



On the road with...

GESTALT

*Clockwise from centre:
Suncat Morningsky,
Verneen Halannim,
Korynn Mitwoch,
Kaichang Belgardis,
Orville Torres,
Tollain Kintarsh.*

GESTALT. It means “a configuration or pattern of elements so unified as a whole that it cannot be described merely as a sum of its parts.” A pretty ambitious name to pick for your band, you might think. But that’s the name of the group that’s currently causing a stir right across the octant, and may be positioning itself to go pangalactic before we’re all very much older. We packed our cameras and recorders to catch up with Gestalt as they embarked on the first leg of their inaugural tour of the Marengo sector, resolved, if we couldn’t manage to describe the band itself, at least to have a good old go at summing up its parts...

The mastermind behind the group is drummer and vocalist TOLLAIN KINTARSH, 26, though he’s careful to stress that Gestalt is not in any sense “his band.” He looks, we have to say, a little bit like a hobbit, being less than five feet tall, but his grin is infectious and his personality irrepressible. He began his career seven years ago as a polymathic prodigy, turning out three albums packed with phenomenal musicianship that nobody could make head or tail of. So what’s behind this reinvention of himself as “just the drummer”?

TK: I think drumming’s always been my first love. I love rhythm. The pulse of it, and the tension you can set up between two different rhythms where they meet and part. My trouble is that I tend to get lost in the details and overcomplicate things; nobody wants to listen to ten minutes of 11/8 overlapping with 19/4 just to get back to the point where they match. You need to stick a bit of actual music in there. (Laughs) Hence, the band.

HO: How did you feel when your third solo album flopped?

TK: Slightly disappointed. I think I can say that. (Laughs) But fortunately, just at about that time, I encountered the Truesingers, and particularly the lady who is now my wife, Suncat, and they gave me the thought—it wasn’t really even an idea at that stage—that maybe there was another way, that I didn’t just have to keep doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result. So we talked, and talked, and talked, and it all just came together.

HO: The Truesingers were doing quite well on their own, weren’t they? What persuaded them to hook up with you?

TK: You’d have to ask them. But I’m very glad they did. I think we’re going to do some amazing things.

SUNCAT MORNINGSKY, 24, the lead female singer of Gestalt, vivacious, blonde and stunningly attractive, tells a rather different story:



Tollain Kintarsh: "I think we're going to do some amazing things."

SM: He just swooped in and saved us. We were going down for the third time, and the problem was entirely me.

HO: How do you mean?



Suncat: "I'm an incredibly lazy person."

SM: I'm an incredibly lazy person by nature, and I've been very lucky having this voice. Kaichang and Verneen had the devil's own time getting me to do any work at all, because when you are lucky it's so easy to fall into complacency. I did scare myself once very badly, but even that wore off after a while, old habits reasserted themselves...we'd do a gig, get paid, live on that for however long it lasted and then I'd start to look round for something else. Plus we were managing ourselves, which is no way to maintain any kind of discipline.

HO: And then...

SM: Well, and then Tollain came swooping in like a rather short superhero and more or less made me be sensible. I couldn't get round him, you see, because I hadn't known him long enough. He gave me daily exercises, and he criticised me absolutely ruthlessly, though not as ruthlessly as some I could name...I got so mad at him sometimes, 'cause I liked being lazy old Suncat, you know, only doing what I felt like. But then it all sort of fell into place, and I realised that it really was making me better at what I do...and I realised that I didn't need him to do that, to maintain the discipline. I could do

it myself. I *should* have been doing it myself. And once I started doing that it all became a lot easier.

HO: How did the other Truesingers feel about suddenly being part of a different band?

SM: Wary at first, of course, which I totally got. They only met Tollain after me, of course, so I'm positive Kaichang thought I'd joined some kind of cult or something...I come in raving about this guy I met and how brilliant he is, and then he shows up (she puts out a hand at approximate Tollain height) all bounce and enthusiasm, and it took them a while to cotton on to him...but we all got there eventually.

HO: Not worried about losing your independence?

SM: Absolutely not. For one thing, we are still independent. Tollain says we should absolutely go on gigging as the Truesingers, so we've got plans for after this tour is over. And we all write our own songs, and we all get to do solo numbers even when we're there as Gestalt, so it's not as if it's all Tollain, all the time. He'd hate that. He loves diversity, different sounds...not just mainstream styles either, but really out-there stuff. Chants, weird harmonies, industrial noises...everything.

With this endorsement ringing in our ears, we went to speak to the group's axe specialist, KAICHANG BELGARDIS. We then spoke to the bassist, ORVILLE TORRES, 25. He answered us.

OT: No, she doesn't give interviews, Kaichang. Not in the ordinary way. I do, though.

HO: How would you describe Gestalt's musical influences?

OT: Well, mostly pretty standard, though Tollain does like some weird stuff. Thing about most music nowadays, it's very conventional, we're still building on the same styles of music that came out from old Earth thousands of years ago...folk, blues, soca, rock and roll, various kinds of dance, jazz and all the rest. Music's gone round in circles, but it's never developed far beyond those genres.

HO: Why do you suppose that is?



Kaichang Belgardis: nothing to say.



Orville Torres: "Music these days is very conventional."

OT: Well, opinions differ. (Laughs) My own theory is that when things started being recorded in a lasting format they kind of fossilise the expectations, so you don't look to develop much beyond the kind of music you can get in recordings, which might have been made in your grandad's day. Tollain disagrees, he thinks that there are natural limits to the kind of sounds human beings find enjoyable, and back in the prespace days they pushed those limits as far as they could go and had the sense to recognise that and not keep pushing. Of course this is the bloke who can sit for an hour listening to the harmonics of a road drill and writing a song to go over it.

HO: And will Gestalt be pushing the envelope?

OT: I think we'll be trying to write the kind of songs people like, but maybe in a way they haven't heard them before. Not so much pushing the envelope as turning it upside down.

HO: You've not been a regular member of a band for some time. How's it working out for you?

OT: Well, it's really odd, but just about every band I've ever been in has broken up acrimoniously. I have no idea why, it just seems to happen round me. This one seems to be different, though. I mean, Tollain and Suncat, there's no breaking that up, and Suncat and the girls are the same...there's nobody to start a fight with except the keyboard player, and he just looks at you and goes back to what he was doing. So it looks as though I'm stuck with this one. (Laughs) Thank the stars.



Verneen Halannim: "someone has to think about what if it rains?"

VERNEEN HALANNIM, 24, started out playing the flute in the Truesingers, but has gradually diversified and is now accumulating an impressive collection of wind instruments some of which (according to her own report) she can almost play.

HO: Is Gestalt a happy band?

VH: A happy band of pilgrims, you mean? (Smiling) Yes, I'd say mostly. We have little frictions, but no more than any group who live together in close proximity. Tollain and Suncat are happy, of course...

HO: And the rest of you?

VH: Well, we're too busy looking after them to fight. (Smiles) No, seriously, with Tollain and Suncat, who are neither of them, bless them, the most practical souls in the worlds...and Kaichang, who's all feeling, and Korynn, who's all brain, and neither of *them* ever really quite on the planet with you...someone has to actually think about, you know, what if it rains, or what if the gig goes south or whatever...and that tends to be Orville and me.

HO: Do you regret it?

VH: Me? Not a bit of it. It's done wonders for my self-confidence. I mean, if *they* need *my* help...

KORYNN MITWOCH, the aforementioned brainy keyboard player, is very much a man of mystery. Whether this is a conscious pose or whether there's some more significant reason behind it, we may never know, because he did not respond to our questions. However, he did take one of our recorders to pieces and put it back together, and it now not only records with stunning clarity in surround sound but makes a very nice cup of tea as well.

So there you have it. Six highly accomplished musicians, six very diverse personalities, six different approaches to life and to music. Will they blend together harmoniously, or will the result be a discordant clash? Our reviewer will be on hand for their first gig of the current tour, at the Cosmolite Stadium on Ramott, and you'll find his report in our next issue. One thing seems certain: Gestalt are not going away any time soon.

Report: Cassivel Dwyer
Pics: Raoul H. Ployd



Korynn Mitwoch: a dab hand at making things make tea.