

INTERVIEW : **NEIL ZAZA (NZ)**

SUBJECT : **COLLABORATION WITH DAN REED NETWORK ON
RECORDING OF COVER VERSION OF 'FORGOT TO
MAKE HER MINE'**

DATE : **SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER 2001-12-15**

RECORDED : **TELEPHONE CONVERSATION**

INTERVIEWER : **AMRIK KERKETTA (AK)**

AK : Good Morning Neil, it's Amrik Here

NZ: Amrik, Hi, how are you ?

AK : I 'm good, yourself ?

NZ : Very good, good to talk to you

AK : You too, thanks very much for agreeing to talk with me

NZ : I was just in Italy, and it was fantastic

AK : How did the tour go ?

NZ : Very good, thank you. So when is the website going up ?

AK : Next weekend (15th December)

NZ : It's so nice to talk to a Dan Reed fan

AK : Same here, and a musician as well

NZ : Oh, I've always just thought they were great. We opened for them in '89, maybe 90, and I was a fan ever since then, a huge fan.

(AK – I'm pretty sure this gig was slightly earlier than Neil remembers - on August 19, 1988 at the Nautica Stage)

AK : Was it just the one gig ?

NZ : It was just one gig, then I got to be friends with all the guys, from there I recorded with them. Their music still stands up today. You listen to it and you realize just how far ahead of the times they were. They set a trend on all of this.

AK : Definitely. It's almost as if the world wasn't ready for them then.

NZ : Exactly right. And they didn't fit in the true Bon Jovi mould. They were just so beyond that, fusing funk and rock together, it was amazing.

AK : Yeah, and people tried to put them in an easy pigeon hole of 'Prince meets Bon Jovi'

NZ : It's funny you say that as I always thought they were much more 'Prince meets Van Halen'

AK : Definitely more Van Halen

NZ : Yeah, and each of those records were different too. The first one was so, it was perfect. A perfect record. It still is. I just wish they were still together. I wonder what they would be doing.

AK : It would be very interesting. Have you heard of any Dan Reed's newer stuff ?

NZ : I've heard Blake in Generator, but not any of Dan's solo stuff.

AK : Have you seen them play a few other times ?

NZ : Yeah, they came through Cleveland a few times, and I saw them, and of course, every time they got better and better.

It's a funny story, when we opened for them, the band was Zaza, we were always very cocky about how good we were. We were like – "you want us to open for you, yeah we'll blow you away".

We got to soundcheck, and I hadn't heard of them, this was when they were first coming up, and I'm like, "we'll annihilate these guys."

After I heard their soundcheck, I called my girlfriend, and I was like 'Oh My God, you've gotta get here and hear this band. This is the best band I've ever heard in my life.' It was very humbling to open for them.

AK : So they really impressed you that first time then ?

NZ : Oh, it was really, it was like nothing I had ever seen, and it was only soundcheck. And then when they did the actual show, it was amazing.

AK : So, how did the collaboration come about ? When did you first get the idea of doing a Dan Reed Network song ?

NZ : I had always thought about it. I just always loved basically every song they ever wrote.

Blake played on one of my CDs back in the day, 'Thrills & Chills', in '92, he didn't get to play a lot of stuff on it, but he added some little things here and there.

We'd always kept in contact, and I was listening to the first Dan Reed record one day, and I just thought, I've got to do one of these tunes and I'm gonna call Blake and see if he'll play on it, and if it would be alright and if he'd be into it.

And, he said, yeah, let's do it. He said "Why don't I get the rest of the guys to play along with it ?"

Of course, I said "Yes". I chose 'Forgot To Make Her Mine', but my arrangements a little bit different, and we have live strings on the end.

AK : Why 'Forgot To Make Her Mine' ?

NZ : Good question. It just rocked. There was a real groove to it. Always one of my favourites. I thought about doing 'Ritual', that was a nice one, or 'Tamin' The Wild Nights'. I just like that tune. Plus it's a very guitar riff (sings opening riff). It just popped up and said 'Do Me !'.

I went to Portland, to record it at this place called White Horse Studios, and Melvin flew in, Pred was already there, and Blake and I. We cut the basic track, and then there's a guy that Blake was in Generator with, Rob (Daiker). He helped out, he did some tech stuff over the end and different parts of it

Brion recorded on an ADAT in L.A. and he sent that in, and the only one unaccounted for at the moment is Dan, and he's supposed to do a little intro – he's supposed to say "Hey there Neil, gimme some of that there guitar stuff". That will be the biggest kick of the whole thing for him to say that.

Where we're at now is, the project got shelved, 'cos I was busy, and Blake was busy

So now it's kicked up, and I want to finish it and put it on my next record. It's going to be mixed in the next month or so. Blake's going to fly in and we're going to deal with it. It's going to be great.

It was fantastic to play with the guys because they're just fantastic musicians. It was really bizarre to be in the studio in Portland, playing 'Forgot To Make Her Mine', looking around to see Dan Pred, Melvin and Blake playing

AK : Was it all live in one take or did you all do your bits separately ?

NZ : The basic tracks were all one take, so the beds of it were one take, meaning bass and drums.

Blake is redoing some of the keys 'cos he wants to make it a little more hi-tech and not just a carbon copy of the original, so that will be overdubbed.

The guitars are overdubbed too. So I just re-cut them. The basic bed of everything is live and we just overdubbed on top of that.

There's a lot of tracks on it also. There's tons of different key tracks, like synths and stuff, that's what Blake is into now.

And then we have a live string section at the end that we multitracked, live guitar tracks, there's a lot of tracks, period.

AK : Why did you do the live string section at the end ?

NZ : Actually, the ending is different, it's like a drone 'E', just a DA DA DA DA DA DA

And I was playing my solo stuff. I heard Alanis Morissette's 'Uninvited' and it had that real eerie string kind of haunting thing. I thought that would go perfect over it.

So I had this guy who worked with Tim Bradford (he produced 'Staring At The Sun' with me); he did a string arrangement and we cut the strings and that was it.

I just wanted to do something very different from the original, so I thought the live strings would take it over the edge. I think they sound really good.

AK : Yeah, I love it when a cover adds something different to the song and it's not just a straightforward carbon copy.

NZ : Exactly. That's exactly right. I appreciate that. Thank you. That's cool.

How big were they in Europe ?

AK : Yeah, they were pretty big. It's strange 'cos I've always had the impression that they weren't that big in the US.

NZ : They weren't that big in the US. Only a select handful of people knew.

AK : Over here, they sold out every time they played. Their first major thing was touring with Bon Jovi as support and they had a good sizeable following then. And on their own tours, they'd sell out venues of 3-4,000 quite comfortably.

NZ : What a waste !

AK : The media attention here as well was amazing – they always had really positive reviews, hardly a bad thing said about them, and you just have to wonder why they didn't cross that line into the big time.

NZ : It seems like they were right there. Just about to pop over. But they left us a lot of good music as it is.

AK : So are you ever going to throw it into your live set ?

NZ : That's a good question. I think once it's done, it will work it's way into something I'm doing live. I really really like it. The groove is good too and I think live it will translate very well. I think it will be fantastic so yeah, it probably will find it's way into my live set for sure, we'll keep the Dan Reed memory alive every night

AK : So we'll see you here in London ?

NZ : Well I was just in Italy two weeks ago and we're looking to do another tour there in May, spreading out into Germany ad France, possibly we talked Hungary, but I really want to get over to the UK. I really want to play England. I would love to come over to England on that tour. I love England, it's fantastic.

We're just in Cleveland now, getting ready to do this big show next week (Zaza reunion gig). The show is really close to being a sell-out – they're predicting a sell-out.

After that I'm finishing up this Christmas record, I'm doing a classical record. I've got a bunch of irons in the fire right now.

But actually, on the front plate is mixing this Dan Reed tune.

Amrik, thank you so much for calling.

AK : Thank you so much for your time. It's been a real pleasure talking with you.

NZ : You too. Have a great day.

AK : Thanks. Goodbye.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NEIL ZAZA AT www.neilzaza.com