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# FIREWORKS

THE MELODIC ROCK MAGAZINE

Issue 59 £4.99  
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**WRECKING BALL**

Robin Beck breaks through with new album 'Underneath'

**GS YET**  
Mystery Dogs  
plenty of bite

**ANGE**  
Michael  
album



TARJA TURUNEN ♦ JON OLIVA ♦ RECKLESS LOVE

whole band in on the fly. That way, if you do a great take but are not happy with the second half of the song you can have the band play along and seamlessly drop into record mode.

**The production for an independently released album is wonderful. What can you tell us about it?**

That would be down to Bruce Quarto, the head of our record company. From the very beginning he said: "I want this album to be exceptional, not just great. I don't care how long it takes or how much it costs but if you come out of the studio and feel you could have done better, go back in and do it again." Giving us the financial freedom to concentrate on the album instead of struggling to survive gave us the chance to really spend a lot of time crafting the songs before we even went in to record them. The same goes for the recording process. We spent a lot of time finding the right guitar, amp or keyboard to get the perfect sound.

**The cover art for the album is fantastic. Who did it and are you and the band pleased with how it turned out? Were you involved in the concept?**

The cover was designed and put together by Glen Wexler. Apart from approving the concept we had no involvement with it and of course, we are more than pleased with it. Glen has produced over 300 album covers and has worked with everyone from Black Sabbath, to Van Halen to Michael Jackson. This cover was originally a concept Glen had for Led Zeppelin with a zepelin being dug out of the ground but got nixed by Jimmy Page's art director. He resurrected the idea for us but with the guitar being dug up and for me the concept is perfect as we're trying to bring back good guitar driven rock and roll to the forefront of music again. As our bass player Chuck Wright says, "It's been buried for far too long".

**The promotional video for 'No Money No Love' is really cool, and has a lavish production. Can you tell us more about why this song was chosen for the video, and the actual making of the video itself?**

We actually did two videos at the same time, one for this song and one for 'I Don't Know What Love Is'. We chose 'No Money, No Love' to release as the first single as we wanted to establish Heaven & Earth as a rock band that did the occasional ballad, not a ballad band that does the occasional rock song.

The video concept was Glen Wexler's idea. When he suggested directing the video we gave him the go ahead and he brought in Jeremy Alter and Meiert Avis who did the videos for Evenescence and Paramour. The video was shot over a three day period at Fuch's Mansion on Pacific Coast Highway in Los Angeles and the rest was filmed in Quixote green screen studios in Burbank.

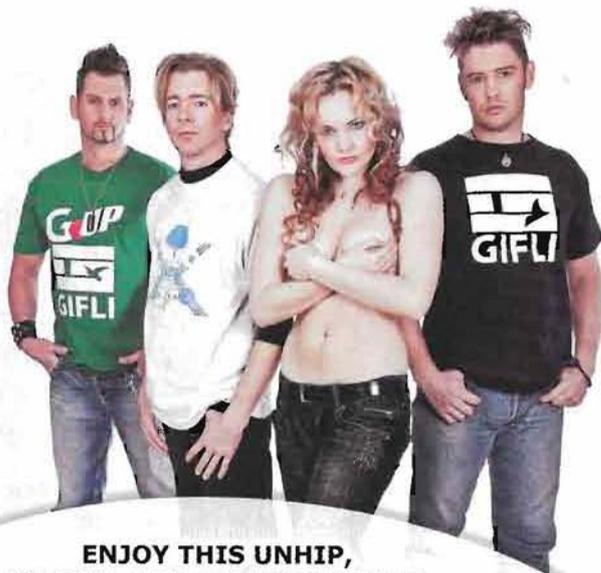
**The new CD feels and sounds more like a fully-fledged band effort than the previous albums. Does it feel the same way to you?**

Yes Ian, without a doubt. I always feel I work better in band situations and I couldn't ask for a better group of musicians. After the first Heaven & Earth album, which got the ball rolling, I wanted to form a permanent band but it's difficult to keep a band of professional musicians together without the financial backing of the record company you're with. At least with the full support of Quarto Valley Records I feel we have a decent chance to get it to the next level.

**Personally I think that 'Dig' is one of the highlights of 2013 and I'm sure just like me, that our readers would love to see the band on tour. Any chance of you getting over to the UK or Europe?**

Oh yes, we're trying. One of the problems was that we didn't get the new album finished and released till April 23<sup>rd</sup> this year so all the summer tours were booked but we're still looking for some slots this year. If nothing opens up we'll have to wait until next year but believe me we want to get out there.

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# TRIGGER



**DELIVERING ANTHEMIC HEAVY ROCK**

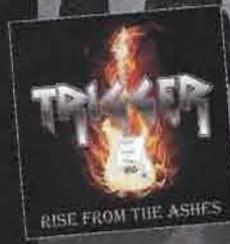
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record and play music,' he explains.

Shane and Bat's collective inspirations run deep and wide, and come across in the resulting music. 'My strongest pull is to progressive music, so that does include some of the kings of the Prog genre: Rush, Yes, Queensryche, Porcupine Tree, Opeth, as well as great re-inventors such as Queen, U2 and The Police. The musical inspirations that tie Maggy Simpson together are largely in the Classic Rock vein, and driven more by song writing excellence than technical prowess. To that end think Thin Lizzy, King's X and Foo Fighters - not that the musical ability is shabby for any of those bands, either! Bat and I have written songs together in the past, but what we really wanted to do with Maggy was to write a compact but musically interesting Rock album. Bat's all about getting the song to be the best it can be, whereas I love the exploratory nature of extended pieces. I think we have found the sweet spot somewhere in the middle.' With rare exceptions, most artists are a product of their musical education and lean heavily on their influences. Maggy Simpson are no different in that respect. 'I expect you will be able to hear similarity and familiarity in these songs. Our general philosophy may be a little different, though, because we are not trying particularly hard to fit into a genre or attract a specific audience. It means we can be inspired by Americana or Cinematic music just as much as by Classic Rock or Metal,' he adds.

The band believe that they have actually made an 'album' rather than a collection of songs. 'We've given a great deal of thought to the song choice and the pacing,' he says. 'From an initial batch of about 20 sketches we settled on these 10 songs to do the talking. It's also a throwback to when albums were comprised of 2 sides and had sensible running times. I know that the majority of my favourite albums run between 35 and 45 minutes total, and they're better for it. It's become something of a cliché but we've made the kind of album we would like to listen to. This is Bat's first outing since the Glyder days and he's right up front on this one, so it's pretty exciting and a little daunting to be so exposed. But he had a number of great song ideas that just had to be aired. I really wanted to give life to some of my shorter instrumental pieces, our respective timelines finally matched up, so we were confident of bringing our respective skills together.'

The guys both have studio's in Wicklow, so they did everything production wise themselves from, writing through to mastering. 'I've done a fair bit of production work over recent years and we had a clear picture of how things should sound. Starting in June 2012 we had initial discussions and traded musical ideas. Writing and pre-production during the rest of the summer, recording during autumn and winter, with final mixes completed in April 2013. About 10 months in total,' he tells me. There will definitely be more music from Maggy Simpson. 'We already have some sketches that could become fully fledged songs. What started as a one-off studio project that has started to become a bit of a different beast altogether. The coming months will be interesting, we'll have to make decisions about how far this thing can run, and whether forming a full band is feasible.'



Austria's CORNERSTONE will have hit the UK for a string of summer shows and by the time you read this they will be travelling across the continent for yet more gigs, and this time they won't be sleeping in their cars! I caught up with guitarist Mikey prior to their UK slog. 'The band will be there from August 1st till August 10th,' he says. The biggest of the shows

will be the Cambridge Rock Fest and this is the bands 6th UK tour. Mikey tells me that he loves the festival-trips, meeting the people and of course our country. 'Plus it's very easy for us, for our kind of music, to get radio interviews etc here, so musically this is right choice for us. The other clubs and festivals such as Skyfest for example are great to us,' he says. Fan's can expect from Cornerstone a full of energy show with lots of fun and great music. After the tour the band will release a new single in September and will be back in Nottingham to play the Skyfest the next day (Saturday 21st September), and then they will start the recordings of a new album. Before that the band have three or four gigs in Austria. 'Then we'll see, hope to do a full European tour next year, including the UK, of course'

Leading lady Patricia Hillinger has settled in nicely with the lads. 'She's absolutely happy with Cornerstone', says Mikey. 'She always wanted to do pop plus rock, with Cornerstone she can do both. We are very close friends outside the band, so this is very bread and butter. Musically she has a great voice, not exactly a rock-shouter voice but simply a great voice, which gives the music another approach.' Steve is Mikey's brother and they both co-founded the band. 'Patricia has been with us for five years now,' he says. 'She is really happy with the band. Mike, our drummer is very demanding, musically and in regards of playing correctly on our instruments. But this isn't exactly a bad thing in my opinion, our performances are 200% better than before, so meanwhile a CST concert is a real... experience, and I mean that in an absolutely positive way.' The good news is that there are plans for a third record from Cornerstone, which may well be recorded here in the UK. 'In fact a few tunes are ready and we can't wait to record our new stuff. A friend of mine recommended a studio in Wales with a known producer who has recorded The Storys amongst others, so maybe we'll record the album there. We hope to get the schedule's together for abroad-recording! release is planned of April/ May 2014'. Get your tickets bought for Skyfest folks.



'At Your Service' is the second solo CD from Norwegian melodic rock artist JAN HOLBERG. The CD features guest such as Joe Lynn Turner, Tony Carey and Wig Wam's Åge Sten Nilsen. Songs like the funky 'Battle For Your Heart' (feat JLT) are full of catchy hooks. I caught up with Jan to find out more. He tells me he was inspired at an early age by The Beatles and it got him hooked on music. 'My inspiration comes from bands like Beatles, Rainbow and Deep Purple. I mix this with more funky styles of music like Level 42 and Mezzoforte, all this together makes the Holberg sound,' he explains.

The style of music that Jan performs requires great players. 'This means that that the band has a really high level of playing skills and I think this is a big difference from a lot of other bands. The level of musicianship is very high and artistic. The album is a result of my influences as a musician. I have always believed in a strong melody and hook line, and I always take it from there. I believe that this album has strong melodies, and this is my foundation for writing a good song.'

Jan tells me the he likes this one better to his debut 'Sense Of Time'. 'I have grown as a songwriter and a musical leader, and I have managed to cover a wider range of styles, even a bit of blues in there...played my way of course.' The new CD was mainly recorded in Iceland but some work has also been done in Norway and the USA. Jan produced everything himself and the whole process took about 10 months to complete. Jan simply sent

a demo to Joe Lynn Turner and a few weeks later JLT called him back and said 'Let's do it'. Just like that, he smiles. For the future, Jan is out and about touring and promoting both albums and more touring. 'I feel that the albums need promotion now so I will concentrate on this. There might be a new single in 2014.'



English hard rockers STERIOD FREAK PUSSY are a band to look out for. They have just put out a double A sided single called 'D.O.R./If It Ain't Broke (We're Gonna Break It)'. The band are lead vocals - Tommy Shan, guitar - Lee 'Thunder' Coates, bass - Craig 'Cougan' Dougan and drums - Paul 'Pencil' Crowther.

It's 1991 and Tommy Shan is 11 and hanging at his mate John's place watching Kelly's Heroes'. 'We've just finished watching this movie with VHS on mute with 'Appetite for Destruction' as the audio track (auto reverse cassette players were rad!!). Shortly after my mate decided it would be a good idea to go sing the breakdown from 'It's So Easy' to his Mum, who was making pastry in their kitchen at the time. It went something like this: 'Mum, I see you making pastry there, you think you're so cool, hey mum why don't you just.... F\*\*\* Off!!' She got really mad for some reason and chased us out of the house with the rolling pin! Scary stuff as she was really fast!! Ha, I suppose that's when I realised just how dangerous G'n'R were,' he laughs. Tommy is inspired by weird things. 'Hulk Hogan, Brooke Satchwell, NWOBHM and Viking Skull are the top four things that I think about on a daily basis!! As a band though our one shared influence/love has gotta be Zodiac Mindwarp and the Love Reaction: sleaze, grease and killer grooves.'

The motivation for the single has been fuelled by a massive hiatus from doing anything as a band. 'After some personnel issues and a few stop/starts we arrived at our current lineup. We recorded the single and we were all totally fired up about getting out there and promoting it. The drama never stops mind; Pencil (the drummer and good friend) suffered a horrendous (and totally blameless) shoulder dislocation in the midst of our comeback trail. Undeterred, a few rolls of gaffer tape, painkillers (for Pencil), Monster Energy and the odd nip of whiskey here and there and a shed load of enthusiasm meant we honoured all of our gigs....no damage! We're looking to get back out there and promote the single ASAP.' From Tommy's point of view, Steriod Freak Pussy are just 'a bunch of like-minded dudes and above all great friends who happen to be in a band together. There are no ego's, there's no self admiration going on...just 4 dudes who love getting shreddy! If we're booked to play, we'll play, we're totally professional and we'll fire it up!

'The D.O.R single is totally killer, man!', he hypes. 'What we've tried to do, after such a long time out, is give folk a taste of what's to come, and I suppose a taste of what we're capable of! The single is a taste of what's to come, Thunder (Born to Rock Guitar, Backing Vox, Motivational Speaker, Father of the Band and good friend) has outdone himself on this one, he's the life blood of the Freak Pussy and we had no choice but to push ourselves to the max. I hope that comes across on the CD - we're all really stoked with how its turned out.'

The band have totally kept it ghetto and local on the recording/production front. 'Coming from somewhere like Leeds you aren't short of places/people/studi's who want to take your money to record you. However, as a band we've become comfortable with certain people/places over time. I'm sure I speak on behalf of the rest of the band