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# VIBES FREE

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## CRAIG CHAQUICO

FROM  
JEFFERSON STARSHIP  
TO  
JEFFERSON STATE  
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ALSO  
INTO THE WILD  
ARTISAN TREMORS  
CUISINE & SPIRITS  
LIVE MUSIC CALENDAR  
RIPPLES FROM ALL OVER



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## A Jefferson State of Mind

**Craig Chaquico** traveled the world performing as the lead guitarist for Jefferson Starship and later Starship. Then he settled down here and became an Oregonian, blessing our community with his special talents. We catch up with him between gigs and harley rides to follow up on where the road has brought him and which way the trail leads from here.

VIBES: You're a well known "City by the Bay" kinda guy..why did you come to Oregon?

I always loved the vibe here in Oregon ever since I was a kid. I would get to go camping up here with The Tumbleweeds which was a traveling nomadish four VW buses with 8 hippie counsleors as part of this awesome summer camp called Forrest Farm Camp in Forest Knolls. It was in Marin County. Ground Zero for much of the virgin Bay Area music scene. Best times of my life were with those travelers and many of those were right around here in the State of Jefferson. Frosty Farms; as we called it; was all about nature, fresh air, horeseback riding, hiking, swimming, river rafting, Jr. rodeo, cattle round-ups, arts and crafts, capture-the-flag, weenie roasts, BBQs, waterfalls and streams, lakes and rivers, trail rides, tree houses, rope swings, outdoor adventures, acoustic guitars, campfires, filling up yer canteen in crystal clear spring waters up-stream from where the horses were clomping around and drinking too. Plus it was co-ed and I was one of the youngest kids allowed to travel along with The Tumbleweeds. It sure beat hanging around in Sacramento all summer waiting for school to start. What could go wrong? Funny thing was back in the mid 60s, The Grateful Dead pratciced nearby at another summer camp. A bunch of big long haired bearded biker looking dudes with a bread truck that carried all the gear around down there. So there I was a little kid with a big ass cowboy hat, on a little bareback pinto, looking down from the hill at these guys wondering WTF is that about? So with guitars and a few motorcycles thrown in there back then, Oregon seems to feel like a logical karmic full circle to me sometimes around my house sometimes. and its coed.

VIBES: So when did you begin playing guitar?

My dad and mom both played music for fun so I figured everybody's mom and dad played the accordion or sax around the organ or piano every nite while my big brother worked on his hot rods and motorcycles around the little dairy farm and started listening a lot to his own music.

So after taking accordion lessons for two years the guitar was a welcome change and actually what I wanted to play anyway. Mom and dad bought me a little acoustic guitar I still have, and figured it was just a little phase I was going thru and that I would eventually play "real music" like the traditional and bee bop jazz or the wonderfully written songs mom and dad played from their generation.

It definitely wasn't the Beach Boys or "Lady of Spain" on accordion anymore once I put on my big brothers headphones and listened to Jimi Hendrix the first time. Holly CRAP! thats a guitar? When my brother, Howard, joined the Navy and submarine silent service for 8 years he would let me use his hot shit SONY tape recorder that had this "sound on sound" feature.

So between recording audio off first run network Star Trek TOS episodes on reel-to-reel, I was recording my guitar and reading sci-fi and soon guitar player magazine.

I was in a bad car accident at 12 when a drunk died after he hit me and my dad head-on. I broke both my arms, my wrist, thumb, leg, foot and ankle, woke up in the hopsital 3 days later and asked for my guitar and dad. He was pretty banged up too. seriously. But dad told me about Les Paul who was also in a bad car accident. Dad said if I was brave and did my rehab he would buy me a les paul. Then later a Marshall. So my little acoustic guitar was a welcome companion thru a frighetening time during my wheelchair, crutches, and corrective shoes.

VIBES: how did Paul Kantner happen to discover you?

At 13 I almost got killed - I was beat up and left for dead at Creater Lake because I had long hair and these 3 guys were drunk.

By 14 I'm an art student at La

Serriea High school that gets to paint the backdrop for a jimi hendrix concert at cal expo in Sacramento.

Then I'm fibbing to my parents with many friends and going to Altamont to see all the bands and my future bandmates on stage.

In between art classes my English teacher asks me to come to his class after school. Uh-oh. He pulls a Martin from behind his desk an starts playing these great songs he wrote and asks ME to play guitar in HIS band? He was a well know folksinger and songwriter that was actually famous among future jeffersonians and airplaneists before they were ever famous themselves. They were fans of Jacks who was probably the real prodigy.

So Paul Kantner and Grace Slick and David Frieberg asked me to play a little lead guitar on some of their solo albums along with all these other bay area friends and superstars like Jerry Garcia, John Cippolina, Santana, Pointer Sisters, Crosby, Nash, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Hot Tuna members.

One thing lead to another and my teacher's Sacramento/bay area band got a record deal with the Jefferson Airplane lable and we recorded an album for "national release"!

Then we did a tour where we opened for other bands across the country in theaters, clubs, or fests like Blood Sweat and Tears, Electric Flag, King Crimson, Chicago, Linda Ronstadt, Pablo Cruise, Elvin Bishop (before they had mickey thomas) Tower of Power, etc etc...

VIBES: And you toured as a teenager. Did you finish high school?

Yup. Started doing college art classes while still in highschool. Funny - a famous artist named Ralph Goings was one of my art teachers. When I met Paul Stanley from Kiss, who was being produced by one of our producers - Ron Nevison and Mike Clink, instead of talking music or guitars, the first thing he says is that he collects Ralph Goings' artwork and he knew that I was a student once.

Playing with Jefferson Starship and in the opening band at the same concerts was a trip. We traveled in a station wagon with a mini-bread truck that carried our gear. We still had stuff in the wagon and took turns

riding in back on Top of the amps and stuff. Hit a bump - bruise yer nose.

VIBES: Did you write and perform on every single Starship CD?

Every national hit song, video, and album is me playing the lead guitar. In fact, I guess you could say I'm the only original founding member ever on every hit recording done by both Jefferson Starship and Starship since the first CD by the real band, Dragonfly. Everything I did with them went platinum and when I left - they never had a national hit again and was dropped. But honestly that's just a co-incidence that looks good on paper. I just can't believe all the amazing musicians that I got to share the stage with and even opened for us?

VIBES: Do you still keep in touch with any of them?

On and off. I was asked to play in both of the Jefferson Starships or Starships out there using the name over the years but I've kinda just been doing my own million selling grammy nominated solo guitar thing too. Plus I can play anything I want this way incuding any jeffesron starship or starship hits since im the only guy who actually played on all of em and wrote a few too. But I'm the only one who never used the name after all the hits but I play a few now. It really helps to have my own killer band so why fix it if it aint broke?

My regular bass player and drummer have been onboard with me for over 20 years and both are on all my own solo CDs - as well as doing other projects in the studio like Santana, Aretha Franklin, Whitney, Jeff Beck, etc. etc. And now us all working with Shae Celine Johnson from the Rogue Suspects on her stuff who is now able to play with me too, along with Mark Thomas on keys, and all of us living in the State of Jeffesron with me. I'm literally in music heaven again now.

VIBES: In 1990 everything changed for you - Did you plan this or did it broadside you?

Well...my wife got pregnant and the acoustic guitar became a lot more welcome around the house then the loud electric. I first started writing around electric guitar,

working with a fantatstic singer, Rolf Hartley, in the late 80s on my own song demos and ideas for Starship in one form or another. The music was more like the guitar based rock stuff I wrote like JANE, FIND YOUR WAY BACK, ROCK MUSIC, LAYIN IT ON THE LINE, FAST BUCK FREDDIE, SWEETER THAN HONEY, and the songs with rockin guitar solos like SAVE YOUR LOVE, WHITE RABBIT, and RUNAWAY, instead of the more pop or folky sound which I also enjoyed playing on tracks like MIRACLES, COUNT ON ME, WITH YOUR LOVE, SARA, NO WAY OUT, NOTHINGS GONNA STOP US NOW. WE BUILT THIS CITY was a good song to go take a leak on stage since it had hardly had any guitar and it only happened at the very end anyway. Mike Clink was excited about our direction but Mickey Thomas and the manager were leaning more toward pop featuring way less guitar. In fact everybody I enjoyed playing with had already left and by then it was just the 3 of us. Yikes!

I was told not to bother writing anything since the direction would never be like JANE and Mickey would continue to choose the outside hit pop songs from then on. Not really a guitar band so I took a leap of faith to record a metal/power pop CD with a lotta killer vox and guitars everywhere. Big Bad Wolf. Mike Clink was very supportive and we did a CD that was well received in Europe and Japan. This was all right when the grunge thing happened in the USA and I didn't even like our record as much after that for a while.

So then my wife became pregnant with Kyle and the acoustic guitar became the instrument of choice while the little Whirling Dervish was still in the womb before he was born at 7:11 am on 7/11 on the day of a solar eclipse. (He should play guitar - not me!)

VIBES: You won a GRAMMY for best new age album in 1994 with your ACOUSTIC PLANET CD - How did NASA get involved with this project?

I was always inspired by astronomy and built my own telescope when I was a kid. Later I did an interview with USA TODAY after I flew with the US NAVY BLUE ANGELS outa El Centro CA in an F/A -18 Hornet with

twin GE 404 Turbo fan Jet engines dumping tons of raw fuel into the after burners and going faster than a /22 cal bullet. Fastest guitarist in the world for an hour or so till I blacked out for a bit pulling a few Gs in the high G environment. So when the pilot asked me how I felt and I said "I feel the need for speed. Go ahead make my day" He took me more seriously than I should have taken me apparently. But it was a blast and it ended up in USA TODAY. The writer, Bruce Pilato, and I hit it off because he was a HUGE music guy ever since he was a little kid.

When Huges was launching a communicalons satellite in geo sync orbit with NASA they wanted to include digital audio and visual recordings including artwork, music, poetry, recordings from Earth with native American singers, musicians and dancers, stone-age tribes, classic symphonies, paintings, books, TV shows, children schools and university contributions, film, photos, drawings, and paintings, all digitized as part of the SPACE ARC PROJECT. So they asked Bruce if he could also recommend some current artists? Along with Peter Gabriel and Jimi Hendrix he mentioned I was in a band called STARSHIP, I was a huge ASTRONOMY buff and NASA fan, and I wrote a song called JUST ONE WORLD for my solo CD ACOUSTIC PLANET, which had major Earth and nature vibes and Sci-Fi elements with some pretty 3D sounding stereo imagery and intinsively ultra clean precise "hi Def" audiophile productions. They asked to hear something so I sent them the whole JUST ONE WORLD opus from the acoustic new age movement to the rockin guitar with recordings of Native American and African tribes mixed in. They liked it and used it and now its in geo sync orbit.

VIBES: Were you in The Gumby movie because your kids wanted you to or because you like him?

Both! I'm Gumby Dambit! The keyboardist, co-writer and co-producer on my first solo CDs, Ozzie Ahlers, was also Jerry Garcia's keyboardist on a live CD set. Ozzie was already working on the music for the Gumby Movie with the original animator, Arthur Cloaky, in Marin.

I think it was Joe Satriani originally but something got in the way? Ozzie needed a guitar player and I needed some actual gainful employment, like maybe a guitar playing job, having just left the other "band" and right before Kimberly became pregnant with Kyle. So I became a HUGE fan of Gumby as did my infant son later. Not so much now that he's 22 but he reminds me that "Its OK to play electric guitar again, dad"

VIBES: How and why did you choose to champion The American Music Therapy Assoc?

When my solo CD came out I wanted to go back to the hospital and play for my doctor and her new patients and family and staff. Ya know? Like "thanx doc! Not a bad job here with the broken bones and the guitar thing and everything" and to let others know during a difficult time that they are not alone and anything is possible. I found there was already an organization working with doctors and musicians to bring the healing power of music into the recovery process. It has less side effects than drugs and can calm the patient even when unconcious or asleep apparently. It helps reconnect pathways in the brain that have been damaged by an illness or head injury. Alzheimers patients who didn't recognize their family remembered their family songs. There was a man who didn't seem to respond or know his wife but when they played some music he and his wife listened to early in life, at the suggestion of a music thearapist, he blinked and looked at his wife, smiled, kissed her, and danced with her to the song they listened to when they dated 40 years earlier. That period of lucidity lasted far longer than the music itself and started to help him remember more longer. Just play me some Clapton or Hendrix or Pink Floyd or Zep etc. etc.

VIBES: You sure have some nice Harleys! What rides do you go on?

As many as I can. There have been some great ones up here and the scenery and roads are second to none! But also over the years as a "celebrity" on the first few Love Rides out of Glendale, the the Bay



Area ones, and any excuse to ride anyway.

VIBES: You've written a LOT of songs...which mean the most to you and what is your favorite song to perform?

Hmmmm?... On the one hand it's something clean and acoustic like Mountain In The Mist but I also still kind of enjoy playing some of the electric rock stuff I wrote in the Jefferson Starship vibe like Jane. But now I would have to say it's anything that has Shaeny Celine Johnson singing on stage with me and my band when she's not playing with The Rogue Suspects or recording with Narda Michael Waldon in CA or with Mark Thomas up here.

VIBES: What words of wisdom can you give to today's young guitarists?

Pratice, practice, practice. Because you love the practice itself. Be inspired enough for some reason to even want to do that much playing? If you really love to play then maybe you are already there? I know I haven't always been there but if ya average it out...

Maybe listen to the greats and the next new greats all around you, and then just don't be afraid to recognise their greatness and then don't be afraid to be great yer ownself no mater what that is. I think... if you get that *feeling* where if you DON'T do it.. then you will probably die, no mater what "it" is in your life, maybe that *feeling* is part of it.

Then again, maybe it's all really up to a great spirit anyway no matter what. "It's the wolf you feed" ...the hokey pokey? I personally think that a real sense of humor seems to help? Seriously, besides the internet (... where was THAT when I needed it?) I would just go see the LIVE players and shows in this area right here because I can't believe the super high level of talent and entertainment availabe all around us. WOW! We are so FREAKIN lucky!

Or maybe be a hippie, get yer ass kicked near death, survive a fatal alcohol related car crash, brake yer arms, wrist, thumb, leg, foot, ankle, after defecting from the accodion cult scare early in life, play some guitar, do some camping, and be LUCKY enuff to still be in a great band with some Johnsons and Thomas' in there as much as possible. Works for me.

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