



On the Spot at BSC

– Chris Dane Owens Interview



April 6th, 2009 by Elena Nola

I am delighted to bring you a BSC exclusive interview with Chris Dane Owens! Chris has recently created one of the most magical and fabulous fantasy videos of all time to accompany his new single, "Shine on Me," from his forthcoming album, Blue Stone. He was kind enough to let me pick his brain via email regarding his vision and his process. I hope you will check out his work and support his wonderful artistic endeavor.

So, without further ado, on to the questions!

Chris: Many thanks to everyone at BSC for your fantastic support of my new album and music video.

Elena: I am honestly really excited to spread the word about what you're doing. I've been showing the video to everyone! So. Are you a musician by trade, or was this an amateur project (not trying to imply anything!)? Either way, what are you hoping to accomplish with this project?



Chris: I have actually been a musician/songwriter since I was in my teens, but generally unable to support myself in the music business. For the last few years, I have been working in Hollywood doing quite a few things. I am a co-founder of a TV/Feature production company that has had some good luck recently with producing numerous TV series, specials, and pilots.

In creating the *Blue Stone* album and producing the accompanying music video trilogy, I am thrilled to be getting back into music and incorporating some of my film production skills as well. My hope is that the work will continue to reach a specific audience around the world who not only enjoy rock music, but are also entertained and uplifted by the accompanying fantasy visuals and “movie trailer styled” storytelling.



Elena: Do you want to talk any about your musical influences on this album? Right now I've only heard “Shine on Me,” so I'm not sure how representative it will be of the whole.

Chris: The whole album will be out available for download on Itunes / Amazon in late April, and the actual CDs available in May, on Amazon and

CD Baby. We released the first three songs in January on Itunes /Amazon. They are “Shine On Me,” “Superhuman,” and “Light Speed.” To me, those tracks are all very different from each other, and pretty much sum up the album styles. We have lots of guitars and driving beats, some techno jams, some straight ahead rock tunes, and even a bit of an '80s' retro vibe on some of the songs. I really dig what bands like U2, The Cure, Depeche Mode, were doing in the '80s, especially, and that had an influence on my writing and playing. My favorite artists are The Beatles, David Bowie, and Led Zep.

Elena: Can you tell us more about the relationship between the music and the story/videos? Basically, did you have the album complete or nearly complete before the story came into the mix, or was their a synergy between them from the beginning? The name of the album, *Blue Stone*, is kind of a fantasy-sounding name. Was your intention from the start to write a rock album based on fantasy motifs, or did the appropriateness of said themes become clear to you at a later point in the process?

Chris: My producer and co-writer Damian Valentine and I had written more than half of the album by the time we shot the video, and the other songs were created afterwards. To me all of the songs on this record can fold into some aspect of the fantasy saga we are creating. Conversely, since all of the songs are deeply personal to me from a lyrical stand point, especially, they really do have a life and meaning outside of the Third Kingdom story line, as well.

Elena: Since you chose to make a fantasy-themed video, it seems safe to assume you are a fan of speculative fiction or at least its multi-media counterparts. Can you tell us what got you into fantasy (a certain book/movie, or was it a person or experience, etc.)? What are your favorite books/movies/games in the genre?

Chris: I'm certain that my love of fantasy started when I was a kid, with growing up in Hollywood and visiting Disneyland year in and year out. The idea of going to a special place that captures the imagination in such a unique and exciting way has really stayed with me all these years. So Walt Disney is perhaps one of my greatest influences and inspirations. (I'm sure the Three Stooges are in there somewhere as well.)

In terms of the book world, I am a really big fan of Frank Herbert's *Dune* and have read it lots of times. I really enjoy the story structure and adventure in the book. The ability to "hear" what people are thinking gives the story a remarkable depth and subtlety.

Elena: What story are you telling with the videos? Is it representative of a specific book or perhaps one of our "cultural" stories such as Camelot, or is it an original story? Either way, what was your inspiration for putting it into a visual medium like the videos?



Chris: The "Arra of The Third Kingdom" story is actually still unfolding as we venture into the creation of the second video in the trilogy. The first video is an original tale that reveals the story of a young woman named Arra (played by Ciel Post) who lives in an oppressed and dark world. In our saga hope shows up in the form of Angelic beings

who are secretly grooming Arra to become ruler and to help bring about a Golden Age for her world. My character, Jade, is initially an enforcer in the Witches realm, but when he falls in love with Arra, he begins a crusade to see her crowned, or die trying.

For me, as I got close to finishing up my album and doing the first video to accompany it, I wanted to do something different that would represent what I would like to see and experience. Plus, I am almost never in front of the camera in the various projects I work on, so it was really fun to get into armor, ride horses, and kiss the beautiful woman under the fireworks.

One of the really exciting developments that has happened for my album project is that we were recently contacted by a prominent New York literary agency regarding the creation of a fantasy book trilogy inspired by our current and upcoming music videos. We've had a few meetings now, and the result is that Robert Short ("Shine on Me" video director) and I have begun working with a fantastic book writer named Eldon Thompson. You may be familiar with Eldon's fantasy book trilogy, *The Legend Of Asahiel* (on Harper Collins, Eos). Eldon has also recently written the screenplay for Warner Bros' adaptation of Terry Brooks' *The Elfstones of Shannara*. We have found that Eldon has a very cinematic approach to his writing and is an incredibly gifted storyteller.

Elena: What draws you to fantasy as a means to express your artistic vision? Is it a love of magic and dragons, or a more abstract concept like the ability to create an allegory that is both thought-provoking and non-threatening in its provocativeness?

Chris: For me, this use of allegory and modern myth creation are the tools for maximum expression as an artist. It has been really exciting to jump into this fantasy world and to express some of the things I felt I needed to say at this time. Also, this idea of telling stories in short 4-minute movie trailers keeps the shots exciting, the pacing high, and the ideas flowing. Since no shots are much longer than 6 seconds, and many are less than 3 seconds, this afforded us an almost archetypal way of communicating. It's really fun to work on this, especially since I am used to producing long format reality TV shows. So 4 minutes packed with characters, romance, adventure, and dragons is a real blast!!

Elena: What has it been like working with Robert Short? I understand he is a special-effects director, so has that background influenced his decisions as the full director? Was this a collaborative effort or did you bring him in to realize *your* vision?

Chris: Robert Short is one of the coolest and most creative people I know, and it's just a real honor to work with him. I first worked with Bob on a pilot we were doing for Lions Gate on one of our show's concepts. We have been friends ever since, and it has been great for me to be on this journey with him.

This project started very small, with me doing sketches and simple storyboards for what I wanted to shoot in the video. Then, as I gathered a notebook full of weird ideas, Bob and I started meeting to discuss how we could achieve my unusual vision. Bob really understands green screen production as well as shooting out in the real world, with all that comes with it. He was the perfect choice to see this project through with me.

Elena: Regarding your notebook of weird ideas: were there any that you were not able to realize? Obviously there are going to be some changes between mental inception and a live-action rendering, so I mean either changes so substantial it became almost a different scene, or something you simply could not find a way to do. Are there any that came out exactly as you imagined them?



Chris: As to the shots that didn't make it into the video, I had made arrangements to work with a stunt coordinator to do some wire combat stunts, and actually got fitted for a wire rig. This was done to create scenes that would give our characters more "flight and altitude" in relation to fight sequences. We ended up turning loose all

those shots and ideas, as they were turning out to be too time-consuming in relation to the overall shot list we had. The plan, had it worked, would have given us some cool battle action that would have been reminiscent of films like *The Matrix* or *Curse of the Golden Flower* (which I loved). I am hoping to accomplish these types of action sequences in the next video.

As to the translation of the ideas from sketches to rendered shots, I think overall we are pretty thrilled with the how our shots came out. There were lots of surprises, as well.

Some of my personal favorites are the Witches with swords in the blue mist, Arra with the Golden Crown, Sterling (played by Jason Schulz) throws a dagger at the Witches, and when Jade (me) and Arra escape into the Ice Forest.

Elena: There is an interesting use of color palettes for some of the different scenes. Are you trying to convey specific emotions with these colors (sadness or grief with the autumnal gold, hope or rebirth with the spring green, etc.) or are they just beautiful fantasy scenes? (I especially love the ice cave, by the way.)

Chris: Thanks. I think more than anything, I am quite obsessed with color saturation. We wanted all the tones to be as deep and rich as possible, even if it meant taking our

colors into an “otherworldly” pallet. We really didn’t have a philosophical rationale for the colors we chose, just a love of fantasy and a desire to have all the scenes look as rich and cinematic as possible. In ways, it was our homage to Japanese Anime. Bob and I felt that lots of people would be seeing the video on small computer screens, or even tiny Ipod screens, and so we really punched the saturation to make it pop. We used Technicolor here in Hollywood to do our color timing, and that was very important to the final look of everything.

Elena: Finally, you have mentioned this will be a video trilogy. Can you tell us where you are on production with the others? Any hints about what we’ll see? What is up next for you?

Chris: As I said, the full *Blue Stone* album should be out on Itunes/ Amazon/ Cd Baby in the next month. After this happens, I am planning to take a short breather and then see what the next move is. I am hoping to tour internationally to support this record, as well.



As for the next video, we hope to have more battle action, overall adventure, more romance, and hopefully some really interesting fantasy elements to add to our elixir.

Elena: Chris, again, thank you so much for taking the time to answer all my questions. I really love the vision you have brought to my computer screen, and I can’t wait to see how the story plays out!

