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MUSIC

Mad axeman Michael Schenker driven by optimism, self discovery



COURTESY PHOTOS

God in his temple — a peachy Michael Schenker comes to SA.

success of his own Michael Schenker Group in the '80s and his gift for singing with his guitar as vividly as Goethe sang with his words, Schenker continued to embody the worst aspects of the Selfish Decade through his self-destructive behavior.

Yet he never seemed to view death as a viable career move. Quite the contrary. The Schenker Ideal — to constantly evolve the essence of the inner self and to translate that to the art of music — is more intact than

By [Gonzalo Pozo](#)

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Bon Scott, John Bonham, and Jim Morrison are names frequently heard when talking about rock 'n' roll excess and its inevitable outcomes. Rare are the encouraging stories of rockers who have teetered on the brink of icon-by-virtue-of-being-dead status only to run from it giggling.

Michael Schenker — unknown to most, but legend to his fans — started down Debauchery Road at a young age, having played lead guitar for the revered Eurometal bands UFO and Scorpions by the time he was 18 years of age. He'd fully solidified his reputation as a non-functioning alcoholic by the time he found himself out of the Scorpions a second time when even guitarist/big brother Rudy Schenker could no longer tolerate his belligerence. Despite the

ever, thanks in no small part to another bout of rehab after a disastrous UK performance in 2006, where he was so incoherent he could barely stand, let alone shred.

"It's all about development," he told the *Current*. "I always move forward and develop new from the old to try to get close to the answers of life. The aspects of moving forward and knowing that there's another surprise around the corner make it an ongoing thing."

Instead of the weary husk of a disillusioned Keith Richards, one instead hears an affable, boyish excitement. Schenker is enthusiastic about life, about the success of his recent tours, and about the fact that his old friend and bandmate Robin McAuley is joining him for his current American tour, which stops at Backstage Live on March 16.

"[McAuley] did an excellent job singing 'Lover's Sinfony' on [new album] *Temple of Rock*," Schenker says, "and he just happened to be available for America." But while this might seem like a perfect opportunity to dust off old McAuley-Schenker Group favorites like "Anytime" and the acoustic megahit "Never-Ending Nightmare," Schenker is clear that on this tour he "wanted to promote *Michael Schenker* classics."

Despite his past's more harmful tendencies, Schenker has always been known as a lover of life and humor. His aforementioned boyishness is perhaps most obvious on the title of his 2001 album *Be Aware of Scorpions*, a friendly jab at his older brother's better-known band. "It's even funnier now," Schenker says, "because my brother ended up with James Kottak from MSG, and I'll be playing with the Scorpions' old rhythm section of Herman Rarebell and Francis Buchholz in Europe."

While Michael Schenker may not be a household name, his indelible influence on four generations of rock and metal guitarists cannot be understated. Heavyweights such as Iron Maiden and Metallica have claimed him as a hero, and you can almost hear the Blind Guardian sound being invented on "This Night Is Gonna Last Forever."

"I decided early on to express things the way I see them," he says, "and to do that you have to go inside yourself, where only you have access. *That's the Temple of Rock.*" •

Michael Schenker featuring Robin McAuley, Bone, Devil May Care, Black Thunder, Sound & Shape

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