

## THE MAKING OF



# Foghat

## 'NIGHT SHIFT'

The Foghat line-up that recorded the 'Night Shift' album. L-R: Craig MacGregor (bass), 'Lonesome' Dave Peverett (lead vocals and rhythm guitar), Roger Earl (drums and percussion), Rod 'The Bottle' Price (lead and slide guitar)

British boogiemasters **Foghat** had cracked the market wide open in their adopted homeland of America with 1975's platinum album 'Fool For The City'. How did they follow it up? By recording the classic 'Night Shift'. *Howard Johnson* catches up with drummer **Roger Earl** to discover how they did it...

**FOGHAT ORIGINALLY FORMED IN** London back in January of 1971 when guitarist and vocalist 'Lonesome' Dave Peverett, drummer Roger Earl, and bassist Tony Stevens all quit blues rock band Savoy Brown. After adding guitarist Rod Price, formerly of Black Cat Bones, the band relocated to the US and signed a deal with American label Bearsville. Constant road work helped the group become one of the tightest rock acts on the circuit and by the time Foghat released a third studio album, 1974's 'Energized', they'd built up a loyal following that pushed the record to over 500,000 sales.

Despite the success, all wasn't well within the band and in 1975, shortly before Foghat started recording their fifth studio album, 'Fool For The City', Tony Stevens was fired. "He was a great bass player," says Roger Earl. "But he was always breaking a group up." Foghat's previous album, 'Rock And Roll Outlaws' had been produced by Nick Jameson, who also happened to be a bass player. Jameson was already onboard to produce 'Fool For The City', so somehow fell into the role of bassist on the album too, and even filled in as bass player on the road until Foghat brought in Craig MacGregor on a permanent basis.

"Craig and I were like two peas in a pod," says Earl. "He was my brother by a different mother, and we were really close. When we were on the road promoting 'Fool For The City' we'd always be hanging out together in each other's hotel rooms, listening to Little Feat and The Brothers Johnson, getting ready to play."

'Fool For The City' proved to be Foghat's biggest album up to that point, selling over a million copies in part due to the US Top 20 hit single 'Slow Ride'. Finally the band was recognised as one of the biggest draws in the States.

"Life was really good," says Roger. "The band was doing great, and suddenly we were treated like little princes. We'd had gold records, everybody had tons of money. It was a case of 'What do you need? You got it!'"

And of course what these dyed-in-the-wool rockers needed more than anything was to make more music...

**GIVEN THE SUCCESS THAT YOU'D JUST ENJOYED WITH 'FOOL FOR THE CITY', ROGER, THE VIBES IN THE FOGHAT CAMP MUST HAVE BEEN FANTASTIC GOING INTO THE NEXT ALBUM PROJECT...**

"You're right, they were. Everything felt pretty cool. I think we were all living out on Long Island by that time. Rod and I both used to live in this house that I owned, but I sold it to him at some point and moved somewhere else. Initially we did some rehearsing at Dave's house to start working on new material, and then decided to rent some rehearsal space. We ended up going to this place that had previously been a pork store where they sold Italian meats, though obviously it was empty at the time we took it on. We rented the RCA mobile unit and started trying to get some ideas down with Jimmy Iovine

producing. I seem to remember that we did one song - probably just a backing track, actually - and I'm pretty sure that it was 'Take Me To The River'. That's a real R&B song, one of the few covers we did that wasn't a classic blues number. But we quickly came to the conclusion that it wasn't working with Jimmy Iovine. He went on to do big things, but it definitely didn't happen with Foghat."

**WHAT WAS YOUR NEXT PLAN, THEN?**

"I can't remember how, but Dan Hartman's name came up as a potential producer. Dan had played bass with Edgar Winter and appeared on Edgar's 'Frankenstein' hit [a US number one in March of 1973] working with Ronnie Montrose. He had a really good reputation, so we went over to his studio in Connecticut. The studio was actually in his house. We hung out together for a while talking about music in general and we really clicked with him. Dan was a very, very positive guy and I really liked his engineer too, a fella called Dave Still. We all thought we could work with these guys, so we moved over there and set up camp in Dan's really nice house.

One of the things I remember most about being there was the wonderful food that this Jamaican lady cook prepared for us. She really spoiled us!"

**WHAT STATE WERE THE SONGS YOU'D PREPARED FOR 'NIGHT SHIFT' IN BY THIS POINT?**

"To be honest Rod and Dave, who were the band's songwriters, were struggling to write new material. We'd been on the road a lot promoting 'Fool For The City' and to write quality material you need some 'sit down' time - unless you're some sort of a f\*cking genius! So even by the time we got to Dan's place, Rod and Dave still hadn't finished a lot of the songs. There were basic outlines, but there wasn't much more than that. And you have to remember that this was the first time we'd been in the studio with Craig, so it was... how can I put this? It was *work*. We had to work hard to get the material to the standards we expected of ourselves. It was work because the songs really weren't fleshed out."

**SO TELL US, HOW DID THE TUNES COME TOGETHER IN PRACTICE?**

"Well Dave or Rod would have a basic chord structure, and then we'd all sit together and try to figure out what to do with them. Then once we had a bit of a feel for a rhythm that we thought would work, Craig and I would start honing the rhythm elements in this big room that Dan used to record drums. It wasn't easy."

**YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY PARTICULAR THEMES OR CONCEPTS FOR THE ALBUM, THEN...**

"No. We never had a deliberate plan for the music. There weren't ever any conversations like 'Should we do this? Should we do that?' It was just dealing with each

**"DID WE FEEL THAT WE HAD TO PRODUCE SOMETHING TO MATCH THE 'FOOL FOR THE CITY' ALBUM? I DON'T THINK SO. WE JUST FELT LIKE WE HAD A NEW RECORD TO DO, AND WE NEEDED A NEW BUNCH OF SONGS."**