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## REVIEW

# Music Review: Gary Lucas, Gods and Monsters - *Coming Clean*

Written by [Larry Sakin](#)

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It's getting harder and harder to find innovative rock music. The enterprise has become so ensconced in commercialism, it seems the best musicians sell out to simple, garden-variety, three-chord junk without bothering to bend genres while bending guitar strings.

Fortunately, Gary Lucas is the exception to this rule. Lucas has a long-standing career as a visionary guitarist and bandleader. His latest effort with his on-again, off-again back up band, Gods and Monsters, is a tribute to the many influences that made an a huge impression upon Lucas on his path to musical brilliance. The experience of listening to the bands latest album, *Coming Clean*, is similar to the feeling one gets from attending a meditative session at a ritualistic sweat lodge.

Lucas' own style is evident here. He wields an axe of shamanistic proportions, casting spells as he weaves extraordinary notes through a series of finger aerobics that others would consider death defying. Lucas has always borrowed rather heavily from jazz avant-garde stylist David Torn, and also from an early entry in the Pat Metheny catalog, *Song X*. Even though these two influences are apparent, Lucas' attack is beyond anything either Torn or Metheny have come up with so far, and Lucas is not afraid of sacrificing technical precision for some gutsy, straight-from-the-heart renditions of his songs.

*Coming Clean* allows Lucas to tip his hat to many more masters of guitar rock, including Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix, Robert Fripp, Frank Zappa, Richard Thompson, and on one particularly beautiful cover, the recently departed Jeff Buckley. Each piece on the album swings wildly with eclecticism, with Lucas bringing a highly erotic charge to each of the pieces. In a strange way, *Coming Clean* could be the soundtrack to a multi-orgasmic experience after one has downed several tabs of LSD.

Gods and Monsters do an outstanding job keeping up with Lucas' frenetic pace. On *Coming Clean*, the back up band includes the all star cast of Ernie Brooks (Modern Lovers) on bass, Billy Ficca (Television) and Jonathan Kane (Swans) on drums, Jason Candler (Hungry March Band) on alto sax, Joe Hendel on trombone, and Jerry Harrison (Talking Heads) on keyboards. Included in the lineup are guest appearances by David Johansen (New York Dolls), Elli Medeiros (Stinky Toys), Richard Barone, and Michael Schoen. Throughout, Brooks, Ficca, Kane, and Harrison keep the songs a tilt, providing the foreplay to Lucas' throbbing, fully immersed chops.

If you are as sick of the pabulum that passes for rock music these days as I am, then *Coming Clean* is the album for you. It's fresh, always challenging, and mesmerizing in its devotion to pushing the boundaries of

the rock landscape. Let's hope for all of our sakes that Lucas never sells out and keeps showing the wannabes what rock is all about.

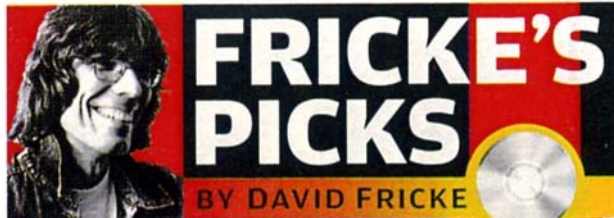
Larry Sakin is a former music executive and non-profit medical organization administrator. He advocates for literacy issues and provides advocacy training for grassroots and non-profit groups around the country.

## Comments

#1 – December 27, 2006 @ 04:03AM – Martin Tiefenthaler [\[URL\]](#)

righteously clean and above all dirty at the right spots -- best record of the year imho. a swinging hey-ho, let's go and good for body and soul ...





**Gary Lucas** is one of the best and most original guitarists in America - a master synthesist of deep blues, avant-rock and madrigal-like folk who was a vital member of Captain Beefheart's late-period Magic Bands and an early musical partner of the late Jeff Buckley. Lucas is also a songwriter of established invention - he co-wrote Buckley's signature songs "Grace" and "Mojo Pin" - and his latest album, *Coming Clean* (Mighty Quinn), made with his band Gods and Monsters, is an action-packed integration of his gifts. It is also a compelling argument for greater recognition. Lucas revisits "Mojo Pin" - appending an explosive Television-style coda - as well as some originals from previous releases, singing "Coming Clean" and "Follow" with effective want and menace, in a near-whispered growl somewhere between Leonard Cohen and a romantic Beefheart. Lucas continues to show great taste in other voices. In the runaway blues "One Man's Meat," he skids on electric slide guitar beside David Johansen's blues-from-a bottle bark. But regardless of who sings, *Coming Clean* showcases the composer's instinct in Lucas' instrumental prowess. He plays astounding guitar throughout, but always for the sake of the song.



## FILTER ALBUMS

### Gary Lucas & Gods And Monsters

★★★★

#### Coming Clean

SEE SALAD

**Guitarist extraordinaire's on/off group back with first album in over a decade.**

As a solo artist Gary Lucas has undertaken an enormous number of projects, but *Coming Clean* shows him in his element as a group leader and rock songwriter. Lucas's songs carry his characteristic warmth and wit, and the band – which features ex-Swan Jonathan Kane and Billy Ficca from Television on drums, ex-Modern Lover Ernie Brooks' bass, and one-time Talking Head Jerry Harrison on production duties – are a formidable unit. A few guests drop by, including David Johansen, hitting top form on the monstrous, horn-powered rhythm-and-blues workout, *One Man's Meat*. On *Skin Diving*, meanwhile, the erotic sighing of ex-Stinky Toy Elli Medeiros prompts a delirious flood of guitar notes from Lucas. His guitar playing is superb throughout – it's never overcooked, but when he lets fly it's breathtaking.

*Mike Barnes*

**GARY LUCAS & GODS  
AND MONSTERS**  
**Coming Clean**

SIDE SALAD



**Ex-Beefheart guitarist's  
own group. Jerry Harrison  
produces**

Lucas collaborated to great effect with Jeff Buckley (whose "Mojo Pin" he co-wrote and covers here) and Mary Margaret O'Hara. On *Coming Clean*, he engages the services of, among others, David Johansen on the snarling, almost rockabilly "One Man's Meat". Lucas strives for accessibility, his own Zappa-esque vocals notwithstanding. Yet his playing, on a cover of Kraftwerk's "Autobahn" for example, can scarcely be contained, speeding and burning with intensity at all times. DAVID STUBBS

**Gary Lucas And Gods & Monsters \*\*\*\*  
Coming Clean (Productions Speciales)**

Atypical rock

by Tony Grieco

A cross between the Velvet Underground and Frank Zappa, playing with psychobilly, is more or less the end result of what is delivered by this artistic collection. The songs here are presented as happenings rather than neat songs under the benevolent gaze of Jerry Harrison (ex-Talking Heads). This association of bad boys mixes adventurous rock and devilish experimentalism. Gary Lucas, the master of the project, officiates on guitar, loves to surprise us, and leads us far off the beaten path. He tortures his instrument to pull us in for the maximum ride, laying his delirium on a massive bass sound like a menacing storm. The spirit "noisy" of this record is ameliorated by the intervention of surprising guests like Elli Medeiros, who offers her beautiful web of sensual vocalizing on Skin Diving, and also David Johansen, who offers his very lively spirit on One Man's Meat, cutting like a laser opening this record. Connoisseur's will delight in Ain't Got You by Bruce Springsteen, transfigured in the manner of Alan Vega like the way he transfigured Gene Vincent on the order of Juke Box Baby. You understand this album is like a cache of TNT, and not for everybody's ears-- but many will come out refreshed. This artful action painting doesn't respect any style, you can't pigeonhole it like something typical on the radio--it exists in its own universe, far from preconceived, comfortable ideas of rock...a cross between Laurie Anderson and the best things of Lou Reed.

**Record Collector (UK), October 2006**

**Gary Lucas And Gods & Monsters  
Coming Clean  
Side Salad / Universal  
\* \* \* \***

**Interstellar overdrive with the Captain's former axeman.**

**by Grahame Bent**

As a former manager to and sideman with the inestimable Captain Beefheart and one of the driving forces behind the successful Magic Band reunion of recent times, risk taking has long been a full time job with Gary Lucas. Featuring among its ranks the talents of Television's Billy Ficca, Ernie Brooks formerly of the Modern Lovers and one time Talking Head Jerry Harrison Gods & Monsters are a supergroup from the New York underground in way more than name. Stylistically the action on Coming Clean the band's third album since its formation in 1989 spills across a broad canvas treating all who venture this way to an unsettling ride through a landscape of expressionistic blues creations, tangential art rock and bursts of rampant psychedelia. While Under My Wing, One Man's Meat featuring David Johansen, Fata Morgana, Evangeline Skin Diving featuring Elli Medeiros and Land's End featuring Richard Barone rank among the album's highlights Maestro Lucas' famed skills as an interpreter of other artists' work is also showcased with a blistering cover of Bruce Springsteen's Ain't Got You, a gravity defying John Zorn's Naked City style take on Bernard Hermann's title theme from Psycho and a stunning solo guitar exploration of Kraftwerk's Autobahn. Revelatory is the word.