

DEYA & THE FUTUREGONG

Montserrat



Gong DVD that shows footage of this particular gig ⁽¹⁾

Yoni and Tali went ahead while I drove our battered Peugeot to Barcelona. The usual delay of 24 hours meant I had a night to pass before the ferry could take the car, so I drove up to the Montserrat Monastery and Cathedral famous for its Black Virgin. It was supposedly an image of the Virgin Mary yet, as a symbol, it was secretly known to actually predate Christianity by several thousands of years.

Here, Maggie Thomas had given me a contact named **Brother Francis**, a sympathetic English speaking Spanish monk.

Francis was one of a number of Montserrat brothers who had been actively helping and hiding anti-Franco Catalan revolutionaries wanted by the police. Church land

was out of bounds for the Guardia Civil—even at the height of the fascist regime.

He invited me to dine with the monks in the monastery where, over an excellent wine, he extracted from me the story of my Spiritual Musical Quest.

He listened thoughtfully, translating my story into Catalan for his brotherly others.

Next morning clarified by sleep, I was meditating in the nearby guest house when Brother Francis knocked on my door. He had come to invite **GONG** to be the first band to play in the cathedral in front of the Black Virgin. I was astonished and delighted & accepted.

Later that day I crossed to Majorca and drove through Valdemossa and around the coast to join Gilli and Tali in Deya.



1. Gong (2006). Gong @ Montserrat, 1973 and other stories, DVD, VPDVD25. Voiceprint: United Kingdom



DEYA ON THE CLIFFS

It was too early for spring weather and we lit wood fires to warm the damp cliffside house we had rented in Deya for our ten days of rest.

This was the house where my friend the poet Chris Perret had mysteriously died the day after he had recorded his collected works in my studio.

If his ghost was present, it was friendly. With the crash of waves and the deep thunder from the deep underwater caves that spread beneath and beyond the house, it was like returning home. Many of my old friends were living nearby and without the intensity of the tourist presence, the magic in the mountains was overpoweringly nourishing for us all. So much so that before a week was past, le Shakti had hatched a plan to buy a house in the clot (valley) by selling both the flat in Paris and the half built house at Montaulieu.

I trusted her leaps of intuition implicitly, though in this case the house was pretty cheap still there was little advance evidence to suggest that we could afford it.

On the morning of the eighth day, in brilliant sunshine, I left on a wide ranging day-long ramble around the valley. After a couple of hours by the quim of the valley I climbed directly up the terraces towards the church and our old house high on the hill.

I spent a long time sitting on my old meditation spot several terraces below the church wall.

Looking down the valley and out to sea from under the familiar tree, I remembered my original inspiration, my seed vision. I experienced again the feeling of being part of a

stream of consciously connected individuals, overseen by unseen intelligences, each of us working out a variation on a single main purpose. Again I felt clearly to be one of a group of souls born on the planet to help revolutionise spiritual awareness and speed the





Lady June, Kevin Ayers, & Gilli Smyth in Deya



• process of evolution.
• Presently, as I write this I see that we are all now part of a
• greater soul group, and if you are enjoying reading this you are
• probably also a part of this movement.
• In 1966, the year of my seed vision the numbers were much
• smaller but enough to work the changes. But then, it was 1973
• and I was looking out over a rapidly changing lifetime.
• As I sat beside and beneath my companion the tree, the
• seed vision gave way to selected images from the events that
• sprouted and grew out of this initial impulse. The arrival at
• Easter '66 of Kevin Ayers with our space cowboy patron **Wes**,

from a previous life to finance Soft Machine and the rapid progress into the charts of the first Soft Machine single. The astonishing "recognition rally" of alternative beings at the Ally Pally and the Roundhouse in '67 and the subsequent explosion of alternative ideas and attitudes transforming social values. Then, our pivotal tour de France and my ban from re-entry to the UK. The first manifestation of **GONG** on the Parisian left bank and the student

uprising of '68 followed by my retreat from the French police back to Deya.

My return then to France to create **GONG** in '69. The birth of **GONG** at the Festival of Amougies and its babyhood in Normandy, followed by its emergence as a prime motivator of new music in '70.

New gig circuits, a fresh positivity, spiritual politics and a rural communal headquarters south of Paris to experiment with it all.

From here the re-entry into UK in '71 with the first Glastonbury Festival and the Virgin connection in '72.

During this time we had all experienced many many deaths and rebirths as the processes unfolded, yet now I felt the cycle of my personal usefulness was at an end. I could not see how I would be of further use. Was I wrong about this?

I realised that part of my job was to kick start projects and then pass them over to others who would gain by sustaining my initial push. However, I was unwilling to

trust that when my usefulness had expired this time I would be removed by circumstances as with my departure from the Softs.

Far below a farmer had lit a small fire and the smoke rose into a perfect question mark. I wanted to know!

Whither now goest GONG? With me or without!

As I sat there in the shade of an ancient olive tree beneath the vivid blue sky, high above the valleys flowing toward the sea, on the ancient terraces of the goddess Diana, I gradually became aware of a presence behind me. It was neither friendly nor menacing. Powerful yet neutral.



I turned my head slowly and saw a tall bony man with dark weatherbeaten skin and white hair. He wore a gaudy marquee hat and a green robe as might a Tibetan lama. He stood very balanced and very still.

Once I had registered his presence as physical, I eased my stiff legs out of the lotus position and wobbled myself upright. I greeted him with a respectful bow.

His eyes smiled in a detached fashion and without a word he gestured for me to follow him. We went up the stone steps, through to the end of a clearing where a huge vertical rockface rose some 50m. The wall around the church rose higher still. He led me further along where, just beyond an outcrop of rock, there was a narrow opening between two vertical lips. Without hesitating, the lama slid through the gap and I followed close behind.

I imagined we were deep beneath the church and that we must be just below the many bodies buried in the church cemetery. In the dark I felt the passage widen, and the lama lit a flare. I saw that we were in a large but low cave. He now knelt beside a broad square stone and seemed to be adjusting some metal toggle switches... or were they taps?

Suddenly the space was lit up by a wide blue screen larger than a TV which appeared to be suspended in mid air.

On the screen images of a tall, cone shaped temple arose. Below it, as if its mirror image, a reversed cone penetrated



VISION

deep into the earth. At the widest point where the two cones interfaced, on a shiny luminous floor a group of musicians were gathered in the centre on a raised stage. They wore green cone hats and played futuristic instruments. Above them hovered a lightbeam refractive multidimensional mandala. Around them were gathered many listeners also wearing the pointed green hats. As they listened, one of the musicians rose to his feet and with arms outstretched and sang a curious mantram. Then as he raised his arms, I saw a rush of blue luminous energy from the uppermost point of the temple pour down through musicians and audience alike and vanish into the lowest point of the lower cone. After a short pause he lowered his arms and a dull red energy streamed upwards through them all and vanished into the upmost point of the temple. Again and again the sparkling blue energy rushed down and the dark red energy rose back upward to the peak. As I watched the green robed lama spoke.

"You are looking at the future function of music. You are seeing here what you must learn to do. It is the conscious transformation of Earth poison. It is a powerful method of spiritual depollution achieved by consciously harnessing music of a certain kind. It is now for you to experiment with ways of achieving this end. You now have the musicians working with you who, for the moment at least, can combine with you to produce primitive results along these lines. Don't expect too much... or too little. You will encounter resistance but this, while it seems hostile or belittling, is a necessary filter through which you may purify and strengthen your resolve. Return now, inspire your brothers and sisters with hope and enjoy this new dispensation. You will see much change around you both comfortable and uncomfortable. Go now and learn again what you have always known how to do." He turned to me and clapped his hands in front of my face. In an instant I was back beneath my tree.

*I looked around but there was nobody there.
Suddenly there was a clutter of footsteps and two tourists in
stout walking boots stomped down the path passing close by
without seeing me.*

*As they passed, the larger of the two said to his companion,
"You know Fred, since I've had these proper boots I reckon I
could go back up into Tibet and find that cave in half the time
it took us last time round..."*

*"It's not the bleedin boots Ted, nah is it!" returned the other;
"it's the telepathic radio that keeps us at it... eh?"
Slowly I rose to my feet and followed their path.*

VISION OF THE ACTOR **birth of the foole**

By the time I rejoined Yoni at the house
on the cliffs a new vision had begun to
unfold in my seeing mind.

I could still hear the lama's voice in my
head repeating, "New dispensation
now... you dont have to bother playing
lead parts any more.

You are now free to concentrate
on ritual audience energy magic!"

I saw myself dressed as a modern
version of the court jester. Peter Gabriel
had shown that artistic ingenuity was
more than a match for expensive effects

budgets. So I could design and make my own props and headgear.

I was now free to move, to mime, inspired to characterize the craziness of nature
and to dramatize the ritual aspects of energy transformation.

The only instrumental essential was that I continue to play glissando guitar.

It was a vision of joyful liberation.

I was reborn.

My groundwork was done.

The musicianship was in place.

Now it was time to concentrate on singing and ritual theatics.



MONTSERRAT MONASTERY GIG

30th June, 1973



We had an interesting gig lined up, a five day trip to play at the Festival of Tabarka in Tunisia supporting Miles Davis. But there was a gap in the giglist to fill so I rang our friendly brother at the Monastery of Montserrat to see if we could get some money for expenses. He rang back the following day to report that he would

organise a second gig in a nearby town to pay for expenses plus a little on top. He would find us accomodation and food while we were there.

There was not an enormous enthusiasm for this pilgrimage outside of Mike, Steve, Yoni and myself. Pierre was the most dubious but we eventually negotiated a group decision to go.

It was a long hot drive and the band bus arrived well before the roadies. The P.A. truck came very late having blown two tyres, one in a hair-raising incident that raised the possibility of divine intervention but did nothing for the nervous systems of the highly sceptical road crew.

My over-riding feeling was of gratitude, awe and respect for the invisible forces that had made this opportunity possible. These had very little to do with the superficial facade of Christianity, the simple superstition of the humble Spanish worshippers of the ancient icon, or the varicose Italian TV film crew intent upon producing a document that would support their projection that a rock band playing for the Black Virgin of Montserrat had to be an act of desecration.

These were people who were blinded by the obvious. But behind appearances, **GONG** had the potential here to serve as a musically energised acupuncture needle. Perhaps we could help release the hundreds of years of stuck and putrifying superstition, cleansing and making way for fresh new religious forms relevent to the present world-need for change and transformation.

All this simply by playing well.

This kind of information was neither plausible or relevant to most of my fellow musicians. Again, it was only Yoni, Steve and Mike who had any feel for the deeper realities that could work through GONG performances.

Our performance in front of the Virgin was limited to thirty minutes and was, in fact, a difficult one.

It took place at four in the afternoon before the entire brotherhood of monks and their heirarchy of superiors together with a strange assortment of little old ladies in black, a coachload of curious German tourists, a smattering of smirking Spanish hipsters and the conspiritorial Italian TV crew, convinced they were witnessing a magnificent blasphemy.

We started with the *'Radio Gnome'* intro tape and thus to *'Other Side of the Sky'* and then *'Dynamite'* followed by an extended version of *'Tropical Fish'* ending in a heartfelt version of *'Selene'*.

The acoustics were extremely reflective and the sound bounced back into itself on all sides making of us a mess of reverberating and incomprehensible vocals drums and bass.

Although I maintained my focus throughout, I wondered how the advanced esoteric work I had envisioned could take place via such dissonant acoustic confusion.

It was a relief to be through it.

The applause was polite. I bowed my brow to the floor to give my respects to that energy field otherwise known as the Black Virgin.

We were then led back to the refectory where monk's food and the famous church wine brought solace to our rumpled sensibilities.

By now there was a strong feeling amongst the others that I was either:

1. Mad.
2. Deluded.
3. Stupid.

I was starting to wonder if they were right.



THE OUTDOOR GIG

Tarassa,

1st of July, 1973



Mike Speaks:

We started the gig with our usual improvised floating intro, and about 15 minutes in Daevid suddenly walked off the stage. Steve, Didier and I had a hurried conversation and agreed to continue the gig with the Paragong set we had played during Daevid and Gilli's recuperation break after recording Flying Teapot. Half an hour or so later Daevid appeared down at the front of the stage directly in front of me. He was leaning with his elbows resting on the stage looking up at me smiling. His goatee beard still had green Day-Glo make up on and he

The next day we were taken to an open-air amphitheatre surrounded with highly scented blossoms which was already crowded before we had set up our sound. It was such a beautiful setting that Steve, Bloomdido, Moonweed and Mike had decided to take an acid trip for the concert. I was tempted, but then recognised my need to stay with my clear focus so soon after the inner work in front of the Black Virgin. By the time the gig was ready to begin, the place was packed and buzzing with anticipation.

The plan was that the lights would be lowered as we entered one by one each taking time to add to the layer of improvised sound until I, being the last to enter, would approach the microphone to speak the invocation:

"To rise beyond the countless worlds... ever passing away before your eyes..." and begin to improvise vocally.

As I watched, Moonweed made his entrance and began... followed by Yoni and together they soared with the very beauty I would have wished to give to the Black Virgin the day before. The spell was being cast and there was magic in the air. A perfect setting for Bloomdido, Steve, Mike and Pierre. But as soon as Bloomdido began I felt there was something wrong. He sounded out of tune with the synthi.

Then in came Steve without hearing Bloomdido and his tuning was again different. To me it sounded terribly discordant and I could not imagine where to place my voice in this multicore of tonal infidelity.

Mike and Pierre's eventual entry did little to allay my fears. Somehow I got through my vocal. Wherever I placed my voice it was out of tune with somebody.

I was suddenly aware that everybody was blissfully unaware of this tuneless sourcream.

At the end of the piece I ran to the dressing room in anguish.

Finding Tim in my path I burst upon him with a vitriolic denunciation of playing on LSD. I was angry and Tim was a wide open sensitized sponge. Without thought, I dumped all my fears and frustrations right into the quick of his nervous system. The gig continued and objectively gradually got better but I was on a negative roll. I had become the resentful undershadow of the four of them that were heaven-high on acid.

I had lost it.

My mission became freak out and destroy.

After the gig everyone scattered to their various hideaways.

The money was just enough to cover expenses and the blown tyres. The drive home was not exactly an episode of the happy hour. Tim was in shellshock and the others were variously affected. **GONG** may well have been the first rock band to play in a Spanish church but I felt as though the mission had self-destructed due to my lack of compassion for the human being human.

was wearing the Gong
Symbole-the triangle
with the eye-on his
head. As I played
Daavid was making
odd facial gestures-
raised eyebrows,
grimaces, smirks.
I was by now well
under the influence
of the acid we
had taken and I
interpreted these
gestures as critical
comment on my
playing, as if every
note I played was
being scrutinised
intensely. I felt as
though my very being
depended on each
note-it felt like I
was hanging on to
my bass strings by
my fingers and one
wrong note would
cast me off into the
abyss-probably the
hardest gig of my
life!

