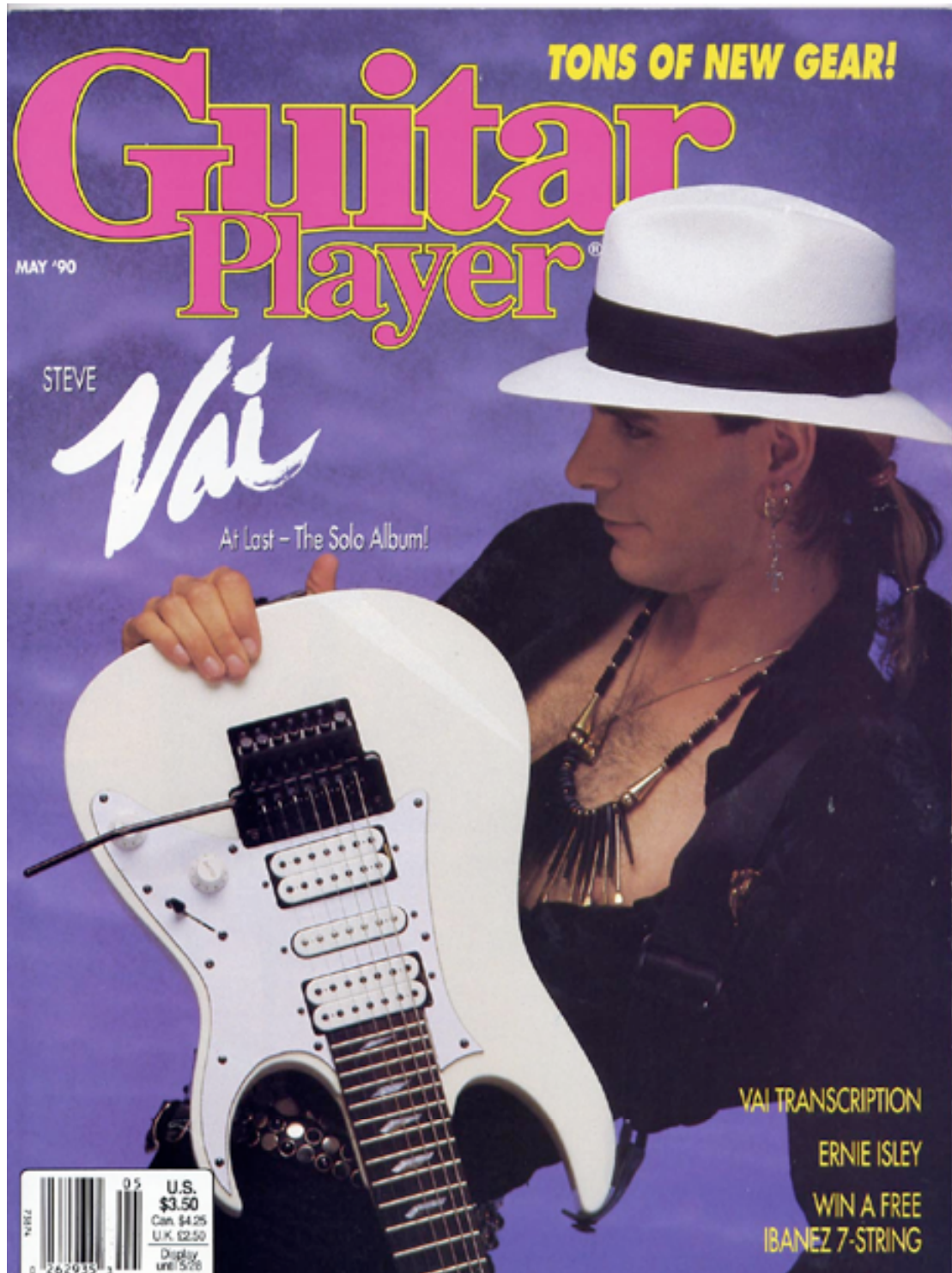




**Last night I had the strangest dream.....**



No concessions to pop-song convention, no generic shlock-and-roll production, no overbearing singers called David-this is the album that Steve Vai's fans have been waiting for. Hey, let's just say it: *Passion and Warfare* is likely to set new technical, compositional and expressive standards for the instrumental rock guitar LP. Even those who feel that Vai's remarkable talents are squandered on Whitesnakes's sexist, riff-by-numbers video-metal will be delighted.

Vai, 29, has deftly sidestepped the twin pitfalls that snare most rock solo instrumentalists; the album is neither a vulgar shred-fest nor a tasteful 'commercial' effort, suitable for cruisin' and snoozin'. It contains enough fretboard fireworks to appease the most strung out chops junkie, but Vai keeps his extraordinary technical skills on a short leash, subservient to his larger musical vision. The album, in fact, depends as heavily on Vai's composition and production as on his guitar flaying (yeah, *flaying*) and the note-perfect accompaniment of bassist Stu Hamm, drummers Chris Frazier and Tris Imboden and computer maven/keyboardist, David Rosenthal.

*Passion and Warfare* captures all the paradoxes that have made Steve's playing so beguiling, even in less-than-inspiring settings. Grand, yet

**funny; flashy yet substantial, spiritual yet dirt-earthly; it's music to satisfy the head, heart and crotch. And it's *always* unpredictable-Vai can cartwheel from subdued celestial grace to rude and in-your-face faster than you can say "Huh?" The album is slated for a mid-April release on Relativity. Tune in-you won't be bored!**

*You talked at length about your album-to-be in our Oct '86 cover story. Is Passion and Warfare the record you visualised then?*

I visualised it 15 years ago. See, when I was younger, I studied sleeping and dreams. I've got dream journals from the time I was 12, and even have my own language that I write in so that nobody else can read them, because some things are so personal that you don't even want to write them down! I experimented with making tapes and listening to them while I slept. Events started happening in my dreams, the term that I've found that describes them best is 'astral projections.' They were incredibly vivid, and I used to take notes of everything that went on. This was around when I started playing the guitar. One evening when I was 14 or 15, I had a dream that was too vivid to be a dream-too clear. The events that took place, the state of mind I was in and the things that I felt are reflected in my album.

I've written a lot of songs by waking up in the middle of the night and actually hearing melodies verbatim, and several songs on the record came to me in that way. For example the dream section of 'Erotic Nightmares', where all the sounds come in, was based on an incredibly vivid dream event. I saw myself playing the guitar but I handled it in ways that made totally abnormal sounds. I would touch it a certain way, and it would make a

squeak, or I'd scream into it. There were no barriers-even my movements were beyond gracefulness. The flute in particular-you know, the 'bweep-bweep' sound-really stuck with me. In my dream, I picked up the guitar and turned it around and it had these holes in it. I had my hand on the whammy bar from underneath, and I was blowing into one of the holes, fingering it like a flute. Between me blowing into the guitar, moving the whammy bar, and the amp feeding back through the pick ups, it created a sound, and the sound on the record is basically the one I played in my dream. The event was the beginning of the realisation that I had an identity on the instrument, and it was the single most important event in my musical career. I experienced feeling that I've never felt on this plane, although I've tried to achieve them. It's where I got most of my musicality from, I believe, or at least that's how I discovered it.

*How about the title?*

I'm trying to put this so people who read this can relate, because after 'Martian Love Secrets' [instructional column] people thought I was from Venus! "Passion" is a very powerful word that describes a multitude of emotions. I believe the whole human race is very passionate about a single, similar goal, though most of us don't realise what it is! But you're constantly fighting with forces,

certain entities that try to keep you from your goal, and that's the warfare. I don't want to go off into la-la-land, so I think I'll leave it at that.

I smoked a little pot as a kid, but after the dream event, I *never* touched a drug-I didn't even try cocaine once. I am a closet hippie, but although I may seem totally out sometimes, I believe that everybody-in some way or another, at some time or another-can relate to those things. Sometimes we don't know why we do those things until a later date, so a lot of concepts on *Passion and Warfare* are there out of instinct or intuition.

## 'Liberty'

'Liberty' is like the national anthem, but for another planet! It's like a meditation or a prayer at the beginning of the day. I wrote the melody in manuscript form on an airplane or something, but it had always been in my head since way back.

It's such a pleasure to listen back to something you envisioned in your head. As far as I'm concerned, I got it right-there are some parts on the record that *don't* quite cut the image that I had in my mind. If I have room for improvement, it's in that area.

I had some really good horn and string samples-there's like a 20 piece orchestra probably even more than that, with timpani and so on. I sampled from AC/DC's '*For Those About to Rock, We Salute You*', but it's an octave lower and it's tripled. I tried getting bombs and cannons from every sound

effects library, but nothing worked like the AC/DC thing.

## 'Erotic Nightmares'

*The parts cycle around like in a pop song, but there's also an unpredictable freely structured quality. It has feet in two different worlds.*

Nail right on the head! It has all those qualities, and that's the kind of stuff I like to hear in a song-we're very colourful beings, after all. When you first hear it, you're taken aback because it's not the norm, but it becomes more acceptable once you listen to it.

*Like many of the tunes on the album, it doesn't have an obvious overstated melody.*

That was a conscious effort on my part. I didn't want to take a standard-melody approach to this record. I wanted to make the melody sort of like a ghosting image. On 'The Animal' for instance, I can hear the first and second verse as a melody, but it's not a repeating-type melody. The original idea for 'Erotic Nightmares' was an AABA song with a melody that repeated at the end. But I opted for the noises and the wailing through it, although I had to return to the rhythm lick at the end of the song, or it would've become a meandering *poof* piece of music.

*How did you create the sound effects during the spacey section?*

It's all things I saw myself doing in that dream. Some of them are just rumbles, knocks on the guitar. I used a razor blade against the strings, I screamed into the pick

ups, and then there's the 'flute' sound which I got by cutting off all the top end, playing through a volume pedal and a wah-wah pedal in the deflexed position, and using the vibrato bar. The dog sound is a real dog. Originally it was doubled with a guitar, but it sounded too much like an elephant, which is a volume-knob swell on a harmonic with distortion through the Eventide Harmonizer. I also loosened the strings so they'd rub against the pickup. Then there's the 'sitar' sound where I pick right up next to where I fret the notes. The backwards swell s are an *E7#9* chord, recorded backwards with the tape flipped over.

*You build intricate harmonies in the bridge section by superimposing simple but harmonically remote chord, like Ab over Fmaj7.*

I like the sound of polychords, where you take two chords and place them on top of each other. They're called hybrid structures. You can keep a constant bass line but move all these chords in top of it and set up textures that you just won't hear from regular diatonic chord changes. That's my main compositional approach.

*So would you improvise, say, two bars of G major over Fmaj7?*

No, I'd hear a tune in my head (*sings descending triadic melody*) and then take the guitar and play a chord like this (*strums a major 7<sup>th</sup> chord built from a different root*). Now I don't know what I just did, but I'd do it slowly and write it down. If I didn't hear something right away, I'd write the scale down, or if I wanted a fast lick that I couldn't really sing, but hear in my

head, I might say "Here's an A chord with a *Db2* triad [the notes *Db*, *Eb* and *Ab*] on top of it, so I'll do a sextuplet where the first half is an A chord, the second half is *Db*, and coming back down I'll go to some other chord." I can go off into composition like that.

*Did you consciously adopt a softer, more lyrical character for the passages in F, as opposed to the more aggressive, blues based sections in A?*

Well, F Lydian is, for me, a more comfortable key to solo in. There are a lot more notes open up to you than in A blues, so it's a lot more lyrical. But by the same token, there was a prevailing line of thought concerning what that song was about-namely an erotic nightmare. A lot of people have dreams with sex in them, but in my dream situation-here I go off to Venus again- the lust was overwhelming. In order to reach a climax we needed human bodies, but we didn't have them because we were on this other plane. So the frustration to release grew and grew, and that's why it was an erotic nightmare. I tried to emulate that in the piece.

*So is the return of the main tune the climax?*

No, you never do climax. At the end you *think* you do, but you really just come to a different realisation about how to handle the frustration. That's when the animal appears.

## ‘The Animal’

*It's a great combination of over-the-top rock guitar and a new wave jack swing [a funk groove in which the sixteenth-note subdivisions are played as swung triple]*

Yeah, I love that sound. I'm a big, big fan of Prince-his grooves are priceless, man. His music sets that sort of thing up, but he never really explodes on the guitar the way I'd like to hear, although I do love the way he plays. So this song has the guitar that I always wanted to hear on Prince song! The whole song was recorded in a couple of days.

*Your melodies tend to emphasize the 9<sup>th</sup> rather than the root.*

Yeah, that's my taste-I love the 9<sup>th</sup>. That and the #11 are my favourite notes, but the #11 doesn't really work as often. But I love the sound of Dorian with a major 6<sup>th</sup> that almost implies minor, and the same thing goes for the 9<sup>th</sup>. Where Yngwie might go to the minor 6<sup>th</sup> or minor 9<sup>th</sup>, I'd go to the major. I like Dorian better than straight minor, and I like cadencing my melodies on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

*When you double track, how do you decide whether to harmonize electronically or add another guitar track?*

It's very simple. The sounds of a melody line being doubled with another guitar and being harmonized are completely different. The texture speaks for itself. On the main lick, I wanted something real grungy and grotesque, and I knew the harmonizer would do it. That's a

sound that you're not going to get if you double-track it because with the Harmonizer, every little squeak and bend is duplicated. But the Harmonizer tweaks the sound and you can lose the flavour. So the song is in D, but I finger the whole thing in A, and it's harmonized down a fifth:



pitched it at about 70 degrees, pointing between the cone and the edge of the speaker. It's the same tone I used for the upper-structure chords on *Erotic Nightmares*. The smooth sound is neck position; the other is treble position.

Actually, that blues passage never really existed-the pattern only happens once on the master tape. But the solo section sounded like it needed to go longer, so I extended it by editing the tape. You can hear the drums and bass are exactly the same each time.

## 'Answers'

*Lydian modes for days!*

It's my favourite mode-I'm a sucker or it!

*Is the clean funk rhythm part at the top harmonized at the fifth?*

No, it's just this fifth-sounding chord:

*What's the cascading bell-like sound over the Eadd9?*

That's three clean guitars and three clean keyboards playing overlapping upper-structure triads way up high. I do that a lot.

*You use a lot of shifting rhythmic accents in your melodies and improvisations. The tune repeats, but displaced in time:*

I like doing that too. Actually, that's a reappearing melody-it's on *Flexible* and the *Alcatraz* album. I wrote this song back when I was in high school, so for me, this is where that technique originally comes from. I like the rhythmic tension of the melody-it's like 7/8 on top of 8/8.

## ‘The Riddle’

*More E Lydian- from the very first notes you set up an incredible tension between the A# and the B.*

I know-I love that. I wrote just those first few notes, with the A# and the B over the E major triad, when I was 15 or 16.

*The bass sits on the E almost all the way through the tune, but you superimpose about a dozen different modes over it.*

I love that approach, although you’re not likely to hear it on the radio! It goes through Lydian, major, synthetic modes, b7s, whole-tone stuff and there are parts where it just goes off into space. But the Riddle is all melody. I tried to play fast in places, but nothing worked-I was compelled to play these melodies.

It was really special to hear these things, out them on tape and then just listen back and go “Ah!” This is one of my favourite pieces on the record. Sure, some people say they’re never satisfied with what they do. I used to be like that, but I’m tired of being miserable. So I say, “I’ve tried my best, I’m going to enjoy it now.” It’s not worth it to walk around saying, “I hate everything that I do”-that’s bullshit.

*How did you get that incredible ‘orgasm’ note during the sex passage?*

I don’t know-it just happened. It works really good with that scream, which is...well, I don’t know if you can print this, but when I had my

first 4-track recorder, I used to record *everything*. I had this cat who was always in heat. She’d walk around with her butt in the air, waiting for someone to come along and pooch her! We called up the vet and said “What can we do? She’s tearing up the furniture, and it’s embarrassing.” He said-you’re really not going to want to print this-to relieve her with a thermometer. I wasn’t about to do it, but my roommate did. The cat went, “roarrrrrhhh!” and I put it on the sampler and played it backwards, at a different speed. I put that on there because that’s what the section is about.

*What about the little stereo stutters panned left and right?*

That’s a B.C Rich double neck 12-string, recorded dry through a Mu-tron Bi-Phase foot pedal.

*How about the quieter parts, where the drummer plays just a sidestick?*

That’s an Eventide Harmonizer setting I wrote called ‘Heaven’. It’s left and right delay that repeats the note backwards and forwards at random in stereo, with a lot of regeneration. It’s a great sound.

*How about your choice of spoken material?*

The sound at the top was something that I recorded off the radio when I was about 15. It was an ad for the honourable Reverend Mohammed-something. He was pounding his hands on the desk, and the way he was speaking sounded so powerful to me at that age.

The song is built around my dream vision of people having had to fight in the past. I've never struck another human being, ever. So how would I approach the idea of having to go to war? I believe in peace, so would I die for that? Why do people fight for peace, or kill, as they would say, in the name of God? This song takes you through the emotional viewpoint of a person in that situation, why would they actually fight and kill when it's the last thing they'd ever want to do? That's the riddle.

## 'Ballerina 12/24'

A journalist came over to do an interview, and she said she spoke Italian, so I had her say, "*L a ballerina si chiama bella rosa*". My Grandmother used to call me that, her beautiful rose, and that always stuck with me. The sound of the baby is my son, and 12/24 is Christmas Eve, and reminds me of that time.

It's all just one take, with one guitar. It's embarrassingly easy. I did it on a 6-string and it's based on simple patterns like:



I wrote the patch on the Eventide, and then I did the composition. The original sound is in the centre of the mix. The first delay, harmonized up a fifth, comes in on the right, and the second delay, a third in-between the first two, come in on the left. I played it to a click in order to keep it in sync, because the delay on the Harmonizer was set for specific repeats. It was recorded straight into the board through a direct box I had specially built, which has a really old transformer w took from an old piece of gear I had. Nothing comes close to it for getting a clean, acoustic-like bell-chimey sound. Then there's just a little delay in addition to the harmonized effect.

But there's more to the piece than "Well I got a Harmonizer; I'll set it to 240 milliseconds here and 560 there, up a third, down a fifth." That's one part of it but that's not why I wrote the song. To me, it just sounded like a ballerina on Christmas Eve.

## 'For the Love of God'

This was a very special piece to me. It carried a lot of emotional significance, and I wanted to record it last. So I recorded and mixed everything else, and then came back to record the solo guitar. But it had been six or eight weeks since I had played a note on the instrument. I had about three days to finish the whole piece, and I needed a day or two just to get my chops back in gear. My fingers were totally out of shape, and they got *trashed*- they all had blood under the skin. It was extremely

painful to touch anything. But I had to perform this piece and it was a real moment.

See, I probably prepare for a song differently than most people. I fasted for four days, just water and a little bit of watered-down juice. I try to fast for 10 days every four months when I'm not on tour. I find it real helpful-you learn a lot about yourself because you're inflicting the second-hardest discipline on your body, second only to controlling the sex urge. I needed to be in that state of mind to record this song, and I was in absolute pain because of my fingers. It was for a special reason, but I can't get too deeply into it because people already think I'm nuts!

It took me about a day-and-a-half to get through it and figure out what I wanted to do. But when I listened back to what I'd done, it sounded like it was chopped together, so I did one take, turned the lights out, and left the studio.

*There are some technically astounding passages, but you build up to them so organically that they're just part of the emotional flow of the improvisation. They never come across as technical stunts.*

There's a fine line between technique and emotional content. No-I take that back-there's a big, big gap. I feel I'm successful when somebody can say I've bridged that gap, because that's what it's all about. I *am* a technical player, in a sense, I grew up performing exercises and scales, but that's not how I want my playing to be perceived, because that doesn't really last. We're not mechanical beings, we're emotional beings.

When I was Playing '*For the Love of God*', I paid a lot more attention to what I heard in my head melodically than to technique, but I *did* employ certain conscious technical approaches. I wanted this piece to be extremely dramatic and intense. Sometimes, overwhelming technique has intensity to it, but you have to be playing the right notes in the right combination in order to get there.

Actually, I became too intense on the instrument for my own good. Sometimes I can't deliver what I feel because it gets to be overwhelming. I saw John McLaughlin play once. He was getting in to it, playing really fast, and then this burst of something came over the guy, and he wasn't even playing anything, just smearing his hand up and down the neck. I thought, "Here's a man who's taking it as high as he can go. He's practiced his whole life, he's picking as fast as he can, and he still feels like he has further to reach." His state of mind says, "I don't care if my mind can't cope with it, I'm gonna show them how I feel." It was a big inspiration for me, but I feel that way far too often. I get too intense in my physical abilities.

*How did you get that warm, breathy tone?*

It's slightly compressed with Urei compressors. I used the black Ibanez 7-string [*Vai tunes the low seventh string to B*]. You know, the 7-string has a really unique feel-it's not just a six string with an extra. The really fast ascending lick that leads into the reprise of the melody, for example, is played

mostly on the low string way up high. You get a real warm sound with the neck pickup and a very low string played up high.

*Again, your melodies repeatedly emphasize the 9<sup>th</sup>.*

Yeah. When it goes to the *F* chord in the key of *E* minor, I play Lydian, but as soon as it goes back to *Em*, I keep it a major 9<sup>th</sup>.

*That gives a lot of weight to the E- you hear it as the root, instead of a II chord waiting to cycle around to the tonic on C.*

Yes, it does. But it's an acquired taste: you have to listen to it and become part of that sound.

## 'The Audience Is Listening'

There was a sequence in my dream where I was a kid in school again, and I loved the idea of a little kid blasting out a boogie with a teacher chasing him around the room.

*People will inevitably compare your song to Van Halen's 'Hot for Teacher'.*

Well, '*The Audience is Listening*' started out that way. I loved to perform '*Hot for Teacher*' live with Dave Lee Roth, and I like that type of high-energy boogie. But I don't consciously rip the song off. The woman on the song is Nancy Fagen, who was actually my 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. All through my high school she was a very good friend of mine-you could really talk to her. So I sent a friend over to her place

with a DAT recorder and she improvised a lot. I've got to make a video out of it.

*With her?*

I don't know if I could subject her to the type of crap you have to go through to make a video.

*Do you use fingers and no pick for the clean comp at the top?*

Yeah it's like a 'classical boogie' or something. It goes like this:

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is a guitar melody in treble clef, featuring a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes. Fingering is indicated with letters 'p' (pick), 'm' (middle finger), and 'i' (index finger). A bracket labeled '6' spans a sixteenth-note triplet. The staff includes a 'p etc.' marking. Below the staff is a fretboard diagram for the first five frets, with strings labeled T (top), A, B, and B. Fret numbers are written on the strings: 3, 0, 2, 2, 5, 7, 6, 5, 5, 3. The bottom staff is another guitar melody in treble clef, consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes. Below it is a fretboard diagram for the first five frets, with strings labeled T, A, B, and B. Fret numbers are written on the strings: 8, 7, 2, 2, 2, 7, 5, 3, 3, 2, 1, 0.

I'm not a very good finger picker at all, but I can do it if I have something that needs to be done that way.

*What are the big swelling sounds during the break down?*

Backward echoes, backward guitars and forwards feedback-a whole myriad of things. The words are what I heard in my dream: "I am fearless in my heart. They will always see that in my eyes. I am the passion; I am the Warfare-

always constant, accurate, and intense.”

*Talking to you about music involves a lot of leapfrogging between precise, technical information and spacier stuff.*

I’m comfortable talking about both. I don’t know if people are going to be comfortable *reading* about both, but sorry, this is a Steve Vai interview [laughs].

## ‘I Would Love To’

*This is about the closest you come to a straight pop tune.*

Yeah, I needed *something* that was pretty straight-ahead. The idea was to write a pop-style song that reflected what a vocalist would sing. I love hearing melody against chord changes, and that’s why I was always attracted to Jeff Beck and Satch and stuff like that.

*You’d swear the harp-like sound was a keyboard.*

It’s two guitars paying a fourth away from each other on an upper-structure chord with auto-panning on both of them, so they’re moving around in stereo.

*Do you usually envision your harmonizations at the outset, or do you go back and write harmonizations to fit the improvised lines?*

95% of the time I hear it before I start, and in this song I knew exactly what I wanted.

*Do you ever use the Eventide’s harmonic diatonic function [which adjusts the harmonized interval to*

*fit a given key, instead of always replicating a fixed interval]?*

Not at all. Not because I don’t like it, but because nothing I was doing called for it. But you’re very limited with a harmonizer, even if it’s diatonic. Say you’re writing a big band chart, with horns following a particular voicing. If you come across a chord that’s slightly non-diatonic, you can just drop another note in. It’s so easy to do on paper, but with a harmonizer, you’re stranded.

## ‘Blue Powder’

‘Blue Powder’ represents a flying dream. This was the first track I completed. It’s the same thing that appeared in Guitar Player.

*Back then, it seemed to represent a breakthrough in your whammy bar technique—so reckless, yet controlled.*

It think my chops were a little more together back then than they are tight now, because I used to have more time to just play. I was very happy with ‘Blue Powder’, but I felt it was scratching the surface of what I feel I’ll ultimately be known for. It came from the same place as ‘The Attitude Song’ and ‘Call it Sleep’. But compared to what I’ve been doing with Dave Lee Roth and Alcatrazz, yes, it seemed like it was from another world.

*As in ‘Erotic Nightmares’, the opposition of the bluesy pentatonic material and the more harmonically complex ideas is built into the tune’s structure.*

I try to marry composition with performance. There’s probably

more composition on *Passion and Warfare* than there is guitar performance. I could have done an album with tons of maniac guitar solo and stuff like that, but I like the idea of composition-, *that's* how I like to lay me melody notes. There are many guitarists who can play anything I play on the record-a lot of it just isn't hard. It's the compositions that make the notes different.

The backwards part is about six guitars recorded backwards. At first, all you hear is the return of the reverb, and then the actual notes come up. The feedback at the very end is just a wah-wah, being flexed and feeding back, with the twang-twang-twang on the bar.

## 'Greasy Kids Stuff'

*This is the albums only odd-meter tune.*

It's a compositional thrasher. There's lots going on musically, but it's all on top of a driving punk-pogo beat. The song was written in 1978, when punk music was *the* thing. It's Steve Vai's idea of punk: upper-structure triads and quintuplet melodies in 5/4 [*laughs*]. I love the horn-section-sounding ending, with all those upper-structure chords. It's all doubled—there are about six guitars at the very end.

## 'Alien Water Kiss'

It's just one pass of one guitar through an effect I wrote for the Ultra-Harmonizer called 'Alien Water Kiss'. It's not one of the presets available from Eventide.

There's maybe 10% direct signal and 90% effect, and then it's all backwards-I flipped the tape over. Forwards it starts establishing a tonality, F# Mixolydian, and there's some fast picking. But it's really an alien water kiss.

## 'Sisters'

*This is an obvious tribute to Hendrix' harmonic vocabulary.*

That's how it was inspired. Learning those Hendrix songs was the basis of my chordal memory when I was young. I'd go to a lesson with Joe Satriani, and he'd show me all those things. I went hog-wild with it, and I tried to figure out all those clean Hendrix songs, like 'May this be Love'. So when I play a clean guitar piece it inevitably has those overtones. It's probably one of the most subtle things I've recorded. It's sort of like 'Call it Sleep'. I used the same 6-string JEM guitar and direct box that I used on 'Ballerina'.

*There are some odd-ball melodies in the octave section.*

Sometimes the things that are a little outside the melodic scheme of things are the ones I end up loving the most. It's like putting cayenne pepper on your food—it's a spice you begin to crave. Did you ever have broccoli rabe, this extremely bitter Italian broccoli? When you're a kid there's no way you would like it, but after a while it's your favourite thing! My wife and I eat bowls of it—it's *stimulating!*

I crave that tension. I like to hear it; I like to be in it. Maybe that's why I'm attracted to Prince's music. He does these off-the-wall things that don't sound right at first, but after a

while you crave to hear them, and everything else that's just the norm just sounds like complacency.

## 'Love Secrets'

No one will ever know how hard it was for me to do this song. It took me *forever*. I've never worked so hard on a piece of music in my life. But it was one of the most enjoyable musical experiences I've ever put together because it's total freedom.

In my dream I was playing the guitar and every note was like a celestial improvisation. It was as if I was surrounded by a thousand-piece orchestra, all slightly out of tune, but sounding perfect. The orchestra would follow what I was played, but in this massively advanced harmonic structure. It wasn't like "Oh yes he's playing an A; then I'll go to this blues notes here." I'd play a *Bb* and all of a sudden there'd be eight chords where *Bb* worked, but there would also be this descending line because I was moving my head this way, or whatever. It's almost impossible for me to explain what was going on, but this particular part of the dream was a big inspiration for me to play the guitar. Everything I played just *worked*. If I played a single note and then stopped, it would echo and each echo would have a different chord on it, or a different sound, or a different thing that happened to it. None of it was in my control except the notes that I played. And I was overwhelmed with euphoria, totally free of all apprehension and ego-hang ups.

I tried to represent that in 'Love Secrets' by going way deep into my knowledge of harmony. There are parts where I spent a solid week creating just 20 seconds of music. I tried to create tension between nervous energy-represented by the fast sequenced bass line and ride cymbal- and a second feel, slower, melodic, and at the verge of total bliss, which is represented by the guitars, for the most part.

*You certainly abandon most assumptions about how a rock guitar instrumental track is supposed to sound.*

Thanks, that's what I was hoping to do. I was debating whether I was going to put it on the record, because some of the people I played it to looked at me like I was nuts! But it sums up the whole record. It goes through the passions and the warfares, and in the end the message given by the deep voice: "The secrets of love are revealed to all in time by God". When I heard that voice, that's when I woke up from my dream. I was just a normal kid thrown into these experiences that I really couldn't understand, and it wasn't like an overall happy ending. Like the song, it was anxiety, but also a twisted form of beauty.

*So none of the sounds on the cut were happy accidents, or trial and error?*

Absolutely, positively, unequivocally *no*. I had 800 patches for the Korg M1, I had hundreds and hundreds of [Yamaha] DX7 sounds, and I would fucking sit there and go through *all* of them until I heard what I thought was right for the

section. You know the part that says “naked...faces...gods”? What I actually heard was “We place our *naked* torsos skyward, our *faces* towards the earth in humiliation, while the *gods* passed over us”. That took place in the dream, but I couldn’t put that on the record because it sounded too outside, so I took it out of the mix except for those accented words. So the gods passed over us and we weren’t allowed to look at them, but there was a sound that happened as they were going by. The sound on the record-with samples of a 30-piece orchestra-was the best representation I could get, but it was maybe 4% or 5% of what it really sounded like. I know it sounds totally out to lunch, but that’s where I got it from-it’s not just haphazard [*laughs*]. That actually happened to me in the dream, so why not make it part of my music?

I’m sure lots of people have these experiences but just don’t verbalise them. Maybe they’re afraid, or just don’t want to. See, I’ve held back from talking about this stuff my whole life, but I’m at a time in my career where I don’t want to hold back anymore. I believe that there are people who, when they read this type of stuff, will feel relieved that somebody’s talking about it. Other people may have an image of me in their minds that’s torn down when talk about things like this. But I’m not going to lie or fake my way through what I am.

When I do an interview expressing how I created *Passion and Warfare*, I have to be truthful. I’ll answer any questions at all on how I performed the parts, what effects I used, what picks, what strings, whatever. But to me, that doesn’t

seem as important as the real gist behind it, which is why the stuff was made and where it really came from. And I can’t really take credit for it, because I think we create the beautiful things we do using our intuition which comes from the inside. I think we all have the same ability to do these things. How much we let that flame inside become part of the product determines what type of a person we are.

But if I do an interview about the Whitesnake album, you’re not going to hear *any* of this stuff, although I don’t diminish that project at all, compared to what I’m doing here. That’s a whole different animal, one that has to do with satisfying millions of people who are used to hearing a certain thing, satisfying the record company, and having two producers controlling mixes and all the parts. All this makes a statement that will probably speak very deeply to a person on a certain level of understanding. But *Passion and Warfare* is 100% Steve Vai-there’s nothing else. I jumped into the water; I dug down deep into the depths of where I am to pull it out. It might sound intense, but this is what I wanted to do. Why not?