

ZODIAC LUNG

PRESENTS

# COLLECTIVE SOUL

By Jill Morrison



**Interrupting the recording of their new album, my mission at hand appears to be chatting one on one with the Rock Gods of Collective Soul. Out from a hiatus, the wonders of this multi-platinum radio band - who may well be given the well earned title of Radio Gods - were simply fantastic in speaking with, all having a very laid back, yet keenly focused and spirited attitude about their new album coupled with thoughts on departure from under the wings of major label Atlantic Records and now treading waters with their own Indie label, El Music Group. Add to that being their own guv'ners, management shifts, a new line up to boot and plus other personal triumphs/tragedies along the way, it appears Collective Soul is having an exciting reinvention of sorts...**

The band's long history and fruitful career is made even sweeter when you stack up their numerous chart topping albums and singles - many finding their way into movie soundtracks and television aside from their own compelling videos - Collective Soul comes across as a band who like to leave no stone unturned

Collective Soul's new rhythm guitarist, Joel Kosche, is the first to air his thoughts on the state of the band at the moment, stating that they have a yearning as artists, "to present themselves, as truthful as they can, kick ass and have fun - all, as an experience shared with the audience..."

"British artists, like The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Queen, Oasis and Elton John are godfathers to us, as musical influences go," added Bassist, Will Turpin.



“After those UK shows last year, we came to the conclusion that we must make a bigger effort and turn it into a priority for Collective Soul to be there.”

To go one step beyond, aside from being musically influential to Collective Soul, the iconic rocket man, Sir Elton, showed the feeling is mutual, both as a friend and peer, appearing on the track, *Perfect Day* off the *Blender* album and in a most gracious gesture, sending to Ed Roland’s surprise, “a little gift” that was a bit more than flowers - a Yamaha baby grand piano for his music writing. According to Collective Soul’s founder and lead singer/guitarist, Ed Roland and brother, Dean, rhythm and keyboards - plans are in the works to spend more time touring the UK, Europe, Asia and beyond, thus creating a stronger presence for the first time in many years - something which didn’t fully reach the European market under the previous label - once the new, yet to be titled CD is released.

Collective Soul, have been together for over twelve years now. Hailing from Stockbridge, a small-town Atlanta, suburb, the kind of place where everybody knows everybody, it comes as no surprise that the band knew each other already - this being especially so with Ed and Dean Roland, whose father was a popular, well respected Southern Baptist minister there.

Will Turpin knew former drummer, Ross Childress from school, Ed from church choir early on and as the story goes, it in was the 1980s when Ed Roland, was doing production/studio work at the only recording studio for miles around, Reel 2 Reel Recording Studios, owned by Turpin’s father, a musician in his own right. Ed, busy with writing and doing demos for his band, Marching Two Step and after various line-ups, joined forces with Will Turpin on bass and backing vocals, with Ed’s younger brother, Dean Roland, playing rhythm guitar and former Collective Soul members, Ross Childress on lead and Shane Evans on drums. The chemistry was working. While sending out demos to labels, Ed took the reins and put out a nine track solo album in 1991, (Ed E-Roland, re-released in 1995 on indie label, Core, now considered a rarity and highly prized collectors item.)

When asked about how the idea of calling the band “Collective Soul” was arrived at, all fingers pointed at Ed, who had toyed with the idea of changing the band’s name, Marching Two Step, early on as he felt it didn’t work with what the band was about. Basically, it just didn’t cut it. Ed told me he was inspired by a passage of dialogue in author, Ayn Rand’s classic 1940s novel, *The Fountainhead* which mentioned something about a collection of souls. “Having seen the movie version which left an indelible impression on me and delving more deeply, to say a comparison could surely be made between both the book’s leading character, Howard Roarke and myself, well...”

The similarities can be seen in his approach with regards to music and the business, marching to the beat of his own drum. For those not familiar, *The Fountainhead* - a dramatic story of an innovator - architect’s struggle and determination to retain his artistic integrity at all costs and

against those who would have him compromise his ideals, as well as, the theme, a situation applicable to so many. In Ayn Rand’s words, “individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man’s soul,” showing how the conflict of individualism versus collectivism pervades all of man’s life, and by examining the struggles that this conflict leads to. Moving beyond that bit of trivia, the band, now solidly known as Collective Soul, forged ahead, creating a stir with their lashings of rich, hooky melodies, heavy guitar riffs tossed with a prevailing sense of spirituality and introspectiveness for the listener.

Shame on you dear reader, if you improperly dismissed Collective Soul as a Christian God squad band. With so many flavours of music genres infused within their music - rock, pop, alternative and post-grunge, including being mis-categorised as Christian rock due to a spiritual nature in some songs - the question of what then, do they classify



themselves as, was posed to main man again. His response was simple if not entirely unexpected. "It's just rock 'n roll!"

*Hints, Allegations & Things Left Unsaid*, out in 1993 was released on indie label, Rising Storm Records, was a collection of songs Ed had written and recorded as publishing demos in prior years. Things were clicking and seemed to all be falling easily into place. The band extensively toured through North America, becoming known as a great college band, complete with a huge loyal fan base. A major breakthrough came when Atlantic Records signed the band and the album was re-released in 1994, along with relentless touring which included the band's performance at Woodstock '94 performing to a crowd of 150,000+ - the likes of which the band had never seen, along with the album going double-platinum in 1996. Hallmarking the year, *Shine* reached Billboard's Top Rock Track status and both *Shine* and *December* were named amongst Billboard's #1 Hot Album Rock Tracks of 1994 and 1995, respectively.

Wasting no time, Collective Soul hit the studio to come out with self-titled *Collective Soul* that combined the band's original, special blend of heavy riffs melded with grunge and classic rock sound that spent a whopping 76 weeks on Billboard, going triple-platinum in a year's time. *Collective Soul* being the only band to achieve Billboard's #1 Hot Album Rock Tracks, two years running, along with *Gel*, *Where The River Flows* and *The World I Know* topping the charts as well.

*Shine* was also a winner for Dolly Parton. Parton's rendition, featured on her *Little Sparrow* CD and succeeded in her receiving a Grammy for Best Female Country Vocal Performance, later in 2001.

Behind the scenes, another not so pleasant situation had been brewing. Archetypal of things that can run amuck with bands, managers and life in general – money. Betrayal mixed with a "friend turned foe" situation with ex-manager, Bill Richardson, finally came



to a head with an ugly legal blowout. Much to the chagrin of the band, it lasted far too long before finally being settled - sadly, not without leaving the band feeling no less than screwed.

Eddie Van Halen, whom Collective Soul had spent time with on a Van Halen tour, had become a close friend. During the tour, Turpin was taken aback by a new bass guitar from out of the blue, delivered to his dressing room, complements of Eddie Van Halen. As Turpin told me, "Eddie's a really sweet guy and was instrumental in helping Collective Soul through the ordeal. His support really got us back on track."

## “British artists, like The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Queen, Oasis and Elton John are godfathers to us, as musical influences go”

The band picked up the pieces, headed back to Atlanta to heal their wounds and did what any self respecting band would do - they recorded a new album. Secluded in a cabin, close to where they grew up, Collective Soul got down to business, recording *Disciplined Breakdown*. Released in 1997, songs like *Blame*, *Listen* and *Precious Declaration*, did indeed directly address the band's angle of the dispute, while lyrically also revealing a darker side of Ed Roland's writing and was surely cathartic in letting out the band's feelings of frustration from the ordeal they had endured yet were still reeling from.

In 1999, the release of *Dosage*, was yet another experiment in sound by virtue of radio friendly pop fused with electronic effects and saw the band returning to perform at Woodstock 1999.

The new millennium then rang in *Blender*, with Elton John on *Perfect Day* and the band experimented with a strong focus on a pop/rock sound and an image that emerged in

marked contrast to the mid 90s grunge theme. Marketed in previous years to appeal to a commercial / mainstream audience, the band felt the need to change with the times in all aspects from their modern, digital recording techniques, right down to their look and image. Their live act never faltering with the band continuing to grow, nevertheless despite these changes, they were questioned by critics.

2001 had claimed the departure of original, lead guitarist, Ross Childress, creating a fuss with fans. But, like a marriage gone sour, Childress' departure was a highly personal one with some things better left unsaid, things

had gotten difficult with some of the band's "personalities that were just not meant to stay together," according to Bassist, Will Turpin. "Band chemistry has since improved to one that is now both ego- and drama-less," noted Joel Kosche, Lead Guitarist and Childress' replacement. Kosche, Collective Soul's long-time guitar technician, is a classically trained musician and former member of Steep, who also was chosen as one of "Atlanta's 50 Most Beautiful People" in Jezebel Magazine. Asked how Kosche felt about filling Childress' shoes, he replied,

While it was hard to replace Ross, I was not going to replicate his style," feeling very comfortable in position as lead guitarist and in a positive place with the band. After all, with Kosche being one of Atlanta's 50 most beautiful people and playing with a leading rock band - who could complain? His axes of choice - MJ Guitars designed by Mark Johnson top the list. One of his first memorable gigs, with only a week and half to get it together, was 10<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 2001, set on a barge on the Brisbane River

in Australia." You couldn't see the huge crowd as it was night, there was water between us and the audience, but, we knew they were there. Considering all, it was quite a surreal experience, I'll never forget!"

2001 saw the release of *7EVEN Year Itch*, a greatest hits collection with two unreleased songs, *Next Homecoming* and *Energy*, also marking the close of their contract with Atlantic Records and to take much needed time off from rigorous recording and touring, save for some appearances and gigs here and there, to enjoy their lives while reassessing the past few years gone by along with life's changes - births, deaths, divorces and families to raise, contemplating what lay in the horizon for Collective Soul's fate and future, riding on a decision whether to keep the band going was on the plate.

As time past, things started falling back into place. Ed Roland began piecing together songs the band had recorded. After a leisurely span of three years, *Youth* emerged as their sixth studio album and released on their new label, El Music Group in 2004. *Counting The Days*, *Better Now* and *How Do You Love* singled out, rating tops on the charts in various categories, warming the band up for a tour lasting almost two years. Meanwhile, back in the studio, EP - *From The Ground Up* was spawned in May 2005, presenting a unique collection of eight acoustic versions of past favourites, receiving a positive response from fans.

Inspired by *Youth*, Ed's new plans emerged that would push the band into uncharted territory by assembling Collective Soul's new lineup of Ed Roland on Vocals and Guitars; Joel Kosche on Lead and Rhythm Guitars; Dean Roland on Rhythm Guitars and Keyboards; Will Turpin on Bass and Percussion and Ryan Hoyle on Drums and Percussion teamed with the backing of the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra in performing two shows, recorded live for both a double CD and DVD, entitled *Home*, released in 2006. The *Home* DVD is a fantastic, well produced creation that really brings Collective Soul to new heights. Combining the best of Collective Soul music and showmanship, these very, live shows could be



best described, as if the band were on a cloud floating above a wonderfully arranged, full symphony orchestra of youth, lending to universally crossing musical genres and bridging the gap in generations through music.

The promising, new album “contains all the classic elements of prior Collective Soul albums, keeping with a very congruent signature line within, from heavy rock to a hypnotic acoustic, organic vibe along with having a well rounded longitude and latitude to explore sound within a song,” as described by Collective Soul drummer, Ryan Hoyle.

In its recording, the new album has been a great experience for the new lineup of Collective Soul. With all things grooving, the band converged on producer, Anthony J. Resta’s Bopnique Studio in Boston, Mass.

The recording sessions were especially enlightening for Drummer, Ryan Hoyle, Collective Soul’s newest member after Shane Evans departure in 2005, who spent eight

days recording drums.” Collective Soul was totally cool in letting me work with Anthony, an experience that was so easy, went so well and totally wonderful !”

Resta, known in the industry for his great production work and music wizardry, especially with drums is held in high regard by other music greats he’s worked with through the years, running the gamut with the likes of Elton John, Duran Duran, Blondie, Megadeth, in addition to film and television work.

The recording sessions were especially enlightening for Drummer, Ryan Hoyle, Collective Soul’s newest member after Shane Evans departure in 2005. From first falling in love with drumming at the tender age of 8, Hoyle’s adventures have lead him to follow his dream and amongst other things, during Collective Soul’s well deserved break last fall to keep on drumming, teamed up with Free / Bad Company / Queen front man, Paul Rodgers for his solo Fall 2006 UK Tour and appears on Rodgers’ recent Live In Glasgow CD/DVD release. Hoyle, known to

keep many pots on the fire, has also been collaborating with Collective Soul Lead guitarist, Joel Kosche’s own project that includes a solo CD on the horizon.

According to the future agenda of Collective Soul and their Indie label, El Music Group, I was told by Hoyle, they are entertaining the notion of signing other artists in conjunction with making the label bigger in the future, though for now the main focus is getting the new Collective Soul CD out along with tour support, reaching globally in expanding their fan base and whatever else the future holds for Collective Soul.



## COLLECTIVE SOUL HOME



LIBERATION ENTERTAINMENT

I thought I would like this... thought it would be my best kept secret. I couldn’t have been more wrong. Since the Hints & Allegations album, Collective Soul have always been kept close at

hand... taking a trip somewhere, they’ve always been on the pod and if you’re not familiar with the band, then you’ve been missing out on some of the finest song-writing of the last 15 years.

So, I figured this would be a great little curio. A band I love playing with the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra? Maybe that would be something to chill out with in those

moments when I was by myself in the house. I was ill prepared for this. I got my ass blown away by every single part of it. It’s as good as Kiss Symphony - and that’s a huge recommendation coming from this quarter. As I sat there one afternoon, I had people drifting into the room but not out of it until we had effectively become a Collective Soul Gathering. The conversation goes:

“Who’s this?”

“Collective Soul”

“Never heard of them...”

Movement in that room only happened an hour or so later, this time they were different questions:

“Can you print off a list of their albums for me?”

Don’t you just love it when you’re passions are vindicated! The band look great and sound absolutely incredible with harps bringing in the intro of Compliment - in fact the whole Youth Orchestra should be feeling mighty pleased with themselves - it’s not easy rising to the challenge of essentially reworking a bands catalogue - live.

The band themselves have been together so long that

I would have thrown it out of the window if they hadn’t been up to scratch, but the chemistry and nuances that they work from each other with is flawless.

Perhaps the best thing about this DVD/CD set though, songs, production and talent aside, is that I haven’t seen a band have such a good time on stage and mean it, in years.

There’s no substitute for infectious enthusiasm - the only downside is that I wasn’t there when they performed.

Damned essential.

**SS**

**Like this?** Get your hands on the bands back catalogue - there’s plenty to choose from. I suggest you simply start at the beginning and work your way through. That way there’s no room for error. If you’re still unsure, their most commercial album was probably Disciplined Breakdown. Looking for a frame of reference? The later albums from the Goo Goo Dolls and Counting Crows are all in a similar vein. Classy acoustic based songs that move you. Killer... every single time.



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