

GARY NUMAN:



The boy who would later evolve into Gary Numan was born Gary Anthony James Webb on March 8, 1958, in the west London area of Hammersmith. He began playing guitar in his early teens and, inspired by the freedom offered by punk's egalitarian ethic, joined a punk group called the Lasers in 1976. The following year, he and bassist Paul Gardiner left the Lasers to form their own group, Tubeway Army, with drummer Bob Simmonds. This incarnation of Tubeway Army recorded a couple of singles until Simmonds was replaced by Gary Webb's uncle, Jess Lidyard, and Webb himself was rechristened with the archetypal moniker of Gary Numan.

The result was a set of demos for the beggars banquet label in 1978 which show-cased the Army's sound of punk-meets-Kraftwerk (these were released several years later as "The Plan"). With a deal with Beggars Banquet secured, the debut self-titled album was released towards the end of the year, and showcase a sound informed by Düsseldorf's finest, Kraftwerk, and David Bowie's Berlin-era collaborations with Brian Eno.

The group's follow-up album in early 1979 was called "Replicas", and this time credited to Gary Numan & Tubeway Army. It produced Numan's first breakout single, "Are Friends Electric?", which went to the top of the U.K. charts, bringing the album along with it. "Replicas" also featured another future favourite from the Numan canon in "Down in the Park". With the attention attracted by the successful singles and album, Numan became a star overnight, inaugurating many of the elements that would define the new wave and post-new wave sounds of the 1980s. Another album, "The Pleasure Principle", followed in the same year, giving Numan his international hit "Cars," breaking the American Top Ten and hitting number one in the U.K; as the album, once again, did also.

Numan's fourth album, and the third to top the charts, was released the following year in 1980. "Telekon" featured two top five singles in "We Are Glass" and "I Die: You Die"; with "This Wreckage" later reaching the Top 20. In 1981, Numan announced his retirement from live performance, playing several farewell concerts just prior to the release of "The Dance". With "The Dance" and its lead single, "She's Got Claws", both climbing into the British Top Five, Numan attempted to fly around the world, but was bizarrely arrested in India on suspicion of spying and smuggling. The charges were dropped, although the authorities confiscated his plane.

Numan's retirement proved premature and he returned in 1982 with "I, Assassin", finding a world where the charts were now filled with synth-pop, much of it based on his template. "I, Assassin" was another Top Ten album, but Numan's hitmaking star was beginning to wane, and the title track of 1983's "Warriors" became his last British Top Ten hit.

Departing Beggars Banquet and creating his own Numa label, Numan released "Berserker" in late 1984. The following year's "The Fury" became the final Numan album to reach the British Top 20. A brief and unhappy period saw Numan signed to the IRS label, before once again returning to Numa for 1992's "Machine + Soul". 1994 saw the release of the industrial-tinged "Sacrifice", and began a period in which Numan's influence was critically appraised by a wealth of recent artists from Trent Reznor, to Tricky, and Marilyn Manson; who covered "Down in the Park" for the B-side of the "Lunchbox" single. His profile heightened, Numan delved deeper into gothic, metal-tinged industrial dance on 1997's "Exile", and fully expanded on the style with 2000's "Pure", which was acclaimed as his best work in years.