

**Keeping the beat: Pulse (from left) Carl Donnell, Peter Neri, Paul Rosano, Benet Segal, Richard Bednarczyk, Jeffrey Potter.**

**CREDITS**

**Tracks:** Too Much Lovin'/Another Woman/Hypnotized/Thanks For Thinking Of Me But It's Alright/Lo Down Baby/She's Killin' Me/Garden Of Love/Amassilation/My Old Boy

**Personnel:** Carl Donnell (vocals), Peter Neri (guitar, vocals), Paul Rosano (bass), Richard Bednarczyk (keyboards), Benet Segal (drums), Jeffrey Potter (harmonica).

Arranged by Pulse  
**Producer:** 'Doc' Cavalier; engineered by Bill Lobb, Dan Zellman, George McLean

**Released:** 1969  
**Recorded:** Synchron Sound Studios, Wallingford, CT

**Current availability:** *Pulse – The Album Plus The Lost Recordings* (Mascot)

doing very strange things to my brain”) features the DADGAD tuning also favoured by Jimmy Page. Faraway pagan reel Garden Of Love, meanwhile, was based on the William Blake poem of the same name. “I bastardised a little bit from the original,” says writer Neri. “I don’t think that Blake is rolling around in his grave about it, though.”

The band hoped the super-ebullient *My Old Boy* – which plugs into a similar easy riding drive as *Born To Be Wild* – might find success. Released on a single with rueful groover *Another Woman*, it failed to break through nationally. Apart from a show with *Blood, Sweat & Tears* at the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Maryland, Pulse were also obliged to stay close to home, playing local shows and supporting the Lovin’ Spoonful, Iron Butterfly and – when he was running against Ronald Reagan to be Governor of California – LSD insurrectionist Timothy Leary at a gig in Massachusetts in summer ’69. “He wanted some blues but with a little bit of a beat,” remembers Neri. “We obliged the best we could when he did his little speech. It wasn’t a long one.”

Navigating further shifts in the line-up, Pulse carried on working with Cavalier. Fruits of later unreleased sessions can be heard on a new release on Phoenix’s Mascot label, where the original album is joined by a second disc of archival tracks: stand-outs including Neri’s acoustic, flute-and-strings-augmented *Love Is Like The Sea* and the Creedence powerpop of *Good Time*.

The group called it a day in 1970. Neri, drummer Benet Segal and bassist Paul Rosano formed pop-rockers *Island* and moved to New York, where they recorded songs engineered by Todd Rundgren. Around the same time, Neri recalls, their occasional roadie Gene McFadden started working for Hendrix: he invited Neri and Benet to watch two nights of rehearsals with the Billy Cox incarnation of the Experience. “I remember more about those two nights than any of the

Pulse recording sessions,” says Neri, who still plays and records as a solo acoustic guitarist. He’s pleased that music he was involved in more than five decades ago has a new life on TV shows and film. “There was no lead songwriter, some were more prolific than others,” he reflects. “But I think we all respected each other.”

He adds that Segal later toured with Judy Collins and Phoebe Snow, while singer Donnell became President and CEO of the American Foundation For The Blind, retiring in 2016. “Carl held that position for 25 years,” he says. “*Man* could he sing!”

Ian Harrison

Thanks to Dwayne Witten of Mascot Records. See [www.peterneriguitar.com](http://www.peterneriguitar.com) for info.



# Throb Rules

This month’s exhumed joy: New England psych blues rock with a nod to William Blake.

## Pulse

POISON RING, 1969

**V**IEWERS OF TV shows including Bob Odenkirk’s *Lucky Hank*, *What We Do In The Shadows* and *Law & Order: Organized Crime* may have heard, in passing, some vintage bluesy psych cues with zip-busting vocals. It’s likely they had no idea who it was. In actuality, they were listening to New Haven group Pulse, who managed one self-titled album in 1968 before passing into hearsay and obscurity.

The group had its roots in Connecticut bands *The Shags* and *Bram Rigg Set*. Both groups were managed by local producer and former dentist Thomas ‘Doc’ Cavalier, AKA Trod Nossel. After mid-’60s 45s on small labels, both groups split in ’67, whereupon Cavalier suggested a rethink. “This was Doc’s plan to create a ‘super group’ with two of the most well-known bands in the area,” says ex-Bram Rigg Set guitarist Peter Neri.

“Unfortunately, some members from both groups were let go. It was a bit of a surprise at the time to the Bram Rigg Set guys – not sure how *The Shags* felt about it.” (In ’69, Cavalier explained his approach to *Record World*, saying “We don’t believe in contracts for our talent. Our working relationship is people to people.”)

Cavalier took the newly blended group to

his Synchron Sound Studios, later renamed Trod Nossel, in Wallingford, CT. Released on Atco, *The Pulse’s* debut 45 was *Can Can Girl* (the flip, Burritt Bradley, appeared on 1990 obsкуро-psych comp *Beyond The Calico Wall*). But it was a reconfigured version of the group that lost the definite article to record the first and only LP by Pulse at Synchron.

“I think the studio was top-notch for that era,” says Neri. “We didn’t tend to do too many takes. We were all teenagers at the time, so we didn’t have much input for the final sound. Doc acted as engineer/producer/mixer with help from a couple of more technical guys who actually ran the boards.”

While ex-Shag and vocalist Carl Donnell was used to poppier releases, his four ex-Bram Rigg Set bandmates favoured the FM rock sounds of *Led Zeppelin*, *Cream*, *Jeff Beck* and *Hendrix*. With multiple writers in the group, the noise they made leaned in heavy directions. With Donnell’s blues rock howl and Neri’s squalling psych guitars, augmented by gob iron and organ stabs, *Pulse* is replete with prime, prowling boogie: wolfish, cautionary opener *Too Much Lovin’* features a guitar solo played through a Fender Bandmaster with a blown speaker, while the tripped-out, *Tales Of Brave Ulysses*-adjacent *Hypnotized* (“you’re



“Timothy Leary wanted some blues but with a little bit of a beat...”

PETER NERI

Picture courtesy Mascot Records