

Pop culture interviews by Tim O'Shea

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James Lee Stanley on *All Wood and Doors*

Article first published as [Interview: Musician James Lee Stanley on *All Wood and Doors* on Blogcritics](#).

[James Lee Stanley](#) is a musician that clearly considers and explores music in extremely unique ways. His musical curiosity is fully evident in his latest project with [Cliff Eberhardt](#), *All Wood and Doors*, an acoustic guitar exploration of classic Doors songs. The 12-song project, which was released this month by [Beachwood Recordings](#), has support and involvement from two Doors members (John Densmore and Robby Krieger). The release (described at [Stanley's site](#) as "An amazing collection of Doors tunes played on acoustic guitars and laden with soulful vocals and joyous harmonies") also has the involvement of numerous talented musicians including Peter Tork, Timothy B Schmit, Laurence Juber, Paul Barrere and Chad Watson. Stanley was kind enough to discuss this project with me, as well as his new solo release ([Backstage at the Resurrection](#)) in the following email interview.



All Wood and Doors

Tim O'Shea: While John Densmore and Robby Krieger were complimentary of the project and expressed interest in working with you two on this Doors collection, I am wondering if there was part of you that was intimidated by the prospect of working with them?

James Lee Stanley: I was certainly thrilled to have not only their blessings, but also their contributions; however I don't recall feeling any intimidation. After playing music all my life and recording 25 other CDs and producing many other artists, soundtracks, scoring TV shows, writing musicals, performing, and session work, it just seemed like more musicians coming together for the sake of the music. And they were both, congenial, professional and just fun to hang with. I was not only honored to be with them, but had a great time.

O'Shea: You have a great amount of experience as a musician, and in fact you were breaking into the music scene a few years after The Doors. Have you always had a healthy respect for the band's music, or was this an appreciation you gained in recent years?

Stanley: I loved The Doors from the first time I heard them. My pal, Ray Thole, and I were driving a VW bug somewhere south of San Francisco when "Light My Fire" came on the radio and we literally had to pull over to listen to it. We couldn't drive the car and listen to that music simultaneously. It was just too powerful...and I don't think the opium had anything to do with it.

O'Shea: The lineup of talent that contributes to this collection includes Peter Tork (Monkees), Timothy B Schmit (Eagles), Laurence Juber (Paul McCartney & Wings), Paul Barrere (Little Feat), Scott Breadman (Rippingtons, Lindsey Buckingham), and Chad Watson (David Arkenstone, Janis Ian). How did you go about deciding which musicians were best suited for particular songs?

Stanley: All of the players you've mentioned have worked with me thru the years and I've been in the audience, the studio and the living room with all of them. I know what they do and their prodigious gifts simply led the way. I knew from the moment we had a basic track who I wanted to have play on it. I knew what songs I wanted Timothy to be on. Most of the time I just felt, ah this is the person for this tune. And in some instances, I was wrong.

In the Motown/Steely Dan tradition, I sometimes had several people (including me) play on a song until I heard the solo that I wanted. I had a vision for each song and I could tell when that vision was being served and when it wasn't. That's not to say I told anyone what I wanted them to play. I don't like to do that. If I want to hear something specific, I'll just play it myself. I wanted the contribution of others and I didn't want to influence it in any way, unless it was just going in a direction I felt was counterproductive to the sonic vision I had. I like to bring in the best people and then get out of their way. Even though I frequently play everything myself on a basic track; sketching out the entire arrangement, I don't show it to the musicians or refer to it until mixing time. Then I listen to see if I stumbled upon something worth keeping; incorporating it into what has evolved, or ignoring it completely.

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