

Interview: Rock guitar legend Michael Schenker

Michael Schenker plays the O2 Academy Newcastle on April 12. Mick Burgess catches up with him



Michael Schenker

On your latest album, Temple of Rock, William Shatner guested on the record. How on earth did you get Captain Kirk to appear on your record?

I had absolutely no concept of what I was going to do when I started the album and I ended up with almost everybody on it. Michael Voss, who sang on the album, did the spoken word introduction at first. We were talking about it and I asked if we could get a big-name actor to speak those words. A couple of days later I received a call from William Shatner's agent asking if I'd play on his Rock record, so I just asked if William would do the intro on my album and he agreed. So I played on his album and he does the intro on mine, and that was it.

Are you looking forward to playing over here again?

Absolutely, I always love playing in the UK. The last tour was really good so it's always great to come back and play for you again. I'm back in the loop of rock 'n' roll and I'll be playing all over the country. It feels so good being on the road and playing again.

You will be playing 13 shows on this tour. Too many bands these days seem to think two or three dates is enough for a tour. Is it important to you to get to as many places as possible to play for your fans?

There's so many places where people can't come to see us away from the main centres and nobody else plays there so, for me personally, it's great to play in these places. I'll play wherever there is an audience and wherever there is a demand.

You have two dates in the North East with shows in Stockton and then Newcastle. Brian Johnson, David Coverdale and Paul Rodgers are all from the region. Are you aware of the musical history of an area before you visit?

Those are hot rock 'n' rollers. The North of England has always been a great place for me to play. I've played there many times with UFO and my own band. I love it there, the fans are always so passionate.

You'll be coming over with a line-up including Herman Rarebell and Francis Bucholz from the Scorpions and Doogie White from Rainbow. How does it feel having two former Scorpions in your band?

It's absolutely great to be able to play with Herman and Francis again. It gives us the chance to complete the Lovedrive tour that never really happened all those years ago. Now we can play some of those Scorpions songs together and make up for not doing it the first time round.

You have so much material to choose from over your career. I take it that, having two Scorpions in your band, you'll be playing a few of their songs?

We'll be doing songs from UFO's Strangers in the Night, MSG's One Night at Budokan, the Scorpions' Lovedrive album as well as a couple of songs from the later period of Herman and Francis's time in the Scorpions, like Rock You Like a Hurricane and Blackout which they played on originally. We'll also be playing new songs from Temple of Rock.

Wayne Findlay, your rhythm guitarist, has been with you for a while now.

Yes, he's been in the band since 1999. He has the same birthday as me, but not the same year. Strangely enough, so does Rod Stewart and drummer Aynsley Dunbar. I want to make a blues rock record with those guys and we can all celebrate our birthday on the same day! Talking of Rod Stewart, I jammed with Carmine Appice recently in the States, He was Rod's drummer for a while and wrote Do Ya Think I'm Sexy. He's an incredible drummer and it was amazing what he could do. So we might have to get him in to do the blues album.

Your old mate Pete Way from UFO hasn't been too well lately. How is he doing at the moment?

For a while I was trying to support him and I even tried to get in touch with his doctor, but then the tour came up. I heard he wasn't doing too well but I hope he ends up going in the right direction and gets himself sorted.

What do you think of when you look back on those days with UFO?

They were fantastic times. It was all about development from one album to the next. We made some great music and on stage the chemistry was incredible. I'm very proud of my time in that band.

Would you consider playing with UFO again maybe as a one-off anniversary show or do you really want to look forward now and not back?

I would love to if people were there to support it. If everything is set up properly and professionally of course I would love to work with them again.

What about the invitation to join the Rolling Stones?

Yeah, that's when I'd just joined UFO. I got a call to audition for The Stones but that was too scary. I was too fragile, too young and too scared to do that.

Do you regret not taking up those offers or was the time just not right?

You make your choices and you stick with those choices. Those choices have got me to where I am today.

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