

# Donald Brian "Buck Dharma" Roeser

An American guitarist and songwriter, best known for being a member of Blue Öyster Cult since the group's formation in 1967. He wrote and sang the lead vocal on many of the band's best-known hits, including "(Don't Fear) The Reaper", "Godzilla", and "Burnin' for You" (the last originally intended for Roeser's solo album).

Roeser was born on Long Island, New York. His father was an accomplished jazz saxophonist, and Roeser spent a lot of time listening to jazz music as a result. Because of this, Roeser developed an interest in the melodic arts at a very early age. He even played the accordion for a brief period of time.<sup>[1]</sup>

Roeser was influenced greatly by the British Invasion of 1964, and he decided to pursue rock n' roll music. He first started out playing the drums, but had to stop temporarily after breaking his wrist while playing basketball. While recovering, Roeser learned to play guitar, and found that he enjoyed it more than the drums.

During his high school years, Roeser played guitar in various cover bands. At this time, he started to develop his own signature sound by imitating his favorite guitarists and combining their sounds with his own style. Roeser attended Clarkson College in New York, and joined a band that included later bandmate Albert Bouchard. The two played together on and off during the rest of their college career. At the end, both musicians abandoned potential degrees (Roeser's in Chemical Engineering), and decided to pursue music full-time. They moved in to a band house near Stony Brook University and started their careers.

Roeser and Bouchard started the band Soft White Underbelly in 1968. Members included keyboardist Allen Lanier, singer Les Braunstein, bassist Andrew Winters and former music critic Sandy Pearlman (their producer). In 1968, they were signed by Elektra Records after the company's president Jac Holzman saw them perform. Soft White Underbelly dropped Braunstein and added new singer Eric Bloom to their lineup. The band recorded under the name Stalk Forrest Group (after a bad gig forced them to change their name) in 1970. Elektra dropped the band because of problems with the personnel, and the album was shelved (it was eventually released in 2001 under the name *St. Cecilia: The Elektra Recordings*).

Roeser, along with Bouchard, Lanier, Pearlman, Bloom, and new member bassist Joe Bouchard (younger brother of Albert Bouchard) reformed with the name Blue Öyster Cult. They signed with Columbia Records in 1971, and released four albums between 1972 and 1975. Roeser's abilities on lead guitar were praised during this period. He did not write many songs during this time period, however, and was hardly featured on vocals (his most notable work at the time was "Then Came the Last Days of May", featuring him as both vocalist and songwriter).

By Blue Öyster Cult's fifth album *Agents of Fortune* in 1976, Roeser proved himself as a songwriter and vocalist with the band's signature song "Don't Fear the Reaper". As a result, Roeser's songwriting and vocals were more prevalent on the followup albums *Spectres*, *Mirrors*, *Cultosaurus Erectus* and *Fire of Unknown Origin*. Most significantly, he penned and sang on the tracks "Godzilla" and "Burnin' For You", which are staple songs of the band.

In 1982, Roeser recorded and released *Flat Out* during his spare time. This is his first and only studio album to this date. The tracks were all composed by Roeser (some co-written with Richard Meltzer, Neal Smith & Roeser's wife Sandy), with the exception of "Come Softly to Me", a track originally recorded by The Fleetwoods. These are songs that Roeser wanted to record, but they were received as too poppy by the other members of Blue Öyster Cult, and therefore not recorded by the band. The singles released off the album were "Born to Rock" and "Your Loving Heart", both of which had music videos made and did not chart. The video for the former song was part of a MTV promo along with Blotto's Metalhead clip, which Buck made a cameo appearance in the video as well as play the guitar on the song. Two other notable tracks are "Cold Wind" and "Anwar's Theme".

Roeser and Blue Öyster Cult subsequently recorded three more albums (two studio and one live) that all flopped commercially, but contained a decent amount of Roeser's compositions and many tracks with Roeser on lead vocals. This, along with the loss of original members Albert Bouchard (1982) and Allen Lanier (1985), prompted Blue Öyster Cult to break up in mid 1986.

In 1985, Roeser and Bloom participated in Hear 'n Aid. This was a project created by Ronnie James Dio to raise money for famine relief in Africa. It included many famous heavy metal musicians. Hear n' Aid recorded the song "Stars", which includes a lead guitar solo by Roeser. Hear n' Aid also released a compilation album which included "Stars", as well as live outtakes from the participating artists.

In 1988 the band released the album *Imaginos*, which was recorded between 1982 to 1988. This was a concept album based on Sandy Pearlman's poetry that was planned to be a trilogy of double solo albums by Albert Bouchard. At the insistence of Columbia Records, it was shortened to one album released under the group name. Due to poor production and a disorganized storyline (shortened and rearranged from its original form), the album suffered, and the band was dropped by Columbia. This was the last album featuring all of the original members, as the Bouchards left at the end of production.

In 1988, Roeser formed The Red and the Black with John Rogers on bass and Ron Riddle on drums. The band recorded demos, but was never signed by a record group and it never released an album. As a result, the band split quickly. In 1989, Roeser contributed the instrumental "Gamera is Missing" to the album *Guitar's Practicing Musicians Volume 3* (later included on the CD re-release of *Flat Out*).

After releasing *Imaginos*, Roeser, Bloom and Lanier continued to tour as Blue Öyster Cult, with various musicians on bass and drums. In 1992, the band wrote the score for Bad Channels and composed two original songs for its soundtrack. In 1994, Blue Öyster Cult released *Cult Classic*, an album containing remakes of their greatest hits.

In the late 1990s, Blue Öyster Cult signed with Sanctuary Records, and released two studio albums and one live album between 1998 and 2002. These albums featured Roeser as both a lead vocalist and songwriter. The band was dropped by Sanctuary Records in 2002. Roeser continues to tour extensively with the band, and in December 2012 he reunited for a final time with all of the original members for the band's 40th Anniversary Concert.

On January 1st, 2015, Roeser released "Fight", an original song, on his Soundcloud account. It is his first newly released material since 2001, and quite possibly hints at an upcoming solo album.

### **Personal life**

In 2002, Roeser and his wife created "The Dharmas", a web-series exclusively featured on Roeser's website. The web-series is a comical, fictionalized insight on the life and times of the Roeser family.