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Michael Schenker Temple Of Rock/Tank - London, Shepherds Bush Empire - 31st May 2013

Written by Jim Rowland

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With former Dragonforce vocalist ZP Theart standing in for the band's "otherwise engaged" Doogie White, this is rather surprisingly Tank's first UK show since 1985, well according to their temporary singer anyway. Back then the band was still fronted by founder member Algy Ward, although the original line up made up of the Brabbs brothers had already long since evolved, and guitarists Mick Tucker and Cliff Evans were both as then new recruits. Today's version of Tank still features Tucker and Evans and this version of Tank find themselves in the unusual, though not unique, position of trading without any original members at all within their line up. That outstanding the classic logo still adorns the stage, but these days Tank's sound actually bears very little resemblance to the filth bitch boogie of the original filth hounds of Hades. The set does feature a few tracks dating back to the '80s in the shape of 'Honour And Blood' and 'This Means War' alongside more recent tracks such as 'War Nation' and 'Don't Dream In The Dark', but although this solid set is played with power and precision, for me it all sounds a bit too bog standard, generic power metal like a thousand other bands out there. However, that's only my opinion, and there was certainly a healthy gathering of

early bids through the door tonight that would disagree with me, giving the band a great reception. Things are also about to get a bit more confusing with the imminent release of the new album by Algy Ward's very own version of Tank, but if that means a return to the punk-infused raw rock 'n' roll of the band's early days, I for one would welcome it.



Tonight's performance of Michael Schenker's Temple Of Rock has the air of something special to it. Not only is Schenker cherry picking many of the best bits of his entire career, but with the rhythm section of the classic Scorpions line-up, of Franz Buchholz and Herman 'Ze German' Rehbein on board, a fair chunk of the classic Scorpions 'Loverdrive' album, which



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As German Harebell on board, a fair chunk of the classic Scorpions 'Lovedrive' album, which featured Michael Schenker, is promised too. Scorpions fans don't have long to wait either as 'Lovedrive' and 'Another Piece Of Meat' are the opening two numbers before the band launch into a great mix of some of the finest MSG moments, punctuated with a couple of more recent Temple Of Rock tunes. 'Armed And Ready', 'Assault Attack', 'Attack Of The Mad Axeman' and 'Into The Arena' all serve as a timely reminder of how great MSG were in those early days, and although only 'Before The Devil Knows You're Dead' features from the 'Temple Of Rock' album, the impressive 'Horizons' from the next album, 'Bridge The Gap', shows that the man can still pen a decent tune in the here and now.

The timeless 'Lovedrive' instrumental 'Coast To Coast' get the Scorps fans rocking again, before it's time for the UFO section of the show, with usual suspects 'Shoot Shoot', 'Only You Can Rock Me' and 'Too Hot to Handle' nestling beside two belters in the shape of 'Let It Roll' and set closer 'Lights Out'.

All is far from over though as two huge encores follow. The first is a Scorpions triple whammy with 'Holiday' commanding tonight's Shepherd's Bush choir to sing along, whilst 'Blackout' and the inevitable 'Rock You Like A Hurricane' give Buchholz and Harebell a chance to revel in former glories. The final encore truly blows the audience away as 'Rock Bottom' and 'Doctor Doctor' wrap things up.

Throughout the set, Rarebell, Buchholz, and Wayne Findlay (playing the Paul Raymond guitar/keybord role), provide very solid backing for the band, and the affable Doogie White makes a good fist of a very difficult job, having to sing the songs of Klaus Meine, Phil Mogg, Gary Barden and Graham Bonnet as well as his own. That's no easy task. The undisputed star of the show though was Michael Schenker himself. He's had his well-documented trials and tribulations in the past, but tonight here was one of hard rock's all-time great guitarists back on truly top, blistering form from start to finish. His jaw-dropping solo on the encore of 'Rock Bottom' was worth the price of admission alone, and the guitar work on the likes of 'Lights Out', 'Let It Roll', 'Doctor Doctor' and 'Only You Can Rock Me' illustrates for me that little bit of magic that today's UFO are lacking. Back to his best, tonight Michael Schenker provided a hard rock guitar masterclass, and long may it continue.



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