

Shane Fontayne

Biography

You might not recognize the name Shane Fontayne - yet - but chances are you have heard Shane's playing or seen him perform live. As a guitar player, Shane has shared the stage and studio with an impressive list of rock music's elite, including Bruce Springsteen, U2, Paul Simon, Shania Twain, Bryan Adams, and Rod Stewart. Most recently, Shane was invited to accompany Bono, The Edge, Elvis Costello, Norah Jones, Sheryl Crow, Mary J. Blige, Patti LaBelle and B.B. King with Wynonna at the pre-Grammy Music Cares event in New York honoring Bono as "Person of the Year."

Today, at the age of 49, Shane has recorded his debut solo CD, aptly titled, "What Nature Intended." The CD's closing song, "You'll Never Know" states: "And we are here tonight by way of everywhere we've been." Shane adds, "As wonderful as my career has been so far, its purpose, ultimately, has been to lead me to this point in time and to prepare me for what amounts to a whole *new* career." The parallel paths of musician/accompanist and singer/songwriter have now merged with the completion of "What Nature Intended".

Blending lush, layered instrumentation, intricate melodies and thought provoking lyrics, "What Nature Intended" has been referred to as an "album of songs that actually live, breath, and talk." [Nic Harcourt, host of KCRW's Morning Becomes Eclectic]. The album is set for release in September 2003 on Mile End Records.

Shane Fontayne was born and raised in the suburbs of London. During the 1960's, profoundly influenced by the British pop and R'n'B of the day, and most particularly The Beatles, Shane picked up his first guitar at the tender age of nine to emulate his heroes. The first song he ever wrote, at 12 years old, he pitched to Giorgio Gomelski [The Yardbirds' manager]. "My brother and I found ourselves backstage at the Marquee Club being introduced by Giorgio to Paul Samwell-Smith [The Yardbirds' bassist until mid-1966]. I brought my guitar, and I sat down and played them my song. Giorgio said he wanted to make a demo of it, so I spent the next three months hounding him on the phone," Shane recounts, chuckling at the bravado of his adolescent self. "I was invited back for a second visit, where I met Jeff Beck. He let me play his Telecaster. It was the first time I'd ever played one."

At 18, Shane was asked to join his first band, Byzantium, comprised of friends from school. "For me, it was like being invited to join the Beatles," Shane recalls. Byzantium landed a major record deal, and was managed by the same management company as Rod Stewart and the Faces. They toured Europe extensively from 1972 to 1975. When Byzantium disbanded, Robin Sylvester, a childhood friend and mentor whom Shane greatly admired, suggested he move to America. Just prior to taking Robin's advice, Shane was invited to do a brief British tour with blues singer, Dana Gillespie. "It was my first-ever gig outside of Byzantium. Through Dana, I met Mick Ronson, a British guitarist known at the time for his work with David Bowie. After telling Mick that I was thinking of moving to America, he and his wife Suzy said, 'You should look us up.'"

In 1976, in New York, Shane did "look up" Mick Ronson who was in the process of putting a band together. "He was sweet, gentle, and one of the most wonderful people I would ever meet." Shane joined Mick's band and they relocated to Woodstock where they lived for several years. Shane played with many of the Woodstock locals including John Sebastian, Jesse Winchester and Johnny Average and The Falcons. "One of the quirks of being a Falcon was that everyone had to assume an alter ego. For example, John Sebastian of the Lovin' Spoonful was known as Bobby Subterranean whenever he would join us on stage," Shane (whose real name is Mick Barakan) recounts. Initially, Shane's Falcon persona was "Shane Mundane." "I felt that "Mundane" was *too* mundane, so I switched it to Fontayne. And it stuck!"

The 70's ended with Shane hooking up with Steve Forbert on tour. Steve had seen Shane perform with The Falcons and invited him to join his band for an album and a couple of tours. "This was a good gig for me to do because Steve was out there promoting a hit album. And, it got me out of Woodstock which had the potential to become a bit claustrophobic."

In 1982, Mick Ronson was invited to record in New York with John Phillips and The Mamas and The Papas. "Mick asked if I would come along. We recorded four songs and soon John wanted to do some shows. Mick

didn't want to go on the road and proposed that I do The Mamas and The Papas tour." Shane stayed with The Mamas and The Papas until the beginning of 1984, when he relocated to Los Angeles. In L.A. Shane reacquainted himself with Billy Burnette, nephew of Johnny Burnette [leader of the legendary Johnny Burnette Rock 'n Roll Trio]. Billy introduced Shane to a large community of local players, including Gregg Sutton, the bass player for Lone Justice. Lone Justice was looking for a guitar player and they invited Shane down to the studio. "Steve Van Zandt was coproducing the album with Jimmy Iovine. I had my baritone guitar with me and was asked if I wanted to go into the studio and play something. I went in and did one pass. The next morning Jimmy called me. 'Last night you made everyone very happy,' he said." Shane was officially invited to join Lone Justice.

Lone Justice went into the studio to record their album, "Shelter," which Shane helped co-write, arrange, and produce. Touring in support of the release included an opening slot on U2's Joshua Tree tour. On June 15, 1987, the last show of the tour, in Paris, Shane and Maria McKee joined U2 on stage for a rendition of Lou Reed's "Sweet Jane." "What a great moment at the end of such a big tour. There I am, playing with The Edge and Maria's singing with Bono."

As the 80's drew to a close, Shane wanted something different. "I was getting to a place where I didn't want to work for somebody else." So Shane, Brett Cartwright (Joan Jett) and Dennis McDermott (Michael McDonald and Marc Cohn) formed Merchants of Venus. Managed by Principle Management in New York (U2's management), they landed a deal with Elektra.

In January 1992, Shane received a call from Jimmy Iovine who said, "Hey Shane, a friend of mine wants to know if you want to go out on the road." "Who's your friend?" Shane responded. "Springsteen," Jimmy replied. Bruce had just seen a rerun of Saturday Night Live on which Shane had performed with Lone Justice. Springsteen had taken a departure from his E-Street band and was looking for a different set of musicians to take out on the road. The only guitarist asked to audition, Shane was invited to join the band. To start, there was a small industry show at The Bottom Line. Then there was an appearance on Saturday Night Live. "Bruce had never done network television before. He asked my opinion on whether or not he should do Saturday Night Live and I told him it was one of the biggest rushes I had ever had."

Touring with Bruce Springsteen led to recording with Bryan Adams, performing on the Tonight Show with Shania Twain, recording with Paul Simon, and touring with Rod Stewart. A show with Rod Stewart on New Year's Eve in Rio de Janeiro has been listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Largest Free Concert Attendance" estimated at 3.5 million.

Shane spent the end of the 1990's touring heavily with Grammy-winner, Marc Cohn, recording and touring with John Waite, and recording with the Van Zant Brothers and jazz trumpeter Chris Botti.

The new millennium ushers in a new milestone for Shane's career. "It's funny how each person's path is different. Here I am in my late forties arriving back at a place I was when I was 12 years old, writing songs once again for the sound of my own voice. It's all quite familiar." The result is "What Nature Intended", Shane's first solo release, recorded and mixed in a variety of home and professional studios, and with a little help from his friends. "I found that as I opened myself up to receive, my record was getting done."

Shane's creative process is fueled by the need to address life's path. "It has to do with love, alchemy, honesty, humor and a search for truth -- creating a mood that envelops, embraces, and supports. I'm reaching out and expanding my territory. I need to push my limits."

For a more comprehensive history of Shane Fontayne's work and experiences, please visit www.shanefontayne.com.

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