

Peter Frampton: A Life in Music

By: Steven Rosen
Photo Credit: Michael G. Stewart

Peter Frampton's musical odyssey has been graced with a series of pop hits and world-wide recognition. His career milestones have progressed from that of a mere guitar hero to a cultural icon. He has been referenced in everything from *Wayne's World* to *The Simpsons*. Frampton's acting credits include: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* as Billy Shears, *Baa Baa Black Sheep* as Peter Buckley and Reg in the coming-of-age rock movie, *Almost Famous*.

If you live in the States, it's a safe bet that you've seen Peter recently in a Geico car insurance commercial, where he plays a black Les Paul plugged into a Marshall stack, and humorously sings his lines using his signature Framptone talkbox. Still, Frampton has never pushed to get into the limelight. Most often, he's more comfortable retreating from it so he can focus on his first love, music.

After his breakthrough album, *Frampton Comes Alive* [1976, A&M Records] broke all live album sales and became the biggest selling release in 1976, Peter all but apologized for his success. He was embarrassed by the shirtless image on the April 1976 cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine and for years after the live record came out, it took everything in him to convince his professional peers and fans that he had not abandoned the guitar in favor of becoming a rock star.

If anyone ever had doubts about Peter Kenneth Frampton's devotion to the instrument, they would have to go no further than a listen to his 1986 *Premonition* album or his latest release, *Fingerprints* [2006, New Door Records]. *Fingerprints* is his first ever all-instrumental recording. It reveals the astonishing player tackling everything from jazz and acoustic pieces to rock and semi-fusion. So brilliant is it that he won the 2007 Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental Album.

No one will ever question Peter's prowess as a first-rate picker again.

Background

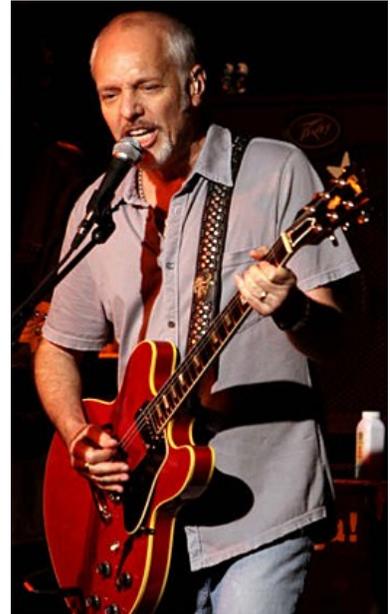
Steven Rosen: Peter, I know that your parents were musical people, a piano in the house and a banjo kind of instrument?

Peter Frampton: Yes, it started off with my mother's father, my grandfather. He was an incredible singer who sang in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. He started off young, but to be part of the choir at St. Paul's is quite amazing. So, he obviously had a pretty damn good voice. Excuse me, you can take the "damn" out. [Laughs]

Steven: Since we're talking about the Lord, huh?

Peter: Yeah. [Laughs] So, he was very musical, but I don't believe he played anything. And my mother was a frustrated actress. She was offered a scholarship by one of the great dame old actresses, I forget the name; she was offered a scholarship to RADA, which is the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

All she needed was fifty pounds for the entrance fee and her mother wouldn't give it to her because she said to be an actress you might as well be a whore. That's the way they regarded them in Victorian times, which my grandparents were of that era, or one generation removed. So, it wasn't thought of very highly as a career.



So, my mother didn't encourage me, but she never discouraged me. When I first showed signs of talent musically she was always there to champion the cause. She wasn't a mumager as we call them these nowadays [laughs], at all. My father was a teacher and he would play guitar when he was in college. So, he was playing sort of big band, you know, Freddie Green type of chords.

From the combination of the two, I think, is obvious where I got my talent from. It's somewhere in that DNA. So, I started when I was eight years old, or seven, when I first went up to the attic with my dad to get down the vacation suitcases. That's when I saw the funny looking little tiny case which had the banjolele in it, which is banjo shaped, with the skin and everything, tiny version of a banjo, but tuned like a ukulele, with gut strings. So, I said to my dad, "What is that?" and he said, "Well, your grandmother gave me this so hopefully one day, if you're interested, she said when your hands are big enough you can play chords on it, if you want to try." My dad's mother was a huge fan of theater, music, everything. And, of course, Vaudeville was huge during her growing up.

She bought this banjolele because an English entertainer called George Formby used to play it. If you've read anything about George Harrison, I think he owned some of George Formby's banjoleles. He was a huge fan. It was English Vaudeville, anyway, and he was a comedian and a singer and everybody loved him.

That's where the derivation of the banjolele came from. Like I said, it was tuned like a, well, it's actually tuned like the top four-strings of a guitar, except the lowest note is an octave higher. So, it goes [sings], "My cat's got fleas," [laughs], that's how we remembered it.

The "My cat's got fleas" tuning, which we've all heard of. [laughs] That's how I started, a tiny seven year old. I started learning skiffle numbers, like, my dad showed me how to play "Michael Row the Boat," and "Hang Down Your Head, Tom Dooley," and that sort of stuff.

Steven: Was it easy for you, Peter? Did it fall beneath your fingers pretty easily? Was there sort of a light that shone through the window on these little Peter Frampton hands on this banjolele?

Peter: It was a piece of cake [laughs].

Steven: Seriously?

Peter: For me it was. I'm sure the first time I picked it up it was very difficult, but within the weekend I had "Tom Dooley" down. Then when I was eight, for Christmas I asked Santa for a "gee-tar" and I got my first plectrum style steel-string guitar, that's what it was called. My dad got a gut-string classical, which I can see from here. I still have it.

I don't have mine because, you know, in those days you only have one guitar at a time because you had to sell one to get the next one, you know what I mean? So, I don't have that original one, but I did end up putting a pickup on it. My dad showed me how I could plug it through the tube radio in the living room. It had an input there.

I remember I bared the wires at the other end of the guitar cable, and we used two matchsticks. We put the bare wires, I can't believe we didn't get shocked [laughs], but my dad and I forced them in with the matchsticks. Voila! Put it on auxiliary or whatever it was and I had an amp. So, that was my first amp.

Steven: From then it was on to bands in school?

Peter: Yes.

Frampton's First Big Break

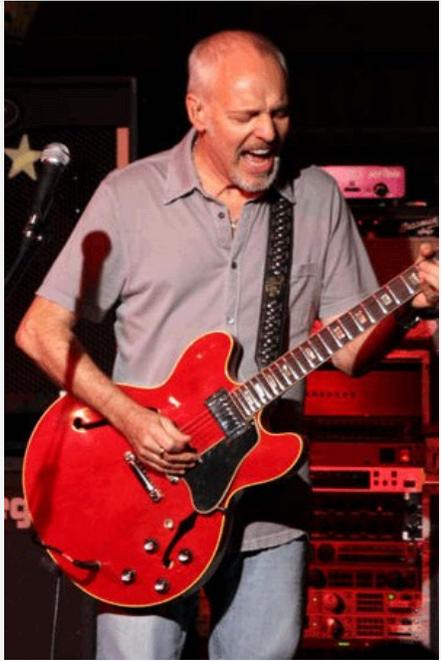


Photo Credit: Michael G. Stewart

Steven: I know there were a few bands sort of pre-Herd. Trubeats and the Preachers, and it was through the Preachers that Bill Wyman actually produced the band?

Peter: Yes. That was my big break, when I was 14.

Steven: Were you that good that Bill Wyman was interested in you? He wasn't in the Stones then, was he?

Peter: No, he was.

Steven: Oh, he was?

Peter: Oh, absolutely. This was 1964. When I met them they'd already had "19th Nervous Breakdown."

Steven: What was that like for you?

Peter: Well, the van came to pick me up; the group van, with all the gear in it, to go to the first recording session. We passed by Bill's house. He lived in South London, over a garage, in an apartment, and Bill came out and everyone went deadly silent.

I just kept mouthing to the other guys in the band, who were all much older than me, [*whispers excitedly*] "We've got a Rolling Stone in the front seat!" [*laughs*]

That was my first brush with greatness. Now, I realize, he wasn't so great. No, he's been my friend, he's like my older brother. He's a dear, dear life-long friend. We've had many, many great times together. He's just one of those genuine, wonderful people. I wish everybody was like him. He's a super guy.

Steven: How did he even know about this little band, the Preachers?

Peter: Well, therein lies the tale. He didn't know I was in the band. What happened was I was working on Saturdays at the local music store, which was actually a department in the big Robertson's Electric Store. You could buy a washing machine, a record player. But, there was a music division and they went overboard and we had Gretschs, Strats, Teles.

We had the whole deal. This was 1964. We had 335s, 175s. If I think of all the guitars I used to have to clean and re-string every Saturday, my God they would be worth a fortune now!

I worked on Saturdays and basically all the top local musicians would come in and I would jam with them, in the shop, to sell them something. You know? This guy called Tony Chapman came in, and he was the drummer, at that particular time, of the band I was to join later, the Herd; different personal, still the same band. Well, his story is this. He was the original drummer of the Rolling Stones. It was Tony, Brian, Mick and Keith. They had no bass player.

So, Tony went to school with Bill, Beckenham and Penge Grammar School. And he said, "Well, I know this bass player, and he's got a van, too." So, I think that was a big part of why he got the job [*laughs*]. No, I'm joking. You know how big a van was in those days. Who wanted to put their stuff in your dad's car and possibly damage it, you know? This is the very beginning of the Rolling Stones. It's in the book and everything.

What happens was, they get offered what they feel is their break into the big time. No records yet, but they get offered a residency in Wardour Street at the Flamingo Club. And Rik and Johnny Gunnell, who were the people who did the Isle of Wight Festival, they owned the place, and that was where they started.

You could see the early Manfred Mann there; you could see Jack Bruce and the Graham Bond Organization; you could see Eric and the Bluesbreakers there. You know, it was all those very cool musical bands; it wasn't poppy at all.

So anyway, Johnny or Rik Gunnell offered the Stones a residency there, but one of the other of them said to Mick or Keith or both, "You can have the residency on Saturday night throughout the summer," which was the *piece de resistance* because you get all the tourists as well. And they said, "But, not with that drummer."

So, exit Tony, enter from Alexis Korner's band, Charlie [Watts], and Bill felt terrible. But, for whatever reason, I won't go into Tony's personality [*laughs*].

Steven: Oh, really?

Peter: You know, I mean, obviously he burned his bridges with the Preachers. So Bill said, as Tony was leaving the building I guess, "I feel so indebted to you that if you ever get a band together I'll produce it for you."

Voila! Enter Tony into Robertson's in Beckenham on Saturday for a pair of sticks and he sees me jamming with some other musicians, you know. He'd left the other band, the Herd, for sort of the same reasons. And he says, "I'm forming this band called the Preachers and Bill Wyman is gonna produce us.

Do you wanna join the band? It's a semi-pro band." I said, "Well, I'm still at school, you know?" and he said, "Well, we've all got jobs so, you know, it's not gonna be a burden. What do you think?" Then he said, "Come around to my house and I'll give you some albums to listen to and this is the sort of stuff I wanna do in the band." Well, I go over to his house and he gives me, like, 30 albums. He gives me everything from Otis Redding's *Otis Blue* to Roland Kirk, Mose Allison, Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery, Miles Davis, you know, it was very eclectic. Some pop, some blues. Oh, yeah, a lot of blues. And it's like Friday night and he said, "Can you learn these tracks off these albums by Tuesday?" So I said, "No problem!" with the sweat pouring down my brow, you know? So, I turn up to rehearsal and he's got some of the top musicians, he picked great musicians from all these local bands that had folded for whatever reason, and I was playing with the cream of the crop from South London. That's where I got the love of jazz, as well as blues.

But, everyone was doing Bluesbreakers, with the same haircut, the long sideburns, basketball boots, and trying to find something that looked like a '59 Les Paul. I just thought it's so cool. I love Eric. I went to see him as often as I could. That was when we had, every place you drove in London, on every wall, the graffiti "Clapton is God." So, it was that period. But, I sort of deviated from that and went to...my father had brought into the house two albums when we first got a record player. He bought the Shadows, Cliff Richard and the Shadows, but it was just *The Shadows Instrumentals*, their first album, and Hank Marvin was my idol as a guitar player at that point, from the English players.

But he also brought in *Le Hot Club De France* with Stephane Grappelli and Django Reinhardt which, when I first heard that, I thought it sounded awful. You know, "What is this? It sounds terrible. That's that jazz stuff." And old jazz, to boot.

I would finish playing the Shadows album and my dad would rush to put on Django to clear the air, I think, and I would rush up the stairs. Well, I probably told you this before, but each time he put it on I slowed my rush a little bit more until I stayed in the room. Then I started listening to Django all day, every day, and tried to play like him. But, I was just starting, virtually, and I just realized this guy's amazing. To this day I still think he's the best guitarist there ever was.

So, I got that influence. If Robert Johnson was the album that my dad bought I would've learned to play like that first. I started branching out from pop into jazz first, and then at the same time listening to Bluesbreakers and then of course everything he listened to. Buddy Guy, B.B. King, you know, all the Kings [*Laughs*], Albert. All of them. And that was it, it was just, like, overload, listening to every guitar player I could ever listen to.



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On Ritchie Blackmore

Steven: So, Peter, you talk about seeing Clapton with Mayall, many times. What about some of those other guys? Were any of those other guys around? I know that you played with some people who sort of peripherally had done some stuff with [Ritchie Blackmore](#). Was he around?

Peter: The drummer of the Herd, well, he was in the Herd for a while and then another drummer joined. Mick, the first drummer, he was really close with Ritchie Blackmore and Ritchie, before I joined the band, used to sit in with the Herd. Because they weren't a pop band at all, they were an R&B band. Very sort of undergroundish, very American FM, you know, before FM.

In fact, Ritchie came into Robertson's and I met him there because everybody had to come to Robertson's for their strings. So, I met just about all the local...and Pete Sears, the bass player from Starship [Jefferson Starship], he used to lend me an amp.

We're the same age. He had this fantastic Bird amp, and it had, like, tremolo and reverb, so I used to borrow that for the Trubeats gigs. And then, of course, when I went to the secondary school, the high school, that's when I met [David Bowie](#), as well.

Looking Back at the '60s and Guitar

Steven: Exactly. Which kind of brings us to the next section here. I kind of have a sense, and maybe it's my idealization of that period. One, everybody was an amazing player, or so it seems. At every club there was some great, unique thing going on. It was like all this cross-pollination of you running into Bowie here, Bill Wyman. It just seems like there was so much more of a sense of guitar community and what these guitar players were saying as instrumentalists, just seems so much more defined and unique than what has gone on since then. And I know I'm looking back, but...

Peter: No, I agree with you. I think the thing was that we were a much smaller country. We were very deprived of good music. We had to wait for the merchant seaman to come back from America to bring us all the early blues and R&B, because the BBC wouldn't play it. So, it was almost like we wanted to listen to what we couldn't hear on the radio.

Steven: Everyone wants to discover something underground. It's still the same today. Kings of Leon, everyone thought were great, until they've now got a hit and all those people think they've sold out, you know? It'll always be the same. "They're my band!"

Steven: No, they're not, they're everybody's band now.

Peter: Hank Marvin said it in *New Musical Express* [NME] or one of those. He went over to America, the Shadows went over with Cliff once I think in the late Fifties, early Sixties and came back and Hank said, "Oh, it's terrible over there. Everybody plays guitar." [Laughs] He said there are too many guitar players. We were a select few. It wasn't like everybody played guitar or piano or drums or whatever. There was me and Bowie, that I know in my school, that were musical. And Pete Sears. We both went to the primary school together.

Grade school, you know, and he was the only other person I knew that played guitar at that age. You know, eight or nine [Laughs]. Maybe I'm wrong, but it seemed like we were on the cutting edge. Only a few of us were actually playing music then.

Steven: Peter, obviously you reunited with Bowie many years later for the *Never Let Me Down Again* album and the Glass Spider Tour. You had said somewhere online, and again I don't know how accurate this is, that that had sort of brought back memories of you doing the big rock 'n' roll band thing with Marriot and Pie. You know, being up onstage playing those big riffs.

Is there part of you that thinks what if? Had things worked with you and Steve, and if obviously he'd never passed away, could you have seen yourself being in this band, Humble Pie, years later and being like an English version of, say, Aerosmith or something?

Peter: I don't think, no, I don't think it would've been that. We'll never know. But, as much as we were enjoying the music, we were still having our problems years later. We could not have been any different as people. But, I mean, the music. Steve said it, after we'd been working a couple of weeks, he said, "You know Pete, I really didn't think that you and I could have so much fun playing music and writing music together again." And I said, "One day, Steve, I will play that back to you!" [Laughs]

Well, the main thing was I'd wised up, if you wanna put it that way, for me. I wasn't drinking and doing anything. I was serious about my music. Steve was still doing that. It's like oil and water the two of us, unfortunately. Believe me, it was both of us. We were both responsible for our relationship. It takes two to tango, and all that rubbish, but it's true. The other day I was at a gig and this guy came backstage and he showed me pictures he'd taken of me the last time I was there. I can't remember where it was now. And he said, "This is for you," and it was an envelope of, like, an 11×15 photo. I opened it up and I got chills, man.

It was Steve, at the mike, with the Epiphone with the one P90, and it was just hanging, he was on the mike, long hair, and he was playing harp with his eyes closed. That's going up next to the Beatles downstairs for me. That's how much I respect him to this day and always will. I will never have the opportunity to play with that talent again or anyone that comes close.

Maybe I'm wrong. I hope so. That's a better way of putting it. I hope that I get the chance to work with someone again who has the amount of talent that that little five foot guy had. I mean, he was the greatest, right? He was better than Paul Rodgers and he was better than Rod Stewart. He would've been bigger than either of them.

Steven: Oh, yeah. Peter, [*As Safe As Yesterday Is*](#), can you give me 25 words?

Peter: What an exciting record to make. That was our first creative period as a band together. I mean, we started in Jerry Shirley's parent's living room. Then went down to Steve's little town in Essex at Magdalen Laver Village Hall, and we got it together in the country as Traffic had just done before us. That was our first time in the studio, with Andy Johns, you know, as the engineer.

It doesn't get much better. I just remember having so much fun. We did it so quickly. It was, like, bing, bam, boom, it was done. We made two records in six months. *Town and Country* came really quickly after that. Then, after that, we switched brothers and went to Glyn Johns, as the engineer and producer.

Signing With A&M Records

Steven: Obviously, Glyn brought something different or you wouldn't have made the change, I'm thinking?

Peter: Well, I'll tell you why. Immediate Records went bust. Andrew Oldham, he's the original manager of the Rolling Stones, was our manager and he had his management and record company called Immediate, who had Chris Farlowe and the Thunderbirds. I mean, he had some fantastic acts. The McCoys, "Hang On Sloopy," he signed as well for England.

That's when Andrew Oldham said, "This is what you've got to ask for. Go to all the major labels. Go to Warner Brothers, go to Atlantic, go to A&M, and we decided to go with A&M. They offered us more money, I'll be very honest.

And Ahmet got back on a plane and thought he had us signed. But, the following day we met with A&M and they offered us more money than I could ever say, for that period, anyway. It was four hundred thousand dollars for a four-year contract, you know, which was unheard of in those days.

Steven: And that would've represented four records?

Peter: No, two records a year. That was eight records.

Steven: And what year is this Peter?

Peter: '69.

Steven: That was a lot of money.

Peter: So, each one of us got a hundred thousand dollars.

Steven: Oh, really?

Peter: Yeah, because recording costs where on top of that. So yeah, I bought my first Aston Martin with that one, boy! [*Laughs*] But, we all bought houses. You know, it was a wonderful, secure feeling. Off shore companies, the whole bit and everything. Jerry Moss of A&M said, "If I sign you, you must use Glyn. I want you to use Glyn Johns."

I mean, he'd done the [first Led Zeppelin record](#), all the Stones records, the first Eagles record. Need I go on, you know? So, we said, "No problem!" [*Laughs*] I mean, I'd worked with Glyn. When I did that first session with Bill for the Preachers, Glyn Johns was the engineer; that's my first engineer.

Steven: Did he remember you at all?

Peter: Oh, yeah. [*Laughs*]

Steven: See, that's exactly what I'm talking about. It just seems like there were these core guys. You know, Glyn and Andy and Eddie Kramer, they were just making all these amazing records. It was a community, a few studios. I dunno, it's just my take on it.

Peter: No, you're right. I felt very privileged to be, because of Bill, involved in that scene. I was part of swinging London, you know? It was great to grow up in that time period of freedom. First generation since the war [World War II], look at it that way as well.

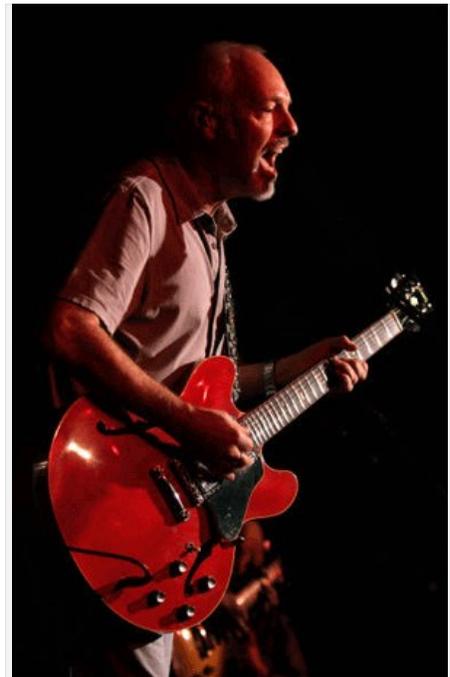


Photo Credit: Michael G. Stewart

My parents never wanted to leave the house after my father came back from six years in the war, in every major battle in the Second World War. He didn't ever think he was gonna see his wife again. So, when he got home they hardly ever went out. I think to the day they passed, God bless their souls, they were just so thankful. We don't know what that was like. I don't know what that was like. Obviously, now I know, but as a child I didn't know. Whereas there was war, there was Vietnam, and even though it wasn't on American shores. I think the reason that things happened was that it was, like, the relief of the World Wars being over and the potential that there was not gonna be a regular war again. It was gonna be Armageddon or nothing. So, I think in a way we were sort of the first protected generation that our parents said, "Go do whatever." [Laughs] I dunno. It's my theory. Why, all of a sudden, were all these young kids now so creative and given the forum to do this? I think it had a lot to do with history.

On Humble Pie and the Rolling Stones



Photo Credit: Michael G. Stewart

Steven: Absolutely, I never thought of it that way, but it really makes a lot of sense. The *Rock On* album, which I understand is your favorite, was just an amazing record.

Peter: Yes. Well, actually my favorite Humble Pie record is *Smokin'*, but I'm not on it [laughs]. Because I could see that we were going that way. We were going towards the more perfect album, and to me that was Humble Pie's perfect studio record.

We were almost there with *Rock On*, but it took a little bit of success to give the boys the confidence to go back in before success goes to the head. You know what I mean?

But, I loved working with Glyn. He could really handle me and Steve very, very well. Brought the best out of him and brought the best out of all of us.

Steven: You've had this pretty amazing relationship with the Stones. Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts playing on your new record. You actually auditioned for the Stones?

Peter: No, no, no, I did not. My bass player John Regan auditioned for the Stones when Bill left, not surprisingly. No, what happened was I had

recorded the Frampton record. It was out and it was getting really good airplay around the country.

It was my first small success. It peaked, before *Comes Alive* came out, it peaked at around 350,000 copies, which was as many as all my solo records together up until that point.

So I'm driving into Manhattan, feeling pretty good about myself. At this point I'm thinking, "I'm on the way. It wasn't a mistake to leave Humble Pie," which I'd been thinking all along. You know, "Oh God, I made a big mistake!" especially when *Rockin' The Fillmore* shot up the charts, you know?

Steven: For you, that must've been an unbelievable feeling.

Peter: It was horrible! [Laughs] But, I made my own decision and I stuck by it, you know?

Steven: And after the *Fillmore* record there was never a sense of, you know, Steve, let's try it some more?

Peter: No, but Steve was really angry with me because he was so hurt. He thought that I would never leave.

Anyway, so I'm in the car, I'm driving into Manhattan. I'm living in Westchester, New York, in an apartment, I've got NEW on, the big FM station in New York, of course.

Eleven 'o clock news or something, "Uh, the five people on the short list for the Rolling Stones are... Ron Wood... Peter Frampton..." Oh, I dropped the phone! [Laughs] I didn't drop the phone, I almost pulled off and

crashed! I had to pull off the road on the throughway, which is illegal, and stop my heart from palpitating, you know?

And I knew who'd suggested me, it was obviously Bill and Charlie. When I was working on "I'm in You," Mick came in next door in Electric Lady. He was mixing [Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!](#) , one of those live albums, and I said, "Was it true?" and he said, "Absolutely you were." I said, "So what was the deal? Why am I not in the Stones?" [Laughs]

I put him on the spot, you know? He very nicely said, "We knew you were about to do what you just did." But, they knew it was gonna be Ronnie, I think because basically it's a clone of Keith. They were just so tight, you know? But, to find out from the horse's mouth that it was true was very nice.

Steven: Could you have seen yourself in the Stones? I know it's almost an impossible question to answer, but I mean musically you could've cut all that stuff. Musically, it would've been amazing.

Peter: I would've been like, not in style. But, I would've been the quiet one like Mick Taylor. He was so tasty. He brought absolute guitar taste to the Stones. Not that Keith...Keith is Keith and it's wonderful. His style, we all imitate him. Let's face it, we all took that bottom E string off and made a G chord out of it.

You know, there's nothing like it. He's so talented and so innovative, Keith. But Mick Taylor had this, just, beauty of, you know, perfectly in tune and sweet blues sound with that SG. I put him in the category of Peter Green, right up there with Peter Green. I mean, unbelievable.

Steven: Absolutely. What about Kossoff?

Peter: Oh, yes, I loved it, loved it. Paul, his father was the actor?

Steven: Yeah, that's right.

Peter: I used to go into Selmers in Charing Cross Road and Paul would sell me my strings. And I was in the Herd and he was, "Hey man, it's so cool to meet you, man!" not knowing that he was gonna do what he did, you know? I was a huge fan of that vibrato [laughs]. It's such a cool vibrato; it's so unique and no one can do it like he did.

Jack Bruce, Ringo Starr and Bill Wyman

Steven: In the late '90s you played with Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings and then you did Ringo's band with Jack Bruce, and you guys did a version of "Sunshine of Your Love." That must've been pretty cool.

Peter: It was like going to heaven. The heaven part was that Jack Bruce liked me! [Laughs]

Steven: You know, it's funny. I heard a lot of stories about Jack and I had the good fortune to actually do a phone interview with him a couple of months ago and I found him unbelievably sweet and open.

Peter: But, I heard those same stories. He can be difficult, but so can we all. You know, I'm not gonna say anything. When Ringo told me who was in the band he went, "Simon Kirk on drums" and I went, "Oh, great, I know Simon." He goes, "Gary Brooker on keyboards" and I go, "Oh, you're kidding me?" And then, "Jack Bruce on bass," and I go [In frightened tone], "Ohhh, I hope he likes me." [Laughs]

But, we hit it off. I mean, I gushed when I met him. I said, "I have so much respect for you. I cannot believe that I'm playing with you." After a few rehearsals he came up and said virtually the same thing, which made me feel like a million bucks, I have to say.

Because, I did feel that *Frampton Comes Alive* removed, the success of it, removed all my musical credibility as a guitar player. And you can't disagree with me, because of the pop icon I became.

So, to actually be playing with a Jack Bruce and a Gary Brooker and Ringo and Simon, who are all, like, credibility personified, and never had a problem with anything else, to actually be respected openly by these people was a huge, giant leap forward for me since *Frampton Comes Alive*.

Les Paul Tribute Album

Steven: You worked on a [Les Paul tribute CD](#)?

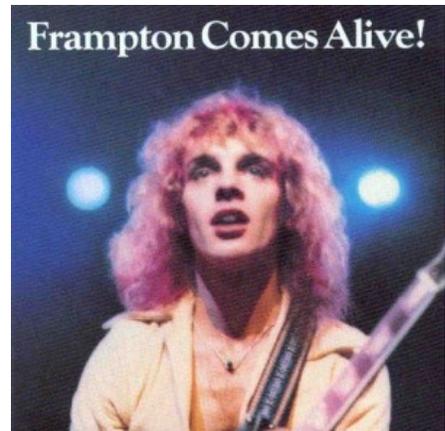
Peter: Yes.

Steven: Did you keep in contact with Les? Did you have a relationship with him?

Peter: I spoke with him over the years. I called him anytime I wanted, I had his home phone number. I mean, he was Les, you know? He was just unbelievable. Oh, I'll tell you what I told Les, and this was right about that time. I said, "I have to tell you Les that when I was, like 11 or 12, I got two reel-to-reel tape recorders. Cheap ones, with those horrible cheap crystal mikes, and I stuck the extension radio speaker that my father put in the kitchen from the living room, where the cheap valve radio was.

I ripped it from the wall, put some wires, took it out of the tape recorder in my bedroom, the bathroom was next door to my bedroom. I ran the wires in, put the speaker in the bath, literally in the bath, and put the shitty crystal mike on the window sill and then played or sang through it, and picked it up and brought it back as an echo return. I had my first live chamber when I was 12."

I told Les this and he said, "I used to stick Mary [Ford] in the bathroom all the time!" [Laughs]



Instrumental Records

Steven: *Fingerprints*, your first instrumental record. I imagine you were trying to touch upon the various things you brought as a guitar player, jazz, the rock thing, bringing in all these different people, and you won the Grammy for it. Was it everything you thought it would be?

Peter: Yes, it was. I had my own studio. There was no release date, no expectation, no one knew I was doing it except the record company, who I don't think was thrilled it was going to be an instrumental because it was going to be my first record back with A&M, you know?

Thank God I'm back with them, if they exist by the time I release my next record. That'll be questionable. But, I do know now the feeling of satisfaction of finishing a record and playing it back and going, "I don't think I wanna change anything?" Maybe Humble Pie was the last time? Or *Wind of Change*?

To me it was like a different career, the start of something new. And when I got the Grammy for it, to me, it's just like, "Okay, we're on a different chapter now," you know? It's another career. It's the credible musician Peter Frampton, again. It just took 30 years to get rid of the stigma of *Frampton Comes Alive*. I'm not talking about the sales. I'm just talking about the reduced credibility as a guitar player.

Steven: I understand. Would you do another instrumental?

Peter: Oh, I definitely will do one, one day, I'm going to do a couple of instrumentals on the next one. But, I will reintroduce my voice [laughs] on... because the instrumental tracks that we play live, it blows me away how well they go down. And, you know, after the first one goes down so well I go, "Shit, I should've given up singing years ago!" [Laughs]

Steven: Everything I know is wrong!

Peter: Yes, exactly! [Laughs] So, yeah, I had no idea the effect it would have and I guess now I know what the feeling is while you're doing it, before you do it, while you're doing it and when it's finished. I'm already feeling that same way about the songs that we've, I mean, we've already written 33 songs for the next record.

Steven: That's unbelievable.

Peter: Yeah, it's the most I've ever written. And I'm not talking about quantity, I'm talking about quality. So, it's gonna be very, very hard to make a choice, but that's easy, really. It's hard, but it's easy. They sort of spell themselves out in the end.

Funk Brothers and Motown

Steven: There's a Funk Brothers Motown project in the works, perhaps?

Peter: Yes, two actually. One they're gonna play with me on at least three tracks. We'll be cutting those in Nashville in January. Two, they're doing a Funk Brothers CD which they've asked me to play and sing on, and that'll probably be "Shotgun" by Junior Walker & the All-Stars, which is the one I did when I inducted them into the Musicians Hall of Fame last year.

Steven: Peter, last question and it's a weird one. What is the least realized solo you ever put on record. Could be a solo project, *Pie*, a session thing. A solo you went in there feeling good about and then you listen back and go, "Oh, I just missed it." Or have there been any?

Peter: Oh, yeah [*Laughs*].

Steven: I mean, everything you do is amazing, but I mean, something that kind of sticks in your craw?

Peter: Well, the solo on "Lines in My Face" on the live record starts off great, [*laughs*] but I don't reach the note, for the real high note at the end, and that's always bugged the shit outta me because tuning is really important to me. For some people it creates excitement. To me it gives me, what's the word, vertigo? [*Laughs*]

Steven: Obviously, you must have a lot of favorites, but on the other side of it what's the greatest solo you ever did? If you had to pick one as sort of, like, being representative of you as a guitar player?

Peter: I would go with one off *Fingerprints*, "*Ida Y Vuelta* (Out And Back)," the acoustic solo. It is the closest thing to pure jazz that I've ever done.

Steven: And it's an acoustic solo. Interesting.

Peter: Yeah, it's sort of in the vein of Django. I mean, there is a Django tribute track on there with John Jorgenson, as well. That was more difficult for me to do, that one, but "*Ida Y Vuelta*" flowed, and that's me.

