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Global Soul

Liquid Blue ☆ Peace Through Music

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A
Green
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Resource

Liquid Blue—whom I consider modern-day troubadours—travel the globe with songs of love, peace, acceptance, and sustainability for Mother Earth. Their commitment to music and all people is inspirational and uplifting. I had the opportunity to hang out with them for an evening here in San Diego and I was truly blown away by their stage presence and their commitment to activism.

The musicians of Liquid Blue have extensive experience in the music industry individually and as a group. The band is comprised of guitarist Michael Vangerov, lead vocalist Scott Stephens, drummer Angelo Frisina, and Kevin Cooper on bass.

The BlueGirls trio captain is Nikki Nova, with Gypsy Gina and Diana Ferrer rounding out this group of amazing dancers and singers.

Recently I had the great pleasure of speaking with Scott Stephens, a passionate musician and activist and the band's requisite manager.

Vision Magazine: What led you and Liquid Blue to travel the globe so extensively?

Scott Stephens: We all love to experience other cultures, and we wrote songs that became more popular internationally than here at home. We also learned to sing in other languages, most notably Mandarin, which has increased our popularity in Asia.

Nikki and I learned to sing in Mandarin, after a promoter in China, who booked our shows, asked us to learn a few songs in the language. We were hesitant due to the effort involved, but once we did, it was great. We've sung in Mandarin every time we go to China—at least a few songs.

We have visited 113 countries so far; 47 of them are in Europe, for example, including places that many people don't visit such as the Balkans and Eastern Europe. These are fascinating places. The people were amazing and the vibe of these cultures was very authentic.

It's been our mission to learn as much as we can about other cultures. We also love to make friends and promote world peace wherever we go.

VM: What would be one of the top cultural experiences you've had traveling with Liquid Blue?

SS: In 2007 we stayed with a Palestinian family on the West Bank for a week. It was an eye-opening experience for us. We traveled throughout Palestine as well as Israel, meeting everyday people and discussing the ongoing conflict. We held a peace symposium and concert in Bethlehem on

Christmas Eve, and did free peace concerts in Israel and the West Bank. We attempted to enter Gaza but we were not allowed to do so. I would rate that as the most interesting and enriching experience we've had and we certainly learned a lot.

VM: How did the peace concerts come about in Bethlehem?

SS: There is a peace group from Palestine working on both sides of the fence as well as a few activists in Israel who would like to see this conflict end. But they're quite a bit outnumbered by those who want to keep the Palestinians oppressed. They contacted us, inspired by



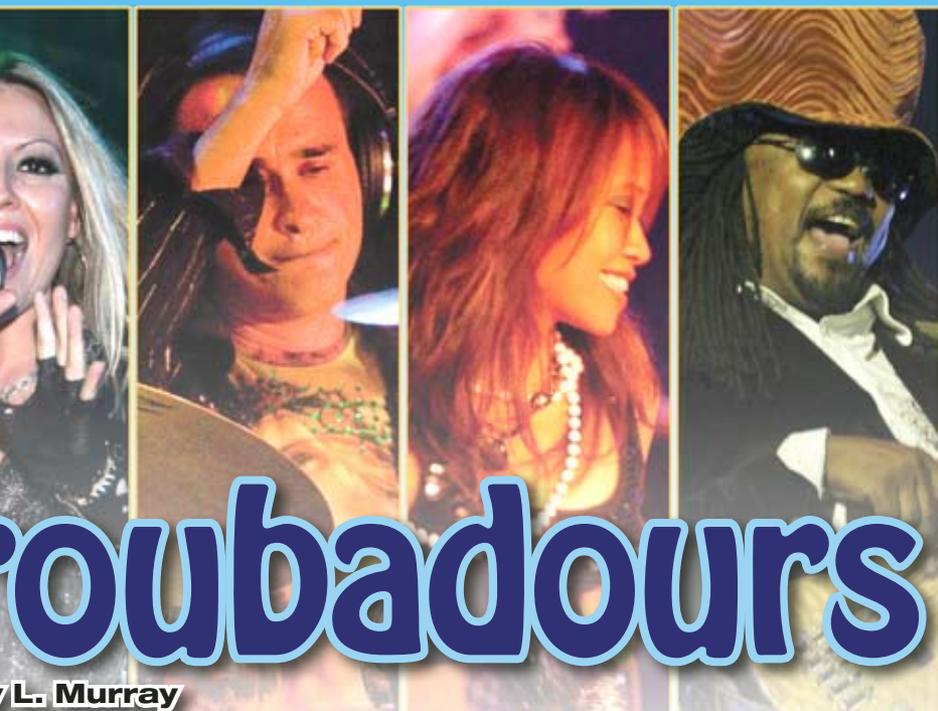
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the type of music we were writing. We ended up talking to them about coming to Israel. They set up concerts on both sides of 'the wall' so to speak, and we did a number of peace concerts, both in Jerusalem and in a few other cities, including Ramallah, Hebron, Jericho, and Bethlehem—on the Palestinian side. In Israel we did concerts in Jerusalem, Haifa, Nazareth, and Tel Aviv. So we spent equal time on both sides and heard both sides of the story. I think we came out with a pretty good understanding of what's happening there and we have sympathy for the Palestinian people for what they're going through. We even helped support the family we lived with there.

In my opinion, all wars are usually started by the leaders [of their respective countries] and they're generally benefiting the elite. In this case you've got Palestinian people who are not extremists. They're not anything like what





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L. Murray

people say; there are some militants who are extremists but this country's been oppressed for over 60 years. So you would figure that yes, there would be a few militants. I'm surprised there's not more. But they obviously have no military. So when you see kids throwing rocks on one side, and you've got other people with machine guns—a complete Air Force and Army with mandatory military service on the Israeli side—it's not a fair fight at all.

And we absolutely love the Israelis we met; we love the country. We met all kinds of people; some who were tremendously nice even if we didn't agree with them.

Our goal is that we'd like the conflict to end. We [Liquid Blue] think it's a big hot spot in the world that creates a lot of other conflict and hatred toward the U.S. because of our policies, and we think

we are on a foolish road with Israel and Palestine. There needs to be a two-state solution.

VM: Why do you think that experiencing other cultures is so important for each one of us?

SS: Travel expands a person's views, and makes the world seem a lot smaller. Our [US] media devotes very little time to international news, and most of what's covered is quite negative and skewed. So the more you travel, the more you realize that we're all one people, on one small planet. I also feel it's really important to travel at a young age if possible, and unfortunately most Americans do the majority of their travel during retirement age—at a time when their views and habits are well-entrenched. I believe that younger people have many more years to share what they've learned while being on the road and can encourage others to do the same.

VM: What began Liquid Blue's activism?

SS: I think education is always the seed that will sprout activism. We make an effort to read books and learn history. Currently the whole band is reading Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. This is a book that I highly recommend to anyone who wants to learn the true history of our nation. Zinn focuses on the perspective of the American Indians, women, slaves, and the lower and middle classes, not just the elite. Most history is written by the victors and the conquerors. Zinn's history is really a true look at what happened. I think anyone who has read regular history books, needs to discover this balanced view. We also get together once a month to watch a documentary film. So by reading books and watching movies, we are more educated. The more one learns the truth, the more that person is inclined to make change. That's why education is so important. If people are ignorant; if they're not getting educated, then they're going to be very susceptible to what the media is saying. And of course the right-wing of our country always votes against spending for education. Other people in our country have fought for our educational system and hopefully we can improve it because it's going downhill.

VM: Tell us about your upcoming appearance this fall at the United Nations (U.N.).

SS: We just completed a new song called *Earth Passport*, which is a tribute to both the U.N. and everyone who's working for the U.S. Department of Peace. The song is sung in all six official United Nation languages, plus several others, and it's a simple call for unity. The band will perform the song for the general assembly during the 2010 Millennium Development

Goals Awards (MDG) ceremony. The MDG are eight international development goals that all 192 U.N. member states have agreed to achieve by the year 2015, and they include reducing poverty and child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS and developing global partnerships for development.

The *Earth Passport* album itself is a work in progress right now. There's another song we wrote called *Dominate* which is about how the U.S. has basically tried to dominate the world through foreign policy and military action.

VM: If there could be one thing in your

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opinion that each one of us could do to change the world, what would it be?

SS: Be educated and be active. To work properly, Democracy needs everyone involved. You have to be motivated. Certainly I think if a person's not educated on issues, it's difficult to be motivated and it's difficult to work effectively as an activist. So the starting point is that we need to educate ourselves, our friends and everyone around us and to encourage education.

VM: How do you think all of this travel has changed you personally?

SS: I think a lot of us fortunately started out with a pretty open, expanded view of the world and the universe as one. I started with those philosophies in my mind, but as I traveled around the world and experienced different religions and different cultures first-hand—as opposed to only in books, it [these cultures] really came alive.

It's beautiful if somebody can start out that way, but not everybody does, so if people travel even if they have very rigid views when they do so, I think those views become expanded. We're taught to believe that this (the U.S.) is really the only great country in the world. Somehow we're taught to believe that we're a Christian nation and there's only one religion and we are taught that America is the only great nation, and the rest of them [nation states] are all supported by us. And when you travel around you find out that obviously it's very different. The world is full of great people. People are all the same everywhere you go.

VM: What was the impetus for your green activism; was there one thing that prompted you to go green in all areas of your life?

SS: I grew up in Los Angeles, and when I was real young, playing on the playground I would get what I'd call “smog lung” after just being outside for a couple of hours. I could hardly breathe, and I had asthma. My dad and I were living in the suburbs, and he would drive to downtown L.A. every day. As I approached my teen years, his drive went from about 35 minutes to an hour and a half. That brought him home very stressed out, and I just thought, “There's got to be a better way.” If you removed the smog and the traffic, L.A. is probably one of the most beautiful cities in the world. That's why people settled on the west coast, because of the rolling hills and of course the amazing Pacific Ocean. It is gorgeous there and we've ruined it. I'm especially big about air pollution because it goes everywhere. It seems like these factories that harm the environment are always in poor neighborhoods. Also: the combustion engine really should be gone.

We have the technology now, and I think in the next few years you're going to see electric cars everywhere. That's probably what I'm the most optimistic about as far as everything going green. We could have cleaner air not only in the US, but also throughout the world. We've been in some cities in China where they never see the sun. When we first arrived, we thought it was just cloudy, and after a couple of weeks you see that the sky never changes, so we began asking people about it. Everybody said “No, we never see the sun.”

And even when it rains, unless it rains as a downpour, they don't even get a glimpse of the sky; afterwards the smog comes back that quickly. Children live in these cities and never see the sun. Yet I had never heard about this city. I don't understand why. It shocked me that if you don't travel you could have spent the better part of your life and not known about these people who are barely subsisting, and never see the sun.

VM: That's incredibly sad. When you hear the words “global soul,” what comes to your mind?

SS: Oneness, collective consciousness, karma. I think of the great spiritual traditions of higher thinking. I've read at least all of the major scriptures from most of the world's religions, and I believe that all of these reflect a global soul: Hinduism, specifically through yoga, Buddhism, Sufism, Native American traditions and Christian mystics. If I handed you certain scriptures from the yogis—the yoga sutras—or the Upanishads, or I could switch it, and hand you a Buddhist scripture or scripture from Sufism, you might not know the difference because they really speak of the same things. They're not pushing people away

from each other and trying to say that there is only one path to God. These are the traditions that bring people together and they're traditions that oppose war and actually believe in peace, which I believe is what Jesus really taught; but his teachings have become very skewed.

VM: Will there be peace on Earth?

SS: There really never has been for any length of time. Right now it doesn't seem likely in our lifetime, but I'm a pacifist, an idealist, and a believer in the possibilities of a Utopian society. So I remain hopeful that it will happen at some point, and if it doesn't happen in this lifetime, hopefully it happens in the next. It's likely that somewhere in this enormous universe there are examples of Utopian societies; people who have figured it out and are living for the benefit of all, not just the rich; people who have stopped going to war, and believe in dialogue rather than bombs. It's pretty simple stuff, as far as peace on Earth goes. I think that every child who is born, until they start seeing violence, just would naturally [be oriented toward peace]. I think it's got to be shocking to children when they start to realize what this world is really like, because I think we all come in [to this life] very innocent and then we become corrupted. There is no reason that we have to kill each other to sustain ourselves and continue warring like we do.

I totally believe that we could achieve peace here on earth through education, activism, understanding, and meditation, as well as just accepting one another.

We all try [in Liquid Blue] to do our small part as we deal with social or spiritual issues. We try to make a difference one song at a time.

For more information please visit www.liquid-blue.com or email manager@liquid-blue.com.



GLOBAL SOUL

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Email: sales@visionmagazine.com // Web: www.visionmagazine.com