

# THE GOLDBERGER VARIATIONS

## AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVE GOLDBERGER ABOUT HIS NEW CD, "THE GOLDBERGER VARIATIONS"

### Where are you coming from with this CD?

**SG:** Well my last few albums featured mostly songs that I had written myself or co-written with friends, but you know, along the way I've met many great Canadian songwriters. And like everyone, I have my favourite songwriters that I've looked up to and admired over the years. I've been singing cover tunes for the last 35 plus years in bands and I just felt it was time to pay tribute to some of these great songwriters by taking these songs and putting my spin on them.

### What do you mean by your "spin"?

**SG:** I guess you could say it's all about the song for me. And my performance is defined by my own sensibilities, the music I've absorbed over the years, and the limitations of my own musical abilities. In most cases when I start out working on a song, I'll usually just begin with a rough vocal and an acoustic guitar or piano part. I build the arrangement from there, using a variety of instruments that I have on hand in my studio. Then I'll bring in the heartbeat master, Penner MacKay to lay down a percussion or hand drum part or one of the other really great drummers that I know. On this CD the drum sets were played by my long time pal Dave Norris and Penner's son Andrew MacKay.

### Who are some of the songwriters on the CD?

**SG:** Back in the 70's when I was with the Black Creek band, we met up with a young and (now legendary) Canadian songwriter Willie P. Bennett. From time to time Willie would join up with us on the road and play harmonica in the band, sometimes for weeks at a time. Between performances we spent many hours sharing songs and some pretty crazy times. When he died in 2008 I knew I had to do one of his songs. Also, Salt Creek, the bluegrass instrumental on the CD was a tune he taught me how to pick. I had an old unreleased recording of it, so I thought it would also be appropriate to use it as a lead into his tune, Lace and Pretty Flowers.

### Who else?

**SG:** A couple by my friends Bill Colgate and Blair Packham who are two more Canadian gems. I do a couple by Andrew MacKay, a young songwriter also from Niagara-on-the-Lake and we actually co-wrote one of them. I've also co-written several songs over the years with my friend Joanne Ingrassia and I've included one of those. Of course there are the well-known songwriters too that I'm covering on this CD including Bob Dylan, Brian Wilson, Robbie Robertson and Rodney Crowell. Another song is one I used to sing back in the 70's called Stay Young, by Gallagher and Lyle a British group that had a few hits back then. And lastly a great country song by Hugh Prestwood, a writer who's had quite a few hits covered by well-known country and folk artists.

### Who else plays with you on it?

**SG:** Penner MacKay on percussion, Dave Norris and Andrew MacKay on drums, the amazing Cam MacKinnon on slide guitars, Blair Packham on guitar and vocals, The Choir Girlz (led by Debbie Fleming) on vocals, Denis Keldie on piano and accordion, Bruce Longman on guitar, Herb Nelson on B3 and piano, Randy Morrison on fiddle to name a few...

### Tell me a bit about where and how it was recorded. From the technical side?

**SG:** I did it at Hitsville NOTL/the shed studio, my studio in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It's my little oasis fully equipped with a full-blown Pro-Tools HD system and a hybrid Sony/API console. I record with mostly Neumann mikes, thru Neve or API pre's directly to Pro-Tools. I mix through the analogue board and my collection of vintage outboard gear and hardly use any of the plug-ins. I mixed this album to my Studer 2 track tape machine. I'm not really a purist and do take advantage of some of the powerful tools in Pro-Tools, but I really hardly use effects and go pretty easy on the reverb and compression. I have no idea how to use pitch correction or any of those "cheatin' tools" that everyone is using these days in pop music.

### Where'd you learn how to do all that?

**SG:** Well I've always been into it. I was the guy in the band that was lugging the reel-to-reel tape machine to the gigs to record the band. I was always the sound guy on the gig. I've always had a home studio of some shape or format. From the old stereo reel to reel with "sound on sound" in the late 60's to the 4 track reel to reel in the 70's. I got an 8-track tape machine in the 90's, moved to ADAT's and then computer based recording 10 years ago when my studio burned down and I was forced to start from scratch. At the various recording sessions I've been hired to do or was on with my bands, I would always be hangin' around with the engineer and producer asking questions or just watching and listening. Over the years I've learned a few things. I'm not that technical though. I'm a musician and come at it from that angle. Listen and make it musical. I rely on my ears more than the science.

### What's with the title of the CD?

**SG:** What do you mean? You don't get it? Google "Glen Gould".

### What are your hopes and dreams for this CD?

**SG:** Look, I'm just a guy that loves to make music. I have to do it. So really, all I can ask for is for people to hear this thing. Hopefully they will like it and it will move them in a positive way. If not, the cover artwork's really good so it makes a really pretty coaster.

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