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THE GUESS WHO



AMERICAN WOMAN

Songwriting from Cummings and Winter (both separately and in collaboration) would power the band throughout of the next two years, beginning with the non-LP single *After Hours/Brake* (another top-40 hit both sides of the border) in March 1971, quickly followed by the full-length (so long, *Somebody* in July, which yielded the US Top-20 (and Canada No. 2) hit *Rain Dogs*, leader would depart shortly after the release of February 1972's *Booked*, with Winnipeg-area guitarist Dennis McDougall replacing him in time for the May gigs that produced *Live at the Forecourt*, whose No. 29 position in the US album charts was the band's best since *Show the Love*. A testament to the group's undiminished appeal as a concert draw, the album also generated a since US hit (Top 10 in Canada) in *Power* (Book in Satisfaction). By the time *Live at the Forecourt* was on store shelves, however, the group had endured another lineup change, with bassist Jim Kala replaced by Bill Wallace (a bandmate from Kurt Winter's pre-Queen Who group, *Brother*) who joined in time for the July expanding sessions for the band's next record, *Artificial Paradise*.

Released in January 1973, *Artificial Paradise* seemingly had everything going for it, with arguably the most instrumentally and vocally proficient lineup in the band's history, and its strongest collection of songs since *Show the Love*. The album was also the group's most democratic, with songwriting shared equally amongst all the bandmembers, and the lead vocals split almost evenly between Cummings and members McDougall and Wallace. So when the album hit the charts with a thud – it would get no higher than No. 110 in the US album tally – band, management, producer and label were justifiably perplexed. Post-mortem on the LP have blamed everything from the album cover design (which parodied street-walk get rich quick schemes) to the group straying too far from its pop roots.

Recorded (not weeks after *Artificial Paradise* entered, late 1972) #110 dramatized the frustrations and disappointments of a band trying to navigate the journey from AM popsters to FM album rockers. Book but beautiful, the album found Cummings reasserting himself as the group's de facto leader, dominating its songwriting credits and singing all of its lead vocals. Unfortunately, Cummings' power move did nothing to arrest the group's US chart decline, with the album registering a paltry No. 155 and its lone single, *Glamour Boy* (a beautiful Cummings glow-bellied ode) by lyrics that took a cynical stab at the current glam-rock genre) failing to chart at all. Despite their ongoing commercial fortunes, the band remained a strong live draw throughout this period, touring nearly 10 months out of the year in both 1972 and 1973 – a somewhat ironic testament to the fact that the group was finding its strongest musical lineup during its chart drought.

The band's hectic schedule (along with interpersonal issues exacerbated by both substance and global abuse) conspired to delay the release of the group's next album, *Rock Hood*, until April of 1974. In spite of that, the record proved to be a surprising return to form, with Cummings loosening his death grip on the songwriting credits and the band collectively tempering the more borrowing excesses of #110 with some of the pop sensibilities of their earlier years. Not only did the album reach No. 80 in the US charts

(the band's best showing in nearly three years), it also produced a US Top-40 hit (and top 10 in Canada) in the power-pop stomper *She's Only* and a genuine Top-10 smash (their first since 1970) in the novelty hit *Clap for the Wolfman*, which featured guest vocals from legendary radio DJ Wolfman Jack.

By the time *Clap for the Wolfman* had become a hit in the summer of 1974 the tensions within the band had taken their toll, with Winter railed and McDougall following him out the door in protest. In their stead the band recruited Toronto-area guitarist Dominic Thibault (who'd played in seminal Canadian rock outfits *Monsters* and *Book* before replacing Joe Walsh in the James Gang) and returned with *Flavour* in October of that year. The record would yield the band's final Top-40 single, *Devil's Feet*, and spawn one further album, July 1975's *Power in the Music*, but Cummings (who felt that Toronto's jazz-fusion digressions had caused the band to lose its way) finally called time on the group in favour of a solo career before the year was out.

The two albums compiled for this release, *American Woman* and *Show the Love*, chronicle the remarkable year of 1970 for the Queen Who. Not only did they survive the departure of a founding member (and key songwriter) in Buddy Bachman following the release of *American Woman*, they seemingly defied gravity by returning soon months later with a new lineup and an almost equally successful album in *Show the Love*. Yielding no less than six charting singles between them, *American Woman* and *Show the Love* would go on to become the band's two best-selling studio albums and reportedly make the Queen Who the top-selling artist in the US in 1970, where they outdid even *Creedence Clearwater Revival* and *The Beatles*.

The Queen Who's hyper-compressed recording schedule meant that by the time of the September 1969 release of their second album (and second album of that year) *Control* *Wheat*, they were already back in the studio working on the music that would form the basis for *American Woman*, which was released in January 1970. While their 1969 hits like *Three Eyes* and *Laughing* had marked the group as AM radio popsters, *American Woman* showed the band moving in an altogether heavier, more dynamic direction, shorn of much of the psychedelics postures of their previous work. No song illustrates this new approach more succinctly than the eponymous title track, a prototypical riff-rocker that's as suitable for Bachman's striding lead tone as it is for Cummings' vocals, which served notice that he was to be one of the decade's great rock voices. The combination proved irresistible to record buyers, who took the single (along with its B-side, *Mr. Super Tonight*) to No. 1 in both Canada and the US.

The album's other cuts show the band spreading their wings both stylistically and sonically, from the requisite fingerpicking and grand piano of *Salaries* (sequenced to provide some acoustic relief from the otherwise all-electric onslaught of the album's first side), to the instrumental Bachman lead guitar showcase *808* (*The Glass Road*, to *818*) and *Proper Stranger*, which both see the group wearing their British Invasion influences on their collective sleeves with pride. *American Woman* wasn't all newly-written material however – short a couple of songs, the band pulled both *No Time* and *When Nicks Fall Out* from its past.

the five may have seemed like an unusual inclusion given that it had appeared barely six months earlier on their previous LP, *Concord Wood*, but Richardson and the band, feeling they hadn't fully exploited the song's potential, re-recorded it for *American Women*. The decision was almost immediately justified when the streamlined remake was released as a single in November 1970 and went to No. 3 in the US pop charts and No. 1 in Canada. When Friends Fall Out, on the other hand, stayed loyal to the group's let's Go days of 1968, but the lyrics seemed eerily prescient when the relationship between Richardson and his bandmates hit the rocks and he exited shortly after *American Women's* release in early 1970.

In a feat of serendipity that may be unrivaled in rock and roll, within weeks of Richardson's departure the band had assembled a new lineup, recruiting Kurt Winter and Greg Leslie to take his place. Not only had they found two world-class guitarists and songwriters, but by plucking them out of their own Winnipeg backyard, the band had kept its musical identity intact. Recorded that summer at RCA's Chicago studios and released in October, *Share the Land* showed the band to be reenergized by the injection of new blood. The album built on the border-rocking direction taken by *American Women*, augmenting it with the new harmonic dimension made possible both instrumentally and vocally by the addition of their new two-guitar lineup.

Although his talent as a lead guitarist may have been his calling card, Winter quickly established himself as a songwriter to be reckoned with on *Share the Land*, tuning in the album-opening *See Rider* (which features a driving rhythm and an inimitable call and response between the vocals and the guitar riff), along with the album's hard-rocking first single, *Hand Me Down World*. Cummings was equally inspired, tuning in the spontaneous title track – replete with vocal and guitar harmonies and soaring lead work, not only was it the finest synthesis of the group's strengths at the time, it was also the album's best performing single. The burgeoning songwriting partnership between the pair quickly comes into its own too, yielding the country-inflected *Do You Miss Me Darling*, where the new lineup shows off its powerhouse harmony vocals for the first time on the record, the guitar harmony-led *Hang on to Your Life*, a redux of their earlier psychobilly sound, and *Three More Days*, the nearly nine-minute long epic proto-prog album closer.

Winter may have been the new lineup's megalomaniac attraction, but Leslie also made an important contribution to the evolution of the group's sound, especially its superb vocal harmonies. He also co-wrote the album's two most eclectic tracks with Cummings – the wank-punk shuffler *Moan for You Joe* and the bluesy-progressive melody *Coming Down off the Money Bag/Long of the Dog*, where he proves himself more than worthy of the lead vocal spotlight. And while *Share the Land* only gave Richard the lightning-bolt-battle No. 1 single of *American Women*, it showed the group striving to be more consistent album artists, as evidenced by the fact that no less than five of the album's songs ended up on the band's first greatest hits package, occupying the entire second side of the original LP.

With the Guns 'n' a record sales juggernaut throughout 1970, when RCA became the first major label to announce support for the new 4-channel quadraphonic format in a two-page centerfold in the 28 November 1970 issue of *Billboard's* magazine, it was no surprise that the group featured prominently. Both *American Women* and *Share the Land* (along with the band's first two albums) were part of the RCA's initial release of quadraphonic 8-track tapes, where they joined other label luminaries including Elvis Presley and the Jefferson Airplane in being some of the first mainstream pop and rock artists released in the new format. Despite RCA's best efforts however, quad never caught an real bite over five years later (they'd shattered the prog format – never having made the jump to quad LP (outside of Japan, where both titles were released) with songs critical due to the technical limitations of quad vinyl of the time) *American Women* and *Share the Land* became exceedingly difficult for collectors to find in the ensuing years. Re-mastered from the original tapes, the SACD-release marks the first time these historic quad mixes have been available in any form in nearly four decades, and they're joined by their stereo counterparts, which also make their worldwide high-resolution debut as part of this package.

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AMERICAN WOMEN SHARE THE LAND

LP LSP-4044 (1970) 180GR, PGM-1 178 QUAD-RAPHONIC

Personnel:

Bobby Cummings (bass/guitar/keyboards/lead vocals)
Randy Bachman (guitar/lead/background vocals)
Gary Peterson (drums/lead/background vocals)
Jill Rice (background vocals)

LP LSP-4049 (1970) 180GR, PGM-1 178 QUAD-RAPHONIC

Personnel:

Jim Kato (bass)
Gary Peterson (drums), guitar/keyboards, (19), (20) (19), (20)
(organ) (19)
Greg Leslie (rhythm guitar) (19), lead guitar (17, 18, guitar) (19), lead guitar – lead (19), lead guitar – mid range (19), lead guitar (epic) (19), lead vocals (19), acoustic guitar (19), acoustic rhythm guitar (19)
Kurt Winter (lead vocals) (19), lead guitar (19), electric rhythm guitar (19), studio bass guitar (19), studio guitar – middle voice (19), (lead) guitar – high (19), lead guitar – middle voice (19), rhythm guitar, middle voice (19), acoustic guitar (19), lead guitar – 19 (19) (17)
Bobby Cummings (lead vocals), (20) (19, 19), organ/organ (19, 19), electric piano (19, 17), organ (19) (harmonic) (19), (20) (19)