

## **Carlton talks about recording with Joni Mitchell, Steely Dan**

Reflecting on solo projects and the work he did as a sideman, guitarist Larry Carlton took time during a recent interview to comment on some selected highlights from a recording career that spans four decades.

Many of these songs have been heralded by critics, transcribed for instruction books, and lauded by the legions of guitarists whom he has influenced.

"Easy Evil" (from Carlton's 1973 album, "Playing/Singing"): "That was just one of those tunes that had been floating around the Hollywood studios for a while and must have been done about a dozen times before I did it. It was written by Alan O'Day (who also wrote the pop hit "Undercover Angel"). I basically just copied his demo. We ended up getting a little airplay on it. It was just a great groove."

"Help Me" (hit single from Joni Mitchell's 1974 record, "Court and Spark"): "Classic. I was really proud to have done that. It came at a time when I was really trying to perfect the concept of being a sideman. She sings, 'Help me, I think I'm falling' and then I just go 'r-r-r-ring' on that one chord. Seemed like a nice way for her to launch into the next line of lyric. I had no idea at the time it would become as big as it is. That was the first time she'd ever really played with a rhythm section."

"Mulberry Street" (from Carlton's 1981 album, "Strikes Twice"): "I remember the evening I was going to record that. I wasn't real comfortable with soloing over the chord changes. So I went to my Room 335 studio and slowed the tape down from 30 inches per second to 15 inches per second. The solo on the record is the first take, recorded while the tape was spinning at half speed. That was it."

"Room 335" (from Carlton's 1978 record, "Larry Carlton"): "The chord progression is partially borrowed from Donald Fagen and Walter Becker (Steely Dan). It's similar to the progression from their hit single, "Peg." I loved the sound of the particular chord changes. At the time, that was a very fresh sound."

"Kid Charlemagne" (from Steely Dan's 1977 album, "The Royal Scam"): "We were just in the studio that night and we played around with it for a couple of hours. The first part of the guitar solo, more than half of it, came out in one take. They started again and I finished it up in the next pass. So it's basically two takes."

"Don't Take Me Alive" (also from "The Royal Scam"): "That was Donald's idea to open with the big guitar chord. They didn't have an intro. So I remember standing in the middle of the studio by myself, in front of my little tweed amp, just playing that one chord until we got one they liked."

"Lord's Prayer" (from Carlton's 1986 album "Alone/But Never Alone"): "That's a nice arrangement. That happened at the time I decided to do a full album of acoustic guitar. It's been transcribed a lot. Chet Atkins, as I recall, called the house once and — I was gone at the time — but he wanted to know what special tricky tuning I had used for the song. I thought that was cute. It was just natural tuning."

"Fingerprints" (title track from Carlton's 2000 album): "The song was already done by producer Paul Brown. Everything was there, except for the melody and the flutes and so forth. There was no melody to the song. He would play things for me and anything I responded to, we would keep and try to work with. The melody I came up with for that track came right out at the beginning, the first time we went through it — it just came."

The Pump (from the Carlton-Steve Lukather 2001 live album, "No Substitutions: Live in Osaka"): "Luke is a big Jeff Beck fan and he brought that to the recording party. I changed the chords for my solo in the song because I didn't want to do it just on the E chord."

"Down in Brazil" (from Michael Franks' 1977 album, "Sleeping Gypsy"): "I remember Michael and producer Tommy LiPuma brought me in after the track was done. Musically, I don't remember much of what I did or why. It's been a long time since I've heard that music."