



Guitar 'god' juggles projects

By Mike Devlin, Times Colonist February 16, 2012

Michael Schenker

Photograph by: Supplied photo , timescolonist.com

IN CONCERT

The Temple of Rock tour featuring Michael Schenker and Robin McAuley

When: Monday, 9 p.m. (doors at 8 p.m.) Where: Club 9ONE9, 919 Douglas St.

Tickets: \$25 in advance at

hightideconcerts.net, Lyle's Place, Ditch Records, and the Strathcona Hotel; \$28 at the door

Michael Schenker has been playing the guitar at an extraordinary level since he was a teenager. Now, more than 40 years after he got his start as a professional, he's still making sure the licks he creates stand alongside the best in the business.

Schenker, 57, is known for his work with a variety of seminal hard-rock groups - from the Scorpions to UFO - but he has always saved a little guitar magic for recordings of his own.

Schenker has led several groups over the years, a number of which featured the lead vocals of Irish singer Robin McAuley. The two friends, who began working together in 1987, collaborated on last year's Temple of Rock, a Schenker solo recording, and have since toured the U.K. in support of the release, the first tour in years to feature the two.

The trek is one of a handful things Schenker has on his plate at the moment. In fact, the native of Sarstedt, Germany, literally can't put a number on his projects currently on the go.

"I'm doing so many things, I'm having to learn to focus on the now," he said Wednesday from San Francisco, hours before the first date on a tour that brings the Schenker-McAuley combo to Club 9ONE9 on Monday.

"When people ask me what I did yesterday, I have to think, 'Wait a minute, where was I yesterday?'"

Better to be too busy than in the depths of misery.

That's where Schenker has found himself at various points during the past decade ago, the victim of alcohol abuse and nefarious business dealings, in addition to the recent death of his ex-wife.

Despite the upheaval, Schenker is upbeat about the state of his career in 2012. "I have a lot of energy, and somehow I'm feeling more energy to do this than I did in the past," Schenker said.

"There is an energy coming from somewhere. It is not at all exhausting, because it's all too creative and too much fun."

The lineup set to play Victoria is one of three Schenker groups in motion at the moment. The other two, which feature rotating singers Doogie White of Yngwie Malmsteen's Rising Force and Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow and longtime Schenker collaborator Michael Voss, are in place to cover overseas tours.

Juggling three separate lineups hasn't caused him any stress ("Being challenged to figure things out is kind of fun for me," Schenker said), though it did take some time to map out the song selection when tour dates first began to emerge.

Schenker said he made life easy for himself by choosing songs from his catalogue that were specific to each singer.

"To keep them all different, when we rehearsed, I figured out what songs are suitable for each singer. Instead of having to choose from 40 songs for one singer, this makes it easier for me. It gives me the chance to play more songs than I [would be able] to if I only had one band."

Schenker is one of the few remaining guitars gods on Earth, and has been cited as an influence on everyone from Megadeth's Dave Mustaine to Slash of Guns 'N Roses. As for anyone who has spent a life devoted to music, the adulation is a nice touch. But above everything else, Schenker said he's simply happy to be working.

"Nothing happens for a while, then all of a sudden everything happens," he said. "This is one of those moments when everything needs attention."

mdevlin@timescolonist.com

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