



The Guess Who

By Helen Marketti

With numerous hits under their belt, Garry Peterson (original drummer and founding member) of The Guess Who reflects on a band that has stood the test of time and provided its

soundtrack.

On the day of the interview with Garry Peterson, he shared that his father, Ferdinand, had passed away and that the funeral would be the next day. Asking him to reschedule the interview, Garry said his father was 92 years old, a drummer himself for most of his life and he would have understood. It gave additional meaning to the "show must go on" in a manner of speaking. The interview continued, leaving no doubt that a love for music, longevity and a lasting career were passed along to each generation.

"My father started me playing the drums when I was two years old. Fortunately, it was something I took to so my career goes beyond rock and roll," recalls Garry. "I've always played the drums. I started playing professionally when I was four years old. I did shows with the Ames Brothers, The Four Lads, Lionel Hampton and Buddy Rich. So that was quite a starting point for me."

Garry has been with The Guess Who for 47 years. Garry met Randy Bachman when the two were playing little league baseball. By junior high, Randy asked Garry to be in a rock band. Eventually leaving their home in Winnipeg, The Guess Who headed from Canada to America in the midst of the British Invasion. "In 1965, we came out with our first record, *Shakin' All Over*," said Garry. "The radio stations were primarily playing the British stuff along with some American bands that were still popular. It was thought that a band from Canada might not be listened to so there was an idea to play the song and then simply ask, 'Guess who?' Listeners would have to call the radio stations and try to figure out which band it was. During that time, the song received a lot of airplay. Listeners thought it was the Rolling Stones or The Beatles so it evolved from that. Legendary DJ, Wolfman Jack started saying, 'Here is *Shakin' All Over* by The Guess Who and we stuck with that. That's the power of marketing."

Hits have rolled out of The Guess Who and rocked airwaves plenty since then with *American Woman*, *These Eyes*, *Undun*, *No Time*, *No*

Sugar Tonight/New Mother Nature and *Share the Land*. Many songs have a meaning behind them just as people have times in their life when a song has served to remember a happy time, inspire or to comfort. "Our music was not only good; it also hit a nerve with the average person off the street," said Garry. "People can identify with us. If we weren't a band a person could identify with then I don't think we would have had much of an impact."

Talking for a moment about the song, *No Time*, a classic song that touches hearts and the inner core when it mentions the four students who lost their lives at Kent State University on May 4th, 1970. "Fear is not taking the time to know someone or something that is different than you are," said Garry. "That is why we still have conflicts today with each other. Fear is of the unknown and to dissipate that fear it's easier to strike out physically. History will teach you the future."

The Guess Who was one of few bands that played at the White House. "We played on the south lawn of the White House," recalls Garry. "It was during Nixon's term. We were playing for the children of his contributors for his campaign. Inside the White House was Prince Charles, Princess Ann, the British Ambassador, and the Nixon family. Outside, some of the kids were listening to us such as Dwight and David Eisenhower and Patricia Nixon. I remember we weren't allowed to play *American Woman*, which was our biggest hit."

Speaking of hits and the repetition of the material that fans come to listen to Garry said, "Back in the day, as soon as you had a hit, record companies pretty much let you do whatever you wanted after that. The Guess Who has eleven albums. We have so much more great music that we created on those albums but usually for our shows, we stay mostly with the hits. I go through what I call 'rediscovery of material' when you have to play the same songs over and over, you have to play the songs like it's the first time because you are doing it for a different audience each time and some may have never seen us before. Then you listen to the song like *American Woman* and

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July

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02 - Larry Smith	18 - Uncharted Course
03 - Uncharted Course	23 - Next Best Thing
04 - Next Best Thing	24 - Sister Kate
09 - Keith Ransom	25 - Light of Day Duo
10 - Keith Ransom	30 - Dave Young
16 - Larry Smith	31 - Sister Kate

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think "Wow, these are great songs," and you get reborn with it again."

He continues, "It's often difficult for classic acts like us because you are usually not allowed to do any new material. There really is no media outlet for classic rockers when they do new material. We are usually told that new material will not stand up to the old material. For some reason, we are stuck in time."

"There isn't really rock and roll any more. That no longer applies. There are so many genres; it has become fragmented. I'm not sure what you would call it now as a collective. I guess it still could be rock and roll. It can be a parent term now for all of the genres that have stemmed from it and because of it."

Garry has been happy with the longevity of The Guess Who. "People that attend our shows and buy our music are what validate the reasons for such longevity of the band. Every night when you go on stage and make people happy, that's the drug. It has been an honor and a privilege to keep doing what I'm doing. Instead of going to work, I'm going to play. Musicians play. For an entertainer, you want to keep going. Our crowds are from seven to 70. I love being part of this band. When people still like what you are doing...that's longevity."

For more information on The Guess Who, including their tour schedule which has a few Ohio stops, please visit: www.theguesswho-cafe.com

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