

Michael Schenker: 'I Don't Consume Music. I Prefer To Make It', date: october 21, 2011

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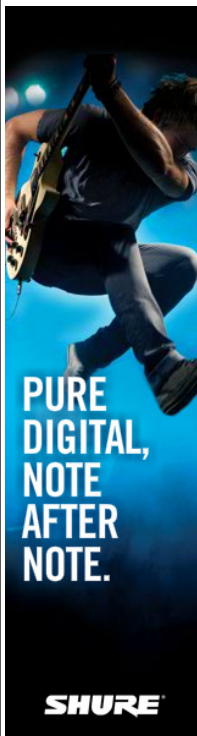
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## Michael Schenker: 'I Don't Consume Music. I Prefer To Make It'

artist: [michael schenker](#) date: 10/21/2011 category: [interviews](#)

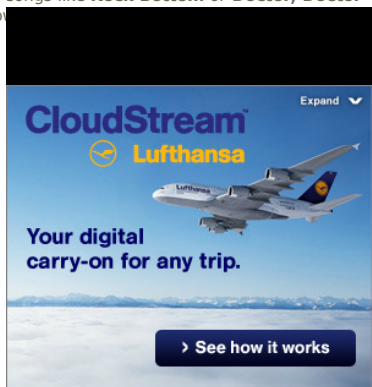


**Michael Schenker** is a true purveyor of first-class hard rock guitar. The list of Schenker's successes is extensive. As a young man he lent his very special sound, together with his brother **Rudolf**, to the **Scorpions**, which later made the band one of the first real international hard rock stars from Germany. In the 70s, he similarly helped the British rock legends **U.F.O.** to their definitive breakthrough, turning songs like **Rock Bottom** or **Doctor, Doctor** into hits everyone knows.

rating: **7.9** / votes: 10

In 1980, it was time for him to form the first band of his own **The Michael Schenker Group**, or **MSG** for short. Since then, the three letters MSG have become a synonym for honest, hand-crafted and impelling premium hard rock.

Now, after extensive touring, and following a well-earned rest, Schenker has returned with his group to add a new jewel to his creative work with musicians such as **Pete Way**, **Neil Murray** and **Chris Slade** all whom still represent the highest of standards and get aficionados' heartbeats racing. One of the biggest treats is his collaboration with the former Scorpions drummer, **Herman "The German" Rarebell** and new vocalist **Michael Voss**. This is all showcased on Schenker's new album aptly titled **Temple Of Rock**.



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**Joe Matera** spoke with the German hard rock guitar master to discuss the new album, the evolution of his guitar playing style and plans for a Schenker brothers outing.

### UG: How did the process in creating your new album Temple Of Rock evolve?

**Michael Schenker:** This particular album goes back about a year, when I was touring the States with MSG. And at the end of August of last year, I decided to not take anymore offers and to start looking around for top management as it was time to move on to a another level. And as I was doing that, I was writing songs. Shortly after, I bumped into Herman Rarebell and we began jamming together and then Pete Way showed up. So we decided to rehearse for a live tour, doing Strangers In The Night where it'd be Herman on drums, myself on guitar and Pete on bas. And as we were doing that, I continued writing songs and also did a demo for my new album. Then Herman happened to hear one of the songs, 'Saturday Night' and he said, "Michael, you have to record that with us, as we want to do the song". So we went into the studio and we did the demo and we recorded the music. Then Michael Voss put it onto the internet to create a bit of hype and it got a lot of interest. At that point I was getting to ready to do the real recording for the album. Then Herman and Pete heard another song and they insisted that they do all the bass and drums on the new record. So at that point we put Strangers In The Night on the backburner, and concentrated on my album instead. When I was doing the demo, I was doing it in Michael Voss's studio and though I had known him for awhile, I had no idea he was a singer. And I found out he was a very good singer so I asked him to do the vocals.



*"I have come full circle and am at the point where I feel I*

### A number of guests appear on Temple Of Rock, from your brother Rudolf to Slash. How did the collaborations come about?

Nothing was really planned, everything led from one thing to another, it is almost a story in itself. It was all a spontaneous process, for example William Shatner, the guy from Star Trek, he was calling me up to play a lead break on his upcoming album And just before he had contacted me the first time, Michael Voss had created this intro for the record and I said we needed somebody with a big voice to speak the words. So while I was thinking of who we could get, I get this call out of blue from William Shatner, and I

*am exactly where I was when I was sixteen, where I had huge waves of development in a major way happening."*

went "wow this is the guy! I will ask him". So we did an exchange where I would play on his album and he'd talk on my album. And stuff like that happened quite consistently throughout the process. Then I decided I wanted some of the musicians from my past on the album as well, guys like Simon Philips, Chris Slade, Neil Murray all these people I had been touring with in the past. Then Rudolf was available and I asked him if he wanted to do something too. And so bit by bit, we added up with a lot of people.

**Just like your brother Rudolf you've been associated with Flying V guitars for much of your career as well. But a number of years back after playing Gibson Flying Vs you made the switch to Dean Flying Vs why?**

I made the switch in 2004 where I was basically approached in Chicago by Dean. I was doing a sound check with Uli Jon Roth onstage and the guy comes in and says, "hey Michael what do you think of this guitar?" So I played it and it was great and from there it went all the way. They're a really good company and very supportive which is great.

**When it comes to your guitar collection, is it mostly comprised of Flying Vs?**

I don't really accumulate anything as I am not a collector. But I do have about six or seven signature models out there and so for myself, I only have one of them each basically. I would say I have not got more than ten guitars all up.

**How do you think your playing style has evolved over the course of your career?**

It has been a long period of development for me. The principles more or less have stayed the same but I have had lots of different solos. For example, when I started with The Scorpions the first album I did with the group, I was fifteen years old, Lonesome Crow. I started playing when I was nine and was picking stuff off the radio and a tape recorder and anything on the charts. But when I was eleven years old, my brother asked me to join the band, which was the beginning of The Scorpions. Then I went to another band and kept developing my style but really, but the most amazing thing that happened to me was when I heard distortion guitar for the first time from players such as Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page. Then I reached a stage where I just wanted to go into the studio and play just improvised lead breaks. So as I began to work on projects, I just went straight to tape as I was playing on the spot, and played one song after another until the whole album was done. So in general my early approach was; with slow solos with harmony I would write them while with fast rock solos, I would improvise them, but I would also improvise slow solos too occasionally. After forty years I now have different approaches to things that basically today, I have come full circle and am at the point where I feel I am exactly where I was when I was sixteen, where I had huge waves of development in a major way happening. So now I'm playing at my best in the same way as was when I was playing with UFO.

**A distinct mark of your trademark tone is the use of the wah pedal.**

I first did that when I was sixteen years old. I discovered somehow that you can change the thing inside the wah wah pedal to find the sweet spot, so I got stuck with that for awhile which in turn created a kind of harmonic sound. It is funny the things I came up with, and where suddenly people start copying them and people start to actually recreate them in the factories. I also designed a Marshall amplifier in the early 1980s but the amplifier I started to design with Marshall was actually never finished. Then later when my amplifier totally broke down, I had to find a new one, and so one day I found this amplifier, it was a JCM 800 and some guy came to me and said, "do you know who these sounds were made after". I said, "no" and he replied, "after you!" Well, no wonder I liked the amp! So they must have used the thing I developed with them in the early 1980s and decided to make an amplifier out of it.

**With The Scorpions planning a retirement, are there any plans to collaborate musically with your brother Rudolf?**

We have been talking about doing a Schenker project for quite awhile now and you know whenever the time is right, for these kinds of things, we'll do it. But they are working on doing the ultimate and final farewell tour where Uli and myself will join them at some point on the tour to kind of give it a good happy ending.



**It is well known that in the course of your career you declined offers to join Aerosmith and Ozzy Osbourne. Do you think that if you had joined either of those acts, your musical path would have been remarkably different?**

*"I don't listen to any guitar because I want to keep on doing it for myself and I don't want to spoil it for myself."*

That is very hypothetical and I can't really answer that because you do what you do and you are today because of what happened in the past. But I would say the answer would be no.

**Do you listen to any other young contemporary rock guitar players out there on the scene?**

I don't listen to any guitar because I want to keep on doing it for myself and I don't want to spoil it for myself. I know there are lots of good guitarists out there but, I would not know who they are because I don't focus on it. I don't consume music. I prefer to make music and be inventive in my field and I want to develop the things that come from within myself as much as I can. That is my department. But there have been on occasion players that really impressed me like Yngwie Malmsteen. He was one of them. He was sensational. When I heard him for the first time I went, "wow what is this?" so I started listening to the scene but they all sounded the same except for Yngwie. He had come up with something that nobody did and at that speed. Another guy who I had heard around the time I departed from UFO, was Van Halen. Their first album, I couldn't believe it that a guitar was so identifiable. Van Halen's playing is by the far, the best playing in the world.

**Over the years numerous interviews have highlighted how much you weren't happy with the second MSG album – though many fans regard it as MSG's finest hour - especially in regards to Ron Nevison's production values. Has your opinion changed somewhat?**

I don't know as it was a weird time anyway. It was when everything wasn't in the best shape. I don't think anything was in its best shape anyway. But never the less, the songs were still good and we made a Budokan album after that one, where we did tracks off the first and second album which then basically became the classics from MSG. But it wasn't the best moment for sure and I wouldn't blame Ron for it, I think it was just what it was. You go up and down in a career and then you get it better and then you get it worse, but you just keep going on and doing your thing.

**Finally, you're about to embark on a US tour with Uli Jon Roth and Leslie West under the moniker of 3 Guitar Heroes, what can fans expect from the shows?**

Basically we're getting together and each player will get to do his own set, doing their highlights of their own career and then at the end, we all get together and jam.

*Interview by Joe Matera  
Ultimate-Guitar.Com © 2011*

POSTED: 10/21/2011 - 10:32 am

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**slipknotskullz** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 11:35 am / quote ↓

+3

His guitars are black and white

**fifopher** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 12:20 pm / quote ↓

+11

**slipknotskullz** wrote:

His guitars are black and white

like a boss.

**andras67** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 02:19 pm / quote ↓

+3

The man is a legend.

**mrRICHARD911** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 02:23 pm / quote ↓

+4

he is a boss not \*like\* a boss 🙄

**Countsuggo** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 02:40 pm / quote ↓

Chicago date of that tour was cancelled. Was looking forward to it.

**Anjohl** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 03:34 pm / quote ↓

+1

Schenker is amazing...I am disappointed that Gary Barden isn't involved anymore though.

**CaliforniaKid** wrote on 10/21/2011 - 05:00 pm / quote ↓

-1

I went to see UFO at the Keystone in Palo Alto Ca., and it was announced over the PA that MS refused to sign any UFO albums or memorabilia. WTF? Dude has an ego the size of a Buick.

**Alliens-exist182** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 01:58 am / quote ↓

+2

I'm pretty sure Michael Schenker just said the exact words: 'Van Halen is the \*\*\*\*ing bawws of guitar, bitches'.

**BrianDeuel** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 11:18 am / quote ↓

Michael goes through periods of stability and instability. I saw him years ago with the McCauley Schenker Group, and he was cool as hell, hanging out in the club and bullshitting. He wasn't drinking at the time, so that may have had something to do with it...

**jalric** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 11:41 am / quote ↓

+5

'I don't listen to any guitar...' 'Van Halen's playing is by the far, the best playing in the world.' He's saying he doesn't listen to any guitar players, but this one guy's playing is the best in the world. He is actually admitting that he is uninformed and yet states an opinion on it anyway. This is the type of dipshit that votes for Sarah Palin.

**myfirebird** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 12:32 pm / quote ↓

+1

I love to hear that man play the guitar!Every musician I've ever met was "touched"to some degree.Thespians too!

**stndrdpcdre** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 05:32 pm / quote ↓

-1

Kind of a dodgy answer when asked about Aerosmith and Ozzy.

**kumamilesbear** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 07:18 pm / quote ↓

Finally, you're about to embark on a US tour with Uli Jon Roth and Leslie West under the moniker of 3 Guitar Heroes, what can fans expect from the shows?  
Basically we're getting together and each player will get to do his own set, doing their highlights of their own career and then at the end, we all get together and jam.

So basically G3.

**ArreatsChozen** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 07:22 pm / quote ↓ +4

I think this guy is a bit of a douche.  
If he was educated at all in music he would be aware that there is more to music than Yngwie and Van Halen.

Also the fact that he makes a point not to listen to other peoples music is a bit weird. What reason would he have for this? Does he get tempted to steal others' work if he listens to it or something?

**kiwi\_metal** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 07:33 pm / quote ↓

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**Rattlehead2** wrote on 10/22/2011 - 08:09 pm / quote ↓

**ArreatsChozen** wrote:

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Also the fact that he makes a point not to listen to other peoples music is a bit weird. What reason would he have for this? Does he get tempted to steal others' work if he listens to it or something?

That's what I thought exactly. Also, he says that Van Halen's playing is the best in the world, but yet he admits that he doesn't listen to any music at all.

**Orion2309** wrote on 10/23/2011 - 05:19 am / quote ↓ +1

**slipknotskullz** wrote:

His guitars are black and white

Thank you, captain obvious

**Nugma** wrote on 10/23/2011 - 06:19 am / quote ↓ +2

Just because he doesn't listen to other guitar players, doesn't mean he's NEVER heard any other players.

**slipknotskullz** wrote on 10/23/2011 - 07:04 am / quote ↓ +1

**Orion2309** wrote:

slipknotskullz wrote:  
His guitars are black and white  
Thank you, captain obvious

You're welcome.

**WaddleDeee** wrote on 10/23/2011 - 03:22 pm / quote ↓

**jairic** wrote:

'I don't listen to any guitar...' 'Van Halen's playing is by the far, the best playing in the world.'  
He's saying he doesn't listen to any guitar players, but this one guy's playing is the best in the world. He is actually admitting that he is uninformed and yet states an opinion on it anyway. This is the type of dipshit that votes for Sarah Palin.

**SoA\_Joseph** wrote on 10/24/2011 - 12:06 am / quote ↓

I think you guys would be better off just titling things "Kickass interview with So-and-So." I mean, the title doesn't really contradict here, but usually you title stuff with really misleading quotes.

**KutoBass** wrote on 10/24/2011 - 06:26 am / quote ↓

He is awesome but he looks like a drug addict



**maker's marked** wrote on 10/24/2011 - 08:56 am / quote ↓ +1

**jairic** wrote:

'I don't listen to any guitar...' 'Van Halen's playing is by the far, the best playing in the world.'  
He's saying he doesn't listen to any guitar players, but this one guy's playing is the best in the world. He is actually admitting that he is uninformed and yet states an opinion on it anyway. This is the type of dipshit that votes for Sarah Palin.

These are the type of comments that come from some halfwit imbecile, that has never heard Michael Schenker's playing. And by the way, Sarah Palin isn't running for office.



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**guitarist41** wrote on 10/25/2011 - 01:26 pm / quote ↓  

He doesn't listen to guitar music because he wants to create something that's 'his' rather than just something that's good?

Ego and a half-shell.

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**saint\_berzerker** wrote on 10/25/2011 - 03:39 pm / quote ↓  

**KutoBass** wrote:

He is awesome but he looks like a drug addict



Dude...he's like 70 years old.

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**W>O** wrote on 10/26/2011 - 12:30 am / quote ↓  

Michael Schenker !!

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**i\_am\_metalhead** wrote on 10/27/2011 - 02:42 pm / quote ↓   +2

**saint\_berzerker** wrote:

KutoBass wrote:

He is awesome but he looks like a drug addict

Dude...he's like 70 years old.

Try 56.

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**Chronologo** wrote on 10/29/2011 - 11:47 am / quote ↓  

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