



TOMMY BOLIN

“Whips And Roses II” album released September 25th on SPV

The second collection of newly discovered, previously unreleased recordings by Tommy Bolin, (the highly versatile rock guitarist best known for replacing Ritchie Blackmore in Deep Purple for their ‘Come Taste The Band’ album in 1975), are set for release on SPV on September 25th.

Tommy Bolin’s star shone incredibly brightly in the early 1970’s before his untimely death at the age of 25 from a heroin overdose in the early hours of December 5th 1975.

A native of Sioux City, Iowa, Bolin is “best described as the David Bowie of the guitar”, according to Classic Rock Magazine’s Greg Prato, who wrote a profile of Tommy in their November 2005 issue.

Bolin was a highly versatile progressive rock guitarist who had already branched into fusion and attracted the attention of such luminaries as Jeff Beck, Billy Cobham and Joe Walsh before showing up on Deep Purple’s radar.

In 1966, aged 15, he hitchhiked to the then musical hotbed of Denver, Colorado, after having been thrown out of school for his long hair. His first recorded appearances on a major record label were with a local rock band called Zephyr, whose self-titled debut charted at 50 on release in 1969. After the release of Zephyr’s ‘Going Back To Colorado’ album in 1971, Tommy’s burgeoning love of jazz was causing ructions within the band so he quit, and formed his own outfit, Energy.

Nobody really understood Energy’s instrumental fusion sound, which had not been heard in Denver before, but they stuck at it and began to back many of the well known artists who came through town, including John Lee Hooker, Chuck Berry and Albert King.

Word soon spread of Tommy’s guitar prowess and early in 1973 Mahavishnu Orchestra drummer Billy Cobham knocked on his door, inviting him to play on his ‘Spectrum’ album, which helped launch the fusion boom of the early / mid 70’s.

According to drummer Carmine Appice, Bolin’s expert playing inspired Jeff Beck on his future instrumental classics, 1975’s ‘Blow By Blow’ and 1976’s ‘Wired’ “I was with Jeff in Beck, Bogart and Appice. We would listen to Mahavishnu Orchestra and the Billy Cobham album with Tommy on it. Jeff really liked the whole vibe of that jazz-rock mixture” he recalls.

Soon, the James Gang came calling. Led by guitarist Joe Walsh, they were a hard rocking trio at the height of their success when Walsh left to go solo. The rhythm section of bassist Dale Peters and drummer Jim Fox decided to soldier on and recruited guitarist Dominic Troiano and singer Roy Kenner. But after a pair of disappointing releases, Troiano left. At the suggestion of their old pal Joe Walsh, Bolin was invited to saddle up and ride with the James Gang, and relocated to their home base of Cleveland, Ohio.

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The two albums The James Gang recorded with him, 1973's 'Bang' and 1974's 'Miami', are among the group's finest, and are arguably among the most underrated rock releases of the seventies. But soon, the band's rather formulaic approach meant Bolin began to feel restricted and he relocated to California after being invited to play on respected Jazz-fusion drummer Alphonse Mouzon's 3rd solo album, 1975's 'Mind Transplant'.

Then Bolin got what he had really wanted all along – the offer of a solo recording deal, and began working on his debut 1975 album 'Teaser', released later that year.

Around the same time Tommy got a call out of the blue, asking if he would be interested in trying out for the job of guitarist in Deep Purple, which had just been vacated by Ritchie Blackmore. Ex-Purple bassist Glenn Hughes recalls that Purple drummer Ian Paice "was a big Billy Cobham fan. I think he came up with Tommy's name. He'd heard 'Spectrum', came over to my house and played it to me and David Coverdale also heard it. We were blown away. I've always been interested in newer, cutting-edge guitarists."

'Teaser' was released just prior to Deep Purple's 'Come Taste The Band' album late in 1975, and next up was an intensive Deep Purple tour schedule. By the time the tour hit the UK in March 1976 it was becoming painfully evident that that line-up of the group was finished and shortly after, Deep Purple split.

Although he had not yet toured in support of 'Teaser', Tommy Bolin chose instead to go into the studio and record his second solo album, 'Private Eyes'. This time, however, he was able to go out on the road in support of 'Private Eyes', and the Tommy Bolin band went on tour round the US opening for Jeff Beck.

Then following a strong set at the Jai Alai Auditorium in Miami on December 4th 1975, Tommy Bolin died of a heroin overdose in his hotel room in the early hours of December 5th, after a huge party in his hotel room the night before.

In the Spring of 2005, LA producer Greg Hampton, who was trying to track down the 'Teaser' masters, trudged through a heavy rain shower up the steps of a single story warehouse on the outskirts of Orange County. He had got a tip that a gold mine may be inside. "I just found them in a warehouse. They were there by accident. A mutual friend told me about them, because we were looking for the 'Teaser' masters. It was a pouring down rainy day, and I was absolutely soaked to the skin. But I couldn't believe it when I pulled down the boxes from the top of a shelf. Over 20 reels of tape no one had given a second thought to for years."

All the tracks on the tapes, which are either alternative versions of familiar material or previously unreleased songs from lost studio sessions, have been remixed and remastered by Greg Hampton, alongside Tommy Bolin's brother Johnnie, who played drums in the Tommy Bolin band.

The first compilation, 'Whips And Roses', was released in April 2006 and the second, 'Whips and Roses II', is now set for release on September 25th.

'Whips and Roses II' amply demonstrates why so many musicians and fans were in awe of Tommy Bolin's talent.

Whipped Up – Roland Hyams on 020 8677 8466 / 8769 6713 roland@workhardpr.com
www.realbolin.com www.spv.de
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