

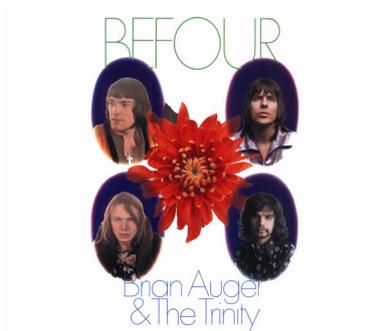
## Fresh Fruit / RELEASES

# Brian Auger

## „Befour/Oblivion Express“

CD Cat. Nr.: MIG 60072  
Format : 2 CD  
Genre: Rock

Cover:



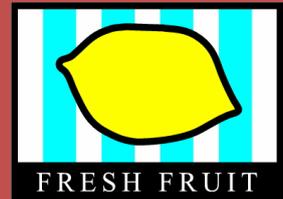
### Overview:

#### Brian Auger talks about the album Befour

Directly after finishing Streetnoise I started my own production company, Nasty Productions. Just to warn everybody that I was going to get nasty if they got in the way of the creative process. I had enough of people interfering with what we were doing when they did not realize what we were doing. Our former manager, Giorgio Gomelsky, was throwing in his ridiculous ideas (Imitates his accent), "Maybe we should have four tubas on this". His favourite was "two oboes". I do not know why he was so interested in oboes but they had nothing to do with the music that I was playing. Instead of all those ridiculous fights in the studio we were trying to actually get our ideas down which is hard enough anyway.

When Julie left the band after the Streetnoise album, I decided to continue and I added the guitar player Gary Winston Boyle. He had actually played on Open, but had left to go to Music College. After a couple of years had gone by, I asked Gary to join the Trinity. Gary was born in Bihar, India. Somehow, Wikipedia mixed him up with me and says in my biography that I was born in India. I told them but the mistake keeps sitting there. Believe me: I was born in London. Roger Sutton was the original bass player in this formation of the Trinity. He was on the Open album as well, but then left to join a group called The House of Usher. Which I thought was a big shame. When I did the Befour album, Dave Ambrose is playing the bass.

On one of the tracks, on Eddie Harris' "Listen Here", I used two bass



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players and four drummers as an experiment, so I invited Roger back. I wanted him to play the underlying riff, but at a certain point, I told him, you could cut loose and play some fills. The idea was to split the rock beat and give each part of the rhythm – cymbal, snare drum, bass drum and fill ins – to one drummer each with his whole kit. The result is like having one gigantic drum kit. It allowed us to stretch out. Gary solos first, then a piano solo to lighten the mood a little, then each drummer plays four bar breaks in the following order: Mickey Waller, Barry Reeves, Clive Thacker, Mickey, Barry again, Colin Allen and then an ensemble fill to kick us into an extended organ solo. We had one rehearsal for that tune and then cut it as fresh as possible, in a single take of nine minutes and 22 seconds.

“**Pavane**” for some reason, reminded me of a jazz tune when I first heard it - the composition, the changes. I wanted to make a version of it, and play over those chords. I discovered that it is by a French composer by the name of Gabriel Fauré. The piece was written in 1887, when Fauré was Head of the Paris Conservatory of Music, the big Paris school, at that time. He had two students who became very famous: Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. They both shied away from writing a string quartet, which is an art in itself. In a string quartet, you have to make up all your harmony and all your rhythm from four instruments, two violins, a viola and a cello. That is not easy. So each of them wrote only one string quartet. However, Gabriel Fauré wrote a Pavane. A Pavane was a slow dance, which originated in Padova, Italy, near Verona. When it was first written, it was described as a “*Dansa alla Padovana*,” When it came to France, they shortened the name and simplified it to “Pavane.” I played it a lot faster than they would have done it in those days, and it has this beautiful melody. I agree with the philosophy of Duke Ellington, who said, there are only two types of music: good and bad. Here is something from 1887, that is still good and always will be.

The same can be said about “**Adagio per archi e organo**”. Albinoni, an Italian composer from the baroque era, wrote that piece for organ and strings. When we played it, I had the band doing all the underlying musical structures and had the guitar play the melody in octaves, like sort of a Wes Montgomery version of Albinoni’s Adagio. I thought it worked pretty well actually.

My friend Keith Emerson came up from a classical background, and really did some great arrangements of some classical tunes with his bands The Nice, and E L P. I only did few things like the Albinoni and the Pavane. I’m from a jazz background, and that’s really the difference between us. After I had my B3 built in London, he came by one evening, when I was playing in the Marquee Club. Recently he told me that he had bought this album by Brother Jack McDuff. There is a track on there called “Rock Candy.” I already had that album and I had the right organ to play it on. He came in and said, “You were absolutely smoking that tune, man!” He added, “I went home kind of feeling disappointed because I wanted to play that tune”. (Laughs).

Sly Stone I happened to see at a concert in Portland, Oregon, when we were playing there. He was so stoned on stage that I actually expected him to kind of collapse. The band was still great but it really took the edge off. We all loved his songs. When we heard “***I Wanna Take You Higher***,” I thought I should try to put a groove down and play that. After that night, he did many concerts where he did not show up; it looks like he rather gave up. Any way, he produced three or four phenomenal albums. To me he was like the next generation of Funk on from James Brown. That was kind of progressive funk; great dance music. I used to dance myself once but I do not have the chance pretty much when I am on stage. However, I like to make other people dance.

“**No Time to Live**” was written by Jim Capaldi and Steve Winwood. I have been dying to play a solo on this since I first heard it. It had that plaintive mood about it and the lyrics are beautiful. I knew Jim, Stevie and the rest of the boys. I met Jim Capaldi at a festival, after recording his song and he said, “I hope you dig out some of my other tunes as well...” Gary Boyle makes his vocal debut and provides some tasteful guitar.

When I heard Herbie Hancock’s album “***Maiden Voyage***” I was fascinated with the chords of the title track. I tried to figure out what they were and when I worked them out, I decided that I wanted to record what in America became called ‘a fusion version’. This was recorded four years before Herbie had his own fusion band, the Headhunters. He still is my favourite Jazz piano player. When we first met, he immediately shook my hand and said, “Ah, you’re the guy that did my tune.” We were also on tour with the Headhunters in America several times; people seemed to think that we went well together as a pack

## Brian Auger talks about the debut album of the Oblivion Express

After all this trouble with the management and the Trinity, I needed a break and went on holiday with my wife and my son Karma. When I came back, I was ready for a new beginning and a new band. Between the musicians who wanted to audition for the new band was guitarist Jim Mullen. I knew him from a band called Pete Brown and Piblokto. He was hired. Next, we found bass player Barry Dean. Last to join the band was drummer Robbie McIntosh. I had discovered him playing in a casino in Nice. The band he was with was called the Piranhas. That was not the only drummer I borrowed from them. Also, after Robbie had left, I borrowed the guy who had replaced him, Steve Ferrone. Both of the drummers - just for the record - later ended up in the Average White Band.

I have always regarded **The Oblivion Express** as a kind of school. You know the direction but you do not know what will happen. This album was the start of something, but I did not know where it would lead. I said to everybody, "This band is going to be an open situation". You can write tunes, and we will play them. We will try them on stage. If they don't work, okay - and if they do, fine. Let us stretch ourselves as writers, composers, arrangers and as musicians.

In the situation with a major label I had felt blocked. Once you had some success, they want to keep you in that formula. I wanted to continue to develop this bridge between the Jazz and Rock worlds. So I felt that the Express would be going against the Commercial tide. I felt that I might be headed the quickest way to Oblivion. Therefore I decided that Oblivion Express was the correct name for the band !.(Laughs)

When I was in New York in 1970, John McLaughlin invited me to the mix of an album he had just recorded. The album title was "Devotion" which was his first step into the heavier psychedelic rock world and it sounded amazing. I was really taken with the tune 'Dragon Song'. I thought that I would like to try a version of that. Therefore, "**Dragon Song**" from that album was one of the first things we recorded on Oblivion Express.

John and I, we know each other from when we were about 18 years old. John played guitar when I did my first organ gig - which was at the Green Man, a pub in Blackheath London. We would do many gigs together in London, and also, we would go out almost every weekend playing for the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army bases. We would take a band and go play at those places all around England. John was a purist. In 1966 when I first started the Trinity with singer Julie Driscoll, to attempt to build a bridge between Jazz and Rock he did not want to leave the Jazz Scene. But after a couple of years had gone by, and the Jazz/Rock movement had grown legs, Giorgio Gomelsky, my manager, had some production money left and came asking me, "Look, I need to produce two or three people. Is there anyone you would recommend?". I said, "John McLaughlin is probably the best guitar player in Europe and possibly in the world right now. You should try to record him. John's fantastic album "Extrapolation" was the result.

I wanted to continue developing my idea of Jazz/ Rock. Unknown to me, Miles Davis was recording "In a Silent Way" in New York while we were recording Streetnoise in London. When I heard his album, it really gave me a lot confidence that I hadn't lost my mind and that if Miles was showing influences from the Rock Scene,( he was taking basslines from rock and R&B and combining them with jazz) I knew then,in 1970, that I had been on the right path musically since 1966.

We recorded the first Oblivion Express album in the Advision Studios in London, in two weeks, engineered again by Eddie Offord. As usual, I wanted to preserve the live character of the recording. Thus, we rehearsed the tracks a couple of times first, then cut them. At the same time, I was aware that we had to find our identity as a band. I realized that the key was writing my own material. Clearly, the debut album fell more into a rock direction.

"**Total Eclipse**" was written by Roger Ball, a Scotsman who later became the alto sax player of the Average White Band. At that time, we were helping a band called Mogul Thrash. He was in that band, and I helped to produce, manage and support them.

Anyway, I thought the tune was interesting because the melody was based on a whole-tone scale. Any major scale has a semi-tone between the third and fourth notes of the scale, and between the seventh and eighth notes. If you listen to the music of Debussy, you will hear that he uses this scale quite a bit.

Both, "**The Light**" and "**The Sword**" are connected to the things going on that caused the demise of the Trinity. The lyrics to "The Light" refer to my realisation that I had been badly betrayed by my

manager ,Gomelsky. Silly Me !! The Sword referred to the actual backstabbing that had been going on from one or two musicians in the Trinity. " What goes around, comes around".

When we are out there "**On The Road**" playing to people, I am happy, (and that's really what it is all about) – at least as far as I'm concerned. I suppose I could have become a studio musician but that was never something I bothered about. I record with different artists if I like their music, but I am a musician that needs to play live. After all these years I still have not cured myself from doing that. On the road gives me a lighter kind of feeling because it is all about the excitement of looking forward to being on stage and playing. That's where we musicians live at our highest point.

As Oblivion Express was a brand-new project I was trying to find my way as a composer for the new band. I did invite everybody to write and I said, let's develop ourselves in all areas. The first two albums, "Oblivion Express" and "A Better Land", expose the two strongest composers in the band at the outset, namely, Jim Mullen and myself.

## **TRACKLISTING:**

### **CD 1: Befour**

I Want To Take You Higher  
Pavane  
No Time To Live  
Maiden Voyage  
Listen Here  
Adagio Per Archi E Organo  
Just You Just Me  
Rain Forest Talking (Bonus Track)  
Pavane (Demo) (Bonus Track)  
Fire In The Mind (Bonus Track)

### **CD 2: Oblivion Express**

Dragon Song  
Total Eclipse  
The Light  
On The Road  
The Sword  
Oblivion Express  
Dragon song (live in Reutlingen, Germany Feb. 1972) (Bonus Track)