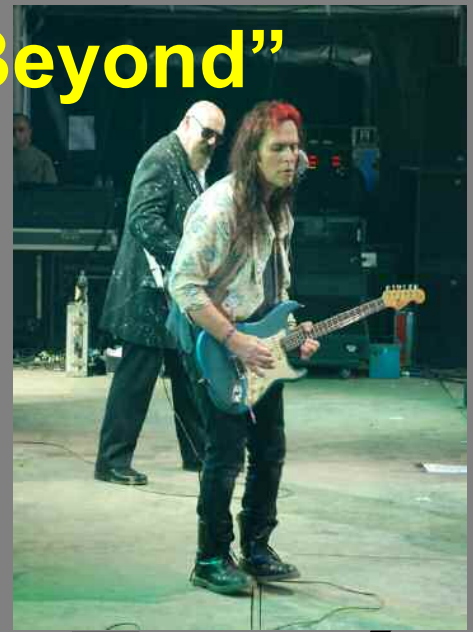
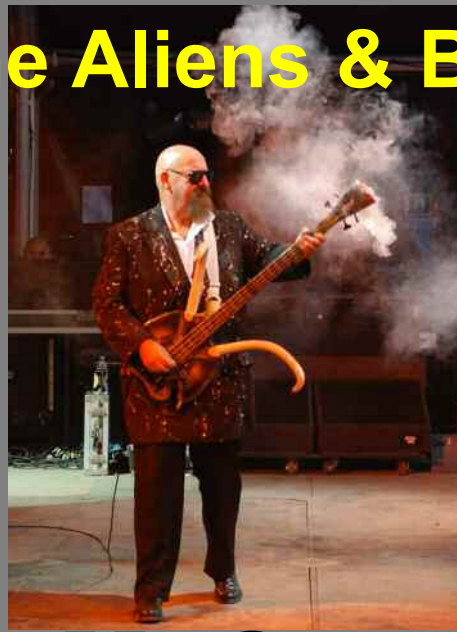


“For The Aliens & Beyond”



Guy

McCoy

Tormé

Interviewed at Rock & Blues Custom Show, Derbyshire, 28th July

When GMT released its debut album 'Bitter & Twisted' last year, it surprised many, not least the band itself. The album has received great reviews and is without doubt one of the finest album releases of 2006.

Now the band that reunites former Gillan band members **John McCoy** and **Bernie Tormé** along with madcap drummer, **Robin Guy** (who has worked alongside Iron Maiden vocalist Bruce Dickinson) are on the road, touring the UK through to the end of the year.

[More Black than Purple](#) editor Jerry Bloom recently interviewed GMT prior to going on stage at the prestigious 'Rock and Blues Custom Show' in Derbyshire, where they shared the bill with The Michael Schenker Group and The Scorpions.

Anyone who knows these guys will know that getting a sensible interview out of them is about as likely as Rab C. Nesbitt getting a date with Liz Hurley! The interview started without Robin who was wandering around the festival site, and arrived a few minutes late, armed with a bowl of strawberries!

John, when I spoke with you a few years back you expressed a keen interest to reform the Gillan band.

JM: Did I?

With this project, originally you and Bernie rehearsed with Mick Underwood, and Colin Towns also crops up on some tracks on this album, so was that the original plan, with GMT just evolving out of that idea?

JM: No.

Thanks for that well developed answer!

BT: It might have been his plan but by the time he talked to me it definitely wasn't mine.

JM: No, not at all. We got together with Mick just for old time's sake really and just to see where it went and basically it just went down the pub.

BT: I think if you have three people who have worked together you tend to re-tread the same routes. The bad ones too and I think that's what happened. There was an awful lot of really special moments with Mick in the jams but there was a general lack of personal excitement.

JM: Well, there was excitement when we first got together because we hadn't seen each other for years so there was a buzz. But after the initial buzz, it was like here we are again. It just didn't kick off.

BT: It's definitely not a put down of Mick, he was great but it was just the combination basically.

JM: The GMT thing now: Whatever it ended up being called it was based around songs we were writing pre-Mick. We would have done something with the songs anyway.

BT: It was also incredibly dependent on Robin because actually finding him and playing with him... he's such a stylistic drummer. He has an identifiable way of playing and that really kicked us along.

Was it originally in your minds to have keyboards throughout or did you specifically want a three-piece?

JM: It was definitely our idea not to have keyboards throughout. We've always loved the three-piece and the space it gives you.

BT: When John and I first met all those thousands of years ago it was basically a three-piece pub band playing exactly the same songs, nothing has changed they just have different titles! There's nothing exciting about it at all, it's the same boring old shit!

JM: We got Colin, not for old time's sake but because songs needed embellishment, which Colin is great at providing. He's also very good at just coming straight into a situation and hearing a track, doing what is required and going.

BT: It was also a nice social type of situation.

Was there any reluctance because he has gone into different genres?

JM: No he was very keen.

BT: I think he also had a chance to play his type of thing again. He actually enjoyed it because I don't think he actually has many great chances to do it.

I think it's fair to say that in a three-piece there is nowhere to hide. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of such a combo?

JM: It's a different type of pressure because everything you do is exposed but luckily when we make mistakes we make them together and it sounds like it's not a mistake.

BT: And repeat it!

JM: Keep making the same mistake.

BT: He's here now!

(Robin turns up eating his strawberries)

The history between you two goes back a long way so why has it taken so long to get back in a band together?

JM: We never really stopped being in touch.

BT: Oh we did!

JM: Well I was still keeping in touch with you. You just didn't... I was cosmically in touch. Because every time, every couple of years we said "we must get together and do something." Or "do you remember that song we wrote..."

BT: Fifty years ago!

JM: Or it was either one or the other of us was working and we couldn't do it. We're pretty sort of laid back about it anyway; it's difficult to get us fired up.

Bernie you have gone on record as saying you don't believe in production. Given that John is not only a bass player but also a producer how did that reconcile itself during the recording of the album?

BT: It isn't like I feel all productions should be rough and raw. Basically I think our charm is that really, being very unpolished.

JM: Well let's face it, it's as polished as we can get.

BT: But there wasn't a disagreement about it. It was a point of view we agreed on.

JM: We discussed the various points of view and stances we both have. We have both done both things, produced and played.



BT: John's done more of the professional producer jobs than I have.

JM: What he means is successful!

BT: I have a kind of a tiny bit of an antipathy to it as a kind of a thing because I feel in the past thirty years producers have become important and musicians haven't. To me the stuff I like the best is the sixties and seventies stuff that is really, generally under produced.

JM: I disagree.

BT: Well you can go and fuck yourself then!

JM: Sixties and seventies under produced? Phil Spector?

BT: Nah, I'm talking more about Small Faces and...

JM: They had phase pedals!

BT: Yeah they had phase pedals but it didn't just turn into a basic backing track and a click track and ten million overdubs like some people we know!

JM: But after having these discussions about the way we sound it was great for me because I could concentrate on playing, rather than "is that bass drum correct or not" which apparently it wasn't! "But it can be repaired."

BT: Truth of it is, in the context of a three-piece, production is vocal and guitar overdubs and I had no interest in doing any overdubs so that was basically it. It wasn't going to happen!

JM: But we didn't have any disagreements about it at all, incredibly.



You have also gone on record as saying that you just recorded the album for your own enjoyment, unconcerned if it was popular. There is nothing contrived on it and do you feel that attitude has contributed to why it is such a good album and has been so well received?

BT: I actually think it's been well received because everybody else is dead! I really do!

RG: What's the story behind your success? Well age and staying alive!

BT: We're the last ones doing it basically. That's my understanding.

JM: It's critically acclaimed isn't it? But I suppose the audience that would have bought it, they're dead too!

RG: I think it's a breath of fresh air though.

The album was recorded in a few takes, so presumably you had jammed the songs extensively before you recorded them?

BT: No not at all. John and I had played most of the tracks together and had a plan of it.

JM: We're talking about acoustic guitars though.

BT: There was a structure verse, chorus or whatever, the bit in the middle, and Robin would go "that's fucking useless I can't play to that."

RG: There were these acoustic battles. I could hear them laughing at each other and arguing and talking to me on the tape "Robin you won't like this bit." They're playing out of key!

JM: If we were trying to rehearse and Robin would say "what happens in this song and what happens there?" "Well, go mad, just go mad!"



RG: There's this brilliant bit, if you look on our little notes on the album, the last thing I put is go mad and that's a direct reference to this song, 'Summerland' wasn't it? There's a bit in the middle it's all chilled.

BT: And originally we are going along (quietly) and "GO MAD!"

RG: We're in the studio and Bernie's eye's flash his arms start waiving and I'm going "what?" John immediately doubles up and laughs and cracks up and I'm just like "what are these goofs doing?" I said, "What did you say?" It took John about half an hour to regain composure after saying "you wanker you can't shout at Robin "go mad", what do you mean?" But basically in Bernie's mind at that point what he thought should happen is that we all dive in and go mental.

BT: It worked Robin!

RG: Once I realised what he'd said that's what we did, and if you listen to that bit that's what we did. That's how we write an album.

JM: We've given Robin the chance to express himself as a drummer, as a musician, which he has never had before.

RG: Usually it's verbal like, "what the fuck are you guys on about?" So there's a lot of translation involved and a lot of laughing.

JM: But actually it's such a long time ago and we are just recording a bunch of new tracks, it's hard to remember what recording that stuff was like.

BT: Generally it was two or three tracks a day and he (Robin) hadn't heard them at all.

RG: That's why it's mad.

JM: But that's why it works.



BT: But there is that instant feeling as you just play a track. Two takes after that it goes downhill again and you actually have to learn it properly so we have a different approach to things that strangely, do work.

RG: John has just come up with the answer: Because we are cosmically connected! That's how it works but you would never know how, if you were cosmically connected apart from it just happens. The fact that some of those... I would say jams and some of those songs are now indelibly imprinted on wax for the aliens and beyond and some of those were the first time I'd ever heard it and the fact that it came out that well.

JM: Imprinted on wax?

It's obviously a credit to your musicianship that it has come out so well.

JM: Or our boredom!

RG: There are definitely some magical moments never to be repeated in that aspect. But then we get other magical moments on stage when we try to repeat the ones from the album!

BT: We never rehearse so we can't remember the arrangements in the first place so it always keeps them fresh.

RG: All of these bands that do months and months of pre-production and rehearsing, you're still at the whim and the mercy of wind and the rain...

JM: We've all been there in big production bands that rehearse for weeks and start getting into choreography.

RG: Now we make it up on the spot and it's brilliant. We make it up every night.

JM: We trip each other up all the time.

RG: It's brilliant fun every night.

BT: We can do that because it's a three-piece. Because if you actually had a keyboard or a larger line-up it's harder to do that because you actually have to have it more arranged and you can't actually just depend on each other. It's attending a different place this time because we are able to catch it because there are only three of us.

JM: It is still experimental. It's almost jazz!

BT: It is!

I listened to the album and there was definitely a lot of Charlie Parker in there!

JM: Anything can happen.

RG: When you listen to that album you can definitely hear a big jazz influence; especially Cannonball there's a big jazz influence from Robin Guy!

JM: There is. That's the way I see it.

BT: You are cosmically connected!

Is it important that this band succeeds or is it just a bit of fun for you? You say you are not doing it for the money but you obviously need money to finance the project?

RG: *It has been successful in that we have set it up to do some crazy arsed thing. These guys had wanted to do a project, or a band for quite some while and here we are playing with The Scorpions and an album out that hasn't had a bad review. Shame that hasn't translated into money in the bank but whatever here we are.*

BT: *It's been amazing. We began a year ago hardly able to get a gig. It has all kicked off. Basically because more people have died!*

RG: *We did a little club gig and some guys flew over from Denmark with 49 albums that John had been on or produced. I mean how do you gauge success? By finance, by reviews or bums on seats or that fact that you are having a good time and that to me is...*

JM: *Basically it has to be good fun.*

RG: *It has to be fun otherwise it just becomes hell. We've all been in stuff that is just "oh God, do that, play that again" and this is becoming more fun, because we are now... "Hold on how on earth did we manage to be recording a second album? Who allowed us to do that?"*

JM: *We didn't assume, we weren't arrogant enough to assume the album is going to do really well...*

RG: *You were!*

JM: *We just thought it would just die because Robin is on it like everything else he has done. The fact that it has been so successful despite that is a bonus.*

You have also put the album out on your own label.

BT: *Basically because we approached other people, a couple of other people expressed interest but it was not like what we call interest. It was like timescales and no fucking money so there was just no point basically.*

JM: *We definitely felt that the album had to come out quickly. It's of the time.*

BT: *And again we have all been in that situation, well John and I have when recording an album, and in my case with my 'Desperado' album, which I recorded in 1989. It only came out last year! I mean fuck off! I'm not going through that again.*

Obviously now with the Internet etc it isn't going to sell millions like in the seventies so financially you must be better off on your own label, but is there also a drawback that if you go with a bigger label there is also better marketing?

BT: *Absolutely. There is no way on the planet we have the budget to market.*

JM: *But you've got to remember that in all honesty both Bernie and I are really difficult people. It would have to be the most wonderful deal in the world for us to sign anything. We value what we have and we want it to be how we want it to be. We don't want to be told when it is coming out and which track is the single and how you're going to look.*

BT: *And also "that is acceptable and that isn't." Basically that album has an awful lot of tracks on it that traditionally record companies wouldn't touch. They wouldn't even have dreamt of using like the drone track and 'Vincenzo' and stuff like that. You cannot take the piss in rock 'n' roll and those tracks are intentionally funny tracks, or amusing tracks. It's like you can't do that.*

JM: *You mean it was intentional I thought it was serious.*

BT: *Well fuck you!*

I have noticed your videos are freely available on YouTube and are clearly designed to promote the album, but given



the way the whole business is being revolutionised by the Internet, what are your general views on the fact that people have access to your work without paying for it, and downloads and broadcasts now exist without royalties being paid?

JM: *Well it's been happening to us most of our lives. It happened in the past and you felt it was illegal but it's great from the point of view that you are connecting with people and they want to download it. I think the whole axis is changing so that the live situation is so much more important now.*

BT: *I see it's going back to how it was in the twenties and thirties...*

JM: *But that album you did in the twenties was really good!*

BT: *The record's a promotional items almost. If you break even on it that's great but they don't sell enough to make you rich. They're never going to.*

Yeah, I don't think you are going to get these million selling albums so much anymore.

JM: *Well thanks Jerry, thanks for that!*

No I don't mean that!

BT: *Well fuck you Jerry!*

It certainly has revolutionised the industry and I think live is where it is and you are obviously getting a lot of gigs lined up.

JM: *That's really what the band is about. If the album is good with the live thing it goes up a step.*

On that basis are there any plans to record any shows and capture the true essence of GMT?

BT: *We are actually recording a few of them including today.*

JM: *Are we?*

BT: *Yes as far as I know. If I can get it together.*

RG: *You will balls that up!*

JM: *I'll wait to hear it.*

Are there plans to tour Europe or further a field?

JM: *Yeah get us a gig we'll go!*

RG: *Spain's not too bad apparently, or is it Italy?*

JM: *We nearly went to Italy but Robin had a gig that night.*

RG: *And Bernie thought it was too hot!*

JM: *This is true.*

Has the band had any feedback from Japan yet because it's normally a good market?

JM: *They seem to like it.*

BT: *We have a myspace Japanese site.*

JM: *But it's hard to understand what they are saying!*

BT: *One of them sent me an email and said, "we hate your album, it's the worst album we have ever heard" then sent an email immediately after saying the automatic translator wasn't working! That's true.*

Robin, you've worked alongside numerous acts, and many diverse names amongst them, but I guess the biggest name would have to be Bruce Dickinson. How did this collaboration come about? And likewise how did you end up working with these two lunatics?

JM: *Cheap!*

RG: *Cheek! The thing with Bruce is an ongoing fun band, a bit like John's Split Knee Loons. It's a band called Sack Trick, which is basically a bunch of mates who have all been in way too many bands, big bands, high profile bands, had record deals, played toilets, been dicked around by way too many managers and all that crap, so let's have a fun band where we can drink and be silly and sing about cabbages and all that stuff. The bass player a guy called Chris Dale used to play with Bruce, and Bruce became a fan and he used to come down and see us and bring Janick Gers. One time Chris said, "Bruce is doing some festival headlines outside of Maiden and he wants you to play drums and he wants me to play bass, and he wants Sack Trick to be his backing band." And I was like "fuck off mate that's a joke and don't joke with that. He said, "No I'm serious." That was it, we did six rehearsals and went off and headlined Wacken and Sweden Rock above Motorhead and on a mountain in Greece, and Tuska Festival in Finland and I had a gig my band I was in at the time, Rachel Stamp, in the same day. We were headlining in Thurrock and we were playing with Slayer, with Bruce in Belgium and we flew back after the gig. I landed and got to the second gig two minutes before we were due on stage and the rest of the band didn't speak to me for a week after that but I still managed to do the impossible. I actually phoned Bruce up and said, "I've got this predicament, I've got to do this gig, would you consider flying me" and he said "how about if we do it in a "medieval" bomber", which I thought was pretty good. And basically with this lot, how can I say this without annoying a certain person?*



BT: *No way around it you've got to say it- you were doing some sessions!*

RG: *There's a chap called Alex in a band called Antiproduct and his name is Alex Caine, and he's a lovely man and Bernie was producing his EP. Bernie was recording at his studio, and I had recorded his (Alex's) first album so we knew each other. He called me up and said "I've got some recording time at this guy's studio." "Who's that?" "A guy called Bernie Tormé" and I'd heard the name because ironically when I was advertising for a bass player when I was seventeen I got a phone call from someone claiming to be in Bernie's band. So we ended up Bernie seeing me play and producing the whole thing. We got on well and I drunk Bernie's drink and ate all his food and thought "here's a nutter!" We sort of stayed in touch and Bernie said, "look I work with this idiot called John McCoy, he's played with Stewart Copeland you know" and that was it! And I think we just got in a room and shouted at each other. Tried to shout at each other above John's bass volume and that's the short answer to it!*

Who are your drumming influences?

RG: *John McCoy, Bernie Tormé. I'm more influenced by someone who is actually a character because to me there are too many faceless drummers; drummers who obviously have a really interesting left foot because they are constantly looking at their left foot. What's so interesting in that? I like people who get up there and give it some and have got something else to offer. I'd rather see an average player who is giving his lifeblood than an amazing player.*



To me it's like a combination between Keith Moon and Corky Laing, very visual.

JM: *But Corky was a bit more controlled than Keith wasn't he?*

But not serious in his performance.

RG: *It's funny actually, it was an LA session player who was actually playing with Bruce Dickinson who saw me and said "hey man you're like Keith Moon on drugs." I completely dead-panned him and said, "I actually think it's more like Keith Moon deprived of drugs!"*

JM: *The thing is we are just happy doing what we are doing. Ninety-percent of the time we are just looking around at each other and cracking up or at least smiling.*

BT: *That's the nicest thing about the band because we can joke over each other's mistakes.*

RG: *I've got a log here.*

JM: *Obviously I'm not aware of that because I never make any mistakes.*

BT: *Well he's playing a different song anyway.*

RG: *Some of that album was recorded with John and I doubled over crying our eyes out with laughter from something I have done, or John's done, or Bernie's done. And it's the same live, one of us will just be going off on one and the other two will notice. Usually it's John and me that have noticed that Bernie has gone off on one but Bernie hasn't noticed and we are like keep going and cracking up laughing and God only knows what the audience are thinking.*

BT: *It's a live thing.*

JM: *But having said all this we will probably go on stage tonight and go...*

RG: *I think especially for the older fans from the Gillan era, I expect a lot of them are expecting to see these guys as*

po-faced haggard guys of rock who hate Ian Gillan and all that, which is obviously true and just get up there and going through the motions like a lot of these kind of demi-quasi tribute bands are and we can take the piss out of ourselves, and laugh and enjoy it: If people in the audience see that and feed of that it kind of breaks the ice in a way.

BT: Also for me because I have done these three-piece things over the years, it makes an enormous difference to have two people who steal the show basically. I can basically get up there and do anything. I don't have to think about it.

RG: We all just kick each other's arse, which is a good thing. I've been in bands when something goes wrong and you do something and they go "why did you do that?" "That's rock 'n' roll." You've got to get up there and do a show and we'll do that.

With so much material from 'Bitter And Twisted' as well as back catalogue stuff, what is the thinking behind including 'Smoke On The Water'?

JM: Because we like it and we do it good, we play it better than a lot of people do it and we did record it twice with Ian and a live version and we did put our own little stamp on it and now it has sort of mutated. It's a great song anyway. Ritchie would be very pleased.

BT: It is a song we have a long-term association with. To me 'New Orleans' is far more of an effort than "Smoke" but I actually enjoy "Smoke" a lot more.

JM: But then we also had a big hit with 'New Orleans', but normally when we play "Smoke" we always look to the side in case Ian walks on.

With a machete in his hand?

JM: Yeah!

You were talking earlier about the new album. Will it follow in the same vein or will GMT experiment with any left-field stuff?

JM: More or less the same. There are probably a couple of surprises.

BT: It isn't a rework. It definitely has an aura. I think for me one of the interesting things about 'Bitter & Twisted' a lot of the core ideas didn't come out of rock exactly. They came out of the Irish thing... it was a broad church in terms of interest and influences and the fact that it hung together as an album because no matter what we play it sounds the same.

JM: As songwriters we never discard a song, an idea. We will always follow it through to the end and when we get to the end we might say "that's shit it doesn't work", but we won't ever say no to a certain type of song because certain things you would not imagine with a three-piece have worked really well.

RG: And we know each other's names now so it's a bit easier. After doing the first album there are bits of complete magic and bits where I know every band can say this looking back because I actually know that song now... because these guys were like, "this song hasn't got a name and doesn't go like anything but lets just record it anyway" and what the hell was that? So there are a few bits and bobs we could do better but the way we now play it live is great because we can give it the proper birthing. But I said to Bernie when we do this second album can I at least play the song once before we record it. Rather than go on a tour and hone it, it was like "okay I'll allow you to play it once." So it's that much more in tune with itself. But also we know how we all work and how John's bass kind of fits with mine on this- cosmic plain, and Bernie's on another plain.

Bernie can you talk a bit about your influences: Hendrix and Blackmore spring to mind. Is that a fair observation, or would you cite other players as more of an influence on you?

BT: Hendrix was. I love Ritchie but I came to him a lot later than Hendrix. So I don't know if he had the same... because it is when you first start off as a player you get your influences and I didn't really hear him until the seventies at which point I was playing in bands. But definitely he was an enormous influence in terms of his riffs and his Strat playing. He is the quintessential Strat player so that's a kind of half and half I suppose. Again also in terms of Hendrix I don't think he was as much of an influence on me as Jeff Beck was but I could be wrong.



What are your memories about your brief stint with Ozzy?

BT: *It was a great experience but a hellish experience. Because basically it's a horrible thing to go in and replace a guy who has just been killed. It was a tragic experience, heartbreaking. Personally I really liked Ozzy, mad as a hatter, a lovely bloke, I like Sharon but basically it was pantomime. And having just come out of the Gillan band, which for any drawbacks it might have had was not pantomime. You just went on stage and played the part and who it was could have been irrelevant. I just felt if it could be anyone it wouldn't have to be me and I really wasn't enjoying it after a week or two. The initial experience of playing Madison Square Gardens was awesome but one 20,000 seater is basically the same as another 20,000 seater and after you have played eight or nine of them its just the same as playing anywhere really.*

Finally, as this interview is partly done to help promote the forthcoming gig in my hometown Bedford, have any of you ever played in this fine town before and are there any messages for the people of Bedford?

JM: *You're from Bedford?*

Yeah.

JM: *There's no hope for them then is there! I think they should come and have a look and have a listen and say hello because we might not be there in the future.*

RG: *Come down and have a rock! There will be a lot of cymbal ear deaths because when I played there last it's got this low little drum bit and it will restrict my showing off which I'm a little bit perturbed about.*

JM: *Put it this way it has to be worth seeing because here you are again the second time in a month.*

BT: *He's just fucking stupid!*

No I was blown away by you- I thought you were great.

BT: *We will make up for that tonight. We will un-blow you!*

JM: *We will spoil it for you!*

Having already seen the band twice I can assure everyone that GMT is well and truly alive, as will [Esquires](#) be when the band plays Bedford on 29th September.

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM [ESQUIRES](#), 01234 340120 OR ONLINE AT [WWW.MBTPSTORE.CO.UK](#)

For Full GMT tour dates check [GMT's website](#).

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