

◆ BLUE OYSTER CULT ◆ AGENTS OF FORTUNE ◆



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"We didn't think of ourselves as a pop band at all," says Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser.

So what was "(Don't Fear) The Reaper" doing sitting at number 12 on the American hit parade in October, 1976? Spending twenty weeks in the Hot 100 charts? Helping to give Blue Öyster Cult's fourth studio album, *Agents Of Fortune*, a hefty boost over the platinum highwire?

"If anything," notes Buck, "We liked to be purposely obscure or cloudy, leaving it up to the listener to fill in the gaps. We were the anti-hit single."

But Donald felt he had "something" when he layered the demo for a song about the afterlife. It was the first tune he had written when he got a home reel-to-reel four-track recorder, working on it for six or eight weeks as he came off a health problem that had him musing on the nature of mortality. When he listened to it back, "I knew it was really strong." Often misunderstood as an apologia for suicide, "The Reaper" posited a life-after, a romance that could endure beyond the death of lovers, on the other side of the veil.

Blue Öyster Cult was facing the same to-be-or-not-to-be threshold. Their 1975 live album, *On Your Feet Or On Your Knees*, had consolidated the gains they'd made in the 70's, when they found their persona as a thinking man's metal band. Their first three albums—*Blue Öyster Cult*, *Tyranny And Mutation*, and *Secret Treaties*—had given them a body of work; but the time had come to evolve, lest they risk entropy.

It was the dawn of the home multi-track recording unit. Each band member got their own TEAC to develop ideas on his own, and the result was not only an individual flowering within the band, but each member becoming more conscious and protective of their arrangements, and the consequent separate identities that were nurtured. Before they had worked on ideas as an ensemble; now they brought them to the rehearsal room fully conceived. Yet having played together for so long—nearly ten years at this point—they instinctively heard this new material within the interpretive framework of the only band they'd ever known.

It was a good time for BÖC to find a new "paradigm," a fresh *modus operandi*. They had achieved a comfortable plateau of success, newly returned from their first European tour, and had built a loyal fan following in the U.S. They understood the vagaries of the

studio, and finally allowed to record outside Columbia's facilities, they settled at the Record Plant on W. 48th St., then New York's premiere recording complex. When they began the album that would become *Agents Of Fortune*, Aerosmith was down the hall; Kiss upstairs. Hard Rock headquarters.

Along with Sandy Pearlman and Murray Krugman, the band's long-time mentors and producers, David Lucas—who had recorded their first album—returned to the fold as advisor. *Agents* was engineered by Shelly Yakus, whose had eq'ed everyone from Bruce Springsteen to the Raspberries. The songs were assured, nigh-formal, a band in the confidence of ripening maturity. "Wine like fine rock and roll," sang keyboardist Allen Lanier in "True Confessions," a rare vocal appearance on record.

The album was no one-hit wonder. Patti Smith joined voices with



Albert Bouchard on her "The Ballad Of Vera Gemini," set to drummer Albert's music, and he did the same to one of her early poems, "Debbie Denise." Albert also wrote the chords and riffs to "Tattoo Vampire" and "Sinful Love," words by H. Robbins, better known to New York rockers as Helen Wheels.

But all paled before the scythe that is "The Reaper." Classics are hard to come by. Any band might happen upon a great song; but a classic exists beyond the conscious self, as if it's always been awaiting its moment in time.

The song is true to Donald's original demo; if anything, it could've been a case of trying to top something that was magical when it was initially conceived. From the moment "The Reaper" opens, an atmosphere of sound instantly swirls you into its guitar hook. Donald begins singing (this was the moment when each member found his voice), and his clear, airy voice provides solace within its lasting rites. The track is all unwind, each symphonic section inevitable. It has no choice but to be a hit. The vocal dialogue is like a devil whispering in one ear, an angel in the other, cajoling and beckoning. There is the assumption that love will still have a value in the hereafter, comforting us in this life.

An instrumental breakdown slices out of nowhere, spinning the modal rhymes of raga-rock. You can hear the drone arc out of the mid-break, on endless delay, a pure ray of note that starts in the inaudible and just keeps ringing, like the ringing in your ears after a loud concert. The cymbals crash in time; "Reaper" fades.

They got lasers next.

LENNY KAYE

ORIGINAL LP INNER GATEFOLD

(L TO R: DONALD (BUCK DHARMA) ROESER, ERIC BLOOM, UNKNOWN, ALLEN LANIER, ALBERT BOUCHARD, JOE BOUCHARD)

(L TO R: ERIC, DONALD, ALLEN, ALBERT & JOE)



1. THIS AIN'T THE SUMMER OF LOVE (2:20)

-M. Krugman-A. Bouchard-D. Waller-

Feeling easy on the outside
But not so funny on the inside
Feel the sound and pray for rain
'Cause this is the night we ride

This ain't the garden of Eden
There ain't no angels above
And things ain't what they used to be
And this ain't the summer of love

Lock all your doors from the outside
The key will dangle by the inside
You may begin to understand
That this is the night we ride

This ain't the garden of Eden
There ain't no angels above
And things ain't what they used to be
And this ain't the summer of love
The summer of love

On the night we ride *This ain't the summer of love*
On the night we ride *This ain't the summer of love*
On the night we ride *This ain't the summer of love*
On the night we ride *This ain't the summer of love*

This ain't the garden of Eden
There ain't no angels above
And things ain't what they used to be and
This ain't, this ain't, this ain't, this ain't

This ain't the garden of Eden
There ain't no angels above
And things ain't what they're supposed to be
And this ain't the summer
This ain't the summer
This ain't, this ain't, this ain't
The summer of love

2. TRUE CONFESSIONS (2:57)

-A. Lanier-

True, true confessions
I lied
True, true confessions
I lied
Spent all night with Candy's eyes
Dragged myself 'cross the warm blind side
Spent all night with Candy's eyes
Dragged myself 'cross the warm blind side

True, true confessions
She cried
True, true confessions
She cried
Stand in the doorway in a jealous rage
Drag myself 'cross her wild terrain
Stand in the doorway in a jealous rage
Drag myself 'cross her wild terrain

We're never sorry
We're never sad
We're modern lovers
What fun we had

True, true confessions
We tried
True, true confessions
We tried
Naked, exposed like fine rock and roll
Perfect as strangers, imperfect as love
Naked, exposed like fine rock and roll
Perfect as strangers, imperfect as love

We're never sorry
We're never sad
We're modern lovers
What fun we had

3. (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER (5:09)

-D. Roeser-

All our times have come
Here but now they're gone

Seasons don't fear the reaper
Nor do the wind, the sun or the rain
We can be like they are

Come on, baby
Don't fear the reaper
Baby, take my hand
Don't fear the reaper
We'll be able to fly
Don't fear the reaper
Baby, I'm your man

La, la, la, la, la
La, la, la, la, la

Valentine is done
Here but now they're gone

Romeo and Juliet
Are together in eternity
Romeo and Juliet
Forty thousand men and women everyday
Like Romeo and Juliet
Forty thousand men and women everyday
Redefine happiness
Another forty thousand comin' everyday
We can be like they are

Come on, baby
Don't fear the reaper
Baby, take my hand
Don't fear the reaper
We'll be able to fly
Don't fear the reaper
Baby, I'm your man

La, la, la, la, la
La, la, la, la, la

Love of two is one
Here but now they're gone

Came the last night of sadness
And it was clear that she couldn't go on
And the door was open and the wind appeared
The candles blew and then disappeared
The curtains flew and then he appeared

Saying don't be afraid
Come on, baby
And she had no fear
And she ran to him
Then they started to fly
The looked backward and said goodbye
She had become like they are
She had taken his hand
She had become like they are
Come on, baby
Don't fear the reaper

4. E.T.I. (EXTRA TERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE) (3:42)

-D. Roeser-S. Pearlman-

Psst...C'mere!

I hear the music daylight disc
Three men in black said, "Don't report this...
Ascension," and that's all they said
Sickness now the hour of dread

All praise
He's found the awful truth
Balthazar
He's found the saucer news
Wait! there's more...

I'm in fairy rings and tower beds
"Don't report this" three men said
Books by blameless and by the dead
King in yellow, the Queen in red

All praise
He's found the awful truth
Balthazar
He's found the saucer news

Dead leaves always give up motion
I no longer feel emotion
When prophecy fails the falling notion
Don't report this
Agents of Fortune

All praise
He's found the awful truth
Balthazar
He's found the saucer news

5. THE REVENGE OF VERA GEMINI (3:53)

-A. Bouchard-P. Smith-

You're boned like a saint
With the consciousness of a snake

You're the kind of girl kind of girl
I'd like to find
Face like an angel in my mirror
But you're boned like the devil

Your eyes have shifted from me have shift
Everyone saw what you did your eyes
You have slipped from beneath me from me
Like a false and nervous squid

Oh, no more horses, horses
We're going to swim like a fish we're gonna swim
like a fish
Into the hole in which you planned to ditch me
My lovely
Vera Marie

I was soaring
Planned to leave me cold a sound
But you'll never get your wish feeling appeal
On the twenty-fourth of May your birthday

I gather up your reins
You filled me with a vengeance filled me
And you touched me with your breath vengeance
I'm gonna pull you from this dance this dance
You're gonna ride so easily

Oh, no more horses, horses
We're going to swim like a fish we're gonna swim
like a fish
Into the hole in which you planned to ditch me
My lovely
Vera Marie

Hey! Come on Vera
Eight night
I dance

Oh, no more horses, horses
We're going to swim like a fish we're gonna swim
like a fish
Into the hole in which you planned to ditch me
My lovely
Vera Marie

I was your victim victim
I was well deceived deceived
Hell's built on regret regret
But I love your naked neck
And evil lies that you told me your lies
Made me believe you're two-faced it's true
But there's two faces have you
And they're both gonna jump

Oh, no more horses, horses
We're going to swim like a fish we're gonna swim
like a fish
Into the hole in which you planned to ditch me
My lovely
Vera Marie

6. SINFUL LOVE (3:29)

-A. Bouchard-H. Robbins-

You're over my shoulder, I think I'm possessed
Your constant undertone is making me toothless
Time's come to trim you gonna get out my knife
Gonna cut you out baby, out of my life

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sin, but I won't be your pigeon
Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sin, but I won't be your pigeon

The power that I give you I'm so sick of your voice
In my body you don't give me no choice
But to boot you, honey, to give you the shove
So take back your despot, I'll keep the love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sin, but I won't be your pigeon
Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sin, but I won't be your pigeon

I'm searching my symbols, looking for a pistol
To laser you out it looks like a keyhole
I'll just stick my key back, seamless and whole
No more idols got my own self-control

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sin, but I won't be your pigeon
Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sin, but I won't be your pigeon

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I-I love you like sinful love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I-I love you like sinful love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sinful love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you like sinful love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I love you, I love you like sinful love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil
I-I love you like sinful love

Daredevil, She-devil, Printer's devil, Evil

7. TATTOO VAMPIRE (2:41)

-A. Bouchard-H. Robbins-

I went down last night with a tattoo madame
To a nude dagger fantasy domain
Wrapped in hell, I lost my breath...Whoal
Chest to stimulating Chinese breast

Grisly smiles that don't flake off
Carry colored demons leering
Vampire photo suckin' the skin
Vampire Vampire

Seeding the night at the linker's parlor
Flesh permabrand, pricked for the dollar
Her wrist, surreal, a heart and flying skull
Lettered 'life and love pass swiftly'

Grisly smiles that don't flake off
Carry colored demons leering
Vampire photo suckin' the skin
Vampire Vampire

Grisly smiles that don't flake off
Carry colored demons leering
Vampire photo suckin' the skin

Vampire Tattoo
Vampire Tattoo
Vampire Tattoo
Vampire Tattoo
Tattoo
Tattoo
Tattoo

Vampire photo suckin' the skin!

8. MORNING FINAL (4:30)

-J. Bouchard-

He cast a grim shadow
Through the busy street
Said he was a junkie
And he punctuated his walk with a gun

Motiveless murder
The papers screamed
The cops all said
The crowd was iced by the sight

Oh, baby, don't it make you feel so bad
Dark clouds are over the street
After what I read I can hardly feel my heart
My heart beat

Oh, baby, don't it make you feel so bad
Dark clouds are over the street
After what I read I can hardly feel my heart
My heart beat

Down the subway stairs
After him they leapt
An echo snap and scream of fire
The hot pursuit was done
For the last time he felt the light
And gave up his last fight

Oh, baby, don't it make you feel so bad
Dark clouds are over the street
After what I read I can hardly feel my heart
My heart beat

Paper! Paper! Extral
Man killed in subway!
No motive for it!
Extral Read all about it!
Paper! Police say no motive for murder in subway!
Paper! Read all about it!
Paper Mister?

9. TENDERLOIN (3:40)

-A. Lanier-

I come to you in a blue, blue room
By some abuse and some heart
You raise the blinds say
Let's have light on life
Let's watch it fall apart
Let's watch it fall apart

Nighttime flowers
Evening roses
Bless this garden that never closes
Treat her gently
Treat her kind
Tenderloin will last all night

I'm feeling hungry have another line
So faith is taken up
You raise your eyes say
That's just like life
There's never quite enough
There's never quite enough

Nighttime flowers
Evening roses
Bless this garden that never closes
Treat her gently
Treat her kind
Tenderloin will last all night

I come to you in a blue, blue room
By some abuse and some heart
You raise the blinds say
Let's have light on life
Let's watch it fall apart
Let's watch it fall apart
Let's watch it fall apart

10. DEBBIE DENISE (4:23)

-A. Bouchard-P. Smith-

She kept the light open all night long
For me to come home and sing her my song
Oh Debbie Denise was true to me

She'd wait by the window so patiently
And I'd come on home with my hair hangin' down
She'd pin it up and softly smile

But I was out rollin' with my band
I was out rollin' with my band

I never realized she was so undone
I didn't suspect she had no life of her own

She was so true but she was a she
She was just there and I would just come
Stumblin' in she didn't show me she cared
I didn't care 'cause she was just there

And I was out rollin' with my band
Yeah, I was out rollin' with my band

I wouldn't come home for weeks at a time
She couldn't accept she was free

Oh Debbie Denise was true to me
She'd wait by the window so bitterly
Wantin' me to come close
I guess I noticed
I couldn't see, so what could I say

What more affection could I show her
I had only one thing on my mind
When I came to her she'd pin back my hair
And out past the fields out the window I'd stare

Where I was out rollin' with my band
Yeah, I was out rollin' with my band
Yeah, I was out rollin' with my band do do do do do do do do
I was out rollin' with my band la la la la la la la la la la
I was out rollin' with my band do do do do do do do do do do
I was out rollin' with my band la la la la la la la la la la
I was out rollin' with my band

BONUS TRACKS**11. Fire Of Unknown Origin (Original Version)* (3:30)**

-A. Bouchard-P. Smith-D. Roeser-J. Bouchard-E. Bloom-
Outtake from *Agents Of Fortune* sessions
© 2001

12. Sally (Demo)* (2:40)

-A. Bouchard-
Preproduction demo for *Agents Of Fortune* sessions
© 2001

13. (Don't Fear) The Reaper (Demo)* (6:20)

-D. Roeser-
Preproduction demo for *Agents Of Fortune* sessions
Produced by Donald Roeser
© 2001

14. Dance The Night Away (Demo)* (2:37)

-A. Lanier-J. Carroll-
Preproduction demo for *Agents Of Fortune* sessions
Produced by Allen Lanier
© 2001

*Previously Unreleased

A NOTE ABOUT THE BONUS TRACKS:

"Fire Of Unknown Origin"—This is the original version, with the same lyrics but different music, originally recorded for the *Agents* album, but left off due to space limitations. Revisited several years later.

"Sally"—A 16-track demo for the *Agents* sessions. Left unmixed and unheard until now.

"(Don't Fear) The Reaper" (demo)—Buck Dharma's original 4-track home demo. The "no cowbell" version. A hit, either way.

"Dance The Night Away" (demo)—An Allen Lanier home demo, left unrecorded by BOC, but recorded and released by co-writer Jim Carroll, of *The Basketball Diaries* fame.





ERIC BLOOM:
vocals, guitar, percussion

ALBERT BOUCHARD:
drums, vocals, acoustic guitar, percussion and harmonica

DONALD (BUCK DHARMA) ROESER:
guitar, vocals, synthesizer, percussion

JOE BOUCHARD:
bass, vocals, piano

ALLEN LANIER:
keyboards, vocals, guitar and bass

Additional Musicians

Patti Smith: vocal on "The Revenge Of Vera Gemini"

Horns by Michael and Randy Brecker

Patti Smith and the Brecker Brothers appear courtesy of
Arista Records.

Tracks 1-10 Recorded and Mixed at The Record Plant,
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Recording and Mixing Engineers: Shelly Yakus and
Andy Abrams
Arranged by Cult
Mastered in The Cutting Room by Tony Stevens

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A&R Coordination: Patty Matheny & Darren Salmieri

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Tyranny And Mutation (CK 85481)

Secret Treaties (CK 85480)

On Your Feet Or On Your Knees (CGK 33371)

Spectres (CK 35019)

Some Enchanted Evening (CK/PCT 35563)

Mirrors (CK 36009)

Colossaurus Erectus (CK 36550)

Fire Of Unknown Origin (CK/PCT 37389)

Extraterrestrial Live (CGK 37948)

Revolution By Night (CK 38947)

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