

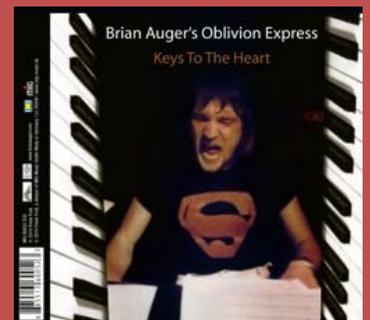
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BRIAN AUGER'S OBLIVION EXPRESS "Here And Now/Keys To The Heart"

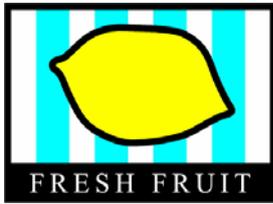


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Brian talks about the album [HERE AND NOW](#)

I was in Milan at the time, and a producer there asked me if I would be interested in making an album. I stayed for about two months. While I was there, I happened to get down to the local Hammond Organ distributor, and as I walked in, there were a few Hammonds sitting around, a few models, and as I was looking at them a guy came up to me and said, “ Oh man, you’re Brian Auger, right? So what are you doing in Milan?” “Well, I am recording an album here.” “Oh, great, look, I work for Korg, and I know our boss here who actually is from Brazil is a big fan of yours, Mister De Silva. Would you like to come up and meet him?” I said, “Absolutely.” So I went up to the office and met Mr. De Silva a really great gentleman, we had a good talk. He asked me, “Are you interested in synthesizers?” I said, “Of course. I am very interested in the new technology. I am always trying to figure out how to program these things. I used the Moog and I have a Prophet Five back in the States.” He said, “We have just brought out this EX-800, would you be interested in using it?” So he actually gave me one (laughs).

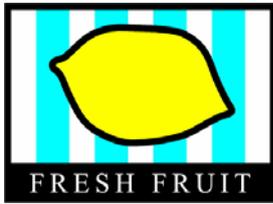
Back downstairs I was introduced to the programmers who worked for Korg. They told me, every Monday, if you need to know anything, we all get together and go through all the programming of these synths and the new keyboards. There were new polyphonic synthesizers coming out that they had there, I think it was a DW-8000. They said, “You are welcome to come down any Monday afternoon, and we will show you anything you need to know, how to program these things and what they’ll do.” They introduced me to the MIDI systems where you can midi one or two of these things together. For a couple of months I went there every Monday and hung out with these guys. They were very kind, and I learned a lot about synthesizers at the time.

I still know that I was amazed that I did not get the kind of Brass sounds out of the Fairlight like I remembered from my Prophet 5. So I brought a Prophet 5 into the studio and ended up using those sounds and meeting Aldo Banfi, a great programmer and keyboard wizard in his own right, and who became a great friend of mine. Aldo was able to handle the Fairlight, the Prophet 5 and just about any synth, and was a great help to me. If I said “Look this sound is almost as I want it, but it needs a touch more filter, Aldo would dial it in for me. Suddenly I realized that programming had become a new science. I thought to myself, well, the Fairlight is an amazing system. It has got all of these hundreds or thousands of sounds but boy, I thought to myself, unless they manage to bring the price down of this thing – which was about 35.000 dollars at that time –these machines will soon become dinosaurs.

From hanging out with Korg I could see that the technology was developing so quickly, that there were amazing analog sounds on these new synthesizers for which you maybe paid only a thousand bucks or less. And they were every bit as good as what the Fairlight was producing at the time. That was one of those things that kind of came out of that period. It was a very interesting time.

The bass player was Julius Farmer, a nephew of the great American Jazz trumpet player Art Farmer who had played with the best American musicians on many albums. Julius was a really great bass player and just what I wanted.

The drummer, Alfredo Golino, was probably one of the best drummers in Italy. He came from Naples. People like Pino Daniele and other guys who are incredibly soulful musicians come from Naples. I think, it was because Naples is a big port, and the American GI’s used to



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come into that port, and go to the clubs. So a lot of musicians were used to playing to American GI's. And so the rhythm section, Julius, and Alfredo were first class. Also there are several really great guitar players in Italy. Giorgio Coccilovo was one of them that we had in Milan. This guy could play anything. So I was just kind of trying to find all the best musicians and put this thing together.

“Heart of the Hunter” was actually my tune. I wrote that after I had read a book by the author Laurens Van Der Post. He was a guy who was born in South Africa in the early part of the 20th century. The book is all about the African Bushmen, who were akin to the indigenous peoples of Australia. He grew up with a Bushmen Nanny and had learned their language, and found that they were being exterminated because they could not really be domesticated. Even up to the 1950s, although there were laws that protected certain animals, there was no law to protect the Bushmen from having their males shot and their women and children taken as servants. The African Bushmen are said to be some of the earliest people on the Planet. They would travel every night and build their shelter. They travelled in small family groups and knew all about the lore of the desert. When they were driven into the Kalahari Desert they still survived. That book was my stepping stone of reading everything by Laurens Van Der Post. This man was way before his time. He started a magazine with a few friends poets and artists, and they kept it going for a little while. They wrote critical words in 1928, about how wrong the color policy of the South African government was, and how badly the Africans were being treated by the White Afrikaaners. In the end they had to flee the country. Fortunately Laurens came to England, and before he died Van Der Post was actually a tutor to Prince Charles, which I think was an amazing selection, because he was a very spiritual man, and all his books are worth reading. As a tribute to him I wrote “Heart Of the Hunter”, the title of the first of his books that I read.

“They Say Nothing Last Forever” is written by a guy called Jim Foelber who was connected to Jermaine Jackson. This was a tune that actually was sent over by my music publisher. He said, look at this tune: I think you might like it. And I did. It kind of fitted in with what I was doing on the album. So that's how that one came about.

There was a singer called Finis Henderson. He made one album that was absolutely smoking. And I thought he was going to be a big star. But I suppose that his management did such a poor job that he kind of vanished. I really could not believe it. And the album is called **“FINIS”** It is pretty amazing. I heard “Call Me” and I thought I'd love to do something like that. One of the background singers was Naimy Hackett who was an American girl living in Milan. She had her own record contract and had some hits out there. And Betty Vittori Golino – she was the wife of the drummer, Alfredo Golino. They made a really nice contrast against everything that was going on.

It is funny, because my kids just have picked up on this album **HERE & NOW**. When travelling in the car, Karma put the cd on he and Savannah were boogying along to it and laughing, saying “this is so Eighties, dad” (laughs). I haven't heard it in ages.

Very popular in the Eighties were these handheld keyboards. On a video that I made in Italy, I used one of these handheld keyboards too. We were at a festival in Viareggio, and they decided to make a video of **“Night Train to Nowhere”**. The National TV network RAI wanted to run a video of that. In the background there was a huge carnival going on. So I thought, “There is no way that I'm gonna drag my Hammond into the street.” I used the Korg handheld keyboard at that time, which I also played on the recording itself.



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The producers wanted me to play a new version of “**Happiness Is Just Around The Bend**” to put that on the album. Which came quite unexpected to me.

Some demo stuff, that we did in the states, was from the same time period and I thought, it's a pity not to add these.

The track “**Brian**” is written by Bunny Brunel. He is the bass player who played with Chick Corea for a while, also with Herbie Hancock.

I did an album with him, Dennis Chambers and Tony McAlpine called “Cab Two”, and that got us a Grammy Nomination for Best Contemporary Jazz Album – that was in 2001. It's nice to have a Grammy Nomination because when you are nominated then at least you know you made it to the last five. So they sent me a certificate from the Academy of Recording Arts and Science with a medal.

I met Bunny when I first came to Los Angeles to live; when I made the Search Party album, he was in the offices, doing something for the same company, Headfirst. And we became friends, He asked me to come out and play with his band which I did. He always has interesting and really tough material. We have been friends since then, since probably around 1981. He came to me and said with his French accent (imitating French accent), “ ‘Ere Brian, is a tune for you, I have written this for you.” And I listened to it, and it was really cool. So I decided to put that on the album, too. Also, I really dig that cover – the Italians have always had an amazing eye for the aesthetic.

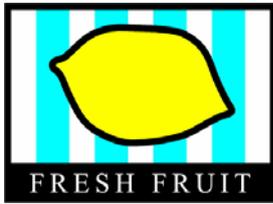
(Andrea Jonischkies; quotes taken from an interview with Brian Auger in July 2009)

Brian talks about the album KEYS TO THE HEART

The Superman shirt that I am wearing on the cover is a present from my kids. They gave that to me for Christmas, the Christmas before that album. The “S” is printed on there in red glitter, and I thought I could use this on stage... I think that picture was taken at a gig I think in Redwood City, somewhere in the Bay area.

Phil Carmen had asked me if I would come out to Switzerland and play on some tracks for him on one of his albums, and I ended up doing a live album with him as well at the same time. During the tour that followed, there were two weeks between the first part of the tour and the second. And I was wondering what to do. Am I going to hang around here and wait or am I going back to the States and come back for the second half. Phil had his own studio in Stein am Rhein, and he said, well, would you like to make an album with your band while you are here? I thought about it. Two weeks and I have no material, too, but then... so I decided to go for it.

And I did. It was kind of a little frenetic. I chose some things I wanted to play but then I remember getting up early in the morning in the hotel. I had a little piano in my room. I ended up writing stuff, then going to the studio and teaching it to the guys and rolling the tape... and so we really completed the album in merely two weeks including the mixes, brass on it,



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vocals, the whole deal. So this is rather spontaneous but despite that I find we came up with some really good tracks.

I had a trumpet and a tenor saxophone – I had the idea of using the instruments in a sort of Jazz Messengers' way. The tenor player, Dick Morrissey, was an old friend of mine that I knew since I was 18. He was the nearest thing to Stanley Turrentine in Europe. He played with such soul it was unbelievable. We had a good time. The trumpet player really did a great job as well, and it was like flying by the seat of my pants for the two weeks, you know (laughs). I was kind of mentally burned out by the time I'd done that but we got back on the road and finished the rest of the tour. And I had the album. (laughs).

I decided to do "**Pools**" by Don Grolnick. The first time I heard that was by Steps Ahead, Michael Brecker and Mike Mainieri. And I love the tune but I felt it could be done in a more up tempo semi-Latin kind of way, so I wrote a different arrangement for it, a more powerful arrangement as far as I was concerned and I thought it came out great.

The rest of the tunes I wrote were developed in this kind of rhythm: get up in the morning, write, then get to the studio, explain it to everybody, rehearse it and get it in shape to record it. Under these circumstances a lot of things came out great. That's the way it went.

The idea to "**Sundown**" came to me one evening. Once I got out of the studio, I would go to my Hotel room and open the window. It was summertime, and I would hear all these kids playing in the street, and the sun was going down, and I am thinking, "Well, the time is rolling by and you better get ready to write tomorrow morning: Children playing in the street, Hear their voices, Hear their feet" – so it was the moment that suggested the tune, and I tried to make a kind of a little gospel thing of it.

For "**The Stork**" I hark back to "Sea of Tranquility". It is more in the style of writing I was looking for. Phil had this amazing piano, an acoustic piano, one of the best I have ever played on, it was just insane. I would have liked to sit there and play it all day. So I wanted to do something for piano and that was the one that came out for piano. I still play that in the car – and I sometimes wonder: Did I actually write that? (Laughs) Could I play it now?

One of the bonus tracks is one of favourite tunes by Mose Allison, "**If You Are Going To The City**", the other one is "**Sea Of Tranquility**" live. They were recorded because we did a couple of gigs a little later with the band, after we finished the tour with Phil Carmen. I had no idea that somebody had recorded it. Somebody sent it to me on a cassette afterwards, I thought, "Wow, that is the only other thing live I have of the same band. So we did our best with it in Pro-Tools. I thought they were worthy of being added to the album.

"**Blue Note Shuffle**" is a dedication to the father of all modern organ players, the great Jimmy Smith.

Another tune was "**Mary Bing's Boogie**". Mary Bing was a little girl who was about two years old at the time – she is the daughter of my dear friends Diana Quick, an actress who does a lot of theatre in London, a friend of the family for years, and also Bill Nighy, also an actor who is doing really well these days. When I was in London they would always invite me to stay with them. And they had a piano, and their little daughter Mary would get up in the morning and say "Brian, play the piano, I want to dance" (laughs), so I played something appropriate for her to dance to. And she would dance around the room, run up the stairs



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dancing, then ran down the stairs and danced on the furniture. She was a really sweet little lady. Her nanny would get her ready in the morning. She'd be sitting in the high chair, and then her nanny would say, "Okay then Mary, what would you like for breakfast? And she would say, "Chocolate!" The nanny would say, "Oh, no, you can't have that for breakfast." Then Mary would say "Jelly babies, but only the yellow ones." I would sit there and laugh my head off with this. And they lived in Camden Town, so I thought, "Get on down, Camden Town", seemed appropriate. While I was there in Switzerland, this child jumped into my head, and I thought of writing a tune for Mary Bing to dance to.

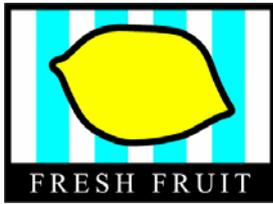
In the Sixties, Dick Morrissey was in a band called If, and he was in a band with Jim Mullen. I never actually saw them play live. Which must have been great. He was only 17 when he wandered into this pub where I was playing, with his saxophone. I was a year older than him and I was playing in this pub in the city of London in Old Street, I never forget it. He came up to ask to sit in, and I looked at him and asked him, "Well, what do you want to play then?" He wanted to play a Wes Montgomery tune or something like that. Anyway, it was a nice standard tune, and he opened his case, took his saxophone out and played, and he was already amazing, even at 17. I was deeply impressed. And we were friends ever since.

(Andrea Jonischkies, quotations taken from an Interview with Brian Auger, July 2009)

Tracklist:

CD 1: „Here And Now“

1. The Hurricane
2. Call Me
3. Downtop Hookup
4. Heart Of The Hunter
5. The Seeker
6. They Say Nothing Lasts Forever
7. Happiness Is Just Around The Bend
8. Let's Keep This Love Together
9. Brian
10. Night Train To Nowhere
11. Downtown Hookup (Demo Version)
12. Searchin' For Your Love (Demo Version)
13. You're Breaking My Heart (Demo Version)



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CD 2: „Keys To The Heart“

1. Pacific Coast Highway
2. Sundown
3. Blue Note Shuffle
4. Pools
5. The Stork
6. Mary Bing's Boogie
7. Forget Me Not
8. If You're Going To The City (Bonus Track)
9. Sea Of Tranquility (Bonus Track)