

INTERVIEWS

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WE RECORDED THE ALBUM OURSELVES

Ernst van EE

Band:
Highway Chile

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Once they were the

'pioneers' of the Dutch Metal Scene together with bands like Bodine, Vandenberg, Picture, Vengeance and Vandale (Remember those guys ?). And in 2008 they are back with a marvellous Hard Rock album titled 'Keeper of the Earth'. I am talking here about Dutch Metal Legends 'Highway Chile'. So we from Digital Steel get in touch with one of "Holland's finest rhythm beasts" Ernst van Ee.

Hello Ernst, how are you doing?

I'm doing very well, thanks. The album is getting very good reviews (yours was one of them, thanks ?), a promotour is being booked at the moment and the atmosphere in the band is very good. Besides that, the sun is shining, which is a rare thing these days.....

After more than 25 years Highway Chile is alive and kicking again. Can you tell us how you guys met each other again and decided to give the 'Highway Chile story' a new episode?

-Guitarplayer Martin Mens (who was the original founder of Highway Chile) and me decided around 2002 to reform the band and one more time play the classic HC songs on stage. We invited Attila Szabo (guitar) and Edwin den Haag (bass) (with whom I played in the band Blind Justice) to join the line up. For the vocals we asked Robert Soeterboek, who was a friend of ours and also did most of the vocals on my solo -album Dance with an Angel. With this line up we did a lot of shows around Holland and in the end recorded the live album 'On the road again'. In the years to come we kept on rehearsing and do shows once and awhile. In 2004 we replaced Atilla by Gert Nijboer and Stan Verbraak (Helloise) joined forces and grabbed the mic stand. With this line up we decided to slowly start and write new songs.....

How did the writing and recording process worked out and what is the difference with 'Storybook Heroes', the debut album from Highway Chile in 1983, 'cause on your new album there is a direct link visible back to your debut album.

This process took quite long because we are all very busy besides Highway Chile and only saw each other once and awhile. Somewhere in 2005 already we started writing new songs and at the end of 2006 we started recording. Also the recordings took a long time because we worked in phases. The difference with the recordings of Storybook Heroes is that we did that album in a period of maybe 4 weeks all together. On the new album there is a link with the 80's because we decided to record 2 off the old songs all over again.

Why did you choose to cover your own songs 'Endless Trail' and 'Headbangers' from your debut album 'Storybook Heroes'? And the spirit of Alfred Lagarde (RIP) is still with you guys I guess, because on the other cover of the album 'Long Live Rock 'n' Roll (Rainbow) you are using a sample from him with the magic words 'Rock and Roll is better than music'!

We did this because we like those songs very much. 'Headbangers' was an anthem for the Heavy Rock scene in Holland in the 80's and could still be the same nowadays. 'Endless Trail' we choose because it's a wonderful ballad and is even sounding better now with the vocals of Stan. Alfred Lagarde produced the Storybook Heroes album and he used that line ('Rock n Roll is better than music') at the beginning of the song Highway Chile is coming to get you. We used it again on Keeper of the earth as a tribute to Alfred.

There are a few guest appearances on 'Keeper of the Earth' from musicians with a past in 'Highway Chile' namely Ben Blauw and Peter Barnouw. How did those guys react when they were asking to play a part on this new album without them being a part of Highway Chile right now?

They agreed immediately when we asked them and were very enthusiastic about playing some solo stuff. The reason we didn't ask them to join the band again in the beginning is that they lead different lives now, so, there's no problems with them.....

The album came out on the Mausoleum label. How did you get in touch with them?

We recorded the album ourselves and when it was finished Mausoleum was the first label I send a promo too. They also released my solo-album 'Dance with an angel' a few years ago and I had good experiences with that one. And, of course, Mausoleum is a label with a long history releasing and promoting classic heavy rock. They were immediately very enthusiastic as well so we didn't need to look further.

Are you guys planning a tour with this new album 'in the basket'?

Yepp, a tour is being booked while we speak. A lot of shows are booked already, some together with Mennen and some together with bands like Alter Ego X and Lost Insanity. They are all very good Dutch heavy bands. Later on in 2009 there will be probably also gigs together with Vengeance and Mennen as a package (Classic rock comes to town.....).

Check for tour dates www.highwaychile.nl

What kind of equipment do you use?

I use Pearl drums and hardware, Zildjian Cymbals, Evans drumheads and Vater drumsticks!

Are you still working with Lana Lane and is Threnody still alive? And can we expect some other bands or projects with you involved in it in the near future?

We (Peer Verschuren and me) recorded a new Lana Lane album last year called Red Planet Boulevard. But the chances of touring with Lana and Erik aren't that big at the moment because Erik Norlander joined Asia (Feat. John Payne) with whom he is very busy at the moment.....

Threnody isn't very much alive at the moment, although a new video was released recently (you can check it at www.threnody.com)

At the moment I'm also very busy with a bluesrocktrio called Rob Orlemans and Half Past Midnight, we play a lot and recently released a Live Dvd called Open the Cage (www.halfpastmidnight.nl). At the moment we are working on a new album, to be released early 2009.

What is the best album ever you have worked on in your entire career, but you may not choose the new "Highway Chile" album 'Keeper of the Earth'?

I must say I enjoyed all albums which I recorded (about 40 , I think....), but I guess my favourite is Fata Morgana by Helloïse, that was released in 2002. It's a great album, very good playing by Ben and Stan and Robby Valentine, and very good sound by Sascha Paeth, great songs, heavy, progressive, it has it all.....

Which do you like the most to play when you are on stage with Highway Chile and why is that?

-Some off the new songs I like very much to play are Keeper of the earth, Run away, Stealing with pride and Dreaming of heaven.....because off the heaviness, raw power, good playing and singing,...and because they are NEW ? Off course the rest of the set is great too !!!

What was the first album you have bought and what was the last album?

I think ,in my mind, the 1st one was Sad wings of destiny by Judas Priest (with the best albumcover ever....) and the last one (well 2...) were the 2 albums of Vollbeat, a great band with a typical sound, that will be very big !

Oké Ernst, last but not the least. Some last words to the readers from Digital Steel.

Thanks very much for your support ,...yes ...YOU ,the one that reads this and has checked us out or is going to check us out. Hope to see you at one off our coming gigs. And try to visit our website on a regular base for news and giginfo : www.highwaychile.nl or www.myspace.com/highwaychileofficial

And to you guys...Good Luck with Digital Steel, you're doing great work !

Oké thank you Ernst and good luck with Highway Chile. We will meet again when you are on the road.

Thank you, Hans.....see you around !