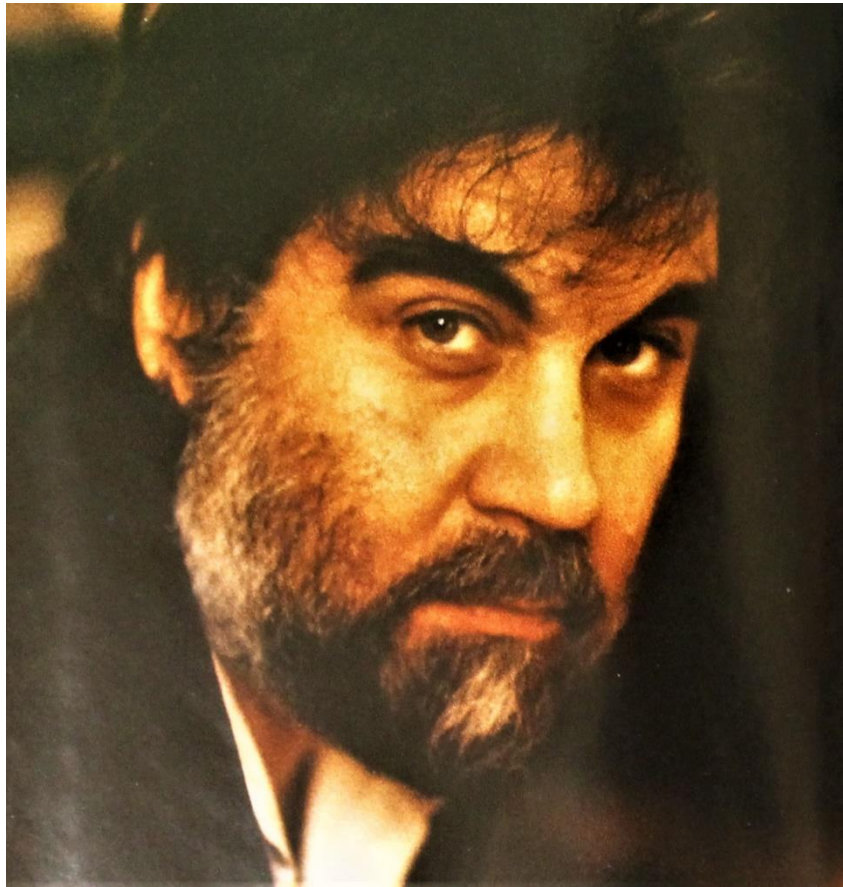


DINNER WITH VANGELIS

A 'conversation piece' written by Ian Welland



Intro:

In December 1975, whilst visiting the music section of Rowse's Department Store in West Ealing, I heard being played some ethereal ambient music. I enquired with the suited and booted shop assistant as to the music; and, he replied, 'Oh that's a new album called *Heaven and Hell* by some chap called Vangelis.

I purchased *Heaven and Hell* with my pocket money - £3.99. It came with a gatefold sleeve with the album label, RCA Victor, beautifully bright orange. I still have that album. I would go on, over the years, to purchase a cassette copy to play in my first car in 1983, the first RCA CD pressing in the late 1980s, and finally a remastered digital version downloaded recently.

I should add at this stage, that I now own approx. 40 albums recorded by Vangelis, including some that were recorded with Jon Anderson, former lead singer with the prog-rock group Yes.

Vangelis is probably best known for his *Chariots of Fire* soundtrack; but, in truth there is so much more to this composer / musician that can possibly be covered here, or over a single evening dinner. My regret is that I never had the chance to meet Vangelis during his lifetime, but I know that one day I shall pass into that utopian eternal garden that lays just the other side of the Pearly gates and be granted an audience with the great man.

So, for now, I can only imagine an evening dinner, at Vangelis's home on the outskirts of Athens, passing through his home recording studio on the way to the terrace affording uninhibited views of the Acropolis.

What would I ask?

Cast:

Ian **Ian Welland**
Vangelis **Chris McDermott**

Location: Vangelis's house, just outside Athens.

Vangelis: Welcome Mr Ian.

Ian: Thank you, Sir.

Vangelis: Please do call me Vangelis. All my friends do. Come, you like Moussaka but without the parmesan, yes?

We sit down at the table that has been laid out on the terrace by Vangelis's housekeeper.

Ian: You live here alone?

Vangelis: Indeed. I was married once, but that was a long time ago. Let's talk music. I understand that you first heard my music in London in 1975?

Ian: Yes. *Heaven and Hell* was playing in a West Ealing department store. I had never heard anything so ambient, so atmospheric. I was a schoolboy amateur astronomer in those days, looking at the stars when I could, and your music seemed to fit. Years later, at an observatory in the Buckinghamshire countryside, I would actually play your music whilst observing!

Vangelis: I have had a special relationship with astronomy. You are not the first person to say the two join up. I purposely explored the music of the spheres, you might say. Wine Ian?

Ian: Half a glass, thank you.

Vangelis: Did *Heaven and Hell*, when you heard it right through, live up to your expectations?

Ian: Absolutely.

Vangelis: I recorded *Heaven and Hell* in my London studio. To think the distance from where my studio was located and the store you purchased my album, was only three miles! I wished you had knocked on my door. I could have signed it for you!

Ian: I understand you record most of your music in one take? The music is almost finished in your head before writing the score?

Vangelis laughs...

Vangelis: Back then, yes. Indeed, right up to probably the mid-90s, nearly all my albums were composed with the music finished in my brain. Someone once remarked Mozart was similar. Wow, I am being compared to Mozart!

Vangelis laughs again...

Ian: What is your favourite recording?

Vangelis: Oh, that's tough. You see I go from one theme to another; and I like the latest one I'm working on. Looking back, *Chariots of Fire* was a real highlight. And before that, *To The Unknown Man* worked out well which is essentially two pieces of music joined by a military march. You?

Ian: The third movement of *Heaven and Hell* is very special to me of course; *Abraham's Theme* is sublime; but, *Reve* is hauntingly beautiful and inspires me to write, and dream.

Vangelis: *Reve* was lost in the background scene in a film. But I am delighted you recognise its qualities. And others?

Ian: *Direct* is, for me, a complete statement of science and technology. The sound is so different to what came before.

Vangelis: I was experimenting with a new sound system that was effectively built to my own specification, based on the Zylkus MIDI. No need for pre-programming. It was complicated to use at first and I have many tapes with false starts which I must use one day if I can find them!

Ian: You have tapes of false starts? You really must release these.

Vangelis: One day my friend I will hand them all to you. No better person knows my music. I'm sure you will do them justice, mixing wise that is... More Moussaka?

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