

Gary Ogan

Releases *Sound Ground* March 8, 2011

On Sound Ground Music

www.garyogan.com



As a veteran of 40 years in the music business, Gary Ogan toured, played, and wrote with the venerable Leon Russell, accompanied, sang, and had his songs covered by various luminaries, and released a few albums under deals with both Elektra and Warner Brothers. Now, Ogan comes forth with ***Sound Ground***, (out March 8 on Sound Ground Music), for which he played every instrument and self-recorded in his Portland home studio. But it's hardly a simple album nor does it sound stripped down. Rather, it channels a bit of Donald Fagan on 11 tracks that range from slick, blue-eyed soul and sultry funk to irresistible, complex pop-rock.

A self-confessed "out of sight guy," Ogan says he enjoys that he is "sort of stepping out of the ethers as an older artist not many people have heard of, and I like that." But he's not been out of sight and certainly not out of mind to the artists with whom he's collaborated. Brian Ahern says Ogan's arrangements "are distinctive and passionate, and he plays every instrument on the record which reminds me of the solo records of Stevie Wonder or Paul McCartney." And Russell said to Ogan, "As an artist you row your own boat in a way that is rewarding to the soul." And Ogan is not really invisible, as he has toured worldwide for the last four years as a drummer and vocalist with acclaimed songwriter Darrell Scott.

Sound Ground came about with Ogan's desire to "keep my three-headed music habit fed. I'm very much into creating all three -- writing, recording, and performing." To the former Sony-Tree staff songwriter, the plan was to start writing again in 2007, and this chapter came fast with "**Showtime**," the leadoff track. It's a funky track in full, driven by multiple vocal tracks, staccato-laced keys, and Motown-inspired guitars.

Next up is "**You Found The Light**," very much a chin-up and ready-to-face-the-world message that "smacks heavily of my love of Little Feat and NRBQ." And while that song is very much string-driven, the title track's melody is a jazzy and cheery-sounding key-inflected story he devised while touring army bases. "I figured sound ground could mean a club, or a code, or a whuppin' ... or all the above."

On "**Time for the Rhyme**" (that would sound at home on a Paul Simon record), Ogan says, "It basically wrote itself. I picked up my Takamine, hit the top three strings E - B - G, slammed into a B7 on the seventh fret, and started singing ... and let the song unveil itself."

"**Picture of You**" is all wah-wah dirty guitar. "I wanted to rock. I sang everything off the top of my head and decided to stick with that approach, so for me the song ends up being about a number of things and people, and about nothing and no one in particular. It's just fun."

That song's more somber counterpoint, "**A Day And The Life**," addresses the simplicity and completeness of the 24-hour cycle. "I think I remember deciding that to have dramatically different sections would be good," shares Ogan. "These songs were written from a place of wanting to venture into any kind of new territory as a writer."

He picked up a lot of his song creation technique with Russell, with whom he co-produced, toured and wrote. "Writing with Leon was a very serious regime. We would sit at separate typewriters and type stream of consciousness prose that we would later attempt to find musical homes for if possible. The two co-writes of mine with Leon on his album with Mary Russell, *Make Love to the Music*, were written this way. They were "Now Now Boogie" and "Say You Will," the latter of which was later recorded by Nicolette Larson."

Ogan learned much in his mid-20's through his work with Russell, in both a production role as well as part of his touring band. (Ogan and Russell co-produced each other's albums). "We had a great kinship of spirit in regard to our mutual understanding of what he was looking for musically. I found Leon to be the most wise, kind, honest, funny, talented, giving, and sharing guy to work for -- just long periods of playing music and talking, as he was eager to teach me things, and I was eager to learn."

Now Ogan is learning newer things from a different source entirely – his Cherokee heritage. His grandfather was the last full-blooded Cherokee in his family, and the grandson is finally exploring where he wants to take that. "I speak precious little Cherokee and having heard my dad's fluent use of it throughout my life, I really shouldn't say I speak the language at all, because the true sound of it is so different from what one would hear passing my lips. I expect my future output to be somehow informed by these new leanings."

For the official CD release shows in March, Ogan has assembled a crack six-piece band made up of some of Portland's finest players. Simultaneously, he is also wrapping up his next solo studio project as well as his role as co-producer, arranger, engineer, and multi-instrumentalist for the great Danny O'Keefe on Danny's 40-year labor-of-love project called "Dreamers", a song cycle on the Nez Perce Indians of the Pacific Northwest. And as Gary puts it, "The phone could ring, or I could get a text or email asking for my availability for Darrell Scott, and that's always a plane I'll get on if I can."

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