

Karthago „Rock'n Roll Testament“



Release: 28.03.2011
CD Cat. No.: MIG 00452
Format: 1CD Digi
Genre: Krautrock

Probably no other Karthago album was as extensively and intensively prepared as this one with songs primarily composed by Joey Albrecht. This is the biggest difference from all of Karthago's other records, especially "Second Step" on which all the band members had the self-fulfillment of contributing material. Rock 'n Roll Testament follows the style of Joey who was at that time very much influenced by American 'Funky Music' and also by the influence of his friend, Tom Cunningham.

Tom was a Berlin based American who later achieved success as a songwriter and producer and who wrote most of the lyrics for the album. When Joey would collaborate with a writer, they would achieve a very intense, interactive symbiosis - on the mental and musical level almost a marriage.



Elisabeth Richter
Hildesheimer Straße 83
30169 Hannover
GERMANY

Tel.: 0049-511-806916-16
Fax: 0049-511-806916-29
Cell: 0049-177-7218403
elisabeth.richter@mig-music.de



Joey's role as composer and his cooperation with Tom Cunningham are the spirit and signature of Rock 'n Roll Testament and his vocals and brilliant guitar skills are both constant elements and absolute highlights.

Compared to other technically geared German bands playing Anglo American music, Tommy Goldschmidt made a great difference to the band with his percussion playing. The instrument played an important role in almost all the songs on the album, much more so than on any previous record. Ingo Bischof handled all the keyboard instruments perfectly and impressed with his empathy and outstanding solo- performances. The foundation of the band was supplied by Konni Bommarius on drums and former Jethro Tull bassist, Glenn Cornick on bass guitar.

A lot had changed since the recording of 'Second Step' at Windrose Studio in Hamburg. The band had become a highly publicized live attraction on German stages. The numbers coming to see the shows were constantly increasing and the audience's enthusiasm was huge. Karthago also played many successful gigs in other European countries. Journalists became very interested in the band, many of them actually became fans and Joey and the band also soon became favourites with the press photographers. Not only were German bands, in spite of the competition, thrilled by the band, but also many English and American musicians with whom they performed in clubs and festivals. This gave the band great confidence and an ambition to succeed.

In the first half of the 70's, Karthago were always in the top 3 positions in the readers polls of the music magazines such as Pop, Muzikexpress and Sounds in the categories both of top band and for solo performances. Although maybe not the coolest spot in the media world, showing up in Bravo magazine in a full-page poster and performing at ZDF Disco hosted by Ilja Richter must be regarded as great honors for the band. The guys were, aside from their musical skills, pretty handsome and had real rock star appeal. But although everything went fine, being part of a German rock band was not easy at that time. Financial difficulties and social pressures within the group dynamic also claimed their victims. Bassist and founder member, Gerald Luciano Hartwig and drummer, 'Panzer' Lehmann left the band before the creation of Rock 'n Roll Testament.

Konni Bommarius from Mannheim was then chosen as the new drummer.

The choice of a new bass player was a tougher one. All the potential German candidates were already working somewhere else so we decided to try our luck with auditions in London. The management team, Cornelius and Marcellus Hudalla, had very good connections with managers, agents, studios, media and musicians there due to their former photographic and journalistic activities in Britain. We entered uncharted territories by looking for musicians in London. It was astonishing, how many people applied for the audition and we received lots of compliments from top musicians. Jeff Beck's bassist, for instance, much preferred Karthago's version of "Going Down" to Jeff Beck's version. In spite of all the enthusiasm, there was a lack of willingness for anyone to move from Swinging London to the 'Island' of Berlin especially in times of political uncertainty- until one said 'yes'- Glenn



Cornick, the popular fellow who had played bass for Jethro Tull, the one with the headband and glasses and who was ready for a change of scenery.

Glenn was a rock star known worldwide, a great bass player and a totally nice guy. In addition, he also brought his American Chevrolet road cruiser to Berlin, which we would use to travel to gigs. With such a dude and such a car in that scene, we were already a show in ourselves and brought a mixture of appreciation, jealousy and resentment towards us but which boosted our self-confidence!

At the same time, there was a change of record label. We had refused a financially generous offer from BASF and signed with Bazillus, a subsidiary of Bellophon. The main reason for this move was that its manager at the time, Peter Hauke, was a successful producer and had brought Nektar, a German based band to the USA, which was also our dream. Furthermore he had done productions in the most brilliant studios in Britain and commissioned the most daring artists to design the greatest album covers.

Joey with our chief roadie, George Früchtenicht and I worked almost daily over several weeks in rehearsal rooms at Wrangel Kaserne in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin till 5 A.M. most mornings with 2 Revox recorders and a live mixer to prepare and record the material for the other musicians. In spite of the extreme noise caused by the endless overdubbing the results were ingenious. Unfortunately the tapes were lost.

Afterwards, Peter Hauke booked us into the Chipping Norton Studio in Oxfordshire, England. Our sound engineer was Barry Hammond who had handled recordings of celebrities such as Carly Simon, James Taylor, Chris Farlowe and many more. On our way to the studio we stopped for the night at Glenn's parents' prototypical British pub in London.

In the English rural isolation of Chipping Norton and contrary to all our expectations, anticipations and hopes we were overwhelmed by a great number of personal and group dynamical problems - almost leading to a breakdown of the recordings. Even a visit by ex Fleetwood Mac guitar superstar, Peter Green, couldn't change the situation. Maybe he brought us bad karma? He had inexplicably left Fleetwood Mac at it's climax and was said to be working at the local church as a gravedigger.

In retrospect, scary, though somehow, such a story fits right into that kind of landscape.

I don't know how we managed to finish our recordings after all. The endless talks in all sorts of moods, the great human support of Glenn Cornick who was more experienced in these matters than the rest and who had the best understanding of how all things, large and small, were done in Britain. Maybe it was the musical highlights that were created by the band and the special guests themselves in the form of several world-class passages that pulled us through. The fact is that, apart from one day, we exhausted our entire production budget.

In December 1974, we headed to Air Studios in London (belonging to George Martin at that time) for mixing. It was a holy sound temple to us. George Martin was actually present producing the Bee Gees.



Our mixer was no less than Geoff Emerick, at that time something like the Godfather of his league. Geoff Emerick had won Grammys, the recording industry's highest award for his work on the Beatles "Sergeant Pepper" and "Abbey Road" albums, Paul McCartney's "Band on the Run" album and for his life's work.

We had actually reached the point that every musician who had started out in a muggy basement would dream of. We had the privilege of working with the stars of the music business in London, the Mecca of rock music. Wow!!

But the sad fact was that Peter Hauke had not managed to come up with an increase in the production budget for Rock'n Roll Testament. In contrast to our successful heroes in London and America, the band hadn't yet reached a sufficiently mature status to be able to command the financial freedom and the freedom from time restraints to enable them to fully enjoy their creativity and to perfect the production of the album.

In other words, we had to mix the entire album, 10 titles on 24 multiple occupied audio tracks, in only one day. That should not have been possible, not even with Geoff Emerick at the helm, but we managed it. I don't know what was slipped into our coffee that night or if maybe that day had somehow lasted 48 hours! If I had one wish, it would be to remix this album with all the time needed and in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Before I forget, the original fold out album cover with the elephant, designed by Helmut Wenske was superb and the posters with the same motif were to be seen all over Germany and there was scarcely a roadhouse or club bathroom where you wouldn't find the matching sticker.

The album is a 'song album' with many great vocals by Joey and very melodic passages sung in two-part harmony with Tom Cunningham. Joey's guitar genius shows on this record more in his outstanding technical skills than in his usual spontaneous emotionally charged improvisations. Some highlights of his guitar sound are 'The Creeper' and the Hendrix tribute 'See You Tomorrow In The Sky'. The guitar symphony 'Rock 'n Roll Testament' is unique and the solo in 'Highway Five' is absolutely world class. Ingo's keyboards augment the timbre of the album with a certain glamorous touch and the feeling of the Mini Moog on 'Sound in the Air' is brilliant. His grand piano solo on 'We Gonna Keep It Together' is amazing, comparable only to the work that I have heard by Greg Allman on 'Jessica'. I remember Ingo recording it in only one take in the studio and us all enthusiastically jumping up in the studio to applaud him.

It is, however, Tommy Goldschmidt who turns 'Rock 'n Roll Testament' into a true Karthago album. There was no other German band of that time with such an exceptional rhythmic background up its sleeves. 'Hard Loving' Woman', 'We Gonna Keep It Together', 'Highway Five' and 'For Kathy' all demonstrate Tommy's South American origin and highlight his brilliant expressiveness.

Vicky Brown, Barry St. John and Joanne Williams, Elton John's backup vocalists, were the angelic choir in the background of 'Hard Loving' Woman', 'Now the Irony Keeps Me Company' and 'For Kathy'. Their sensational singing on 'Now the Irony Keeps Me Company'



sent shivers down our spines and earned them a huge standing ovation in the studio from all present.

Cornelius Hudalla

Producer, photographer, manager, journalist
Düsseldorf 21/02/2011

TRACKLISTING:

- 1. Hard-Loving Woman**
- 2. We Gonna Keep It Together**
- 3. Now The Irony Keeps Me Company**
- 4. Rock'n Roll Testament**
- 5. The Creeper**
- 6. Back Again**
- 7. Sound In The Air**
- 8. Highway Five**
- 9. ForKathy**
- 10. See You Tomorrow In The Sky**