

Mp3 Richie Fontana - Steady On The Steel



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"This new release works its undeniable charm via a solid collection of deliciously melodic heavy pop numbers..." Ken Sharp (music journalist - Goldmine, Record Collector, The Rock Report) 14 MP3 Songs

POP: Power Pop, ROCK: 90's Rock Details: In The Beginning Any chance of Richie Fontana having a so called regular life, pretty much ended on February 7th, 1964 with the arrival of The Beatles in his home town of New York City. Already having shown an interest in music as a young child, playing his Dad's records, and listening to the pop radio stations with his sister Marianne, Richie was very much primed for the phenomenon of the Fab Four. Since both his parents were music lovers, they were easily persuaded to buy him his first guitar, and later, his first drum kit. Aside from a few early guitar lessons, Richie was self-taught on all instruments; an important factor in the creation of his signature playing and writing style. This all paved the way to a life dedicated to music making, a course from which he would never stray. Heavily influenced by the British Invasion and other choice American groups, Richie soon became a guitarist, and then a drummer in neighborhood bands with other kids who were also bitten by the same Beatle bug. Eventually he moved onward, beyond his own zip code, where he would meet better and better musicians. Although never forsaking his ability to play guitar, bass, and a bit of keyboards, it became obvious that his forte would be that of a drummer throughout his career. Things began to get serious when in 1973 he became part of a group called Wormwood Scrubs. This was the best band he had been involved with to date. Also, it's where Richie's songwriting skills would begin to bud. Working with the late/great guitar virtuoso Jack O'Brien (from Hammer), Richie's playing (drumming) ability would excel to a much higher standard. Also part of this group was bassist Danny McGary, who along with Richie, would later form the nucleus for the band Piper, founded by Billy Squier in 1975. Max's Kansas City Max's Kansas City in New York, being "the" music industry club, was ground zero for rock 'n' roll in

the 70's. Groups like The Ramones and Blondie were just emerging at that time, and they were all part of that scene. On a given night at Max's, you would see people like David Bowie or Alice Cooper, just hanging out. It was like "Glitter Rock," meets Andy Warhol, meets the then budding punk rock scene. It was a great place to be at that time. Richie Fontana and Danny McGary being frequent patrons of Max's, were right in the middle of it all. One of the more avant-garde acts from that time was the transvestite rocker Wayne County (known today as Jayne County. Ah....you do the math). For a while, Danny played bass in Wayne's band, which lead to Richie Fontana playing keyboards (Hammond Organ/piano) on two songs on Wayne County's album. So for Richie and Danny, just being around that whole scene, somehow they knew that the "big time" was maybe just a breath away. And then..... Piper In the summer of 1975, Billy Squier, Danny McGary, and Richie Fontana got together at Bearsville Studios in Woodstock, New York, where they would record the first demos of Billy's latest songs. Although Richie loved to rock on the heavy side, he has always been much more concerned with the 'song'. Good playing with good melodies was, and still is, of the utmost importance. Billy's music had all of these elements. True power pop. He (Billy) was, and still is, a great songwriter, as many now know. With interest from Aucoin Management, the people who handled Kiss at that time, came the addition of guitarists Alan Nolan and Tommy Gunn (that's right, Tommy Gunn). Now, with management, and after showcasing for Clive Davis and various other record execs, Piper signed a record deal with A&M Records in 1976, and proceeded to Toronto to record their self-titled debut album "Piper." It was "welcome to the machine" time. After lots of radio air-play, and their first major/national tour, it was back to the studio to record the second album titled "Can't Wait," this time at Electric Lady Studios in NYC. After another tour with many different headlining acts, including Kiss, Piper disbanded in 1978, as Billy Squier was at the beginning of his career as a solo artist. KISS/Paul Stanley During the post Piper era, Richie continued to work with Billy Squier, recording demos of Billy's new songs, while also working on a project with another x-Piper band mate, Tommy Gunn. While doing that, he received a call from Paul Stanley of Kiss, as the four members of Kiss were getting ready to record their individual solo albums. Richie plays drums on the first four songs on Paul Stanley's album, with Paul and members of Meat Loaf's band. This album, of course, was a million seller, going platinum as all other KISS albums usually do. Skatt Bros. In 1979, Richie Fontana helped form The Skatt Bros.. He was the drummer (sometimes guitarist) of this L.A. based dance/rock band founded by Sean Delaney. Signed to Casablanca Records by Neil Bogart, Richie

co-wrote a song with fellow band member David Andez called "Walk The Night," which became a dance hit in clubs all over the world. At one point, The Skatt Bros. had 3 songs at #6 on Billboard's Top 100 Dance Chart, plus a gold record in Australia called "Life At The Outpost." Before disbanding in 1981, they recorded two albums: "Strange Spirits" (Casablanca), and "Rico And The Ravens" (Polygram-Mercury/Australia). They also recorded what Billboard Magazine called, "a sledgehammer version of Elvis Presley's "Don't Be Cruel," recorded at The Record Plant in Los Angeles. This was issued as a single only. Skatt Bros. toured Australia (including Tasmania) in 1981, with the group Men At Work as their opening act. They also appeared on many of the TV shows of the day, i.e. Dinah Shore, Merv Griffin, Dance Fever; and in Australia, "Hey Hey It's Saturday," "Countdown," and others. Although their music was generally categorized in the dance genre, in reality, Skatt Bros. was a powerful rock 'n roll band. Laura Branigan Richie performed on tour with Laura during the peak of her career. He was her drummer for all live performances and TV shows from 1983 through 1985, touring the USA as well as Canada and Mexico; performed on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson twice, Solid Gold, and Solid Gold Hits, as well as other TV shows of the day. Also, Richie can be seen in the video release: "Laura Branigan," a one hour live performance from Caesars Tahoe, Lake Tahoe, NV. More Stuff Also during this same time period, Richie had worked with a band called The Criminals. The lead singer of The Criminals, Tom Nielsen, was one of the stars of the CBS TV soap "The Guiding Light." In turn, The Criminals appeared on that show three times in 1984. Other members of this group were from the bands of Bryan Adams, Dire Straits, Ian Hunter, and Laura Branigan. As well as working with The Andy Parks Band (aka John Andrew Parks), a talented singer/songwriter from Texas, Richie worked with Dr. John, and John Pousette-Dart on various one-off gigs. He would also work as a session musician on various recordings for numerous would-be pop stars. In 1987, Richie made a brief appearance on an album by Billy Branigan (yes, the brother of) called "Make A Move" (Polygram), while for a period of time, played in a group with Steve and John Conte, who today are known as Crown Jewels. Evolution By this time Richie's ambitions started to shift from being a band member, to being a solo artist. His songwriting skills had developed to the point where he felt he was ready. With the ability to play different instruments, and arrange them in a cohesive way, he acquired the production values he needed to get his music across. In doing so, he developed a sound of his own; a sound that encompassed his earlier influences, as well as what he had learned from the top musicians that he was privileged to have worked with (and you know

who you are!). After 3 development budgets from Atlantic Records, including one from Doug Morris (then president of Atlantic Records), Richie had crossed the line from musician/player, to singer/songwriter. Subsequently, the result has been an ever-growing catalog of material containing a substantial number of songs, many of which have recently been selected for the album titled "Steady On The Steel," now available through this web site. But, there is another facet to Richie's compositional endeavors. He has also made songwriting contributions to various other projects. One being Skyshapers, a motivational/entertainment program for kids. His songs "The Good Life" and "Wanna Be A Skyshaper" can be heard at Skyshapers.com, along with music contributed by people like the renown guitarist, Chris Spedding. And then there's Songs Of Love, for which songwriters contribute personalized compositions for terminally ill children. Richie Fontana, as well as writers like Billy Joel, Will Lee, Steve John Conte of Crown Jewels, and many many others, have written music for this very worthy cause - one that is truly a labor of love. So, the art of music making does have many joys, and for Richie Fontana, it remains the love of his life to this day. The Secret It's no longer a secret that Richie Fontana has Multiple Sclerosis (MS), a neurological disorder. But, from 1985 through 1993, before his symptoms became visible, Richie had to be very closed mouthed about the whole thing. While pursuing a recording career of his own, striving to once again become a commodity, he didn't want record companies or management to see him as a bad risk - so, it was hush hush. Today, in the year 2002, with the most up to date medication and use of a walking cane, Richie continues to write and record his music, as well as pitching his material to various other artists, publishers, and producers. So, life goes on. Note: With new medications, we are now able to slow, if not stop the progression of MS. Research has taken great strides in recent times, and the ability to reverse disabilities caused by MS, may not be as far off as originally thought!

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