

FOR OPERATORS ARE STANDING BY:

"4 STARS -- THIS FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED 'EDGE OF HEAVEN' SHOWS LUCAS ATTACKING EVERYTHING FROM PUNK TO FOLK...often referred to as a 'former collaborator' of the Three B's (Beefheart, Bernstein and Buckley), this compilation should help finally put him in the spotlight...confirms him as the psychedelic guitarist for the post-modern set...the perfect introduction."

Mojo (UK), 10/2003

"4 STARS -- THERE'S ONLY ONE MEMBER OF THE GARY LUCAS SCHOOL OF GUITAR HISTORICIS: GARY LUCAS. Stylistically dissimilar but equally bonkers mavericks might include Dave Fiuczynski, Roy Buchanan, Vinni Reilly, but even they'd be hard pressed to match the 'Man with a Thousand Ideas'....this collection features Lucas in even more pyrotechnic, psychedelic mode. This is not Lucas in sideman guise -- not that Lucas ever was really a sideman: he just put on his own show alongside the likes of the good Captain or the equally unique Mary Margaret O'Hara...the man can't be beat: he's a brain-box axe man in excelsis, Page, Beck, Roy Harper and Blind Willie Johnson rolled into one. If you want virtuosity, passion and the downright weird speared to a righteous anger, 'Operators are Standing By' is for you."

Jazzwise (UK), 8/2003

"EVIDENCE THAT LUCAS, DESPITE HIS PAST WORK WITH BEEFHEART, BUCKLEY AND JOAN OSBORNE, IS NOBODY'S SIDEMAN. It's also proof that he's got a sense of humor. His playing speaks volumes whether through a calming sea of loops and delayed tones, raw distortion, or his speedy and elegant slide playing. There's a killer version of Pink Floyd's 'Astronomy Domine,' where Lucas builds a wall of feedback, splitting the difference between Syd Barrett and Jimi Hendrix. And 'Theme from East Enders' plays canny games with vibrato and intonation to make his guitar's sound -- which is always big and focused -- shimmy. A very good introduction to the solo work of this underrated player and songwriter. 3 STARS."

Boston Phoenix and Portland Phoenix,
5/2003

"SMART COLLECTION OF THE FORMER CAPTAIN BEEFHEART GUITARIST'S SETS."

Guitar One, 5/2003

RAVES FOR THE EDGE OF HEAVEN:

"GARY LUCAS GOES MOSTLY ACOUSTIC AND DELIVERS A GORGEOUS SET OF SONGS...WITH MELODIES THAT HAVE THE RING OF STANDARDS, THESE SONGS ARE LIKELY TO FIND A PLACE IN YOUR MEMORY."

Utne Reader, 9-10/2003

"ONE OF THE MOST MESMERIZING DISCS THAT WE'VE HEARD LATELY...SEDUCTIVE AND FULL OF LONGING."

Daedalus Books Catalogue, Winter
2003

"LUSH MID-CENTURY CHINESE POP LUCAS REVIVES SO EXQUISITELY...an intriguing Chinese New Year meeting of fleet-fingered guitarist and cool pipa (Chinese lute) virtuoso Min Xiao-Fen, who also happens to sing."

Village Voice concert pick, 2/2003

"GARY LUCAS -- CHARMINGLY ODDBALL POP SONGWRITER, MUSICAL WORLD TRAVELLER, UTTERLY HELLACIOUS GUITARIST -- IS PERHAPS AT HIS MOST HELLACIOUSLY, CHARMINGLY COSMOPOLITAN ON THIS FRANKLY AMAZING ALBUM...WHICH INCLUDES JAW-DROPPINGLY VIRTUOSIC FINGERSTYLE GUITAR ARRANGEMENTS. VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED."

All Music Guide, 1/2003

"4 STARS...LUCAS MAKES SUBLIME CHINESE CONNECTION...his dexterity has never been doubted. 'The Edge of Heaven' has him focusing all his attention on China's gracefully melodic pop tradition of the 1940s and 50s. Lucas lets his respectful acoustic, electric and national steel guitars do the translating on this delightful set."

Q (UK), 5/2002

"A GORGEOUS TRIBUTE TO THESE BYGONE VAMPS CHOW HSUAN AND BAI KWONG...IF YOU LIKE THE SUPERB SOUNDTRACK TO WONG KAR-WAI'S 'IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE' -- YOU'LL LOVE THIS."

The Independent (UK), 4/2002

"AN ETHEREAL DISC, BRIMMING WITH NOSTALGIA, THREADED WITH BRILLIANTLY EXECUTED ARPEGGIOS ON THE NATIONAL STEEL GUITAR...he throws himself into Chinese pop music from the beginning of the 20th century with elegance, brio, and an audacious sense of experimentation...ONE OF THE MOST CAPTIVATING RECORDS OF 2002."

Liberation (France), 4/2002

"TOO BEAUTIFUL TO BE TRUE...CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF HEAVEN."

Jazz Podium (Germany), 3/2002

"GARY LUCAS IS A GOD ESPECIALLY WORSHIPPED BY GUITARISTS...'THE EDGE OF HEAVEN' SHOULD WELL MEAN HIS BREAKTHROUGH TO A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE. Lucas outdoes as a guitarist everything he has done until now -- breathtakingly beautiful."

De Volkskrant (Holland), 5/2002

"WORLD CD OF THE WEEK, 5 STARS -- Lucas is a consummate player and brings out the full lyrical beauty of these strong tunes while filling them with tumbling runs of picked notes and luscious chords in resonant open tunings. It's difficult to describe the strange, fresh pleasures of this music; suffice to say it really is unique and the title is no exaggeration."

Birmingham Post (UK), 4/2002

"HAUNTING AND EVOCATIVE CHINESE SONGLAPES (AND MUCH, MUCH MORE)."

Time Out London, 4/2002

"A TRICKY PROJECT WITHOUT BEING ELITIST, SUICIDAL IF IT WERE IN THE HANDS OF ANYONE ELSE, BUT PERFECTLY EXECUTED. NOT ONE CUT THAT ISN'T GOOD -- EVERYTHING HERE DISPLAYS EXCELLENCE. THIS MAJOR GUITAR (ANTI) HERO AT THE CROSSROADS OF CHINESE POP AND SOUTHERN COUNTRY, PRODUCES A MASTERPIECE IMMEDIATELY DESTINED FOR IMMORTALITY."

Rock and Folk (France), 2/2002

"WITHOUT QUESTION THE MOST INTERESTING AND CHALLENGING GUITARIST PLAYING TODAY....Lucas has realized the project -- brilliantly. Gary has been threatening to make a record this unified and with such immediate appeal (try not humming the tunes after one listen) for a while. His humour and jaw-dropping techniques here blend with a devotee's enthusiasm for the music...ONE OF THE THREE BEST GUITAR ALBUMS EVER MADE. IT'S THAT GOOD."

Folk Roots (UK), 3/2002

"IT IS SIMPLY GORGEOUS...played by a guitarist who learned his chops in Kowloon's dive bars before unleashing his skills with Beefheart. Lucas grew up as a guitarist in Asia, so this is no dilettante's stop-gap."

Mojo (UK), 2/2002

"THE MUSIC IS ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL AND UNAFRAID...unfolds like fingery wisps of steam, Lucas's ringing notes wandering and searching with inhuman reach. Earthy and skittering...beautifully rendered. Most impressively, Lucas shades in the unspoken sentiments of these pop verses, the plaintive wails and agonizing back and forth implied in the originals."

The Wire (UK), 2/2002

"A DECADENT TREAT FALLEN FROM THE SKIES...A CONCENTRATION OF GLAMOUR. FROM SILKEN MELODIES...ONE OF THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2001...a guitarist with an exceptional touch."

Liberation (France), 12/2001

"A SURPRISING ENCOUNTER, ELEGANT AND EXOTIC, BRIDGING TWO CULTURES-YOU HAVE TO HEAR IT TO BELIEVE IT."

Jeunes a Paris (France), 12/2001

"A FREE ELECTRON, ABLE TO ACCOMODATE UNIVERSES AS DIVERSE AS THE BLUES, EXPERIMENTAL, JAZZ, ROCK 'N ROLL, AND JEWISH MUSIC...his fingerpicking and slide guitar create bittersweet romances with a delicate perfume."

Les Inrockuptibles (France), 12/2001

"THE CENTERPIECE OF HIS RUSTIC, DREAMY NEW DISC...where his blissed-out steel-guitar musings take on a charm that has everything to do with the predominating melodic simplicity. LUCAS MAY BE THE ONLY CAT ALIVE WHO KNEW THAT CHINESE MUSIC AND THE BLUES HAD SOMETHING IN COMMON."

Time Out New York, 11/2000

"LUCAS UNLEASHES THE MUSIC FROM ITS ASIAN MOORINGS AND BRINGS IT ALL BACK HOME TO THE BLUES...giving almost all these melodies an earthy, country-blues bent....YOU WON'T GET MUCH CLOSER TO PARADISE THAN THAT."

The Village Voice, 11/2000

"THE TUNES DON'T LEAVE YOUR HEAD...the Oriental sounds blend with the most ancient kind of music, the blues -- and the fusion enriches the genre and makes an enticing mixture of cultures,"

Marianne (France), 10/2001

"FROM SILKEN MELODIES, HE EMBROIDERS COMPLEX AND ETHEREAL GUITAR SOUNDS, WORKING THE SONOROUS MIXTURE WITH CONSTANT INVENTIVENESS."

Liberation (France), 11/2001

"THE ROAD LEADS TO A MASTERPIECE, AND TO HEAVEN."

Le Parisien (France), 11/2001

"A MOST EXQUISITE BITTERSWEET TASTE."

Temoignage Chretien (France),
10/2001

"A CREATIVE WORK BEYOND NORMS...FASCINATING, FAR FROM LINEAR PATHS AND MUCH LABORED APPROACHES."

Jazz Magazine (France), 11/2001

"AN ENCHANTING ALBUM...A TREASURE."

Vibrations (France), 11/2001

"LUCAS HAS BEEN PUTTING OUT ALBUMS OF THE GREATEST INTEREST FOR 20 YEARS...totally surprising, an album whose harmonies have a delicacy that is almost childlike, evoking a fairytale world that entices one to escape."

Guitar and Bass (France), 12/2001

"GUITARIST WITHOUT PEER, LUCAS IS A GENIUS OF TRANSGRESSION -- the guy tries everything and almost always succeeds, such is his facility in translating his desires onto the guitar."

Ouest France, 9/2001

"A PALANQUIN OF DREAMS THAT TAKES YOU VERY FAR FROM THE RIVERBANKS OF CONVENTIONAL MUSIC PRODUCTION."

Les Echoes (France), 12/2001

"UNDER THE MAGIC OF HIS FINGERS, CHINESE MELODIES GLIDE IMPERCEPTIBLY INTO COUNTRY MUSIC, FOLK AND BLUES."

L'Independant (France), 10/2001

"HE PLAYS IN THE KEY OF SUBTLETY AND HARMONY...with his guitars he explores new musical territories. He creates a personal music. HIS ALBUM IS ELEGANT, RACY AND SOMEWHAT MAGICAL. HE SEDUCES TOTALLY."

La Montagne (France), 10/2001

"RIGHTFULLY CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST TALENTED GUITARISTS...as far as his musical ideas go, he avoids exoticism and performs with cool humour and his ability to recollect 6-stringed history with roots in the blues."

Le Monde (France), 11/2001

"THE EDGE OF HEAVEN" IS A RAINBOW EXTENDED ACROSS THE PACIFIC...the instrumentation is flawless, the musicality of the Mandarin language finds empathetic echoes in celestial arpeggios of a polyglot guitarist."

Le Maine (France), 9/2001

"A SURPRISING DISC...A UNIQUE STYLE FOR A DIVERSE ALBUM."

L'Independant (France), 9/2001

"LUCAS' GUITAR IS MARVELOUS...whether acoustic, electric or steel guitar, you sense a musician in his element -- it's a pure style, and a real discovery."

491 (France), 10/2001

"AN ESSENTIAL ALBUM, UNPREDICTABLE AND DELICIOUS...he delivers a precious music, gripping and sentimental, dominated by the charm of these deliciously old-fashioned songs, and the bluesy and incisive accents of his omnipresent guitar."

La Terrasse (France), 10/2001

"LEAVE IT TO THE GUITAR WIZ GARY LUCAS TO FIND ANOTHER CORNER OF WORLD POP TO CULTIVATE FOR PURE PLEASURE. This time he turns to the seductive sound of pre-and postwar Chinese film music, with a vocalist providing the necessary note of feminine longing."

The New York Times, 8/2001

Chosen as one of the BEST ALBUMS OF 2001 by LIBERATION (France) and by JAZZ MAGAZINE (France)
#1 on the World Music Charts, CIUT-FM, Toronto, Canada, Feb. 25, 2002

FOR STREET OF LOST BROTHERS:

"THREE AND A HALF STARS...PERHAPS LUCAS' MOST PERSONAL PROJECT...LUCAS CONTEMPLATES FACETS OF HIS CULTURE, OFFERING HIS PERSPECTIVE THROUGH VARIED FORMATS."

DOWNBEAT, 09/01

"A SPOOKY MASTERPIECE...radical Jewish music of master guitarist Lucas."

DE VOLKSKRANT (Holland), 06/01

"COMPLEX HUMORISTIC AVANTGARDE...he practices witchcraft out of fantastic guitar riffs and rhythms. Most pieces are instrumental and excellent because of his fanatic and fantastic guitar art."

GONZO CIRCUS (Holland), 06/01

"MORE OF HIS REINVENTIONS OF JEWISH CULTURE, from the Marx Brothers to 'The Tel Aviv Ghetto Fighters Song,' plus his dizzying take on 'The Ride of the Valkyries.'"

THE NEW YORK TIMES, 12/00

"LUCAS' BRAND OF MORDANT HUMOUR COMES TO THE FORE...ostensibly a tribute to the man's Jewish roots and upbringing...INTENSE, UNSETTLING, REWARDING AND AT TIMES, HILARIOUS (READ THE SLEEVE NOTES), LUCAS GETS BETTER ALL THE TIME."

FOLK ROOTS (UK), 12/00

"TOP 10 ALBUMS OF 2000...LUCAS' STRONG WRITING AND INVENTION PROVE THAT HIS BEST DAYS ARE NOT BEHIND HIM, BUT ARE IN THE PRESENT AND PERHAPS YET TO COME."

THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE, 12/00

"A GENIUS COMPOSER AND CONCEPTUALIST...LUCAS CONSTRUCTS AN EDIFICE OF JEWISH ORIGINALITY...the followup to his wonderful "Busy Being Born". An eclectic potpourri by the wizard instrumentalist, including updates of traditional tunes composed and played like you've never heard them before by his madcap band of confreres Gods and Monsters. His guitar playing, as always, is unique."

BERKSHIRES WEEK, 12/00

"MUCH MORE SATISFYING...matching the emotional range of great Jewish cantors like Yossele Rosenblatt, Lucas moves effortlessly through giddy Yiddish knees-ups like "Yigdal" and "Mahzel Means Good Luck" into much more blasted territory. "It's Like a Wheel" is a speedy acoustic fantasia on dream themes recalling the work of guitarists Robbie Basho and Leo Kotke. But the gravy here is Lucas' version of "Ride of the Valkyries", scored for the end titles of a spaghetti western, where he shreds Wagner's bombastic march with atonal machine-gunning guitar. It takes a medley of Marx Brothers tunes to clear the smoke."

THE WIRE (UK), 12/00

"5 STARS--ONE OF THE BAD BOYS OF JEWISH MUSIC...a follow-up to the inspired, wacky "Busy Being Born" and it pushes the envelope even further, but with astounding results. From the rock march "Yigdal" (don't laugh, it works), through a series of brilliant improvisations that run the gamut from delta blues to a deranged Hawaiian-cum-country "Ride of the Valkyries", Lucas puts his virtuosity to spectacularly expressive use. But the masterpiece of this set--worth the price of this CD by itself--is an 11 minute "Sh'ma", a stunning adventure in electric guitar dynamics, feedback and reverb aesthetics that combines the protean drive of Hendrix with the brute force of Glenn Branca. If you can handle the volume, this is a must-buy album."

JEWISH WEEK, 12/00

"EXTENDS THE PALETTE TO FAHEY-ISH FINGERPICKING, GOOFY SWING, AND A SMEARY, TREMBLING 'SH'MA YISRAEL'."

VILLAGE VOICE, 11/00

"4 STARS...RECOMMENDED...ANOTHER MAZY WORK DRAWING ON LUCAS' JEWISH HERITAGE."

UNCUT (UK), 12/00

FOR LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD:

"A CRAFTY COMPOSER, DELICIOUSLY TWISTED, CAPABLE OF COOKING TOGETHER BLUES, HIP HOP, FOLK, ROCKABILLY AND PSYCHEDELIC GARAGE MUSIC INTO AN EXTREMELY CAPTIVATING STEW."

IMPROJAZZ (France), 02/01

"MR. GARY LUCAS IS THE KING, THE EMPEROR OF COLLABORATION...the perfect dandy. Technically and musically, this animal has nothing to fear and no lessons to learn from anyone, and for a long time."

COMPACT (France), 12/00

"GARY LUCAS HAS AN AMAZING GUITAR ABILITY, NOT EASY TO CATEGORIZE...he has a joy of guitar impressionism, and floats on waters of a diverse effluvium. Astonishingly, Lucas in solo turns out great subtle inventions."

491 (France), 10/00

"ONE OF THE KINGS OF GUITAR."

COLS BLEUS (France), 10/00

"5 STARS...IT'S A SCANDAL THAT HE'S NOT MORE RECOGNIZED. Here's a dude who seems to have been born with guitar strings instead of fingers, at ease in every style of music."

COMPACT (France), 11/00

"GARY LUCAS IS AN ATYPICAL ARTIST, STRONGLY UNCLASSIFIABLE...AN ASTONISHING DISC AND HIGHLY RECOMMENDED."

STATION SERVICE STRASBOURG,
11/00

"AN EXCELLENT RECORD THAT RETRACES THE EPOCH WHERE THE GUITAR IS OUT FRONT. A GUITARIST UNCONTROLLABLE, GIFTED, WITH MUCH ENVY FROM OTHER GUITARISTS."

LE CRI DU COYOTE, 12/00

"NOTHING RESISTS THE AGILE FINGERS OF THIS MUSICAL BULIMIC. GARY LUCAS COMES BEFORE ALL OTHER GUITARISTS, RIDING THE GENRES WITH A DEXTERITY THAT LEAVES ONE SPEECHLESS."

ABUS DANGEREUX, 12/00

"A POSTMODERN JIMMY PAGE, AN ARTIST WHO ASSOCIATES THE CLASSIC SOUND OF BLUES, FOLK AND COUNTRY WITH THE MADNESS OF PROGRESSIVE ROCK AND THE FREEDOM OF FREE JAZZ. A GENIAL SORCEROR'S APPRENTICE OF SOUND AND A SONGWRITER OF TALENT."

BLUES AND CO. (France), 12/00

"MAGISTERIAL...he can be considered as the (spiritual) son among the 'Beefheart family'. Gary Lucas has kept himself particularly busy lately, publishing album after album. We are not going to complain about this here -- this guitar player has remained unknown to the public for too long."

ROCK AND FOLK (France), 11/00

"ALL GOOD FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT -- IF YOU'RE THE ADDAMS FAMILY PERHAPS -- AND A CONSTANT SOURCE OF AMAZEMENT AND AMUSEMENT -- the unifying factor is Lucas' mix of amphetamine ragtime playing and musique-concrete concept."

FOLK ROOTS (UK), 12/00

"EVERYTHING YOU WISH JOHN FAHEY WOULD GET ROUND TO DOING WITH 6 QUIETLY BUZZING ELECTRIC STRINGS."

THE WIRE (UK), 12/00

THE VETERAN GUITARIST'S NEW RETROSPECTIVE MAKES THE CASE FOR HIM AS A NIMBLE AND VERSATILE ROCK ACCOMPANIST."

VILLAGE VOICE, 11/00

"4 STARS...HIS BEEFHEART PEDIGREE IS REFLECTED IN HIS PLAYING, A COMBINATION OF FURY AND FINESSE, A CHAINSAW USED TO MAKE ICE SCULPTURES...an audacious segue of Miles Davis and Suicide, as well as more glittering ambient excursions like 'Dream of a Russian Princess'...'Poison Tree', a typical piece of fragile dementia."

UNCUT (UK), 12/00

FOR IMPROVE THE SHINING HOUR:

"3 AND A HALF STARS...THIS 20-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE EMPHASIZES THE DAZZLING DIVERSITY OF LUCAS' MUSIC, INCLUDING BLISSFULLY FAST AND FLUENT ACOUSTIC SOLOS, GRITTY ART-ROCK WITH HIS GODS AND MONSTERS BAND, JEWISH THEMES AND MAJESTIC INSTRUMENTALS. WITH DARK HUMOR AND SPIRITUALITY AS RECURRING THEMES..."

DOWNBEAT, 09/01

"TOP 10 ALBUMS OF 2000...THE 20 YEARS' WORTH OF SONGS AND INSTRUMENTALS THAT LUCAS WROTE AND PLAYED ON READ LIKE A SUBTERRANEAN HISTORY OF ROCK AND CUTTING EDGE MUSIC. What unites it all is Lucas' sensibility, in which his guitar is just a tool at best or an excuse at worst for the genius to play music."

THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE, 12/00

"GARY LUCAS PERFORMS THE MUSICAL EQUIVALENT OF A HIGH-WIRE ACT, LENDING HIS BRAVE, INNOVATIVE GUITAR WORK TO AN ECLECTIC SLATE OF PROJECTS...throughout, Lucas has shown a dogged determination to never repeat himself...listening to this collection, one can almost hear him reinventing himself on each cut. Whether working acoustic or electric, the Yale English Lit grad shows an uncanny ability to conjure and embellish new musical languages. Fully half the cuts here were recorded live, an environment in which Lucas's invention and luminous drive truly come into their own."

Amazon.com, editorial review, 10/00

"SPECIAL, SPECTRAL AND GLORIOUSLY UNIQUE...Gary Lucas opens his showcase of diverse musical treats with Nick Cave, Mary Margaret O'Hara, the spirit of Harry Smith and old boss Don Van Vliet being just some of the special musical guests."

TOP MAGAZINE (UK), 10/00

"THE BEST WAY TO APPREHEND GARY 'SKYWALKER' LUCAS' WORK...George Lucas would have made a Jedi knight of him...Indeed, Gary Lucas handles guitars like others do light sabers. The six-string man's delicacy is revealed at every measure, in turns bluesy or airy. Far from any pyrotechnical exhibition – which is always to be feared on guitar players' records, 'Improve the Shining Hour' actually is a gathering of unlikely collaborations and a survey of 20 years of musical activism."

MAGIC! (France), 8/00

"AN EXCELLENT WAY OF EXPLORING AMERICAN MUSIC IN DETAIL, from its more exhibited parts to its more mysterious hidden sides...Gary Lucas is slowly coming out of the mists that kept him hidden. Engaged in countless adventures, always on the move, never short of curiosity or kinetic energy, Lucas is a chameleon who never forgets to affirm his colors: a guitar sound investing every note, an inspired use of pedals, and above all, writing and playing at multiple levels of understanding."

LES INROCKUPTIBLES (France),
8/00

"THIS IS ONE HELL OF A DIVERSE BUT REWARDING COLLECTION FROM A TRUE MUSICIAN'S MUSICAN!...The plaintive beauty of 'Follow', along with a slew of exotic instrumentals that range from the dazzling,

solo slide piece 'Indian War Whoop', to the ambient electronics of 'Ted's Theme', through to the majestic nuances of the far-reaching 'Listen, You Who Dare/Improve the Shining Hour' (which features Lucas's lush, sweeping textures and tones) add to the mix."

RELIX, 8/00

"A BEAUTIFUL INTRODUCTION TO A VERY SPECIAL MUSICIAN...there is plenty of great music to be found on this collection of live recordings, home tapes, film scores and assorted freakery. Lucas owns a very interesting address book...Lucas plays slide guitar like the best pre-war blues guitarist, but finds himself equally at home in electronic soundscapes. Evidently 'Man can play guitar' in many many ways."

OOR (Holland), 5/00

"4 STARS...MISS IT AT YOUR PERIL. Odds and ends from a brilliant avant guitarist. Gary Lucas' reputation could linger forever on the basis of 'Flavor Bud Living' alone. But there's more. Lot's more. A literally astonishing, powerful duet with Eric Mingus; an improvised duo with DJ Spooky, and lots of other treasures, too."

ALTERNATIVE PRESS, 8/00

"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED -- Gary Lucas spent five years at Captain Beefheart's. Let us say one century for every normally constituted guitarist. The retrospective of the Magic Band's ultimate soloist is launched, well launched. Lucas' guitar is malicious and inventive, using genres for perverting them better. A historical and touching connotation to a record sweeping twenty years of multi-directional works."

VIBRATIONS (France/Switzerland),
7/00

"GREAT DELICACY AND BEAUTY THAT COULD GO ON FOREVER...the ambitious new compilation tries to encapsulate Lucas' weird, impressive career on a single disc, and for the most part succeeds. Nowhere is it quite as surprising or welcome as it is during a haunting take on the theme from Herzog's Nosferatu."

THE ONION, 6/00

"EXCELLENT...New York guitar maestro's 'Improve the Shining Hour'."

TORONTO NOW MAGAZINE, 5/00

"HIS MUSICAL PALETTE HAS MORE SHADES THAN MONET...Gary Lucas lights up his new album with virtuoso guitar playing. Whoever Lucas plays with, he is rarely outshone, and even on his own he has something special to offer. 'What's a nice Jewish boy like me doing in a place like this?' he wonders. Making music, Gary -- we should all be grateful."

JEWISH CHRONICLE (UK), 6/00

"THIS COLLECTION OF RARITIES OF ONE OF THE GREATEST GUITARISTS YOU PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF ONLY SERVES TO BRING HIS LEGEND TO THE FOREFRONT. Throughout the disc, Lucas' playing is extraordinary, he makes people like John McLaughlin look like simple jazz/blues noodlers by comparison. In fact, there really is no other guitarist to compare Lucas to, he's A TRUE ORIGINAL IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD."

CARBON 14, 7/00

"THIS IS ONE HELL OF A DIVERSE BUT REWARDING COLLECTION FROM A TRUE MUSICIAN'S MUSICAN! Lush, sweeping textures and tones add to the mix...from the plaintive beauty of 'Follow' to a slew of exotic instrumentals that range from the dazzling solo slide piece 'Indian War Whoop' to the ambient electronics of 'Ted's Theme,' through to the majestic nuances of the far-reaching 'Listen, You Who Dare/Improve the Shining Hour'."

www.maxcreek.com, 7/00

"8 OUT OF 10...RARELY DOES A GUITARIST PLAY SUCH IMPOSSIBLE AND INNOVATIVE PARTS WITH SO MUCH GENUINE EMOTION...he's equally impressive playing his acoustic guitar as when he creates electrical storms. You get your money's worth here...the album helps you understand what it is that makes so many musicians and singers ask for his help."

POP AND ROCK (Greece), 6/00

"A MUCH NEEDED OVERVIEW OF AN ALWAYS SEARCHING GUITAR POET WHOSE SOUND IS LIKE NO ONE ELSE."

Z Magazine, 6/00

"ONE THING IS CLEAR - GARY LUCAS IS ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL GUITARISTS OF OUR TIME. This is an occasion to celebrate, a spotlight on dark corners - a very sensitively arranged selection of choice and rare moments from his career. It's a trip through a fifth of a century that commemorates immeasurable energy, craziness, and genius. Gary Lucas is a great inventor of melodies - in every transition from one theme to the next one can hear a motif worthy of being made into a symphony. Gary Lucas is a magician, a possessed person who has himself become the guitar. Also, his singing has improved enormously in the last year. Gary Lucas is a disciple of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, who with his enchanting playing takes power over the listener. The spectrum ranges from driving blues, juicy folk songs, lyrical bluegrass fantasies to tight jazz numbers and ambient pieces. One unfortunate thing is that the album was supposed to feature a track with Jeff Buckley, whom none other than Gary Lucas opened the way up for, but it was not allowed, because one more time business took precedence over art. Hopefully the tapes of this extraordinary collaboration which really bring tears to the eyes will one day find their way to the public. Still, even without this track, Improve the Shining Hour is not just a jewel, it's a collection of jewels."

JAZZTHETIK (Germany), 5/00

"5 STARS...GARY LUCAS IS A SECRET GENIUS OF AMERICAN MUSIC: a gifted guitarist, songwriter, bandleader and eclectic spirit...a tilt-a-whirl rush of acoustic blues, pop tunes, poetics, drum 'n' bass, heavenly textural explorations on electric guitar and Lucas' own lyrical folk-pop numbers. It's all knit together by Lucas' unerring sense of melody and soul...cut-for-cut, a thoroughly winning musical biography."

TOWER PULSE!, 6/00

"4 STARS...20 YEARS OF THIS NYC-BASED GUITARIST'S VERSATILE GENIUS PRESSED INTO 18 TRACKS...from the Beefheartian weirdness that first got Lucas recognized to his hit collaboration with Joan Osborne. That wide embrace is what makes Lucas so exceptional. Not only can he navigate the oft-murky waters of textural music and improvisation, he can write a damn solid pop tune, too. There's plenty to be charmed by...Lucas' unerring sense of melody and soul see to it that he's never overshadowed by his high-profile peers."

BOSTON PHOENIX, 5/00

FOR BUSY BEING BORN:

"A GUITARIST'S GUITARIST...a fixture on the downtown New York scene for years. He essays traditional folk tunes and synagogue sing-alongs on a variety of electric, acoustic and National steel guitars, putting a virtuosic spin on his heritage as well as adding a healthy dose of humor. The highlight is Lucas' haunting rendition of the psalm 'Hinay Ma Tov.'"

BILLBOARD, 4/98 (lead Pop Album
review with a star)

"THE YEAR'S BEST NEW TREND – the Jewish Alternative Music essayed by guitar God Gary Lucas' playful tweaking of tradition on 'Busy Being Born' (Tzadik)."

HITS, 12/98 (chosen as one of the
outstanding albums of 1998)

"LUCAS REALLY SHINES on such fleet fingered instrumentals as 'Shekinah' and lovely tributes to the Marx Brothers and Fiddler On The Roof...downtown guitar squall and irreverent takes on Hebrew prayers and Jewish movie music commingle on this eclectic mix."

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, Fall
1998
(Best Recent Discs, On Campus Issue)

"A DAZZLING MIXTURE OF ACOUSTIC RENDITIONS OF HEBREW PRAYERS, alongside tunes associated with Groucho Marx, Betty Boop and Popeye, a rewritten 'Hundred Pounds of Clay' and several originals...a meditation on growing up Jewish. Lucas incorporates cultural irreverence into his music, but at other times he's deadly serious."

RAYGUN, 12/98

"LUCAS DIPS DEEP INTO HIS OWN MUSICAL PAST...on the Tzadik label, home of 'radical Jewish culture'. Radical is a relative word, especially on this gentle ride of a project that emphasizes Lucas' angular, John Fahey-esque fingerpicking on acoustic guitar, with occasional snorts of electric-guitar noise-making."

JAZZIZ, 8/98

"VIGOROUS JOY...CALL IT OLD SCHUL – OR SEMITIC-SONIC...Lucas reinterprets Jewish melodies ancient and modern with an array of musical strategies...resourceful, energetic playing and scrappy vocals, Lucas will knock you upside the keppy. At once devout and irreverent, experimental and traditional, 'Busy' is TRULY A MITZVAH."

HITS, 8/98

"FIVE STARS...HUMOR, FEAR AND VIRTUOSITY...A BLAZING SONIC RIP...in theory it's a children's album, but some of these 17 pieces will give little bastards nightmares – but it'll thrill anyone who loves inspired guitar virtuosity in the service of wildly creative compositions – especially 'Sandman,' which progresses from a prettily charming figure to a deep, dark din...some of the more charming tunes blend Jewish folklore with memories from Lucas' own childhood...there's also a streak of Delta blues running through the album; it surfaces most dramatically in the ravishing 'Shekinah,' an instrumental that unites the sound of deep Mississippi and the female spiritual energy of the Kabala...Lucas' unrestricted, intelligent command of acoustic, National steel and electric guitars demands constant attention."

TOWER PULSE/BOSTON PHOENIX,
8/98

"4 STARS...revered experimental guitarist...formidable talent. A master of acoustic, electric, slide and 12 string guitar, he is clearly capable of blowing the competition off the stage...gorgeous and/or dazzling guitar work. Lucas never approaches anything without total enthusiasm. Even the most forgettable pieces on this CD will give you a taste of Lucas' incredible guitar work, and if you're troubled by the lack of high seriousness, maybe you're on the wrong side of Dylan's equation (he not busy being born is busy dying')."

ALTERNATIVE PRESS, 10/98

"HALF GUITAR HERO, HALF SCREWBALL COMEDIAN, Gary Lucas offers an antic meditation on Jewishness, childhood, and his Jewish childhood. Highlight: 'Sandman,' an anti-lullaby proceeding from the excellent assumption that kids sometimes love getting scared witless."

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, 6/98

"IF NEW YORK MAKES A FITTING CRADLE FOR THE AVANT-GARDE INFANT, GARY LUCAS HAS RECORDED IT'S BEDTIME STORYBOOK...Lucas here leavens deft guitar play with traditional Jewish songs and melodies...the achingly gorgeous 'Sunrise Sunset' is what won me over. The whole, wildly eclectic outing is united by the sheer force of Lucas's personality, his exemplary musicianship, and the fine support from a handful of guests, including Zorn, all anchored together by former Swan Jonathan Kane and the superb Greg Cohen on drums and bass respectively."

THE WIRE (UK), 6/98

"WITHOUT A DOUBT HIS MOST PERSONAL RECORD, AND FOR THAT REASON THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED...a great success. 'Busy Being Born' is a record which is both uninhibited and ardent, engaged and amused. The music is fitting, graceful, of a jubilant intelligence, profound and immediate, often audacious and always understandable; it is made in the image of a man who has known how to trace his own personal path far from both nostalgic aberrations and the sirens of modernity...a formidable coherence."

LES INROCKUPTIBLES (France),
5/98

"GREAT FUN, AND JUST LIKE LEVY'S RYE BREAD, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE JEWISH TO ENJOY IT...formidable guitar chops and droll, inventive arrangements. Two highlights are 'Fleischerei', a dazzling medley of tunes from Popeye and Betty Boop cartoons, and an exquisite arrangement of Ernest Gold's theme from 'Exodus'."

MOJO (England), 5/98

"RICH JEW MUSIC WITH SOMETHIN' FOR EVERYBODY. LUCAS IS A TRUE TALENT."

PAPER MAGAZINE, 5/98