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raig Chaquico, platinum-selling lead guitarist and songwriter with Jefferson Starship and chart-topping smooth jazz solo artist, takes a walk on the bluesier side of the street with the release of his Blind Pig debut, *Fire Red Moon*.

From the radio-friendly opening track, "Lie To Me," (with vocal by Noah Hunt of the Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band) to the thunderous conclusion of Robert Johnson's "Crossroads," Chaquico explores the thoroughfares and back alleys where blues and rock intersect. There's an instrumental version of Albert King's signature tune, "Born Under A Bad Sign," a rousing cover of Muddy Waters' "Rollin' And Tumblin'," and sterling originals that echo the stylings of blues/rock forerunners such as Cream, Jimi Hendrix, ZZ Top, and Steely Dan. There's even an instrumental tune entitled "Blue On Blue" that would appeal to Craig's many smooth jazz fans.



Craig Chaquico (pronounced Cha-KEY-so) was born September 26, 1954 and was raised in Sacramento, California, and by the time he was 14, he was playing in his own band and playing professionally in nightclubs. Primarily self-taught, Chaquico says "I was just this kid in my bedroom playing along with all these records. I would play until my fingers bled. All I did was play guitar from sunup to sundown."

Paul Kantner and Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane auditioned Chaquico on his 16th birthday and invited him to join them for a series of concerts and recording sessions. Chaquico made

his recording debut with Kantner and Slick in 1971 on their *Sunfighter* duo album. This was followed by appearances on the pair's next album in 1973 and Slick's solo debut album, *Manhole*, in 1974.

During this period members of the Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Crosby, Stills and Nash often appeared together in concerts and recordings, and Chaquico played alongside a number of musicians including Jerry Garcia, David Crosby, David Freiberg and Carlos Santana.

Craig recalls the early days as great learning experiences. "I learned a lot from doing sessions with Grace and Paul Kantner and that group of musicians," he says. "There were a couple of songs where I was playing rhythm guitar and Jerry Garcia was going to come in and do the guitar solos later. I figured we could just erase it when Jerry came in but when Jerry came in the next day and he heard the track with the solo I did he said, 'That's a great solo. Why don't you let the kid have the solo?' Being around all those musicians was like getting thrown into the deep end. There were so many different songwriters, musicians, and styles that I had to wear a lot of different hats."



In 1974 Chaquico toured with the newly-renamed Jefferson Starship, and opened the shows with his own band, Steelwind. After the tour, the band went into the studio and recorded *Dragon Fly*, and Chaquico demonstrated on tracks such as "Ride The Tiger" and "All Fly Away" that he was a distinctive lead guitarist able to define the Starship sound just as the very different Jorma Kaukonen had the Airplane. Chaquico, who had expected to go back to school after that one tour, was instead approached by Slick and Kantner, who invited the teenager to join the band permanently. He jumped at the chance.

In 1975 Jefferson Starship recorded the best-selling album of their career, *Red Octopus*, with Rolling Stone remarking that "the emergence of guitarist Craig Chaquico resulted in the finest San Francisco music since the heyday of the Haight."

Chaquico became a central figure in the band, playing lead guitar on all their hits from 1973 to 1990 including "Miracles," "We Built This City," "Sara" and "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now," and developing into one of their main songwriters. He wrote or co-wrote some of Starship's most memorable songs such as "Find Your Way Back," "Jane," "Layin' It On The Line," and "Rock and Roll is Good Time Music."



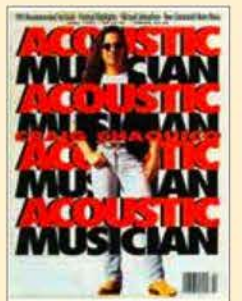
He played a seminal role in making Jefferson Starship (later Starship) one of the top selling bands in history, earning twenty platinum and gold albums. While in the band he was also on the covers of Rolling Stone, Guitar Player, the front page of the New York Times, featured in USA Today, People, Easy Rider, GQ, and Playboy, performed on both the Grammy and Oscar telecasts, appeared on a number of late night TV shows, and contributed to movie and TV soundtracks. While others came and went, Craig is the only person in the band to appear on every recording, tour, MTV video, album, and hit song during that time.

When Starship broke up in the early 90's, Chaquico formed Big Bad Wolf, a hard rock band continuing in the same vein as Starship, recording one eponymously titled album before disbanding.

Then, after finding himself at the top of the national charts in each of three consecutive decades, Craig left the fast-paced pop world of arena rock and reinvented himself as a top-selling contemporary jazz/New Age guitarist.

As a solo artist Chaquico quickly emerged as one of the most original and exciting pop instrumentalists on the contemporary jazz landscape. The fresh sounding combination of his rock, blues, contemporary jazz and new age influences allowed him a rare crossover success to the top of the charts once again. In 1993 he released his first solo album of contemporary instrumental music, *Acoustic Highway*, which hit number one on the Billboard charts and was named by that publication as the "Independent New Age Album of the Year."

His next recording, 1994's *Acoustic Planet*, also found a home at number one on the Billboard charts. The album, a blend of guitar playing and recordings of African and Native American music, garnered Chaquico a Grammy Nomination for "Best New Age Album." One of the songs from the release, "Just One World," became part of NASA's Space Ark project and is now in permanent orbit around the Earth.



In early 1995, he contributed guitar tracks for the animated children's film *Gumby: The Movie*, most notably in the scenes where Gumby plays his guitar solos in his concerts.

Some of Chaquico's other celebrated chart-topping titles include *A Thousand Pictures* (1996), *Shadow and Light* (2002), *Midnight Noon* (2004) and *Follow the Sun* (2009). Chaquico continued his success into the new millennium with two songs - "Café Carnival" and "Luminosa" - that topped the Billboard and radio airplay Smooth Jazz charts, and he even extended his chart dominance into a fifth decade with "Songbird."



Altogether, the acclaimed guitarist has sold over a million albums as a soloist. And he was voted the "Best Pop Instrumental Guitarist" by the readers of Guitar Player magazine while Jazziz magazine listed him as one of the "Top 100 Most Influential Guitarists of All Time."

Chaquico has continued to work regularly as a studio musician and maintains a robust touring schedule with his own band. In addition to recording and performing, Chaquico, a believer in the healing power of music ever since a lengthy boyhood hospitalization where his guitar saw him through the recovery process, does charity work by performing in hospitals and working with the American Music Therapy Association and riding his Harley in benefits for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. A graphic artist and amateur astronomer, he has also designed his own guitars, including a signature series that features wider frets, lower action, and steel strings. A die-hard environmentalist, Craig negotiated a deal with the guitar maker to "give something back" by planting a tree for every Chaquico guitar manufactured.

Chaquico, an avid Harley-Davidson enthusiast, had two songs chosen for the company's official double CD collection, *Road Songs*. Both his hard rock side and his more contemplative playing are represented, with one Jefferson Starship track and one from his solo career. Craig also arranged a licensing deal between Harley-Davidson and Dunlop for the manufacture of a special edition series of guitar picks and guitar straps featuring the motorcycles company's well known logo.



Going into the fifth decade of his illustrious career, with the release of *Fire Red Moon* Chaquico continues his improbable journey from the boy-wonder of 70's rock to genre-defying success as a top jazz and new age guitarist, returning to the roots blues he listened to in his early teens. Says Chaquico, "The multi-platinum stadium rock period in my musical life was as rewarding as it was fun, and part of my higher musical education. And as much as I still love instrumental smooth jazz, which for me was always blues-based anyway, I sometimes missed the edge that I could experience with blues-based rock and roll."

As the Los Angeles Times said of Chaquico, "Despite his having achieved a remarkable degree of technical prowess, it's the feelings that he elicits that gives his music magic." And blues, one of the most emotional forms of music, if it's about anything, is about feelings. *Fire Red Moon* sublimely showcases Craig Chaquico's innovative guitar wizardry, the refreshingly honest musical approach of a consummate artist, and, delightfully, more music magic.

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