

gary numan



new dreams for old

1984-1998



gary numan : new dreams for old 84 : 99

6-70211-5052-2

- ㊦ *dominion day (single version)*
- ㊦ *metal '98*
- ㊦ *the skin game (single edit)*
- ㊦ *america (7 inch)*
- ㊦ *berserker (7 inch)*
- ㊦ *down in the park '98*
- ㊦ *call out the dogs (7 inch)*
- ㊦ *new anger (7 inch)*
- ㊦ *absolution (single version)*
- ㊦㊦ *my dying machine (7 inch)*
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- ㊦㊦ *cars (live ep)*
- ㊦㊦ *a question of faith (edit)*
- ㊦㊦ *your fascination (7 inch)*
- ㊦㊦ *magic (b-side of absolution)*
- ㊦㊦ *voix '98*
- ㊦㊦ *i can't stop (7 inch)*
- ㊦㊦ *i still remember (7 inch)*
- ㊦㊦ *tribal*



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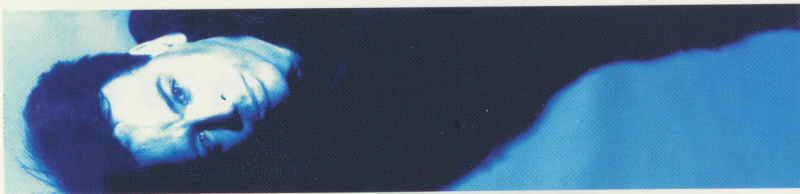


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New Dreams For Old: 1984-1998

"The biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth," wrote JG Ballard in the British magazine *New Worlds*. "It is inner space, not outer, that needs to be explored. The only true alien planet is Earth." Despite his reputation as a fan of science-fiction, Gary Numan's songs are about the bizarre behaviour of human beings rather than visiting E.T.'s. The estranged emotions and altered perspectives expressed through his writing have touched a chord with an audience who recognise their own fragility, humanity and weirdness in the songs. As for the music, in 1979 *Record Mirror*'s Chris Westwood neatly summed up the appeal of Numan when he enthused about the singer's, "readily accessible, stimulating, immediate, modern electronic pop."

This description also fits the opener on this compilation LP, *Dominion Day* (the only single from 1997's *Exile*), which connects a percussion loop with Numan's ethereal synths, edgy rhythm guitars and a chorus defined by the NME as "pure howling Goth." Songs about the apocalypse are hardly the stuff of every day life, but the darkly glamorous escapism still connects with all the imaginative impact of an intelligent sci-fi/horror movie. In fact Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* film was an influence on Numan as he wrote the *Exile* album, along with certain parts of the Bible. Or, as *Q Magazine* put it, "the old android has produced a concept album, no less, on God, Satan and The Fall (perhaps theologically spun off from Milton's *Paradise Lost*)." Numan's vision of God as a Super Being who is bored with humanity also echoes Kurt Vonnegut's dark comedy *The Sirens Of Titan*, where God, if 'He' exists, is indifferent to the sufferings of both human beings and aliens.

The 1998 version of *Metal* was recorded shortly after the release of *Exile*, almost 20 years after it first appeared on 1979's *The Pleasure Principle* album. At that point Numan was one of the biggest alternative acts in the world, prompting *Sounds*'s John Gill to conject, "perhaps, grandiosely, Numan has caught an undercurrent of the times; disbelief, despair and the almost cold-war paranoia making itself felt today." In 1998 the singer slowed the track down and replaced the symmetry of the original with a heavier, more aggressive feel, built on Led Zeppelin-esque loops. The subject matter - the feelings of a robot - stigmatised Numan in the media as a West London mechanical man with a receding hairline. While this image has lasted, so too has *Metal* as a piece of classic sci-fi pop. It's been covered by Nine Inch Nails, remixed by techno DJ Robert Armani and spun at New York block parties by electro pioneer Afrika Bambaataa.

Back in 1979 Numan explained the ideas behind the track, with boyish enthusiasm and a sense of humour: "I wrote this one song, *Metal*, about a machine that can reproduce itself and realises it's almost human, and how it would love so much to be human, and what it would do if it was. That came from a newspaper story I read where some American scientists theorised that within ten years they could build a partly organic computer that could rebuild itself, grow new limbs - practically make babies! Imagine, a whole bunch of new-born computers running around your house!"

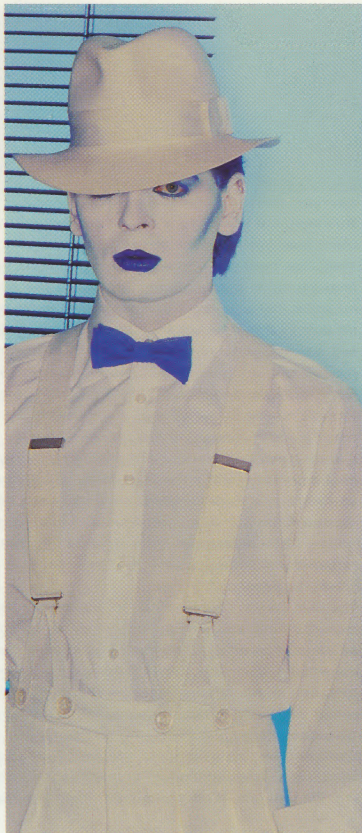
However, the song has a sexual subtext which makes it more than the storyline for the Data character from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Numan revealed this double meaning in his autobiography *Praying To The Aliens*, when he wrote, "A line from the song, 'If I could make the change, I'd love to pull the wires from the wall', was a play on the sex change wishes of some human beings in relation to the machine's desires to be human." Another lyric, 'I could learn to be a man like you', was originally poured over by foppish heterosexual teenagers who enjoyed the implied sneer at male machismo and others who were genuinely questioning their sexuality. When Sadenia sings this line on *Towering Inferno*'s contribution to the Numan covers LP *Random*, she deliberately emphasises the song's sex-change theme, so that it becomes a woman wanting to be a man. *Metal* is essentially a song about the human desire to transform ourselves, not the belly-aching of a burger-chomping cyborg.

The Skin Game, a single from 1992, presents celebrity as a form of prostitution. Numan is clearly sick of the business's smoke and mirrors, proclaiming that it's all a "lie" with the vehemence of a man whose dreams have turned against him. In a world of narcotics, whores and TV shows, the singer even swears that he can cop the ultimate drug deal: "I've connections with God, what do you need?" Numan is, of course, sending himself up, saving *The Skin Game*'s rant from being pure self-pity. As *Q Magazine* recently pointed out, it's also one of his best songs from the period '84-'94.

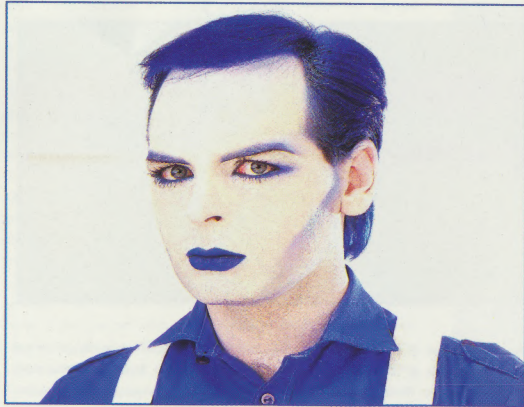


The 1988 single America got to Number 49 as an unusually bright, radio-friendly remix of the original track from the ultra-aggressive Metal Rhythm LP. One of Numan's most oblique lyrics about being an exile in the States is enlivened by a touch of pop glitz in the chorus, which makes it stand out from most of the album's uncompromising industrial funk. Q Magazine concluded in 1988, "The Numan of Metal Rhythm is wholly unlovely. One other thing though: odd to relate, it's a good record. Get past the relentless whinging and you find the sort of potent songs and arrangements that have made him such a durable Top Of The Pops contender."

1984's Berserker album is a love-it-or-loathe-it blast of booming synthetic pop, sold with a glam-rock, futuristic image. This was in stark contrast to many electronic acts of the period who were rejecting synth pop in favour of more "organic", mainstream rock (Simple Minds, Ultravox). Berserker's aggressive wall-of-noise was also Numan's two-fingered response to the lightweight chart acts of the day, namely Howard Jones and Nik Kershaw. Most of the critics hated it, but Martin Townsend summed up the feelings of many fans when he reviewed it for Smash Hits' rival, No.1 Magazine. "Others strive to break life into their synthesizers, soul into their voices. But Numan revels in the artificial, machine-like qualities of both. The result is near compulsive listening." The LP and title-track (as a single it reached Number 32) are still big favourites 15 years later, partly thanks to the album's oblique, dream-like imagery which unfolds a vague narrative about a man being hunted down but leaves it up to the listener whether this is a metaphor for fame ("My face, the picture's changed/Do you remember me?"), a Jacob's Ladder-esque hallucination after an horrific accident ("I'm in a big clean room/There's blood on my shirt/I'm in bad shape from the crash"), a berserk altered state ("I can't believe the noise/We'll take this place apart"), or word play and innuendo which expresses emotions but doesn't actually make any coherent sense at all.



Numan re-recorded Down In The Park as one of the B-sides to Dominion Day in 1998, paring it down to an industrial pop song and reflecting its reputation as a '90s alternative anthem - Marilyn Manson, The Foo Fighters and Christian Death have all covered it. When Numan first emerged as a fledgling electronic act, looking across between the Ed Straker character in Gerry Anderson's U.F.O. and puppet hero Captain Scarlet, Down In The Park was his debut synthesizer single from the fictional sci-fi LP, Replicas. It's a song about part-men, part-machines with cloned human skin and semi-organic eyes, who patrol the parks at night eliminating humans still out after curfew. Numan was fascinated by the "cross-over point" when flesh and metal are fused together to create new beings, an idea explored with horrific impact by the Japanese movie Tetsuo: The Iron Man. However, the singer also makes it clear that The Park is a place of entertainment for a human "elite" who watch the rape and pillage from a club called Zom Zoms. Like Rollerball and Roger Corman's Death Race 2000, where the drivers score points by knocking down pedestrians, the song reveals people's thirst for blood, set in an extreme version of a very real no-go area of modern urban life, Central Park, New York. Numan believes that humans will find any excuse to "revert to their primal instincts - that is, being violent". Call Out The Dogs from The Fury was one of five singles Numan released in 1985 including Change Your Mind, his Top 20 collaboration with Shakatak's Bill Sharpe. In a very busy year he also scored two Top 30 albums - The Fury, which reached Number 24, and the live LP White Noise (Number 29). By this time he was embracing computer synthesizers and samplers, which were opening up new possibilities in sound. Jerry Casale from Devo offered a neat soundbite for this latest generation of hardware, when he commented, "Selection is probably now the only artistic process". Numan searched for his own sounds with the PPG Wave 2, a German sampling machine which was part-analogue, part-digital. "Synthesizers are the most human instruments of all," he said in 1985, "because you have to go and create the sound you want. You pick up a guitar and the sound is there, unless you plug it in a multitude of pedals to make it sound different and then you're not a mil-



lion miles from a synthesizer." Sadly some of this technology was quickly stigmatised by its misuse in the '80s. Former Ultravox singer John Foxx recalls, "synthesizers should sound like themselves, but so many people were trying to make them imitate natural instruments. It was horrible." Although he was deeply unfashionable at the time (Smash Hits were almost a lone voice in claiming *The Fury* was his "best album since *Replicas*" and even they had reservations), Numan's electronic music retained an inorganic voice. The album's synths were occasionally massaged by Dick Morrissey's saxophone but they were never used to replicate traditional instruments. Meanwhile, *New Dreams For Old* features an early demo version of *Call Out The Dogs*, which was briefly available by mail order a few years ago.

The *Fury*'s hard, textured sound was reinforced in 1988 to create the *Metal Rhythm* album. Q Magazine's review of the LP pointed out that, "if Numan has an enthusiastic embrace for anything it's expressed in the album's anthemic first single, chorusing, 'Welcome to New Anger.'" The song plagiarises its structure from Robert Palmer's *Addicted To Love* (a return compliment after Palmer covered *I Dream Of Wires* from Telekon on his 1980 LP *Looking For Clues*) but the mood is shot



through with fighting talk rather than sexual swagger. Like much of the album, the track's angsty, urgent feel expresses Numan's fear that time was running out for achieving "stability" in his personal life or career - he'd just turned 30: "I've got this desperate need for something permanent," he told Q. "Something that is solid and won't change. I haven't got that and I'm very aware of that." *Voix* was also originally a track on 1988's *Metal Rhythm* but this version is the third 1998 re-recording on the *Dominion Day* single. The take is typical of the jagged, heavy style of his recent material.

Numan wrote and recorded the original 1995 version of *Absolution* in a day and immediately released it to fans. The dirty, ambient feel signalled his interest in a darker style of writing, which he later refined with new keyboard parts, re-working the song for the *Exile* album two years later. Adrian Thrills of the *Daily Mail* devoted a page to his review of the LP, enthusing, "Numan's well-tuned ear for melody and his ability to build a mood through electronic sound has often been obscured by his ludicrous image. But the craft that turned *Are "Friends" Electric?* and *Cars* into huge pop hits almost two decades ago is still evident here on well-constructed songs such as *Dominion Day*, the Eastern-spiced *Dead*



Heaven and the slow, tranquil *Absolution* . . . Despite the motorik beats *Exile* is not a dance album and the material is generally fleshed out with slightly fuzzed guitars and the familiar, cello-like drone of Numan's wall of synthetic sound." The *Absolution* single featured a grungey, alternative take of the *Sacrifice* song *Magic*, which finds Numan rejecting God but coming to his own optimistic conclusion: "And I believe in faith and magic/And I believe in love and wonder/And I believe in you when you come for me/And I believe in you when the world comes apart."

1984's *My Dying Machine* was the second single off *Berserker* and showcased a clubbier electronic direction, especially on the nine-minute "12". Melody Maker's Lyndon Barber reviewed the single and left some of his colleagues gob-smacked by concluding, "not bad at all . . . all that noisy music from New York has been having a hardening effect; this is more disciplined, less gimmick-ridden than some of the efforts of the other bandwagon-hoppers who parade their acquired studio trickery like cheap baubles." Essentially the song is about being trapped inside a piece of machinery just as it's about to crash and burn, which gives Numan the chance to ask for proof of God's existence ("If I had a picture I could say it's all for you"), indulge in some freaked-out paranoia ("I



can feel they're here/I can feel the cold") and distance himself from his own body ("I can hear me scream"). The artist's relationship with machines has often been dismissed as a ludicrous, cod-Kraftwerk gimmick, but in his autobiography Numan insists, "I love my machinery for lots of reasons, but a key one is it never lets me down on purpose and that is something that can rarely be said for people. It has no spiteful intent when it falls me, it has no vicious motive. It's absolutely honest and that is why I have always felt more at ease around machinery than people. I don't have to entertain a machine, for a start, I don't have to talk to it on the phone. As soon as I'm finished I can just walk away and it doesn't get offended." New Thing From London Town was the follow-up to Change Your Mind but the bubblegum-noir of the track failed to break into the Top 40. Lack of airplay was the crucial problem, despite the fact that Smash Hits made it their Single Of The Fortnight, with Ian Cranna convinced that it would be another success for the Sharpe/Numan partnership: "The pair that brought you Change Your Mind now serve up brutally relentless crashing drums, sweeping but briskly melodic piano and synthesizer lines laced with chopped-up laughter and Gazza's, erm, singing, to make a startlingly efficient, almost dehumanised record." Unfortunately all the tapes for this version have either disintegrated or been lost, so we had to master an unplayed vinyl seven inch.

In 1979 Numan scored his second Number 1 hit with Cars, which has now been a Top 20 hit three times in the UK. It's a timeless and massively influential track, popular amongst pioneers in electro, techno and hip hop. More recently it's also been covered by the heavy rock act Fear Factory, who invited Numan to guest on vocals. This version is taken from his 1984 Berserker tour, later released as a double LP White Noise and a four-track E.P. featuring Cars (it got as far as Number 27 in 1985). At this point Numan still relied heavily on the Moog sound, but from 1981 onwards he was also adding dreamily inventive fretless basslines to his music. A Question Of Faith from 1994's Sacrifice failed to make



the charts at all, but when the LP was re-released last year it did register with some observers of British and American pop. Melody Maker's Daniel Booth remarked, "As Britpop acknowledged his pervasive influence, most notably on Blur's Trouble In The Message Centre and London Loves from Parklife, Numan gradually began to crawl back into public consciousness. Sacrifice was his most consistent album since Telekon." The single heralded Numan's venture into dark electronic rock, neither fully goth or industrial, but containing elements of both. Lyrically it opens with an image of sexual slavery ("I'll crawl for you/hurt if you want to/I'll be the thing that you feed"), graduates to cult behaviour ("They say I lost my way/I'll wait for Judgement Day"), references J.G. Ballard's Atrocity Exhibition and confesses to a Faustian pact with the devil ("They say I sold my soul/we all reap what we sow"). It's a song about obsession and the extremes to which people will go. The snarly electro-funk of Your Fascination mixes sarcasm with sexual kinks, as backing vocalist Tessa Niles sings, "If you want it/Every little girl is welcome here." There are a few references to bi-sexual girls on The Fury, along with images of dominant women who call to mind those drawn by illustrator Eric "father of fetish" Stanton. Your Fascination launched Numan's white-suited, Great Gatsby-meets-Gene Pitney image, as if he'd suddenly been transformed into a Vegas casino entertainer, right down to the fake suntan. The singer says of this unnecessary distraction from the new music, "That's my Clark Cable rip-off. I was looking through an old book of Hollywood heroes and I wanted an image with a dicky bow. It's my man at the casino image. I thought I should stop looking like a hyped-up, young, teenage rock 'n' roll star."

I Still Remember is a sickly-sweet ballad, originally taken from The Fury but re-recorded with new lyrics in

1987 for an RSPCA benefit single. The song features some typically seductive playing by saxophonist Dick Morrissey who worked with Gary on numerous albums from 1983-1991. "I didn't really change my style of playing when I was with Gary," says Morrissey, "I just enjoyed myself, playing along naturally. I loved working with a fairly unconventional musician like Gary because I'm also self-taught."

One of the darkest years of Numan's career was 1986 when the financial problems of his Numa label worsened into heavy debts. Not surprisingly his Strange Charm album was fragmented, bitter and very dark, with Sounds magazine describing this latest phase of nasally-voiced electronic rock as, "Maggie's self-made automaton finally coming to rest in Bowie/Eno Warszawa-land, and he's still forgetting to take a packet of Tunes to the studio." The disco-fled, naggingly catchy I Can't Stop was the second Top 30 single from Strange Charm. The NME responded, "a disco beat, one finger synths and backing female vocals herald Gazza's return, timed to follow his Top 30 blockbuster, This Is Love. 'I can't stop it', hollers a frantic Gary throughout this one, just pausing to allow a guitar "lick" in every now and then. At a recent London concert to celebrate his 160th comeback, Gazza introduced a selection of mechanically controlled Daleks not entirely dissimilar to himself. I seriously suspect that one of these robots is now masquerading under the GN logo." However, No.1 Magazine thought the pop kids might like it: "Gary, obviously encouraged by the success of This Is Love, seems to be going for Madonna's share of the pop market with this uptempo, very sprightly workout. Gary intones how much he seems to enjoy doing something (the mind boggles . . .) over the disco chorus of the title. Whatever he can't stop doing it should see him back in the charts."

Steve Malins



- 01 = dominion day (single version)
- 02 = metal '98
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- 12 = cars (live ep)
- 13 = a question of faith (edit)
- 14 = your fascination (7 inch)
- 15 = magic (b-side of absolution)
- 16 = volx '98
- 17 = i can't stop (7 inch)
- 18 = i still remember (7 inch)
- 19 = tribal

みいごしすいちもつ

music / lyrics by gary numan
except track 11 (music by bill
sharpe - lyrics by roger ocdell)

produced by gary numan
except tracks 7, 14, 17 and
18 gary numan and the wave
team. track 11 bill sharpe
and nick smith. track 14 gary
numan and colin thurston

published by numan music
limited except tracks 2, 6
and 12 beggars banquet
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ltd. track 11 bmg music
publ. ltd tracks 4 and 8
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exec. producer steve
malins design by curt evans

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