

# INTERVIEW/MUSIC RELEASE

By Helen Marketti

## PHANTASMAGORGY

Roxanne Fontana and I first worked on an interview together in 2012 when her book "American Girl" was published. She shared her story of growing up in Brooklyn, New York and winding her way through music adventures that had her crossing paths with Tom Petty among other notables. We recently arranged an email interview as she now lives in London. She recently released a new CD titled, PHANTASMAGORGY. During our "Q and A", she describes in full detail the origin of the project while discovering more about herself along the way. The tracks speak for themselves - a thinking compilation about when we question life and what is going on in our world. One of the contributors on the CD is Barbara Jones Marion. She is the daughter of the late Brian Jones of The Rolling Stones.

**NCV:** How was the title decided upon? What is its origin?

I hear a psychedelic vibe.

**RF:** The 'orgy' part is because I had the idea to run the songs into each other as an orgy of sorts



to be listened to altogether. 'Phantasmagorical' is the perfect way to describe the music because it's a cross between what is known as "psychedelic," and historically, culturally as "surrealism". The perfect word to describe that marriage is phantasmagorical.

**NCV:** I know you worked on this during the Pandemic. What made you decide to choose the subject matter?

**RF:** Pre-pandemic we had a society of aging populace in the West (USA/Europe), low birth rates, and people in poor health due to improper regulations on foods and pharmaceuticals. People were dying at such a fast rate. The Pandemic comes along, and everything goes into double time, triple time. How does one deal with that reality? I personally know of five people who died in the first wave. Many people suffered extreme mental issues due to every aspect. For me it was a "wow" moment more than anything else. As a deeply spiritual person I don't believe in death. I don't believe I will ever really die, and there are many like me, but there are probably many more who are scared, believe in nothing but what they see, atheists, etc... I certainly don't want to die, or be ill, however I have to accept what is going on, likely a genocide, or is it karmic. That is the thing about conspiracies against the general public, is that bad news real, is it conspired against man, is it coincidence, or is it karmic? I was also seething angry at the situation, and to avoid any sort of major toxic damage to my mind and spirit, it was time to be busy - do a psychedelic record of all things! With death as its theme, but not as an "oh no" grief or even protestation about what was happening.

I was blessed that the original drummer for The Church, Richard Ploog, remembered me from when I hung out with the band in the 1980s, and agreed to track the drums! I was jumping around with glee after he did it. It came out better than I

ever dreamed. It was clear this was no longer going to be an EP. The funding was there for me to carry on. Finally, I was thinking about Marianne Faithfull because while I was making this record it was announced she had moved into a nursing home. I was thinking about her, and her version of 'Hampstead Incident' which she titled 'In the Nighttime'. I started playing and singing it on the acoustic guitar. I decided to cover the song because I loved singing it, sing it well, and to carry on her 'thing' so to speak, to do it, in 2022. I like my version of the song so much more than hers. Some have agreed! Although my string section isn't as good as hers. A few have said my version was the best, better than Donovan's too.

**NCV:** Regarding Barbara Jones (Barbara Marion), listening to her contribution, it could very well be Brian Jones from The Rolling Stones. Is she a full-time musician? How did you get in touch/form a relationship with her?

**RF:** That's wonderful. Barbara came into the public eye about 10 years ago. She didn't know she was Brian's child until she was an adult and it was a sort of confession from her mother. (You can see her mother in the Godard Film, *One + One*. She's this striking looking woman/boy/man in a hat thumping on the piano as the Stones are doing their final takes to Sympathy.) Then Barbara had blood tests done with his sons etc. She is probably the one most like Brian Jones. She was his final child. Born days before his last birthday. I think Brian has about 7 kids! Crazy thing is yes, she is a multi-instrumentalist: guitar, dulcimer, flute... I don't remember what else. She is very beautiful. And she is a true rebel soul. I consider her one of my best personal friends.

**NCV:** What do you want listeners to come away with after listening to the tracks?

**RF:** I want people to appreciate that *Phantasmagorgy* is unique. That it has so much going on - the lyrics are interesting, the songs are top tier, as are the musicians. The "sound" is great because it was recorded on 2-inch tape 16 track. That is how all our favorite records from the 1970s were made. The 60s are 4 track thin tape, the 80s and 90s were 24 track studio, 2 inch... but the 70s, which I think have the best sounding records, used this method. We're talking T Rex, Bowie, 70s Stones, the first records of the Cars, Petty... I think these were the greatest sounding records ever made, and here, in London, we have many studios that use tape. In the USA there are not many, and because of that the prices to record are impossible. ALL of my records of the past 15 years are analogue - tape. I am spoiled. I won't record at all if I cannot record analogue. So many record only digitally. I use digital but that is the right term "use," I record on tape, turn them into digital files to be able to put them for sale as downloads, also to "mail" to musicians worldwide so they can do their bits and send it back, preferably on tape, then turning to digital. We even mixed all the parts, both digital bits and tape, actually ONTO skinny tape to give it the

added warmth and depth of our timeless records in history. Many won't know what I'm talking about, but you do! It's why those old records sound so much better, it's not just because the artists 'were better'. It's the medium. Just the way digital photos can never be film.

**NCV:** How can interested readers get a copy of your CD?

**RF:** The CD is for sale through my record label, Sprezzatura Records, at [www.sprezzaturarecords.com](http://www.sprezzaturarecords.com). Otherwise, the downloads are everywhere, Amazon, iTunes, etc.

**NCV:** Is there anything else you wanted to mention or discuss?

**RF:** I also produced this album. Which simply means I told everybody what to do. What to play, sometimes exactly, but usually in description of what I wanted, and had a hand in the mixing. My love, blood, tears and laughs are in this record, it means everything to me. As everyone knows I love doing videos to my songs. I thoroughly enjoy the process, it's really magic. I'd never do a corporate type of video though, those slick things that look like bank or medicine commercials on TV. That repels me. You know, despite my melodies, and nice singing tones, I am more fiercely anarchist than a tattooed, pierced and beer guzzling DUDE. I don't play corporate events - banks or charities, unless it's for the beagles who are tested on. So, I'd never do a "normal" video, like with a proper crew or anything, boring. I'm more Warhol art school - the colours mean more than anything. But also, I just respect the potential a music video has, far too much to be predictable or "samey" (meaning what's expected to look like to sit side by side with Madonna/Adele/Taylor or any of those people. Oh my God, just no!) That's a waste, a pity. So, I am doing visuals for every single song. In the end, I will put them all together and we'll have *Phantasmagorgy* - the film... I'm having a blast doing this, and I only hope to share my happiness and get others enthused with what I am tapping into.

<https://www.sprezzaturarecords.com/>

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