



Come on and take a Free Ride with Edgar Winter

By Helen Marketti

He is an innovative, creative mastermind that has spanned a career of over forty years and showing no signs of slowing down. Edgar Winter has several projects going on at once. He was the first rocker to use the synthesizer, created the keyboard body strap, still writes music, tours and is part of Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band and that is only for starters.

"I knew that I always wanted to play music but I didn't think of it seriously as a career until I got in high school. When I went on the road with my brother, Johnny Winter is when the big change came for me. I played Woodstock in 1969 with my brother and I will never forget that moment of looking out over the endless sea of humanity," remembers Edgar. "Hearing the artists who wrote and performed their own songs, songs that they really believed in was amazing. Before then, music had been my own private identity, my own private world. Being at Woodstock with the social backdrop of the peace movement is when I decided I wanted to write music not just play. A song can reach out and touch people. It can make a difference. Woodstock was a turning point for me."

Edgar resonates with all styles of music genres. He recognizes their importance and contribution. "While growing up, Ray Charles

was my idol. He loved all styles of music. As far as I'm concerned, the least understood and most overlooked music genre is gospel. A lot of rock and roll is derived from gospel. The blues have been given their credit but we can't forget about gospel. Ray Charles blended all styles of music. His music really resonated with me especially his vocals. He had an emotional depth and sincerity. I loved his vocal style and delivery. I also liked Little Richard, Chuck Berry and The Beatles."

"The Beatles changed my life. I feel that what they did was transcend music. They really changed the mindset of an entire generation. They brought about a revolution without firing a shot because of their freedom of thought," said Edgar. "When they started out, they had simple, pop love songs like *I Want To Hold Your Hand* and then they went through so many changes and wrote songs on every subject imaginable. To me, they were something unparallel and raised our whole social consciousness. I think The Beatles changed music forever. Elvis was the ultimate rock star but he didn't write his own material. The Beatles came along and changed that."

Edgar has written rock classics such *Free Ride* and *Frankenstein*. There is so much more creativity and talent than what many may read on the surface. Edgar explains, "It seems with song writers, we are usually expected to

have our songs based in fact; that the songs we write must have something to do with us personally but that's not necessarily so. Just as an author writes a book, people don't usually connect the story to the author on a personal level but with music artists, we seem to be connected to the music we write. As a writer you can't help what you channel that comes to you. I write a lot in the alpha state - just as I'm falling asleep or just as I'm waking up. I can get up in the middle of the night with an idea. I've written songs in a dream before. It's all a creative and natural process. Everyone is creative. People don't credit themselves enough."

He continues, "I never would have predicted that my songs would still be around today. Classic Rock is here and still very much with us. I'm going to continue to make music that I care about. Music, no matter what genre it is, is about communication. It should reach you in some way. People always want to be in that experience whether it's listening to a CD or coming to a live performance. There is that connection."

Edgar Winter is responsible for creating the idea of the keyboard body strap and introducing the synthesizer. "I am considered a rocker because of *Frankenstein* which was the first song to feature the synthesizer. It was hard rock, almost like a precursor to heavy metal. I really love classical music and jazz. What I've tried to do throughout my musical career is broaden my horizons and tear down some musical prejudices. I love all styles of music and feel they are all valid. My last CD was *Rebel Road* and I was trying to make it a rock album and make it like it was back in those days. There's not much of that around anymore. I think that country music is so big because rock has a vacuum now. I consider myself a music rebel-never really feeling that I fit in only one category. I never want to conform to one style of music. I love music for harmony and beauty of rhythm. Being a star wasn't my motivation; it was a by-product of what I did. Record companies became powerful, vocal and instrumental with shaping an artist's creativity."

Edgar shares how the keyboard body strap came to be as well as his thoughts on the use of the synthesizer. "Being a keyboard player, I



was frustrated being behind a big bank of keyboards. No one can see what you're doing and you have to keep your foot on the pedals. The way I came upon the body strap idea was that I used to love watching the old Sci Fi movies like *Forbidden Planet*. One day I was walking through Manny's Music Store in New York City and was looking at the keyboards and synthesizers. I thought the keyboard itself was pretty light and thought, "I could put a strap on that and carry it around to play which is what I proceeded to do and the rest is history. I knew I was on to something. I remember the first night I did a show with the keyboard body strap and the crowd went nuts when I walked out onstage. Everyone thought it was a great idea. On so many levels it made the keyboard much more fun and rehabilitated my love for the keyboard."

"Saxophone is actually my favorite instrument but the synthesizer is a close second. Synthesizers have been given a bad rap as dehumanizing music. Bands were using synthesizers for the sounds they wanted and putting other musicians out of work so that was a negative part of it. Also, there were those who could program the synthesizer to achieve the sound they wanted because they may not have had the talent to play the sound themselves. It spun new music but wasn't music in the traditional sense. The synthesizer is versatile and flexible. To me, as humans, we are able to access the endless world of the imagination and that's what working with a synthesizer is for me. My argument is that it's a far more human instrument and I'm sticking to my guns!"

Being part of Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band has been a dream come true for Edgar. He has toured with Ringo several times.

"It was something I've always wanted to do and be a part of ever since Ringo started doing that. I thought it was a great idea to have an All-Starr Band. I had told my manager that I wanted to be part of the All-Starr Band if ever



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17 - Next Best Thing	30 - Dave Young
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AUGUST

1 - Dave Young	14 - Sister Kate
6 - Next Best Thing	15 - Light of Day Duo
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an opportunity came up. I was willing to rearrange my schedule to be a part of it. Then one day, I answered the phone and it was Ringo! I was on cloud nine! He has been kind enough to invite me back. I have also had the honor of playing on his latest CD. I feel that what Ringo is doing is continuing to carry on the whole freedom thing. There is so much respect for Ringo, for who he is as a person and for The Beatles. Everyone checks their ego at the door. Ringo is such a heartfelt advocate and spokesperson for peace and love. That's the feeling you have from start to finish when you are part of the All-Starr Tour. In my whole music career, the most fun I have ever had is being part of the All-Starr Band."

Being part of the classic rock culture and

still touring is a thrill for Edgar. "I'm feeling great that I have come through the madness of rock and roll in one piece. (laughs) What could be better than doing what you love doing the most and see people out there rockin' and havin' a great time. It's the greatest win/win situation. You will never see Edgar Winter calling it quits or doing a farewell tour, not me. I love touring. I would like to thank all of my fans for their support for all of these years for my brother, Johnny and for myself. It means the world to me. Music is an ongoing, evolving process. I'm never going to stop. I'm going to continue to push the envelope."

Ringo Starr and his All-Starr Band will be in Cleveland on Tuesday, July 20 at Nautica Pavilion. For more information on Edgar Winter, please visit: www.edgarwinter.com

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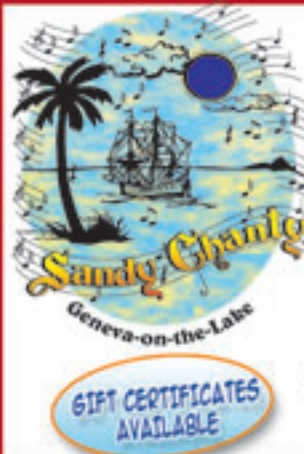
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