

TALKING TROWER

Guitarist Robin Trower's got a new album out – one that covers old ground but also travels to unique places. By Jeb Wright

"WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO" is the latest release by guitar virtuoso Robin Trower. The album mixes Robin's love of blues with classic rock grooves from his most popular era. This is a welcome return to the classic sound his fans have been waiting for. Trower also handles lead vocals throughout, as he has done on his last few albums. Joining the iconic guitarist are Chris Taggart on drums, with Livingstone Brown playing bass and handling co-production and mixing/mastering. Robin even generated the album cover concept which was turned into cover art by graphic artist Eric Krause. Goldmine readers will be interested to learn about a limited-run of vinyl LPs available, too.

Trower may never have achieved rock god status, but that's OK with both himself and his fans. He has remained grounded and guided by his own musical vision. Where is he going to musically? Easy answer: Anywhere he wants!

GM: This new release rocks! It is still bluesy, but you're rocking, Robin!

ROBIN TROWER: I tried to do something different for this album. You're always tied into the songs that you come up with. That is the way you go. You can only record what you come up with ... I wanted to do it as more of a guitar album than the previous ones.

GM: Did you know you were going to make the old fans happy?

RT: I never think about that side of it. I don't think you can prejudice what people may or may not like. I, personally, go with if I am really liking it, then that is what I am going to do. I've been very, very fortunate to carry on basically making the music I want to make.

GM: This is not a concept album, but the sounds of the songs are cohesive.

RT: I've been recording now pretty constantly, I think. When I go in to do another album I don't have to wind it up. It is becoming more of a continuous thing. When I've got two or three songs, then I will go into the studio for a few days and start work. It is a constant process. I'm rolling along all of the time.

GM: Talk about the inspiration for the song "When Will the Next Blow Fall?"

RT: The piece of music itself I stumbled across it, as I often do, when I am playing guitar. It was half of an idea that I worked on. The lyric ... there is so much in the news from the refugees coming from Syria and that was very much on my mind when I came up with that lyric. It is not really my view of things. I am just sort of talking about stuff. I think that is something that is on everybody's mind, as it is such a tragedy.

GM: Talk about the title track "Where You Are Going To?"

RT: That is a song about when I first started out. It's about when I first came out to America in the '70s with Jimmy (Dewar) and Reggie (Isidore) and became quite successful. I suppose it is looking back, but it applies to anybody who was suddenly successful today in music. No one asks where you came from or where you're going to. Just because you're successful you just sort of float by.

GM: Talk about the song "Jigsaw."

RT: If that is not my favorite, it is one of my favorite two or three songs on the album. I came up with that riff on the road and put it in my phone. When I came up with the riff, I knew I could come up with a song that had a heavy atmosphere about it. I think that is what attracts me to guitar ideas that can become songs. I have to basically think it can be strong and that it can have a good atmosphere ... but job No. 1 is that if I want to play lead guitar to it, then I will try to write a song out of it.

GM: What is another of your favorite tracks on the new album?

RT: "I'm Holding On To You." I love that song. I love where that's at, the pocket and everything. I just stumbled onto that idea. Every song starts with a guitar idea and it has to have a strong identity for the guitar part. Then I will see what melody the vocal can do. Then I go in deeper and try to finish it as a song. That's what happened here.

GM: Talk about "Delusion Sweet Delusion."

RT: I like the riff on that, as it is a very strong riff. Life can be a bit like that song.



Courtesy of MVD

GM: This album has a classic sound to it. Your sound does not come from a computer or presets, but I wonder if you have been tempted to play with new technology? Or are you pretty happy with what you've got?

RT: You can't replicate the effect you get by cranking a loud amp, by cranking a Marshall 100-watt amp – that is the only way you can get that sound. I can't get what I want without playing through a very loud amp. That is all there is to it.

GM: What is the plan now, Robin? How many new songs will you fit in the "live" set? I would say you could throw three or even four in there.

RT: You nailed it. I am doing four in the next tour off of this album. I am not doing "Jigsaw." I may have a go at it eventually, but it is quite difficult to pull that one off singing and playing. I am doing "Where Will the Next Blow Fall," "Where You Are Going To" "I'm Holding On To You" and "Delusion Sweet Delusion."

GM: You're lucky to have fans that want to hear the new stuff, as opposed to the classic "best of" ...

RT: On the last tour I did a couple off the new album and it went down really well. It is very pleasing that they hold up amongst the more classic stuff.

GM: You've had a career where you played stadiums and a career where you played tiny clubs. At the end of the day, you never compromised. You may have a little bit in the '80s, but you walked away.

RT: Well, you're right, in the '80s is when I came closest to sort of getting away from the principles, you know, of what I'm about, really. I think once (manager) Derek Sutton and I decided to have my own label I've been free to do whatever I want, musically. I am happier and I think the people that buy the CDs or hear the music are happy, too. I have to say it was Derek's idea.

GM: You have such a loyal fan base. You are very nice to people who come see you play.

RT: Let's face it, the people that come to the show are the ones that make the whole thing work. Without them coming to the shows there is no tour and I don't get to play. I'm grateful. If they want to line up afterwards and get a signature or whatever, I feel that is absolutely fine.

GM: With the new record, it is not 1975, so it is not going to go Gold. What do you consider to be a "successful record" to you in 2016? Are sales important to you now?

RT: Not so much. I'm happy if a CD sells enough for me to make another album without me putting up the money out of my own pocket. As long as I can keep doing what I am doing and not lose money, then that is great. **GM**