

7 May, 2013

CLASSIC ROCK \* METAL \* THRASH \* PROG \* GLAM \* SLEAZE – IF IT ROCKS IT RUSHONROCKS!

**REVIEW – MICHAEL SCHENKER**

Posted by simon On April -13 -2013

**@ Newcastle O2 Academy, April 12 2013**

About 12 years ago, I returned from a UFO gig featuring Michael Schenker on guitar and immediately played the track *Rock Bottom* from the band's legendary 1979 live album *Strangers In The Night*.

I needed to listen to Schenker in his pomp, playing one of the most spellbinding solos in classic rock history.

For that night, the German had cut a shambolic figure on stage at Newcastle City Hall with his performance hitting a nadir as he pitifully tried to

replicate his finest moment.

On arriving home from Schenker's latest Toon show I had no need to play *SITN*.

For what I heard was a man reborn, an axeman at the top of his game and a 50-something enjoying a second flush of youth.

On his last appearance in the region two years ago, he'd surprised those fans who had feared his rollercoaster career was on a permanent downward spiral. And here was glorious affirmation that Schenker really is back to his best.

His Temple of Rock/Lovedrive tour is no promotion for new material. Schenker's band played a new song called *Horizon* from their forthcoming album but, essentially, this was a journey back in time to his days with UFO, The Scorpions and MSG.

Backed by former Scorpions bassist, the ever-smiling Francis Bucholz and drummer Herman Rarebell, Schenker wasn't the only individual on stage whose past careers had taken them to arenas across the globe.

But the pair, like him, seemed to relish the intimacy of their surroundings on Tyneside.

The set list included several songs from the German rockers' back catalogue including the Schenker-penned *Coast To Coast* and *Holiday*, while lead guitar duties were handed to multi-instrumentalist Wayne Findlay for *Rock You Like A Hurricane* and *Blackout*.

Surprisingly, Schenker chose only a handful of songs from his own solo career. His dexterity on *Into The Arena* still marks him out as one of the most talented guitarists in rock while the riff on *Armed And Ready* remains as pummelling now as it did in 1980.

It was the UFO songs, all taken from *SITN*, which raised the biggest cheers last night with *Rock Bottom* and final encore *Doctor, Doctor*, the resounding highlights.

Singer Doogie White is more comfortable singing UFO songs than those from the Scorpions and his limited range occasionally made audience participation essential.

The Scot is a curious frontman. An egotist he most certainly isn't. At times, he could almost be mistaken for a middle-aged biker plucked out of the crowd.

He's friendly, demonstrative and never threatens to hog the limelight. But when Schenker's in this sort of mood, nobody could snatch it off him.

**Ian Murtagh**

Pic courtesy of John Burrows @ishootgigs



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