

# I AM SCHUMAN

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**NAMMA** MUSIC

The numbers associated with Tom Schuman are staggering to say the least. He has written or co-written nearly sixty compositions for the Jazz powerhouse Spyro Gyra since the 1980 album *Catching the sun*. With a total of 35 albums, over 10,000 shows and 13 Grammy Nominations under their belt, Tom has released eight albums on his own as well. Tom has been living a life of music few people can dream of.

# Tom Schuman



# THE STORY

The dream started small in 1974 in Buffalo, New York. But once the juggernaut called Spyro Gyra started, Tom Schuman, co-leader composer and arranger made his mark as a musician even greater than the fame that Spyro Gyra brought him. With over four decades with the band, a personal choice to move to Europe with his wife Yvonne, brought the curtains down on a glorious run with Spyro. Given the staggering achievement as a musician, Tom could have hung up his boots and just taken it easy watching the days go by peacefully. Well, he chose to get back on the drawing board and carve out something new.

His ninth album, a completely solo project barring a special guest on one track, Tom has wrapped a brilliant gift for his fans and followers. His prowess as an arranger and producer is well accepted. If one has followed the works of Spyro, one is aware that Tom's keyboard work, compositions and jazz arrangements have helped to keep them as the leading contemporary jazz band for 50 years.



So what exactly is music? The dictionary will define it as vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony. Music is also defined as punishment for a misdeed (face the music). I prefer to think of it as the purest form of a universal language which can in great detail, represent the heart, soul and intellect of a musician or composer. It is complete when shared with an audience who is willing to pay attention and really listen.

The “music” in this collection of instrumental adventures were mostly conceived through improvisations I played when I felt the urge or inspiration. I rarely sit down and draw up a formula, arrangement or plan (although I have done it). I prefer to have emotional conversations with myself using a piano or keyboard. I then further develop those “conversations” into something that invokes an emotional reaction when I hear it back. This process has become my mental and spiritual therapy!

All the songs on this album (with the exception of “Set It Off” and “A Child is Born”) were conceived from an impromptu keyboard solo without any pre-conception or intent. Some of them may have been inspired by a rhythmic groove or synthesizer patch. Others grew from a solo piano improvisation.

The end result for me is a detailed look into my heart, mind and soul. My most vulnerable self. For me, these and all my compositions, will allow me to live beyond my body. A source of immortality if you will.

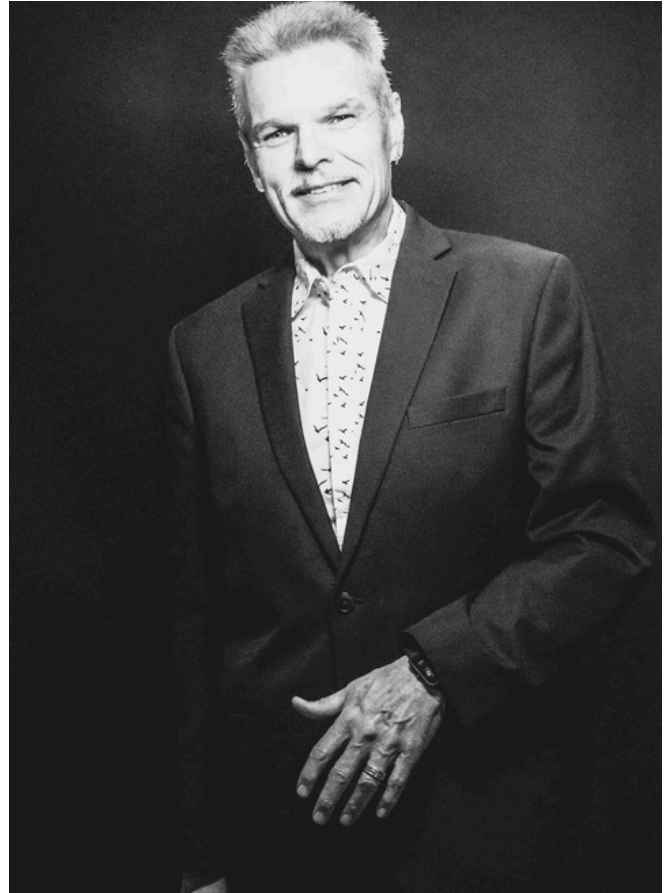
So music to me, is life everlasting!

I must thank my best friend, wife and “muse”, Yvonne Schuman for giving me the sanctuary to create without judgement or restraint.

I also must thank Sandeep Chowta and Vikram Ghatpande for believing in me and technically guiding and helping me to install the most amazing and extensive sound palette on the planet.

Shout out to vocalist Kevin Whalum for breathing life into “Loose Change”.

Thank you Abhay Nayampally for your brilliant performance on “Comfortable Silences”.



Thanks to Stewart Townsley Photography for the cover picture.

Thank you Arpito Gope for taking the trouble to design the amazing album sleeve.

Thank you Amyth Venkataramaiah for the Album design.

Thanks to Nama Music and all its allies for releasing this collection and exposing me to a whole new audience who really listens.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Seaver". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "T" and a long, horizontal line extending to the right.

# THE ALBUM.

## I AM SCHUMAN

'I Am Schuman' the album announces Tom in his new avatar. Post Spyro Gyra, he has indulged in music in the way he wants to and has laid bare his soul in this album. Each arrangement and piece has a very personal aura of his and the compositions range from the melancholic to the cheerful to the wistful. Each one of his fans have been waiting to hear from Tom and what is happening post his four decades of association with Spyro. It takes a musician of Tom's calibre to rise above the powerful aura and fame with Spyro Gyra and to give his fans something so distinctively Tom. Well, this is Tom Schuman.

AUGUST 2024

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# SONG BOOK

## 1 Set It Off

This is a piece I wrote for Spyro Gyra some thirty years ago . Jay Beckenstein recorded it with the band at his Beartracks studio but the song never saw the light of day until now. I love this track. So I replayed every part using a plethora of new sounds to embellish the rhythms and arrangement.

## 2 Loose Change

I once worked with vocalist, Kevin Whalum (Kirk Whalum's brother) on a video webcast about 15 years ago. I orchestrated the original groove as a soundscape for a scene which was perfect for it. You can hear Kevin's rhythmic breaths in the mix. I expanded the arrangement and then recorded the improvised one take melodies and solos that you hear on this final mix. The rattling sample effect and rhythmic jingles sounds like a pocket full of loose change.

## 3 Comfortable Silences

This slow waltz started as an impromptu piano improvisation at my house in Las Vegas. My wife, Yvonne loved it. So I wrote it out and played it with my trio in Bern, Switzerland. When Sandeep asked if there was a song Abhay Nayampally could play guitar on, this one immediately came to mind. Abhay gave us an emotional performance that enhances the tune beautifully! The title is a reflection of that peaceful feeling you get when you are with the ones you love and nothing needs to be said.

## 4 How Sensitive

For this song, I wrote down The chord structures and I purposely left the melodies optional to be played differently every time it was performed. The final melodies you hear on this version happened while using the flute sound as I heard it at that moment in time. The title gives homage to Antonio Carlos Jobim's "How Insensitive". I never understood why he named it that when the song could only be properly played with the utmost sensitivity.

## 5 The Candy Store is Open

I previously released a single of this one in 2020. It was created from an improvisation that I performed in my studio on a chorused Rhodes sound which still exists in the mix. It is a loving tribute to Sandeep Chowta and Vikram Ghatpande. They were both instrumental in helping me upgrade my studio with the latest VSTs and rhythm orchestrators at the time. Sandeep would always make me laugh when he would call and say "The candy store is open". Hence the title.

## 6 Transitions

Sometimes mistakes are what makes the creative process more interesting. I sometimes do test sessions in my studio to audition either a new VST instrument, outboard gear or effect. This started as a test of a 32 channel A/D - D/A audio interface (the Antelope Orion 32). It was an impromptu performance from multiple keyboards recorded with a sequenced rhythm from my KORG X50. The title arrived when I inadvertently deleted the only copy I had of that session. I was able to bring back some of the tracks using hard drive recovery software. But the piece "transitioned" into something deeper and more pleasing to my ears as a result of my catastrophic blunder.

# SONG BOOK

## 7 Crimson Rain

This is by far the most adventurous track on this project. It started out as a sequence on the KORG X50 keyboard. The Rhodes sound I was using had an interesting arpeggio pattern when the sequencer was applied. So I recorded my harmonic reactions to the pattern by inserting chords at random. I added bass and drum programming and left it alone until I moved to Barcelona where I finished it. The solos and break melodies were all performed in my new surroundings.

## 8 Mientras Espero

This was born from another test session. I was experimenting with the Synthogy Ivory piano and some string / pad sounds in the MainStage app on my laptop. The intro you hear was the first take swelling pads in and out and testing the dynamics of the American Steinway grand. I thought it sounded pretty good as an intro. So I decided to finish it here in Barcelona by continuing the flow using a rhythm pad that felt appropriate. I then played out the tune over the rhythm by improvising alternate chords to avoid any similarity to the intro.

The title is in Spanish to commemorate our new home as a place where I don't mind waiting for my wife to get ready and go out to explore this beautiful city.

## 9 Syntropy

Here is another re-mastered re-release from the JazzBridge-SchuBox archives!

Syntropy is by definition, "The tendency towards energy concentration, order, organization and life. In contradiction to entropy, syntropy is a result of retrocausality leading to persistent and more complex organization."

I equate this physics term to a jazz musician's thought process while improvising in real time. We routinely convert the chaotic and ever streaming musical ideas flowing through our minds and filter them down through our instruments so the listener can understand and enjoy them.

This song and performance is an adventure into the exciting process of improvisational writing and soloing over an infectious jazz fusion beat and bass line.

## 10 A Child is Born (by Thad Jones)

After all the chaotic streaming of musical ideas start to fade out, I find peace and tranquillity in the music of other artists.

This one especially gives me that "Zen" quality I need to settle down and reflect on my accomplishments of the day (if any). Please accept this final performance as a musical hug and thanks for listening!