

INTERVIEW WITH TETSUYA NAKATANI. TOKYO.

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“GO FOR BROKE” 2008**

**Q)Had you stayed or toured in USA before the album
'Valley Hi' in 1973?**

A) Yes, I first “toured” the USA in 1970. Not playing, but doing what Mercury Records called “a rap tour”. Which comprised of going from coast to coast, accompanied by my old friend Paul Nelson. Armed with a film of 5 of the songs from the album, speaking with journalists and radio DJs, to promote the release of “If you saw thro’my eyes” I then went back with a band in 1971 playing clubs.

**Q)Did Elektra request that you recorded 'Valley Hi' in USA?
You moved there and started musical activity mainly in
USA around that time, didn't you?**

A) I was quite friendly with Jac Holzman, who owned Elektra Records. It was his idea that I meet up with Michael Nesmith and talk about him producing my next album. I went over for 2 weeks, to meet Michael and exchange ideas about what sort of album it would be.

Q) Personally, Mike Nesmith is one of great all time songwriters but he has received very low appraisal here in Japan. What did you think when you played with him?

A) I didn't actually get to play with Michael more than once. He produced the album and played on one track, “Seven bridges road” I played live with him at a music convention in Colorado, a year later and that was it. I did see him work a couple of times and was riveted to my seat. He was a trailblazer for what we now call Americana music, a great human being and I like to think, a loosely sewn friend.

Q) You had recorded your albums in USA for a while after 'Valley Hi'. Did you find any difference between American and British musicians?

A) I actually moved to California to make “Valley Hi’ and stayed in the USA for 28 years.

Musicians are musicians the world over. There are great ones, good ones and the rest. The only difference for me was the accent.

Q) Elektra refused to release 'Journeys From Gospel Oak' and 'Plainsong II'? Why did they? Were you angry about it?

A) Elektra never had any involvement in “Journeys from Gospel Oak” The album was made for Vertigo.

Jac Holzman chose to not release the second Plainsong album because he felt at the time that it wasn't good enough and that we, as a band, were not living up to our full potential. I agree that it was a scrappy album, but I've heard worse.

At the time I didn't mind. He'd already offered to send me to California to meet Michael and my head was full of that. Making an album in California was a dream come true for me and I would have quit any band to see that happen.

So no, I wasn't angry. On the contrary, I was elated.

Q) I think your sense and ability for picking up other musicians' songs is really worth mentioning. Could you let me know how you make your choices? Did you listen to a lot of music?

A) I have always listened to other people's music, lots of it. I'm curious about what others are doing. For me that's what it's all about. Being aware of what others are doing and appreciating ones peers. I got as much satisfaction from recording other people's songs, as I did my own. So consequently I explored all the time. I would basically look for songs that I felt comfortable with, as though they were my own and try to give them some kind of little twist. I still do it to this day, but not as much any more.

Q) When I was a junior highschool student, I listened to your 'Valley Hi' and 'Some Days You Eat The Bear' and that gave me a chance to become familiar with Steve Young and Tom Waits for the first time. I love these albums so much for that reason.

A) Yes, me too. I still love to listen to both of those writers. What they do is timeless. I prefer Waits early work to his more recent offerings, but he's consistently good and I'm coming around on his more recent work. He's another who does what he does for all the right reasons. Music for the love of music, or so it seems.

I love Steve's "Rock salt and nails" album, it's an ageless work.

Q) 'Go For Broke' was recorded in Nashville. Why did you record it there?

A) The album was recorded in Nashville because my producer, Norbert Putnam had a studio there, Quadraphonic. He co-owned it with David Briggs. I think he might have preferred to do it in L.A, but he recorded the first Dan Foglberg there, which I loved and wanted to try to recapture

that vibe.

Q) On this album, there are some great musicians from the country music scene such as Reggie Young and David Briggs appeared.

A) I actually took my own band to Nashville and recorded the majority of the album with them. But after they'd left, Norbert suggested we record one more track, "Brown eyed girl" which is how I came to use the "Area Code" guys. They were all friends of Norbert's.

Q) Were you thinking about city music (AOR) like Boz Scaggs, which was main stream at the time you made the album?

I wasn't then, or ever have been influenced by what other people were doing. I just went my own way and sometimes it came out sounding more commercial than others. But this wasn't a conscious effort on my part. It just happened one way or another, depending on which musicians I used. I would never hire a player and then tell him what, or how to play. The reason I would hire any particular player was because I liked what they did. So for me to then try and get them to fit into a mould of my design, could potentially have taken away all that I loved about them in the first place.

Q) I was just a high school boy when I listened to 'Go For Broke' and 'Hit And Run' and I was disappointed about changing the atmosphere of sleeve design more than music itself (Please don't get angry). Because the former images were gloomy and so quiet and it was so impressive to me.

A) I'm not sure I understand what it is you're asking in this question!

Q) How did you get the chance to be contracted to CBS (US Columbia)?

A) It happened through my publisher at the time. I'd taken a song of mine, "For the lonely hunter" to him because he told me that The Flying Burritos producer (Norbert Putnam) was looking for an uptempo song for a new album they were making. Norbert loved the song and the version I gave him, but didn't think the Burritos could pull it off. He liked it so much, he offered to ask CBS on my behalf, if they were interested in making an album with me and have him producing it. I don't really know any of the political details, except that he came back and told me CBS wanted to sign me. Simple as that!

Q) You wrote the name of Emitt Rhodes and Don Ellis (who was active in a different kind of music) in the credits of that album. Did you know each other in those days?

I met Emitt while I was still with Elektra. When Geffen took over and they merged Asylum and Elektra, they assigned me an A & R "advisor" and that person was Emitt. We became close friends and I ended up making some demos (including "Lonely hunter") at his studio, in Hawthorne. The demo of "Lonely hunter" was ultimately used on "Go for broke: We tried to re-cut it, but it never sounded as good as the demo. We even had Charlie McCoy come in and try to replace the harmonica, but he couldn't play it as well as my guy, Joel Tepp.

Don Ellis signed me to CBS. In my opinion, he was another fish out of water. He loved music far too much to be making corporate decisions. I liked him a lot. He understood what I was about. There were others in the LA office I didn't like at

all and had no comprehension as to who I was, but we won't go into that. In general A & R guys are out to carve themselves a reputation and move on, but Don wasn't like that.

Q) Would you tell me how you found your songwriting partner Jay Lacey on 'Go For Broke' and 'Hit And Run'?

I met Jay when I recorded "Valley Hi" He was a member of Michael's house band at the Countryside studio. Jay took me under his wing when I moved to LA and made sure I didn't get into too much trouble. Eventually we began writing together.

I believe after the Hit and run band, he went on to record and tour with Hoyt Axton. After that, he came up to Seattle for a short spell, to work with me, but didn't stay long. I think he missed all that smog. We eventually lost touch completely and I haven't heard anything about him for ages. I went on the internet and saw that he was selling "how to play guitar" books, on ebay and lives in Las Vegas.

Q) It's the last question. Please give me your reminiscences and self-criticisms for "Go for broke".

A) I think it's a good, inconsistant album, not one of my best. There are tracks like "For the lonely hunter" that I love and other stuff Like "Just one look" that I should never have recorded and cannot remember why I did!

I don't like the cover at all. I had no input into the artwork, it was done by the CBS art department. At the time I found it cringingly embarrassing and still can't figure out what message they were trying to put across.

In retrospect, the production is a bit too slick for my taste. I

far prefer what Nik Venet did with "Hit and run" Plus it's a much better album, one of my best.