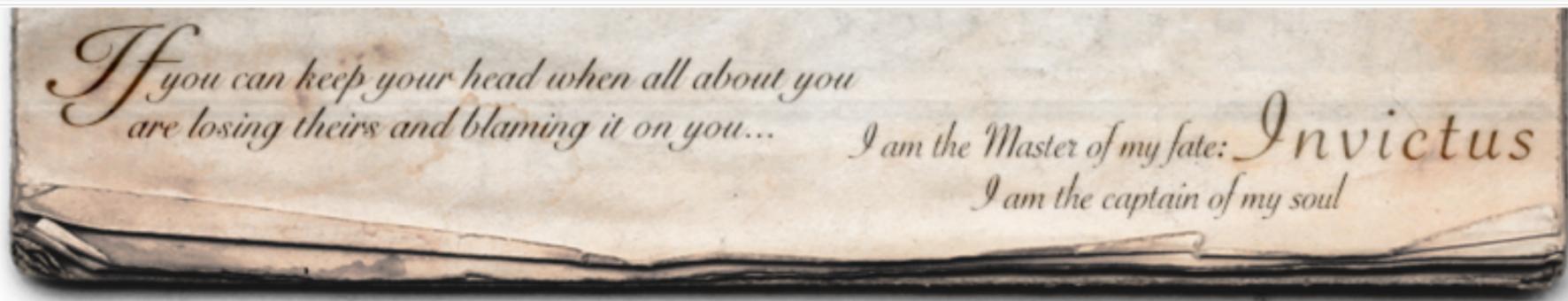


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Keyboardist David Rosenthal: "He is a virtuoso."

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If you've seen Elton John, Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Robert Palmer, Cyndi Lauper and a few other legendary rockers in concert, chances are you've seen David Rosenthal on keyboards. He's also known for his work with British rock band Rainbow. In 2000, he joined a reunited Happy The Man, replacing long-time keyboardist Kit Watkins. He recorded one album with them in 2004 called "The Muse Awakens". David is also a producer and songwriter, and he continues to perform with the best.

ATI: How did you first hear about Happy the Man?

DR: I think I was at a party. I was at Berklee College of Music, and I went to a party and somebody put on [their album]. Literally, from the first note, I was enthralled, and I sat and listened to the entire first album. I think I sat and listened to the entire second album all in one sitting. I was just blown away right from the first note I heard.



ATI: What was it about the music that made you want to be part of the band?

DR: I wished I could have joined the band back then, but I didn't know them. At the time I was at school and, by the time I found out about them, I think it was 1980, maybe '79. I think they were pretty much on their last legs anyway. I fell in love with their music and transcribed a lot of it. I learned a lot of Kit Watkins' solos just out of passion for how great the music is, and I was a student at that time, so it was a great learning experience for me to transcribe all this stuff. I never dreamed that I could have possibly have been in the band at some point. It was inconceivable to me then. It wasn't until twenty years, maybe mid-nineties, late nineties when they were starting to talk about possibly doing a reunion. I had become friendly with the guys over the years and kept in touch, particularly with Stan. I also knew Rick [Kennell] fairly well all through the eighties and nineties. When I heard they were going to do a reunion, they mentioned that Kit Watkins might not want to do it, and I was, like, "Look no further. I'm your guy!"

ATI: How did you hook up with them initially?

DR: I met a guy when I was in Berklee who knew Stan and told me that Stan's band Vision,

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which Rick Kennel was in as well, was doing a gig in Poughkeepsie. I think they did some originals and some covers, but the band was Vision. I practically picked this guy up by his shirt collar and said “You’re going to take me and introduce me to these guys.”

And he did. We drove from Boston to Poughkeepsie, and I went to the gig. I showed them, at that time, I had transcribed “Knee Bitten Nymphs in Limbo.” I had transcribed the entire song in score form and a whole bunch of other solos, and I brought all my transcriptions to show them. They were surprised, because they didn’t even write the stuff out in those days. They were pretty impressed, so I instantly became friendly with Stan and Rick, and the friendship has lasted all these years.

ATI: What’s your take on Stanley’s guitar skills?

DR: He is a virtuoso. There’s no question about that. I think he has the ability to play just about anything on the guitar, but he has also a very unique style, and his style is a big part of the uniqueness of Happy the Man’s music, not only from a playing point, but also as a composer. As a keyboard player, I really enjoy playing with him because the way he understands harmony and music in general really suits; the way he approaches music is not typical of a guitar player, and it really suits playing with a keyboardist. I think one of the reasons why Happy the Man’s music works so well is the bond between the guitars and keyboards and the unique role that guitar plays in the band.

ATI: Describe Stan as a person?

DR: He’s great. He is really a kind, gentle person. Really a nice guy, and fun to hang out with. He is a great guy.

ATI: Tell us a about the dynamic in place when you were playing with them. What that was like for you?

DR: It was very much natural for me, because I was so influenced by their music and studied it so much that Happy the Man’s music literally ran through my blood. They are probably my favorite band of all time, so all of their music and everything, it’s just in my blood. There was no sort of transition I had to go through or adjustment or anything like that. I just went there, and I was me, and it just fit in perfectly with what they were doing.

ATI: You still get around a lot in your career. Do you ever run into people who remember Happy the Man?

DR: I do. There’s no middle ground with it. People either never heard of them or are completely flipped out in love with their music. In fact, when I was touring with Billy Joel and Elton John, Elton’s keyboardist at the time, Guy Babylon, who has since passed away, was a huge Happy the Man fan. One day I just mention I’m doing this Happy the Man reunion, and he jumped out of his skin. He was from the Baltimore area and loved the band. I do run into people in quite a few places, especially in musical circles, and those that do know the music have the highest regard for Happy the Man.

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