



# DURAN DURAN

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### [Reflections on Duran Duran's "The Wedding Album"](#)

February 20th, 2013

The 20th Anniversary of *Duran Duran [The Wedding Album]* brought forth some reflection from the band, who are as proud of this record now as they were in 1993 when it came out. A seminal release in the Duran Duran catalog, Simon, John, Nick, Warren and friends reflect on what the album meant to them.

*Duran Duran [The Wedding Album]* was released on February 23, 1993.

#### **SIMON LE BON:**

Twenty years has gone by since we released *The Wedding Album*. I've been trying to think of something to say about it, but this far down the line, the music itself makes the most powerful statement of all. It is, in many ways, an album of its time; with the Gulf War going on as we wrote the songs we were looking out at a world of "holy war and holy need" and reflecting it. We were standing on the edge of a technological revolution. For the first time in our careers we recorded directly on to a hard drive. I began putting finished lyrics into a handheld computer – a PSION Organiser to be precise – this so that I'd be able to print them up to sing in the studio, when it came time for the vox to go down. You cannot overlook the contribution to, and the influence exercised within the project by John Jones, who engineered and co-produced the work with Nick, John, Warren & myself.

I remember, at the end of the project, I drove and parked on a dark street somewhere close to home; I took the cassette of the master and put on the stereo. And upon playing *The Wedding Album* for the first time from start to finish, I began to realise the scope of what we had created together... As I said, the music speaks loudest.



#### **JOHN TAYLOR:**

*The Wedding Album* is one of the most important Duran Duran albums, at least from my perspective. It was the album that gave us two massive hits, outside of the Eighties!... The success of this album gave us tremendous confidence, and the idea that we still had vitality and something to offer the world, after having had a few years of banging our heads against the wall, trying for re-invention.

I feel I have to credit Warren, in large part, for getting this album on track and keeping it there, helping us ultimately to hit those Billboard Bullseye's. From beginning to end Warren kept a watchful eye over all the recording, overdubs, mixes and expenses. He really got to flex those muscles of his, which were considerably bigger at album's end than they were at the outset!

A great cover, by Nick Egan, who also directed the "Ordinary World" video, after an idea of Mr Rhodes'. Great mixes, especially "Ordinary World" and "Too Much Information," courtesy of David Richards, better known for his work with Queen, and a tour that ran and ran.

This album will always be very special to me, as I believe it is to the entire band. I got married during the course of its creation, and my wife gave birth to a beautiful daughter (whose first word was shoes.. ) It was a very special time.





## WARREN CUCCURULLO:

back in 1993, i had no idea that 2013 would be so much like nineteen eighty four. (calculator not necessary)

a tail wagging the dog type media-centric world, as distant from ordinary as one could imagine. the masses subjected to too much (dis)information while under a constant state of surveillance. not an ideal situation for humankind.

“ordinary world” & “come undone” kinda go together in a chilling way. come to think of it, so do myself, john, nick & simon. the odds of that hookup were probably a billion to one. i would wager that those were the same odds that we had to ‘make a comeback.’ stroke of genius that nick suggested our parents wedding photos for the cover art? the cd was a re-birth for all of us, individually & as a group. stroke of genius that john suggested queen’s david richards to do some mixes? getting the mixes back from david’s montreaux studio was one of the most amazing memories i have of the entire project. david made stuff sound like you’d taken drugs before having a listen...obviously, much healthier than actually *taking* drugs. every one we were working with, throughout each phase of the project, was operating at a very high level. from art director nick egan, to co-producer john jones, the management, the backing band, the crew. wow!!! what could any unsuspecting music consumer of 20 years ago think of milton nascimento’s contribution? sheer brilliance! there is now no doubt that this was one of those extra special records that comes along every once in a while. i love that it’s untitled/renamed, just like one of our all time favourites.

i felt this was the tip of the iceberg for us.

warren cuccurullo, los angeles

sent from my heart to my brain to my fingers to you.



## NICK RHODES:

It really doesn’t seem like twenty years since we worked on *The Wedding Album*, and now, twenty years since its release, we did work on it quite a long time. I remember the sessions which were mostly at Privacy, at Warren’s house. After *Liberty*, we decided we weren’t sure we had gotten the direction right and went from being a five-piece band to a four-piece band again. We were down to the four of us again, which meant using a lot of drum machines! We really had to concentrate all of our efforts on the songwriting. We also realized how much music changed. The 80s had ended and a lot of people wanted to lock the door, and close Duran Duran in that decade too, I think. A funny thing happens when a decade changes. In reality, not much happens on that DAY, but people think, ‘right, now things have changed.’ Some how at the end of the 80s, music changed considerably. We had grunge, techno and rave culture, which left us in a place where we felt we had to make ourselves relevant to the times. We weren’t about to make a Grunge or Techno album, but we had our songwriting. We very much went back to basics. We went to the Studio and wrote and wrote and wrote, day after day. And some days, we had some interesting ideas, and other days, we didn’t. “Drowning Man” came from those sessions – that was John’s idea to make it dance music based. Too Much Information, which i think is a great lyric from Simon was about what was happening in the world and how we are all bombarded with “stuff” and keep in mind, this was before the Internet. i actually think he was far ahead in the sentiment in that lyric. Then one day we were jamming all together in the room with headphones and Warren and I collided chord-ically and melodically, which sent a little shiver down our spines. Simon came up with a melody on top of what we were playing and it became “Ordinary World.” At that point, we knew we had something VERY special. It is rare to find something unique and powerful and emotional – and Simon nailed that lyric, probably the best of his career. And then everything fell in to place. We fell more secure when we had that song.

When it was “leaked” to radio, “Ordinary World” exploded instantly. and it became the fastest growing song on many formats. This became a turning point for us, because it was the first time in the 90s that we had broken through on a chart level worldwide. That song is the significant story for me when it comes to *The Wedding Album*.

John Jones produced the album with us, and he was a great ‘ear’ to have around. He had a great knowledge of classical structure of songs. With what we were trying to do, he was the right inspiration to have around. he helped steer some of the songs and generally contributed a good sense of direction for the album’s arrangement.

Certainly, *The Wedding Album* is one of our most important because during that period, Duran Duran may not have survived had we not got through that record. I have fond memories of the writing sessions and completing the album. Looking back, all good memories – we worked with Nick Egan and Eric Roinestad on the design of the cover. I had the idea of putting our parent’s wedding photos on the cover. The photos of these 8 people, on the day they were married, that was the DNA that was to come to form us, to make that album. I wasn’t sure that everyone was going to go for the idea, but every one loved it. We gathered our parent’s wedding photos together and when we saw them all together for the first time we all thought, “wow!”. We couldn’t have made this better if we had gone looking for old photos in some archives.



You know, it is NOT really called *The Wedding Album*, even though it is called *The Wedding Album*; it is actually called *Duran Duran*, as it was us going back to basics. In a way though, I am quite pleased it is called *The Wedding Album* now...



### **JOHN JONES/CO-PRODUCER:**

So many emotions are involved with the 'Wedding' album I don't know where to begin. I was the luckiest guy in Bedrock to be working with four amazing people in the first place. To be trusted to get the recording done changed my life. Warren, Nick, John, and Simon, gave me the chance to work with them in the greatest creative situation I have ever known, and one that set a new standard for me to achieve in the music I have made ever since. From the Albert Hall to the *MTV Unplugged* show, we were reminded that great music has to be loved by the people making it. With "Ordinary World" and "Come Undone," now classics, the truth was always in the pudding!



*The mastering photo from Townhouse (courtesy of John Jones)*

### **NICK EGAN/ART & VIDEO DIRECTOR**

You could say that it was written in the stars from my point of view. It all just fell into place.

John Taylor had happen to mention to actor Billy Zane, that he was looking for Nick Egan to design the new Duran Album 'The Wedding Album' I believe that was the working title in the beginning because of the photographs that were to be used on the cover.

When Billy responded that I happened to be a friend of him and his wife Lisa, John was delighted, even more so when Billy had told John that by chance I happened to be in London at that very moment. That chance conversation was to be the very beginning of what became one of my longest and best associations with any of the bands I have worked with.

Within hours I was meeting with John at his house in London where he outlined the bands concept of using, not only photos of their parents weddings, but also going against the previous notion of commissioning an expensive album cover photo shoot by going to the last remaining public photo booths in and around London with a couple of pounds in change and having their portraits taken as black and white 2" x 6" strips. It was this concept that convinced me that this was going to be something special visually, but it also made me realize that Duran were one of the most innovative and creative bands of theirs – and subsequent – generations. They were never predictable.

My immediate concern was to avoid it becoming kitsch which nearly all wedding photos have the tendency to be, white, lacey with silver horse-shoe confetti decorations. I wanted it to be like a piece of art, which is where I took the influence of Pop Art Collageist Robert Rauschenberg, who laid seemingly random images on top of each other with the faintest hint of off register color as if the whole thing was screen printed. This was all done in a sepia tone with gold leaf accents. To keep with the low tech do-it-yourself concept, the lettering was embossed plastic done with a Dymo label printer and a chinagraph grease pencil on masking tape. This gave the whole package, inside and out, an organic 'Pop Art' feeling.

At the time, my Graphic Design Assistant was Eric Roinestad (who has since gone on to be a recognized artist in his own name), He laid the whole thing out, but the whole package was really a collaboration between me and the band.

The next coincidence was the single 'Ordinary World' beginning with the single art. I had worked with a brilliant an innovative photographer called Dean Chamberlain a couple of years and it turned out that Dean was also a close friend of Nick Rhodes, so I used Dean's beautiful photo of a tree as the single cover. Dean would literally paint with light by opening the shutter on the camera for a long exposure, sometimes hours long. He then took various sized lights, put colored gels on them and, running around in total darkness, would create an eerie looking environment.

The video shoot itself took place in two parts. The images of the band performing on a white stage and walking through the gardens were shot in one day. We had to edit a performance cut for projection and return to our location a week later. We shot the exterior in Pasadena just before Christmas at the renowned Huntington Gardens. We shot in each of their special themed gardens, the most stunning of which was the Cactus Gardens. When we returned, we shot the projections in the gardens to give the band an omnipresent, almost dream like view of this couple's wedding day. I purposefully wanted to create a surreal environment, very much like Federico Fellini, and in particular, 'Juliette of the Spirits' which is where the idea of the bride's hat came from, and not, as some surmised, from a lampshade.

The dress was an idea I had seen in a Giorgio Armani Fashion show. It was a tuxedo dress with an exaggerated bow tie, I changed it from black to white. The stylist who made the wedding dress has had more requests to re-create that dress than anything else she has ever done. Not seen in this video is the wedding band who were a group of older, sophisticated gentlemen, who were meant to be Duran Duran in the future. I don't think the idea of the band members ending up playing at weddings was

considered a successful end for Duran Duran, so it was cut. My last memory of the shoot was an hour before we wrapped, the heavens opened and we had a torrential downpour that went on for hours as we all wrangled cable and generators through almost a foot of water.

I continued the idea of showing that the World is anything but ordinary.



**NIGEL REEVE/EMI RECORDS, UK:**

*The Wedding Album*, or *Duran Duran* to give its official title, had a long gestation period. The first sounds out of the studio were in late 1991, even then ‘Ordinary World’ existed and sounded like a sure fire hit. I remember the whole of the 4th Floor at EMI’s Manchester Square offices stopping to listen to it. It was another 18 months before the album hit the streets but by then everyone at EMI knew that Duran were back with something massive.



*Duran Duran’s “Ordinary World” won an Ivor Novello Award in the “Best Song Musically & Lyrically” category in 1994. The Ivor Novello Awards are held annually in London.*



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