

# Hello Stranger

Peter Gallway

I've been caught up lately in an avalanche of fond remembrances about the musical coming-of-age of Greenwich Village in the mid-1960's, including the bands that played The Night Owl Café and my original group, The Strangers. As a result, I was inspired to take a look back to my earliest writing and recordings, and to revisit some songs I haven't before re-interpreted or re-released. The result is the album *Hello Stranger*, twelve pieces arranged primarily for voices and a single instrument, electric guitar or piano. Occasionally I have added another instrument but it is the voices, mood, words, the innocence, and the distance traveled that carry this collection from me to you. This is for the friends and fans that have supported my work over nearly fifty years, particularly those in Japan and those who were there when it happened.

## Hello Stranger (A Long, Long Time Ago)

This is the only new song on the album, the anchor that sends tie lines back to the other songs, which were written between 1965 and 1970, and re-recorded here. Hello Stranger is an homage to the popular music that helped me to find a voice and become a songwriter, Motown music of the early and mid-60's, a time when creative lines were being crossed and even eradicated. The Strangers singing Barbara Lewis' original "Hello Stranger" at the Night Owl Café along with songs by The Temptations, The Miracles, Martha and The Vandellas and The Four Tops... James Taylor and The Flying Machine interpreting Hoagie Carmichael's "Baltimore Oriole"... and the Lovin' Spoonful playing "Night Owl Blues" and soaring up the charts.

## I Need Your Love Inside Me

The B-side of The Strangers' first and only 45-rpm single, released on KR Records in 1966, Charles Koppelman and Don Rubin's label. The A-side was "Land of Music," inspired by "Land of A Thousand Dances" and "Dancing In the Street." Kenny Altman wound up singing "Land of Music" because I couldn't seem to deliver it while the red light was on in the studio and I remember it charting on a radio station in Shreveport, Louisiana. I have always loved this more obscure B-side, however, especially when everything ramps up in the fade.

## Twelve Day Lover

This was a coming-of-age song based on a coming-of-age experience, which included (though it is not mentioned in the song), the betrayal of a friend. Or perhaps, more accurately, this song is a chronicle of the end of innocence. It was written in 1966 but not recorded until 1972 and released on the *Peter Gallway* album for Reprise Records.

## Rolling Stones, 1964

About ten years ago I wrote a poem a day for a year. I carried those pages with me, unsure if they could or would see the light of day, yet always feeling I wanted to assemble a collection of my written work. Last year, with the invaluable editorial assistance of Kristi Wallace, the poetry collection *Big Mercy* was published, which includes this piece describing the night I went to my first true, live rock and roll concert—the Rolling Stones at Carnegie Hall—and the dream took shape. I vividly remember thinking at the time, "This is what I will do," and it caused the course of my life to change forever.

## Fast Freight

The Strangers parted ways in 1967-68 and I went deeper into my lost years. I wound up arrested and in rehab for heroin addiction outside of Boston (later to be chronicled in "Boston Is Burning"), found my way back to New York City, and was introduced by Jerry Burnham, bassist for The Strangers, to some players from Mannes College of Music who were in the process of forming a new band. This group, through a number of twists and turns, became The Fifth Avenue Band. I brought the band to Bob Cavallo who signed on as manager and I introduced them to Kenny Altman, who joined as guitarist and then bassist. Later Bob signed us to Reprise Records under the helm of Mo Ostin. "Fast Freight" was written for my buddy Jake Jacobs of the Magicians, whom I mention in the

2nd verse. My father was in the studio the day the FAB cut the basic tracks on the original version and that's John Sebastian playing the drum fills in the fade. I still love a good fade-out ending, as you'll hear again on this new take on the song. The original was released on the first Fifth Avenue Band album in 1969.

## Country Time Rhymes

When I was in high school at Elizabeth Irwin in Greenwich Village, I had several friends who were a year older, smoked pot, and loved jazz. This was the early 60's, an incredible time for jazz, and I have always wished for the jazz technique I never had. This song, wonderfully played by Murray Weinstock on *The Fifth Avenue Band*, released in 1969, is delicately re-interpreted by Murray here. The song was born from a longing for a simpler time and place somewhere beyond my addiction and with someone I could love simply. Jake joins me in singing harmony on this version (originally sung by Jon Lind in the FAB), recorded by Murray this summer in New York.

## Decidedly Fun

I can't tell you how many people have remarked over the years how much they have been touched by this song. During the period of the Fifth Avenue Band, Jon Lind and I lived with our manager Rich Chiaro, then partner of Bob Cavallo, in a full floor-through brownstone apartment on West 10th Street in the Village. It was a beautiful place and I had a small room in the back that overlooked the interior of the square block, which included small gardens and beautiful trees, one of the gifts of New York City living. Looking out that window gave me peace, restored a bit of innocence and helped my mind to wander. I believe that innocence and quiet joy is what people have responded to over all these years. Written circa 1969, it was not recorded and released until 1972 on the Peter Gallway album, after I moved to Los Angeles.

## Give Me John Ford

I have always loved the movies. I grew up watching them on television, then in theaters in the children's section or with my parents, then every few days, all over Manhattan through my high school years. This song tips my hat to the Monument Valley landscapes and imagined heroism of the great films of John Ford. It was originally written in 1970 and included on the *Ohio Knox* album, released on Reprise in 1971. *Ohio Knox* was recorded in a full-blown studio set-up in the home of Cyrus Faryar, singer for the MFQ (Modern Folk Quartet), on a 46-acre piece of land known as The Farm that overlooked the Warner Brothers Burbank Studios. John Sebastian, who lived for a time in a tent on The Farm, was featured on the original recording and graciously recorded harmonica on this new interpretation at our friend Jerry Marotta's studio in Woodstock, NY. John remains an inspiration to this day.

## Cockeyed Shane

This song is a cityscape imagining a brash African-American woman and a day in the life of a young man, who just might have been me. I had a girlfriend at summer camp when I was 16 years old who was feisty, sexy and named Bootsy. She was from West Philly and taught me a thing or two. I think she's there in Shane.

## There Comes A Time

I sort of went to Boston University when I was 18 years old. We had already been recording as The Strangers and were close with The Lovin' Spoonful when "Do You Believe In Magic" took off that summer in 1965. It was a magical summer for me, between high school and college, when Kenny Altman and I lived on our own in John Sebastian's apartment while The Spoonful were on tour. I was already living in a world that had nothing to do with going to college and only attended classes for two weeks or so, but loved Boston and spent time there on and off over the next several years. I remember a period, cruising Beacon Hill sometime in 1968, when Laura Nyro's *Eli and The Thirteenth Confession* came into the air. Laura's music, and later her friendship, were pivotal in my life. This song is based on two things: a chord progression from a piece by Oliver Nelson from the seminal jazz album *The Blues and The Abstract Truth*, and the music of Laura Nyro.

*There comes a time for blowin', to leave behind blind yesterday  
Sunshine my straight and wide...*

I was prisoner to my heroin addiction and longed for freedom. Still, there were the stolen moments in my songs of that period that set me free. Thank you Laura, I miss you every day.

## Come On In

In 1966, just as the Strangers single "Land Of Music"/"I Need Your Love Inside Me" was about to be released, I became very ill. I spent a lengthy recovery period in California and it was a lonely and painful time, I felt exiled from my life and was in over my head romantically. "Come On In" was inspired by Frank Sinatra's "Strangers In the Night," by the romanticism and pure balladry. Over the years I have also been inspired by the work of Leonard Cohen, starting with his poetry and novels when I was 19 years old. Leonard's take on his own words has a presence and gravitas that moves me and I chose to focus this re-interpretation of "Come On In" on the words themselves and how I remember feeling when I wrote them many years ago.

## Come And Get These Memories

This collection of songs starts and ends with the revelation and testimony of Motown music. Somewhere around 1971 I recorded a version of this Martha and The Vandellas song, written by the incredible team of Holland, Dozier and Holland. It was included as a B-side on a 45-rpm single featuring the song "Abigail Archer" from the 1971 album *Ohio Knox*, recorded on The Farm in Los Angeles. I first sang this song in 1965-66 with The Strangers at The Night Owl Café. I will never forget the night that Zally Yanovsky, guitarist for The Spoonful, brought Martha Reeves to The Night Owl to hear us sing our version of "Dancing In the Street."



It is nights like those and the thousands since, the friends, mentors, slips, stumbles and eventual growing up that make this project what it is. John and Zal, Joe and Steve, Laura, Jake, JT, Kootch, Bishop, Kenny, Jerry and Jay, Bob, Erik and Richie, the list goes on and on and will keep going on and on. For it is the music and the words, the streets and the beat and the common dream that binds us all, everywhere, whatever your time, place or story. This is a piece of mine.