

» Michael Schenker - MSG

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Michael Schenker is one of my all time favourite guitarists. He has forever built a reputation which will never be destroyed. His recorded heavy hits with UFO, Scorpions, and MSG, all speak for themselves. When I was given the golden opportunity to sit and chat with the master of the Gibson Flying V, I was in for quite a shock, a real flash of light. In lieu of discussing his past accomplishments and failures, the Teutonic Titan waxed on and on, all about the Universe and the meaning of life.

Perfect timing suggests that there is no time for losers, so get armed and ready for this mind assault attachment, and in the midst of beauty, you will soon discover that only mettle matters.



MettleAngel: Hello Michael (shaking his hand), it is truly an honour to speak with you.

- Michael: Yes, I have heard that you really worked hard to get this interview. How are you?



MettleAngel: Honestly, I am a bit nervous. I, of course, grew up listening to UFO, Scorpions, and MSG. You are definitely one of my favourite guitarists.

Michael: Thank You!

MettleAngel: I am sure you hear this daily, but I am very sincere. Without you and Ritchie Blackmore, where would we be?

Michael: I almost joined Deep Purple, when he left.

MettleAngel: I know, and you were asked to replace Joe Perry in Aerosmith too. I talked to Dave Meniketti of Y&T the other night, and he is another one of my most treasured artists. I was so sad to hear that Phil Kennemore was diagnosed with cancer. This really hit home with me.

- Michael: I was not aware of that.

MettleAngel: Yeah, he had back issues, and had to drop off the tour. Dave was heart-broken, having shared the stage with him ever since 1974. I really like the unsung heroes. You are celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Michael Schenker Group with this tour. You even have Gary Barden back on vocals.

- Michael: Yes, it is hard to believe that 30 years have passed.

MettleAngel: Your tour line-up is basically a supergroup since you also have Carmine Appice on drums, along with your original vocalist.

- Michael: I do not know how to explain it, but just recently all of these celebrated musicians have been becoming available. We already had this tour booked before we had Carmine agree to join. We were planning to do just a low budget tour. When Carmine found out, it was great, because he was my first choice for our drummer. We decided to make it a big gig, and I am so pleased how this all worked out for the best.

MettleAngel: So am I! I asked him earlier which band he most enjoyed drumming for, whether it was Blue Murder or King Kobra? We did not even mention Rod Stewart or Vanilla Fudge. He did say that a new King Kobra album is in the works with Paul Shortino from Rough Cutt and Quiet Riot on vocals.

- Michael: Yes, he is very excited about that.

MettleAngel: When I interviewed Uli Jon Roth, we did not talk about the Scorpions, and instead focused our attention on Greek philosophy and vegetarianism. Hopefully, you are willing to discuss your past bands.

- Michael: Not a day goes by where I do not speak about those important parts of my life.

MettleAngel: You are such a major influence on what became True Metal.

- Michael: This is what I often hear.

MettleAngel: Out of all the projects with which you have been involved, from your beginnings with UFO and Scorpions to MSG, what do you feel is the most personal?

- Michael: They all hold personal meaning.

MettleAngel: I assumed this. You are credited with the trademark Gibson Flying V and your own signature sound with "Rock Bottom" being in the Record Books. What band do you think most sums up your work?

- Michael: Everything really, because everything that I have created was for my own personal musical freedom, basically, created without any pressure.



MettleAngel: I actually like the McAuley Schenker Group albums better because your guitar work is so amazing. Then again this was the first MSG that I ever heard, too. There was something about the MSG music in the 80's.

Michael: I can understand why you feel that way, because I was not really interested in pleasing people. Everyone has a different motivation when it comes to writing music. I just simply wanted to make my own contribution, which is why the Michael Schenker Group was put together.

MettleAngel: MSG was so ahead of their time.

Michael: MSG allows me personal freedom, as opposed to the constant machine rotation of album - tour - album - tour - with the other bigger bands.

MettleAngel: Oh I see, with MSG you decide when to record, and when to tour. You are not at the mercy of the Record Labels.

- Michael: In the beginning I developed my style and playing very fast. I look at music differently, I do not look at individual songs. To me all of my songs are adventures, and I look for those little bits and pieces which really stand out, and make a difference.

MettleAngel: You mean those subtle nuances which later become the demarcated licks and trademark leads?

- Michael: Exactly, sometimes you are in the right place at the right time, when it comes to music making. Obviously I know which songs are the most popular. I enjoy playing the songs, and I can put that little bit extra into it when I am going to play live.

MettleAngel: So you do add a bit of improvisation in a live setting?

- Michael: If the mood feels right, definitely. Also, you have to remember, your favourite songs are always the ones that you grow up hearing. Everyone has different tastes. With Gary we are trying to create a new feel for the older songs, and still please our older audience.

MettleAngel: With this line-up I am sure there will be a ton of surprises. I know you kind of have a revolving door with playing with UFO. You had a tremendous comeback with the 'Walk On Water' album and then left, and came back again. Was all this ambivalence owing to the fact that you kept wanting to try new things?

- Michael: I think it all happened for a reason. We come to a turning point in life, where change is necessary. Look at it like you are building a temple where my style of electric guitar formed the foundation. Then my contributions in the 70's, 80's 90's become the bricks, clay and mortar.

MettleAngel: I get your analogy. Each part of your musical life is part of the edifice of your accomplishments.

- Michael: Yes, but my temple is not complete. I am just now creating the roof. You just keep building, because every generation adds something new, based on a different need. Over the last 30 years as a musician, I did not put out an album for commercial gain, I did what I wanted to do. I have been going back and forth musically, just like the Universe is being created without our direct involvement, we just choose how we want to be part of it.

**MettleAngel:** Whoah, slow down Brother, that is a bit too metaphysical, but I accept your paradigm. You just played the show in Oklahoma with the Scorpions where you and Herman Rarebell joined them on stage for some Classics. You did that at Wacken a few years ago as well. Did you feel that resurgence with the fans?

- **Michael:** Yeah, that was great.

**MettleAngel:** Let us discuss your involvement with Contraband. This is one of the projects that a lot of people do not recognize, which I think is brilliant. This was such a unique line-up of male and female talent.

- **Michael:** I wish it had been more successful, but there is a reason why it was not.

**MettleAngel:** There you go again waxing on and on about the meaning of life. One thing is for sure you have a very unique metal guitar sound which is often emulated but never imitated. Have you reached a point where you are excited to play for the sake of playing?

- **Michael:** No, up until recently I never really liked being on stage and I hated playing live. Once I took control of my life, I realized about two years ago, that I really like doing this every night.

**MettleAngel:** You mean all those years with Scorpions and UFO it was more of a chore?

- **Michael:** That is really weird, given my success, and influence, is it not? Yeah, I was never into playing live. Then I realized that I fit into a larger picture than just what I feel.



**MettleAngel:** You mean the grander scheme? I am sure once you realized how reknown you are for creating the Metal sound, it all dawned on you. I am sure with all you have been through in life, this rude awakening could not have come sooner?

**Michael:** I do not know how to explain it. I suppose basically we all experience the same thing but at different times. We all just go on our different journeys.

**MettleAngel:** Man you sure are getting cerebral on me. This is not how I saw the interview going at all. Then again, your words of wisdom are a comfort to my forlorn heart. What you are saying is that you celebrate the joy of the journey.

**Michael:** Exactly.

**MettleAngel:** You treasure the whole experience, the rollercoaster ride of life. It is never about finding your destination, it is all about the celebration of the journey that carries you through life.

- **Michael:** In spite of everything, I have enjoyed my journey. There are all sorts of different choices I could have made.

**MettleAngel:** Speaking of that, I read Ozzy's biography and he has his story where after the tragic death of Randy Rhoads, he apparently asked you to join. There has been a lot of controversy generated, because in his book, he says that you asked for a "King's Ransom" , but your response is that you felt that it was not the right choice for you. What is the real truth?

- **Michael:** I was contacted by Ozzy, but I sensed it was not the right path for me.

**MettleAngel:** You were very perceptive about that.

- **Michael:** Yes, and the funny thing is I was tempted to join, but it was not meant to be for me. This is the same story when I rejoined the Scorpions. If I had stayed, Matthias Jabs would have never been given his chance to shine.

**MettleAngel:** My first Scorpions album was 'Blackout' with Matthias. You are right, it is difficult to picture the Scorpions without him. I only learned about the Uli Jon Roth era, when some of my favourite acts began to cover Scorpions albums on which he played.

- **Michael:** I only opened the door for them that was my job.

**MettleAngel:** I assume that you still have a great rapport with your brother though.

- Michael: Yes, of course. Just imagine if I had been in the band with my brother all this time. He could never have enjoyed and experienced what he has, all these years. There is a reason why we go through life in different ways. One gets to experience being rich, the other has to experience being poor, nothing is better or worse; because it is all a mental state.

MettleAngel: Or a mettle state of mind, if you please. I really respect your mettlephysical approach to life. I admire your philosophical ideology; because, you are one who has hit rock bottom, if you will excuse the pun. You had an ex- wife rob you blind and leave you penniless...

- Michael: Among other things....

MettleAngel: You are so noble because you are not bitter, you have made your forgiveness, and you refuse to play the victim.

- Michael: My energy is in great spirits. That is what Metal is essentially about, honour and truth. You can have all sorts of things, but money cannot buy one's happiness. You cannot enjoy life, money, or anything if you are screwed up in your head.

MettleAngel: I agree. Who would have thunk in a million years that Uli Jon Roth and Michael Schenker would be more metaphysical than my philosophy teachers!

- Michael: That is why we have chosen this kind of a path.



MettleAngel: In our eyes, as fans we see you as the icon of heavy metal creation, inspiration and exceptional guitar talent; whereas, you view yourself as being on a journey characterized by different vicissitudes.

Michael: As I alluded to earlier, when you construct a building from different materials, you need clay, bricks, and a solid foundation, but you also need details, schematics, and a crew of architects. If we are now putting on the roofing, then soon everyone will come out and appreciate the completion of this magnificent edifice.

MettleAngel: Again with the building of life analogy, I get it. The fans are not only the architects and construction crew, but we also provide the blueprints for your madness and imagination. Everything that has happened has served to build the MSG Temple.

Michael: This MSG Temple is a monument to all of our success.

MettleAngel: I really respect you saying that, and I totally understand what you are saying from a personal point of view, because it is about the choices we make, and we are the masters of our own journey.

- Michael: I have enjoyed speaking with a like minded individual. Sometimes you just have to push forward, and never look back.

MettleAngel: I assume if you had to go through it all over again, there is nothing that you would change?

- Michael: Not a thing, except, maybe I would be a little less introverted, and more open to expressing myself.

MettleAngel: Well Brother, thank you for your wisdom and artistic contributions for nigh 35+ years. I am so grateful that we had a chance to chat and get to know each other a little bit better. Your fans may find this interview a bit out there, but I know your heart, and I wish you all the best.

- Michael: The same to you my brother, now go out there and enjoy the show!

MettleAngel: I will, as I have never seen you live before tonight!

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