

TED LUCAS CD REISSUE LINER NOTES – REVISED VERSION FOUR (dbm)

Ted Lucas was adept at playing all kinds of music, from folk and blues to ragas and rock. He was a good friend of mine. I met him in 1965 when my girlfriend saw Ted's folk-rock group The Spike-Drivers at the Raven Gallery in Detroit, our hometown and the setting for most of this tale.

Late that September, I was drafted by the US Army and spent most of 1966 stationed in Turkey. I was reassigned to the Presidio of San Francisco in the spring of 1967. After my discharge, I decided to stay in San Francisco. It was an exciting time and I was completely taken with the Bay Area music and art scene, but eventually my marriage and the band I was in both broke up. I decided it was time to go back to Detroit.

By 1971, I was performing my songs again in Detroit area coffeehouses. In 1972, I saw a notice in the *Fifth Estate* newspaper that Ted Lucas would be playing at a local college. I went, and I was mesmerized and amazed at the diversity of styles that Ted performed on the guitar that evening. After the show, I got the chance to talk with him. He invited me to visit the following week. Ted's house was a large, stately old home a few blocks east of Woodward Avenue in Detroit's Highland Park neighborhood. There I met his wife Annette and their young sons Peter and Anthony. I brought my son Ben, who immediately ran off to play with Pete and Tony.

Ted took me to his music room in the attic. All his stringed instruments were there along with a reel-to-reel multi-track tape recorder. He had a well-organized tape library full of recordings by his bands – The Spike-Drivers, The Misty Wizards, The Horny Toads and Boogie Disease – and also his own solo acoustic material. That evening Ted showed me a treasure trove of photos and other memorabilia from throughout his career. In another room, he showed me his toy collection. Ted collected toys and kept them in mint condition, in their original boxes. Peter and Anthony weren't allowed in the attic, nor do I think they knew at that point what Ted was hiding up there.

That evening we each played some of our original songs for each other. I asked Ted about recording and making records. Before Ben and I left that night, Ted gave me a handful of 45rpm singles, one by The Misty Wizards, another by The Horny Toads and three by The Spike-Drivers. I still have all of them.

We met often after that, to show off new songs and on occasion record together. I made posters and fliers for his gigs and before long Ted asked me to open shows for him, which I did regularly. I played the autoharp that you hear on 'Now That I Know' and contributed some of the lyrics for 'I'll Find A Way (To Carry It All).' Ted played electric lead guitar on my song 'Let Go' on the 1976 Detroit singer-songwriter compilation *Stone Soup*, and he played acoustic guitar and bass on several other unreleased songs I did in the mid-70s.

Ted Lucas was the son of Greek immigrant parents. I only met his mother once, but I recall that she was dressed all in black and also wore a black head scarf. Ted, Steve "Maruga" Booker and I had dropped by one day for a quick visit. She hovered around her son and called him Teddy. His father wasn't home.

Ted studied classical guitar at Wayne State University in Detroit, and took guitar lessons from Joe Fava. Phil Holwey was his vocal coach. Ted was drawn toward folk music during the early 60s. He fell in with a group of folkies and beatnik guitar players that included Sid Brown, Marc Chover and Jim Gurley. Ted taught guitar at Fava Music, as did both Sid and Marc. Eventually Ted would travel west and study the sitar with Harihar Rao and Ravi Shankar.

When The Beatles hit the top of the charts in 1964, followed by an invasion of other British bands, American folk musicians like The Byrds and The Lovin' Spoonful went electric and folk-rock was born. Many folk musicians who grew up in 1950s Detroit, were also closet rock & rollers. So by the fall of 1964, both Ted Lucas and Sid Brown were talking about forming a group. Sid's wife Marycarol came up with the name The Spike-Drivers, inspired by the time Ted and Sid jammed with Mississippi John Hurt on the song 'Spikedriver Blues.' Ted introduced the Browns to drummer Steve Booker and singer-guitarist Richard Keelan. Steve was asked to go on tour with Brenda Lee and was quickly replaced by Larry Cruse, and suddenly the Motor City had its first folk-rock group. Almost immediately The Spike-Drivers got attention in the press, but that really is another story...

Holy smokes, what can I tell you about the making of this album? First off, it was recorded over a number of years during the early and mid-70s, much of it up in Ted's attic. Readers should understand that Ted was very disciplined musician and practiced for hours everyday to perfect his guitar technique. He wasn't a natural singer. He had a rather husky voice with a smoky and sensitive quality to it, and he used what he had to his advantage. Ted knew how to use vibrato, to project his voice when necessary, and sing from his diaphragm. He actually finished all of these recordings at some point in 1974, but the album wouldn't be released until the following year.

In part the album was financed with funds advanced by Warner/Reprise president Mo Ostin, who thought Ted might be able to fit into the singer-songwriter trend that was happening during the early 70s. In the end, Ostin passed on the project. Ted finally put the album out on his own OM label with financial help from his friend Don Schmitzerlee. There are only two records released on the OM label, The Spike-Drivers first single (released in 1966) and Ted's solo long-player (almost ten years later).

The album was one of the most eclectic acoustic records of its day. On side one, Ted sang six folk-styled originals, both good-time music and heartfelt ballads. Side two is more experimental, with two improvised guitar instrumentals, including one raga and one extended blues. The songs 'Now That I Know' and 'I'll Find A Way' are as good as anything done by the more well known singer-songwriters of that same era. It's unfortunate that Ted didn't catch a break outside of the Detroit area with this LP. He sold the album at concerts, but it didn't have much distribution beyond the Midwest. Which is why the album is so very rare today.

Ted had help from Milan Bogdan, who worked at studios like GM and Tera-Shirma and recorded a number of these tracks downtime and off the books,

which is why no studios are listed on the credits. Milan also remixed and put other finishing touches on Ted's home-recorded tapes. Milan was a guitar player who had recorded with Del Shannon and many Detroit R&B vocal groups. He engineered the sessions where Danny Ballas plays the congas on 'Robin's Ride' and Carol Lucido plays the tambura on 'Love & Peace Raga.' The album was mastered by Howard Craft at Mastercraft Studios in Memphis. Howard was a legend because of the many southern soul hits that he had mastered (and a quite few northern ones too).

One Saturday morning Ted called and asked me to stop by his house. He said that Stanley Mouse was in town and would be coming over later that afternoon. I knew Ted wanted Stanley to illustrate the front cover. He had already asked me to design the back cover and put all the final mechanical layouts together for the printer.

When I got there, Stanley, Steve Booker and Ted were already sitting in the living room talking about the project. Actually Ted and Maruga did most of the talking, while Mouse sat there quietly grinning and sketching in pencil on a pad of paper. Near the end of the meeting, Stanley had a big smile on his face and showed us what he had been drawing. It was a rose design, not unlike what he did later that year for Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter's *Tiger Rose* LP cover. I can't recall if Ted vetoed that idea or if Mouse just decided to do something different, but when the finished art finally arrived, it was a totally different illustration and design.

I recognized the image immediately. A year or so earlier, Stanley had an exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts. On display were many of his psychedelic San Francisco concert posters, album cover paintings and hot-rod monster designs. One of the original pieces on display was the art that Stanley had done with Alton Kelley for a Jimi Hendrix album to be called *First Rays Of The New Rising Sun*. Alton did a symmetrical collage that involved a number of images, including lightning bolts, a woman from an old Maxfield Parrish painting and an astronaut riding on the head of a dinosaur. In the center was Mouse's illustration of the winged scarab that you see on Ted's cover. Jimi Hendrix died before he finished that album and the artwork was never used. When I was talking to Stanley last October, Ted's name came up and Stanley told me they had had a falling out several years later. He remarked rather cryptically, "Ted hijacked Jimi Hendrix's album cover and stole my green socks." (It's also worth noting that that Mouse's scarab wound up as the symbol for the popular rock band Journey.)

I've gone on long enough, but let me finish these liner notes with a couple of short reflections. Ted Lucas was an exceptional talent. This is evident, for instance, from the session work he did for Motown producer Norman Whitfield. Ted played on a number of late 60s records by The Temptations, The Supremes and Stevie Wonder. Although uncredited on those recordings, you can hear him playing the harmonica on The Temptations' 'Ball Of Confusion' and the sitar on their 'Psychedelic Shack.'

Ted was a major musician on the Detroit scene, respected by local promoters and booking agents who hired him to open for an array of international performers including Frank Zappa, Yes and The Eagles. Once I saw Ted open

for a Black Sabbath at Cobo Hall. I considered this to be very brave, because this crowd would be a potentially surly one. I thought Ted should at least pull together a band and play some hard-edged blues-rock for this concert, or else he might get booed off the stage. But that didn't happen. Ted wowed them, all alone, with his tremendous guitar improvisations.

Then there was the time a group of us went to a Joni Mitchell concert at the Masonic Temple. Joni acknowledged Ted from the stage as one of the few people who believed in her talent when she first came to live in Detroit in the mid-1960s. She had him stand up to rousing applause.

So there you are. I didn't always agree with Ted about everything, but I was deeply saddened to hear that he died in 1992. I miss his generous spirit and excellent music. Recently, Jim Gurley, Marc Chover, Sid Brown, Norman Whitfield and Jonathan Round all left the stage of life. There aren't many of us left that tell you about Ted and his music. You'll have to discover that for yourself by listening to this album.

Dennis Loren, 27 Feb. 2010, Oakland, CA

Remastered by Jeff Lipton and Maria Rice at Peerless Mastering
Liner notes and booklet layout by Dennis Loren
Images courtesy The Lucas Family and Dennis Loren
Produced by Douglas McGowan
Production supervised by Jae-Soo Yi for Riverman Music

Many Thanks to Annette, Peter and Anthony Lucas, Stanley Mouse, William Tyler, and Mike Dutkewych.

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