice it was too. I've got great memories of New Zealand, the people were really nice, the concert was nice. I wish we could do it more often."

Freddie refused to tour at all for the previous album, *The Miracle*. Are there any Queen concerts planned this time?

"It may happen but not in the next couple of months 'cos we're all fairly busy. I've been doing music for a play here — I'm doing music for *Macbeth*. It's nearly finished and I've been working on my solo album which I'll hopefully have out in summer. At the moment I've got much too much stuff but it's very widespread in style. I'm going to hone it down a bit — there's some rock'n'roll ballads and some experimental guitar stuff. That about sums it up but at the moment I think there's too many ballads. I've played most of the stuff but there are a few other musicians that I've had in."

Will you take your own band on the road if Queen don't tour?

"Yeah, that's kinda my plan for the year. I don't want to rush the solo album but I want to have it out and then tour maybe at the end of the year with a band that I feel comfortable with. It may take a bit of time to get all that together but I'd definitely like to do that. If Queen decide to go out then that would take priority but I do want to play again soon. We have a kind of fan club Christmas party here and it's become traditional that a couple of us go along. Roger's band, the Cross, played for a little while and then I got up at the end and did a few numbers. One of them was 'Let Me Out' off the *Star Fleet* album."

Have you worked with Eddie Van Halen again since *Star Fleet*?

"No, I haven't seen him very often either. Our ways have gone geographically very differently so our paths don't cross that often."

For the *Innuendo* album the songs were co-written by the band as with *The Miracle*. "We took that decision at the beginning. It saves a lot of problems and we think it worked very well for both albums. Problems over publishing credits for songs split more bands up than anything else, I reckon. Seeing as the band is the main vehicle for whoever's writing I think it's a very good idea in the long run to share the credit. It encourages people to contribute and you get a much better product out there."

Before 1989 the only song co-written by all of Queen was

'Stone Cold Crazy' from *Sheer Heart Attack* which Metallica recently covered.

"I still haven't heard it but I like Metallica a lot, I find it highly flattering that they want to do it, I can imagine it would suit them very well really. I can remember the history of that song. Before Queen formed, Freddie had this group called Wreckage and he'd written most of the lyrics for this song called 'Stone Cold Crazy' which they put to a medium paced Jeff Beck sort of riff. Freddie's singing stuff like 'rubber Tommy water gun' and I just thought it would sound great if it was really staccato, everything coming

hard on top of each other at a frantic pace. I heard it in my head so I said try it this way and it went faster and faster and became something that made sense with the gangster stuff. I guess it's a fairly early example of playing heavy metal as fast as you can go."

One of the heavier tracks on the new Queen recording is 'Hit Man' which Brian says is one of the hardest songs the band have done

and in fact nearly got thrown off the album.

"We did a demo version of that early on and everybody was quite excited about it. Then we listened to it a couple of days later and thought it was alright but very rough. It had a lot of timing errors and didn't feel quite right so we were leaving it but our producer Dave Richards said 'Let me have a go at it'. What he did was reconstruct it around a loop to

bring everything back into time and when we heard it like that it began to have a new life. We played everything again on top of that and it just seemed to spring to life and sound good at the last moment. It was the last track we finished."

The song greatly features Brian on his very special custom made guitar. He actually built the instrument himself, using mahogany wood taken from a one hundred year old



Queen, Brian May second from right.

fireplace and it is the guitar he plays 95% of the time.

"It's great, works well for me. She's an old lady now but she still works. The Guild guitar company of America commercially made some for a while under licence from us. They made some good ones, I have a couple and they sold a few but the relationship got a little strained after a while because they started changing things without always telling me. Recently they were bought out by Randall and we're planning to reissue the guitar as a collector's edition and do it really much better than before."

Are you happy with the state you've reached? What you're playing now?

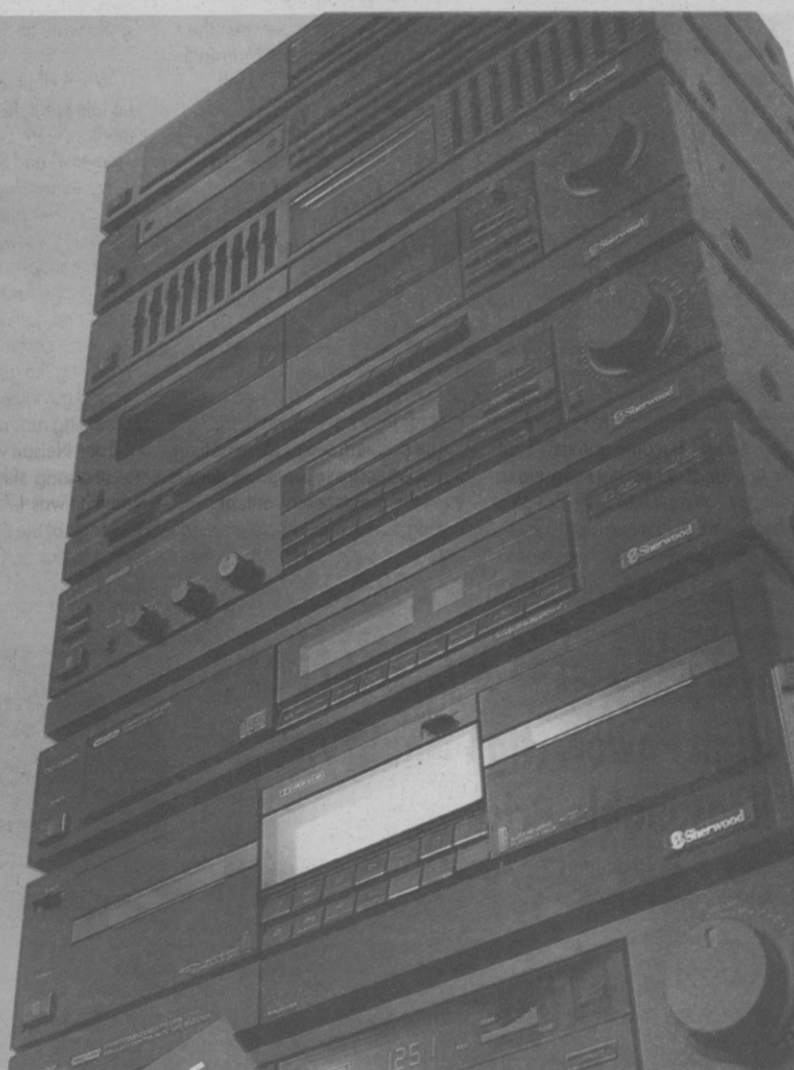
"Not really but I keep truckin' on. I'm never happy with my playing when I hear something like Jeff Beck's new album. But I'm going to keep trying... and enjoy it."

Having played and stayed together as a group for nearly two decades, will Queen still continue on well into the nineties?

"As long as we're all still around and healthy I think we'll be doing it till we drop."

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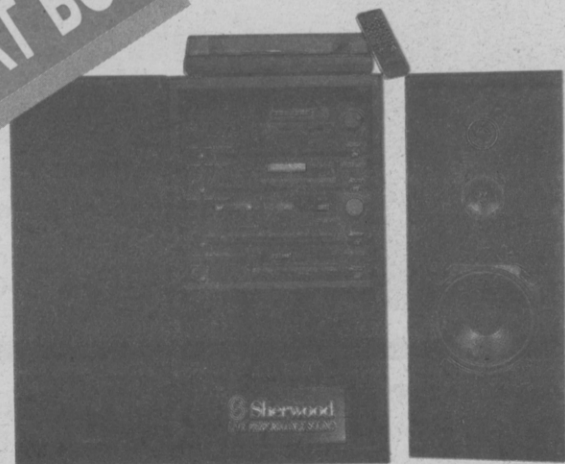
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