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BRIAN AUGER'S OBLIVION EXPRESS

“Live Oblivion Vol. 1 & 2”



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Brian talks about the album “Live Oblivion”

For the “Live Oblivion” recordings, singer *Alex Ligertwood* rejoined the band. I called him to wish him a happy Christmas. I said, “What are you doing over there in Paris?” And he said, “Not much.” Well, I told him, “These new albums that we made, ‘Closer To It’ and ‘Straight Ahead’, are both in the Billboard-charts, not only in the rock-charts, they are in the R&B- and jazz-charts all at the same time. Would you like to come back into the band for the America-Tour?” And he said, “I thought you’d never ask!” So he came back and I recorded the band while we were on tour.



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Alex was the lead singer. He is a tremendous singer. He is really like having another instrument in the band; he sings freely and improvises a lot. This time, on the live recordings, I am only singing some harmony stuff and some kind of backup stuff.

We chose the Whiskey-A-Go-Go on Sunset Strip. It is one of the most famous venues of the world. We used to have a long line around the block for the OBLIVION EXPRESS. It was amazing. Upstairs on the third floor, overlooking the Sunset Strip, was a huge backstage area. We had an open band room. People could come in and talk to us. A lot of people would turn up to see us.

Keith Moon, the drummer of *The Who*, came in one night and he was dressed like a court's jester. I just had to laugh. It was unbelievable. Also, in one night *Alan Price* visited us with his band, while they were touring the States. There were several people in the band that I knew from England as well.

It was very cool to see *Alan*, another great keyboard player. He was a fan of the guy who wrote "Simon Smith and his Amazing Dancing Bear", *Randy Newman*. He recorded one or two songs that were hits before *Randy Newman* was well known. *Randy's* songs, although great, didn't fit to my style – but they fit to *Alan's* musical direction completely. He had a lot of hits including his own songs about Northern England, where he had grown up.

The Whiskey was pretty amazing. Somebody told us someday that *John Lennon* was in the audience. Another day, the *Allman Brothers* came by. *Gregg Allman* was a great guy. I don't know why, but I had a friendship with him immediately. He came to one of the gigs in Cleveland and introduced himself. We were kind from the same background. He and his brother came up from the south and their family wasn't rich. He and his band did some great stuff. *Gregg* introduced me to his band mates with the words "He is one of us" (laughs). I took that as a compliment. *Gregg* picks us up to another club, where we jammed together.

Bob Dylan came up a couple of times. But people couldn't leave him alone, so he stayed only for a little while and we heard after the show that he was there. You never knew who would drop in. It was a very popular club at that time. There was tremendous happening music scene at this time, it was very vibrant.

Someday a strange guy marches into the club and picks up *Jack Mills'* guitar – *Jack* was talking to somebody and didn't notice – and walked toward the entrance with it. *Howie*, our road manager, ran after the guy. *Howie* had the black belt, so I said, "Howie, just get the guitar!" The guy was kicked out of the club. The funny thing is, that he turned up at the next time when we're playing at the Whiskey. And he came up to me – in a line of people who



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came by for a short conversation – and said “Hello Brian, I hope that you don’t remember me!” (laughs).

In that night where we started the live recordings, we came to the club in the early afternoon, and I had hired the *Wally Heider* Mobile Sound Studio standing in a huge truck outside. We had a closed circuit TV in the club, so we could talk to technicians outside in the truck. As we stood by, *Steve Ferrone* was 40 minutes late for the first set. *Steve* had gone out the before – not aware that it’s hard to get back in town due to the heavy traffic in Los Angeles. So he got stuck in a traffic holdup. When he arrived, he was extremely apologetic. “Oh, I’m so sorry, Auger, so sorry...!” I said, “*Steve!* Where the hell have you been?” And he said, “I got stuck in the traffic.” The manager of the Whiskey told us to go on stage right away. *Steve* asked, “What are we going to play, Auger?” I said, “Beginning Again”. And when he started the drum intro, he was so full of adrenaline that he played it faster than we usually played it. If you listen carefully, you can almost hear me thinking to myself, “Holy Mother of God, I’m not sure if I can play it that fast!” In fact, it’s a stirring track.

We recorded in three nights. I think that I still have enough stuff for “Volume 3 & 4”. It was very difficult to choose between one take and another. In the end I had to toss a coin. I choose this version of “Beginning Again”, because I thought that it absolutely rocks and it’s full of spirit.

Another anecdote comes to mind regarding “Maiden Voyage”, which is on Volume 2.

I was in a hotel in New York. As I was getting ready to play at the Bottomline in New York, I was walking down the hotel corridor and passed this room. From the inside I could hear the intro of “Maiden Voyage” from Volume 2. I stood still and listened to it for a moment and wondered if I should knock on the door. But I didn’t have enough time. Just one of those funny incidents.

Anyway, things progressed for me, in the States where a lot of people asked me to open for them – people like *Earth, Wind And Fire!* *Maurice White* came down to our soundcheck and introduced himself. That was pretty overwhelming for me. We had tremendous black following. The term “crossover artist” was coined over here in the U.S. *Herbie Hancock* and his *Headhunters* crossed over from the black to the white community. I went the other way. *Herbie* and me toured together with our bands three or four times. We also did shows with the *Crusaders*. *Joe Sample* is one of my all time favourite keyboard players and composers.

In Richmond, Virginia at a big festival, OBLIVION EXPRESS was in the same program with *Rush* and *Kiss*. We played at the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago with *Grand Funk Railroad*. *Blue Öyster Cult* asked for us to open for them in New York. And we opened for *ZZ Top* at the Madison Square Garden’s Felt Forum. I recently discovered a poster from the 70s where an up and coming *Bruce Springsteen* opened for us. *Duke Ellington* said, “There are only two types of music – good and bad.” I have been lucky enough to know so much of the good ones.



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(Quotation from an interview with BRIAN AUGER in May 2009)

TRACKLISTING:

CD 1: “Live Oblivion Volume 1”

1. Beginning Again – *(Auger) Omnibus/EMI Music*
2. Don't Look Away – *(Ligertwood/Dean/Mullen) Omnibus/EMI Music*
3. Bumpin' On Sunset – *(Montgomery) Keith Prowse Music Publishing*
4. Truth – *(Ligertwood) Omnibus/EMI Music*
5. Freedom Jazz Dance – *(Harri/Auger/Ligertwood) Omnibus/EMI Music*
6. Happiness Is Just Around The Bend – *(Auger) Omnibus/EMI Music*

CD 2: “Live Oblivion Volume 2”

1. Maiden Voyage – *(Hancock) BMI*
2. Second Wind – *(Auger) Omnibus/EMI Music*
3. Whenever You're Ready – *(Dean/Auger) Omnibus/EMI Music*



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4. Inner City Blues – *(Gaye) Jobete Music (UK) Ltd.*

5. Straight Ahead – *(Dean Auger) Omnibus/EMI Music*

6. Compared To What – *(McDaniels) BMI*

- ★ BRIAN AUGER has set musical standards as jazz pianist, band leader, studio musician and Hammond-B3-innovator
- ★ Original albums fully remastered
- ★ Digipak incl. informative liner notes
- ★ BRIAN AUGER played with *Rod Stewart, The Yardbirds, Jefferson Airplane, Herbie Hancock, Julie Driscoll* etc.