

Peter Frampton

Thank You Mr Churchill takes Peter Frampton back to the beginning. Literally.

“This album is very autobiographical. It starts with my birth, in which I thank Mr. Churchill for bringing my father back from the Second World War,” says Frampton of his new set. “I woke up one morning and I wondered what would have happened if Winston Churchill hadn’t been at the helm and the British and the Allies had not won. Would my dad have not come back? Would I be here? Probably not.”

Mr Churchill is Frampton’s first collection since his innovative Grammy-winning instrumental album, *Fingerprints*. “Since *Fingerprints*, it’s been a very creative period for me,” he says. “I wrote over 50 songs between *Fingerprints* and choosing what will be the 11 on the record. Awards aren’t supposed to enhance one’s creative juices, but they don’t hurt. With the Grammy I feel validated as the musician that I always felt I’ve been.”

Frampton, pairing primarily with Grammy-winning songwriter Gordon Kennedy, wrote all the songs on the album, revealing sides of himself never before seen. “Gordon is an incredible storyteller and that’s why I think we work so well together,” Frampton says. The song “Vaudeville Nanna and the Banjolele” is exemplary of that notion. “It’s the story of how my grandmother gave me a banjolele when I was very young which started my entire musical journey. What I write has got to be something I’ve experienced. The only way I can write, really, is from my heart. I think that’s why this album is so important to me because I’ve tackled issues that I’ve never tackled before.”

That includes looking outward on such songs as “Restraint,” about the Wall Street meltdown, and the stirring “Asleep at the Wheel,” about Megumi Yokota, a Japanese teenager kidnapped by the North Koreans in the ‘70s. “I was watching a program on TV about Megumi’s story. The North Koreans were abducting children from Japan for years and years. She was on her way to school when she was 13 or 14, which is the same age as my daughter, and never heard of again. It is the story of the parents’ struggle between the Japanese and the North Korean government. Rumor has it that Megumi is the nanny of Kim Jong-Il’s children.”

Just as some of the 11 tracks address Frampton’s look at the world, a number of songs, including “Black Ice” and “I’m Due a You,” touchingly and poignantly look at his life before and after finding sobriety seven years ago. “‘Black Ice’ is a very personal song. It’s about how fallible we all are,” Frampton says.

Another track, “Invisible Man,” celebrates Frampton’s growing up in England as he listened to and was forever influenced by the magical music of Motown. “Gordon and I knew this was going to be for the Funk Bros. They play on that track. I had the honor of inducting them into the Musicians Hall of Fame in Nashville and was invited to play two numbers with them. I’m getting chills thinking about it! Motown is such a huge, huge part of my musical upbringing. It doesn’t get any better than what they came up with. They were responsible for a whole new sound. The

playing was out of this world, because you had all these great jazz musicians playing and adding licks to these innovative songs. We wrote “Invisible Man,” incorporating as many Motown titles as we could.”

Frampton recorded *Mr Churchill* at his home studio in Cincinnati. “This was produced with Chris Kimsey, who was the engineer that I used on my very first solo record. We hadn’t worked together in over 30 years. I hooked up with him through Facebook,” Frampton says. “I thought it would be a wonderful way for us to work together again and it was. We co-produced and co-engineered with Seattle engineer Don Gunn (Death Cab For Cutie) and then Chris mixed it.”

But Frampton’s connection with Facebook doesn’t end there; Frampton has found the social networking site a remarkable way to relate to his fans around the globe. He took over operation of his fan page three months ago and has watched it soar to over 100,000 fans. “The Peter Frampton Facebook page IS me,” he says. “I go in and answer people’s questions. I tend to spout my theories there as well and stir it up a bit.

Mr Churchill also features Frampton’s first recorded collaboration with his son Julian. Frampton says, “Julian started off playing drums. Then one day he played me a song on guitar and he blew me away. He’s now 21 and over the past few years, he’s become a terrific writer. He’s an amazing lyricist, great singer, and a wonderful guitarist. He inspires me.

“We’d always wanted to write something together that he could sing and we could put on an album. So we wrote two songs and it was one of the best experiences of my life.

“Chris [Kimsey] heard the demo of ‘Road to the Sun’ with Julian singing and said, ‘Who’s that?’ I told him, ‘That’s my son, Julian.’ He said, ‘He’s gotta be on the album.’ Julian’s vocal is the live vocal, it’s take one.

“During the last week of the 2009 tour in California, I said to Julian you have to come and play ‘Road to the Sun’ live. He said, ‘Me, live?’ So, he got on the bus and played his first four shows with us ever. He took to the stage like a Frampton to water! Basically the story [of ‘Road to the Sun’] is about our journey together and what we’ve been through.”

Throughout *Mr Churchill*, Frampton’s guitar playing is sharp and expressive, especially on the eight-minute, emotional instrumental “Suite: Liberté.” “I pick up a guitar every day. My form of practice is a combination of limbering up and writing all at the same time,” he says. “Every day I find new things. It’s always better when I don’t think and I just play. That’s when new stuff happens. I have to do the solos in one or two takes. If I don’t like what I’ve done so far, I have a break and then come back fresh. It has to be spontaneous for me. I’m not someone who sits down and works out a solo. I want to go, ‘Oh, that’s interesting. I’ve never gone there before.’ It’s all about choice of notes and melody. It all depends on what mood I’m in at the time.”

Over the course of his 40-plus year career, including his co-formation of super group Humble Pie, Frampton has realized that success isn’t measured in how many albums you sell or how many concert tickets people buy (although in his case, the answer is in the millions), but by an

internal barometer. “It took so long for me to realize that and I think that’s why this album is so important to me,” Frampton says. “I’ve realized success isn’t what *you* think, it’s what *I* think. Until I drop, I’ll still be trying to make myself a better person and that’s how I do it, through my music.”

About Peter Frampton

Frampton remains one of the most celebrated artists and guitarists in rock history. Raised in London, Frampton taught himself to play guitar while still in single digits. He studied at the Bromley Technical School with classmate David Bowie (with whom he later recorded and toured). At 16, he was lead singer and guitarist for British teen band, the Herd. At 18, he co-founded one of the first super groups, seminal rock act Humble Pie. His fifth solo album, the electrifying *Frampton Comes Alive!*, is one of the top selling live records of all time. Frampton is so identified as the quintessential rocker, that he served as a consultant on Cameron Crowe’s *Almost Famous*, Crowe’s semi-autobiographical film about a teenage journalist covering the fictional rock band Stillwater.

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