

Sep 10, 2024; By Daniel Coston

In 1978, [Dane Donohue](#) made a debut album that should have propelled him to stardom. Working with members of the Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, and Toto, and backed by many of the same musicians who had just recorded Steely Dan's *Aja* album, Donohue's self-titled debut was released by Columbia the same week as Toto's debut album. For reasons that are still open to discussion, the record did not find a larger audience. 45 years later, that audience may have finally found Donohue. Now considered a lost gem of the Yacht Rock genre, Donohue recently went over two million plays on Spotify, and finds himself again looking towards the future. This month, Donohue has returned with *L.A. Rainbow*, available through Japan's [P-Vine Records](#). All these years later, the world may finally be ready for Dane Donohue.

GOLDMINE: *Your new songs sound as if no time has elapsed since your debut album.*

DANE DONOHUE: Thank you. I've been working with this group in Ann Arbor, Michigan, of all places, called Page 99 with John Nixon. One thing led to another, and now we have seven or eight songs recorded. This is the first time in 45 years that I have recorded something that feels as good as the 1978 album.

GM: *Before you began work with Terence Boylan, you recorded your version of Keith Carradine's composition "I'm Easy" as a single with longtime Neil Young associate Elliot Mazer. You also recorded an album's worth of songs with him in 1976 that you weren't happy with.*

DD: We spent a number of months recording at His Masters Wheels at 60 Brady Street in San Francisco. Rick Danko was heavily involved in the recording. Denny Seiwell played drums. Nicky Hopkins came in and played piano. A friend of Elliot's name Joel sang backup on one song. I found out later that it was Joel Bernstein, who photographed Neil Young, and a lot of other musicians. Elliot was a great producer, but with our work together, I couldn't reach the sound I was looking for. It didn't suit me. At some point, we were working on a song called "What Am I Supposed to Do?" which became the only song that I brought over from those sessions into what I eventually did with Terence Boylan. I told Elliot that I wanted the chorus to sound like the Eagles. He said, "You're not the Eagles," and I thought, "What's the point?" A year later, John David Souther and Don Henley put backing vocals on the same song, for my album.

GM: *You then spent close to a year working with Terence and John Boylan on your album. The list of credits on that album is staggering.*

DD: It was magic. A member of my management firm, Leber-Krebs in New York City, Kevin McShane found Boylan because he felt his work matched what I was in search of, and he was correct. I want to say how amazingly professional all the famous singers and players were backing up an unknown artist. They were so dedicated and worked hard. Timothy B. Schmit was the sweetest human being I'd ever met in my life. John David Souther was my hero. J.D. sang on more on my album than anyone else.

GM: *How did Don Henley get involved with the recording?*

DD: I was staying in this broom closet at the Beverly Hills Hotel. I was probably driving a Pinto that I'd gotten from the rental company and every day I'd have to park in an illegal spot. One day, Terence called and said, "You're not going to believe this. Don Henley is on his way over to Westlake Audio. Get your butt over there." I ran out the door of the hotel, and my car had been towed. I freaked out. I somehow finally got to the studio. I walked in and my producer was sitting there on the phone with the most depressed look on his face. He said, "Henley's on the phone, and he's not coming." J.D. Souther was already at the studio, and he got on the phone and talked to Don. Finally, J.D. looked at me and said, "He wants to talk to you." That totally freaked me out. Henley had some issues with my management, as I learned later. I offered to credit him on the record as "Lord Hen" and said, "I just want your beautiful vocals on this record." Don replied, "I'm sorry man, I can't do it." I handed the phone over to J.D., and he said, "Hey man, don't take it out on this kid. Besides, he has the worst taste in shoes. You've got to come here

and see this,” and he hung up the phone. A half an hour later, Henley arrived in a black BMW, and he and J.D. proceeded to sing until five in the morning, when they finished “What Am I Supposed to Do?”

GM: *How did Stevie Nicks come to sing on the album?*

DD: One night I was sitting at the bar with this girl named Mary and we were talking about the album. She said innocently, “I heard that you want Stevie Nicks to sing on your album. Do you want me to ask her?” I sarcastically answered, “Yeah sure, go ahead and ask her,” and left it at that. A night or two later, I was sitting at Westlake Audio, playing a George Jones-style version of Fleetwood Mac’s “Dreams” at the piano, just messing around. I saw Mary walk into the studio, and I turned around, and right behind her in a long red dress was Stevie. I nearly fell off the piano. J.D. was there as well, and they started working on the background parts to a song of mine called “Woman.” Stevie took the lead in working on the song.

GM: *Your album is also one of Steve Lukather’s earliest credits.*

DD: Lukather’s advocate was Jai Winding, who was my number one guy back then. Jai was really pushing for Lukather, and I was like, “No, I’ve got Larry Carlton, I’ve got Jay Graydon.” Winding pushed and pushed, and when Steve came in, he was amazing. He went to take the solo on “Whatever Happened.” I said, “This will be interesting since it’s an acoustic lead solo,” but he just picked up an acoustic guitar, and just blew my doors off.

GM: *There’s a bit of controversy on the internet right now, where some people have written, “At the end of Dane Donohue’s song ‘Casablanca,’ they have Larry Carlton listed on the credits as playing the guitar solo after Victor Feldman’s fabulous percussion solo,” but to my ears, it sounds like Steve Lukather.”*

DD: Controversy or not, I was sitting in the control room at I believe Capitol Studios in Hollywood with Terence watching Larry Carlton laying down the solo. Later we went with Larry to the Baked Potato and watched him play with an amazing group that included Jeff Porcaro. Two people I brought in for the song “Casablanca” were Jeff D’Angelo on bass, and Andy Smith on drums. Jeff was Beverly D’Angelo’s brother and had been my bass player in Columbus, Ohio. My drummer on that song was Andy Smith. Andy ran errands for the studio personnel while Steve Gadd was working on my album and was the best drummer I’d ever heard. I wanted to bring some Columbus musicians into this record.

GM: *You wrote many songs specifically for that album.*

DD: I wrote half of the songs on the album, but my co-writers on the other songs, David Getreau and Mark Fisher, were the best. They brought me up to the Steely Dan level. I met David through our work with the National Rock Opera Company production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and we would get together and ask each other, “What do you have?” They made me better. It took a long time to get the album done. We spent months on it in California, and we then did some sessions in New York. Terence and I had an argument at one point, and John Boylan came in to record the last two songs. Terence and I then patched things up, and he came back in to finish the record.

GM: *Your album was finally released in 1978, the same week that Columbia also released Toto’s first album.*

DD: I was disappointed that Columbia did not get more involved in the promotion of my album. That, along with the rise of disco music that same year, didn’t give it much of a chance of commercial success. When my album was released, disco was at its peak. One thing I want to say is that I feel very blessed now. I’ve spent many years singing with the Music Explosion, sharing the stage with The Outsiders and The Cyrkle. It’s a wonderful feeling. Then on top of that, I’m now playing these new songs with these young kids. They have a fire in the belly like we did back then. Yes, I could have been a star as big as the Eagles, but I also may not be here now if that had happened, and for that, I feel very blessed, plus, now I have a new album, too.