

THE MUSIC IS OUT THERE

By Nicky Baldrian



PEANUT BUTTER LOVESICLE

Are you a fan of groovy, surfy blues-based psychedelic rock? Then check out New York's excellent PEANUT BUTTER LOVESICLE. They have a hugely enjoyable EP out called 'Heavy Daze Wildcat Craze'. The production is solid and the songs vibrant and flow well. I especially love the catchy 'Commodore' and the retro heavy 'State Of I'. There are hints of The Doors, The Cult, Led Zeppelin and even some Inxs within the vocals and guitar work amongst others and the more you listen, the more these guys pull you in. Live PBL must simply smoke and their music makes you high.

Jake D'arc the band bass player first picked up an instrument when he was five years ago but didn't go pro until he was twenty one. Jake's younger brother Mike was sixteen at the time and had been playing bass for several years. When the pair were growing up their father was really into classic rock and bands like The Who and Jethro Tull were always playing in the tape deck of his Ford pick-up truck. At an early age, Mike caught on to how great that era of music was. Jake never had a common ground with his brother until he started coming home from college and spending time with him while he played bass to 70s rock records. "He was so effortless and amazing and that inspired me to pick up a guitar and get to a level where we could form a personal bond," Jake recalls. "My cousin Timmy also played an integral role in those years as he was just picking up the drums as his second instrument. We would jam together to improve. Creating music forged an incredible bond between all three of us."

PBL are a rock band of two brothers and a cousin that started playing out of a beach town in Ocean City, New Jersey. "We currently live and play throughout New York City. I play guitar, Mike plays bass, Timmy plays drums and they share the vocal duties. Often times we do horrible impressions of American news anchors. Our live shows could probably be described as energetic, 70s rock kamikazes supplemented with an awkward brand of humour that makes an audience scratch their heads at times. We also have a pizza named after us and are currently working on an ice cream sponsor."

The EP was mostly recorded last summer at home and for a home recording it's a solid impressive affair that has a vibe of many of those old 70s records we love. "We all live in together, and the last track was recorded above an old local surf shop apartment that our sister resides in. A close friend of ours, Andrew Wilson, helped produce the album and really pushed us to incorporate a lot of dynamics into the raw rock and roll style that we play live."

The band have also just recorded ten new tracks, this time in a Los Angeles recording studio for a possible upcoming single or EP. "We are also planning a summer tour through London, UK during the month of July, so anyone reading this should check our website and hit up a live show." Check them out now at www.myspace.com/pblovesicle



BLACK SUNDAY DREAM

Classic Rock is alive and well over in San Lorenzo, California. We came across the quite excellent BLACK SUNDAY DREAM who have a new CD out called 'Light Of The Night' that has been getting excellent feedback within the UK press, with Powerplay Magazine awarded

their album a whopping 10/10. I caught up with guitarist Brian George to find out more.

What influenced Brian to pick up the guitar was when he first heard Black Sabbath as a teen. "When I heard 'Iron Man' and 'War Pigs', I knew I wanted to make sounds like that," he says. "Music that's just so guttural it really reaches inside you and speaks."

Black Sunday Dream consists of four guys who are all friends. Bass player Terrence and Brian have known one another since their school days. "We have played in a million bands together, sometimes with him on six string guitar too." Terrence is multi-talented and he plays bass/guitar and keyboards. Frontman Donald Hillier and Brian met through the local network. "I was looking for a vocalist and we hooked up from an ad on Craigslist," he says. "We jammed on some Zeppelin tunes and it just clicked, so I invited him to check out my original project."

Drummer Dennis Galway and Brian met through a friend of Donald's while they were putting together a Zep tribute band. "I invited him to come and have a play at my house and again, it gelled quickly. He liked the original tunes and so we decided to have a go at playing together."

The album, 'Light Of The Night' was recorded in a few places. The basic tracks were recorded in San Rafael at Laughing Tiger Studios, the vocal tracks were recorded mostly at Get Reel studios in San Francisco and the guitar overdubs and mixing was recorded at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California. "Since we all live the Bay Area, all these facilities were close by. The production credits go to local studio legend Howard Johnston and me. He has produced some star artists including Stevie Wonder and Jacob Pastries," explains Brian.

The band for the future are out and about cracking some heads open with their powerful live show. "That's what it's all about for us," says Brian. "Nothing like cranking the amps up and melting some faces! We hope you enjoy the new record."

BSD have an artist showcase at this link, check it out: www.rockrealms.com/previews/blacksundaydream. pfp and also at www.blacksundaydream.com and www.myspace.com/blacksundaydream



ELECTRIC FURNACE

From the Welsh valleys we find lurking around the hills the quite awesome ELECTRIC FURNACE, a three piece heavy/hard rock band who have been championed lately by the likes of Metal Hammer and various websites. The lads have a new EP now out called 'Sound And Fury' and it is utterly brilliant. I got together for a pint and a chat with vocalist and bassist Gareth Westwood.

"I think its human nature to emulate what you see and enjoy," says Gareth when I quiz him about how he got started in music. "Some people see fast cars and want to drive them, with us we heard these great bands, watched their videos religiously, and ultimately wanted to make the same kind of ruckus," he laughs. "It's a natural thing to listen to a riff or a drum fill or vocal melody and think, damn that's cool, let me see if I can do that! Then you get a band together and it spirals - out of control - from there! Plus the buzz you get from playing live is the best feeling in the world."

Electric Furnace sprung into life in early 2010. The guys (completed by Kilby - Guitar/vocals and drummer Mikey T.) had all played in bands that perhaps took themselves a little too seriously and realised that the fun had gone out of it. "So we said let's start again with no pressure," says Gareth. "No deadlines, and just play some heads down, balls out rock and metal. We play the gigs we want to play, when we want to play them, rather than taking every offer that comes along. Forget spreadsheets and band meetings, it's all about the magic of playing face melting melodies and full throttled no holds barred tunes! We'd say we take influences from Anthrax, Pantera, and Maiden."

The band recorded their debut EP using a mobile studio at various grotty locations in South Wales over a period of five months or so. "The producer was a strange shadowy guy who only goes by the name of Halloween

Jones," explains Gareth.

I ask Gareth how he is finding the metal scene in and around Wales. "The metal scene in South Wales at the moment is in a bit of a transitional period. There are some cracking bands who are plugging away, but it's the clubs that are really the problem, not the bands. Clubs are charging £4 or £5 just to get in, and if you've already seen one or two bands you may have no choice but to miss others. We desperately need some venues to start putting on free music nights again, so that we can say 'this club always has bands on this night, let's just go down and see what's playing' and not have to think 'well I can go this week, but then I'm skint the week after' etc. When you read biographies of all these great bands: Maiden, Metallica and the rest - they all had their regular haunts they could depend on. That's what's missing in South Wales right now - that single biker bar that puts on live metal for free every night! Most promoters, unfortunately, only tend to listen Franz Ferdinand-alikes and a lot of heavier bands just don't get a look in. However, with the Big 4 being back on top of their game and, for that matter, for over twenty years, maybe there is still hope for the metal scene yet," he adds.

Next up Electric Furnace are playing some select shows across the UK on the back of their debut EP 'Sound and Fury'. They are also shooting a video for the track 'Battle of Llantrisant' and then the lads are thinking about heading back into the studio to record a few more tunes as well as booking some festival slots thereafter. In the meantime you can check the band out at www.myspace.com/electricfurnace and on the Fireworks CD sampler. Enjoy.



DUST AND BONES

Illinois's DUST AND BONES are back with their excellent new CD called 'Rock And Roll Show' which is now out through PERRIS RECORDS. If you like your rock music in the style of Tesla, then you will enjoy this band and you can have a listen to a track on our CD sampler. "I remember being a young boy and my house always had music playing," explains bassist and lead vocalist Jon "Big Dawg" Jackson. "Even by the age of seven, I had my own record player and had many classic albums. Just listening to them and seeing the covers really inspired me from the start. I did not pick up a guitar until later in life but it all goes back to that time for me," he says.

"Dust And Bones just want to make music that promotes having a good time. You can dance to our tunes and certainly put our music in at a party. We are not trying to make anyone think but maybe forget for just a while. Lighten up and have a good time. That is what we are all about," adds Jon.

The new CD was recorded at Pinewood Studios in Metropolis IL with Shain Lloyd. "He has a kick ass home studio and is a friend of ours" and is produced together by Dust and Bones and Shain. The new album shows that the band have progressed into a finally tuned kick-ass rockin' unit, although Jon is quick to admit that it's just 'their vision'. "I don't want to bore you with the same old 'we have grown as a band and in our song writing' speech. We did not want to vary far from our original vision and I feel we maintained it very well. Overall we took more time with these songs and hope that all of our friends and fans like them."

Right now the band are already working on new material. "Sean cannot stand to sit idle for one minute. Our home base is St Louis but we have also started to venture out a bit with booking shows in Chicago and Nashville. Hopefully this CD sells well enough for us to fly over there and play a couple weeks worth of shows. That is our goal for late this year or next year." Check this excellent band out at: www.dustandbonesroxxx.com / www.myspace.com/dustandbonesroxxx

'Regeneration' is the excellent hard rocking new CD from Greek metal band EMERALD SUN who are signed to Pitch Black Records. "Songs like the hard melodic edged 'We Won't Fall' and 'Starchild' are up there with the likes of TNT, Fair Warning, Edguy and Firewind, full of galloping power metal energy, high power vocals, crispy guitars ... you know the drill. I had a chat with bassist Fotis to find more about the band."

While he was growing up, music was the only thing that made sense to Fotis. "Words, melodies and heavy guitars. I guess it was always a dream to compose new songs and perform them on stage. This way, we can give back to metal a small percent of what it gave to us," he says.



Emerald Sun was formed back in 1999 and it became obvious very soon that the so-called Euro-Power was their kind of metal. After a couple of demos and a lot of gigs in their home country Emerald Sun released their first CD 'Escape From Twilight' in 2007 which did quite well. While working on new material, the band parted ways with their then singer, due to musical differences, and recorded the new album. The band also changed labels and signed to Pitch Black Records and 'Regeneration' was ready for metal fans to enjoy, and enjoyable it is, in massive proportions.

"It was recorded at Maranis studios in Germany. Vagelis Maranis was in charge of mixing and mastering the album and he also lent his voice on our 12-minute track 'Fantasmagoria.' He did a brilliant job and highlighted all our ideas in every song, making us truly happy with the way this album sounds," says Fotis with pride. I asked Fotis what made him cover the Bonnie Tyler hit 'Holding Out For Hero' which is of interest to me as Bonnie is from my hometown of Swansea. "It is a song that we all love and in our heads it was already sounding metal. We thought that we needed a hero to begin our regeneration so it sort of came naturally to include this song in our album. You can say that this hero is the guy in our front cover," he explains.

The band have already begun composing new songs. "Right now we are more focused on live performances. We want to play as much as possible and promote our new album and of course because we simply love it. That feeling when you are on stage, with loud metal in our ears and the crowd enjoying it with us, is basically what keeps us alive!"

Make sure you check these guys out, they are fantastic. www.emeraldsun.gr / www.myspace.com/emeraldsunband



If you love hot n' sweaty 70s style rock n' roll like Nazareth then check out BACKSTAGE HEROES, a nifty Italian four piece whose new album 'Too Rude To Be Cool' is rather excellent. I caught up with hot-shot guitar player Ritchie 'Mohicano' to find out more.

Ritchie was fourteen years old when he got the musical bug "Some friends and I were all listening to the radio station. Suddenly, one song that will change my life forever came on. 'Sweet Child o' Mine' by Guns N' Roses." Ritchie's first priority became how to learn to play guitar. It then took him two years before he joined his first band, Dioniso. "We were really loud," he laughs. "Try to imagine four young rockers with no experience who just want to play the worst, wild side of Black Sabbath, Metallica and Motorhead! I had to wait some more years more, some additional practice and I had to know myself better to understand what to do and to find out the right people to build up the rock n' roll band I had dreamt. I met a lot of musicians, I've changed many bands, I've played more than five hundred gigs and I'm still happy to sweat on the stage. I really love what I do," he says with pride.

Backstage Heroes were born in 2008 in the dusty county of Turin rock city. "After the reckless agreement between myself, Lory Cruel (vocals), Miro J. (Bass) and Cris Crow (drums) with the intention to build up a rough rock n' roll band deriving from the wild American punk's abandoning, with the most cruel sound inspired by glorious bands like Guns N' Roses, Aerosmith, AC/DC, Motley Crue and influenced by modern sleazy-rock from North-Europe such as Hardcore Superstar and Backyard Babies." The band have played well over one hundred shows over two years and have opened up for the likes of L.A. Guns, Crazy Lixx, Last Vegas and Vains Of Jenna amongst others.

In September 2008 they released their first EP called 'Stone Cold Cruel', with its blazing drumming and its

super-vitamin-enriched rock n' roll which became the most hot business card of the rock n' roll band of their neighbourhood. In May 2010 the band finally released their killer debut CD 'Too Rude To Be Cool'. The album is hot on the heels of the above mentioned bands and has a great production and one song I personally love, 'Let's Rock And Roll', even borrows some tasty Eddie Van Halen licks midway through. The result is honest down to earth sweated rock n' roll with attitude acquired by the band after two intense years of healthy live activity.

The new album was recorded between February and March 2010 at Manufacture Musicali which is the studio of Claudio Cattero, 40 km from Turin. It was mixed and produced by the band themselves who have done an ace job. "It all took one month after a lot of fights," laughs Ritchie. "It's pretty hard to make it easy and agree with four different points of view. We had no producer, 'Too Rude To Be Cool' is totally self-produced..but we did it," he smiles.

The band are currently looking to promote the album. "First of all we have good planning between gigs and webzine, magazine and everything is going to start this year here in Italy. We are always hungry to find someone who could help us to promote our music out of the borders! We have performed many times outside of Italy, and we just came back from our Portugal tour. We are still looking for a deal, for promoters and managers outside Italy who can understand what we do and who can give us a chance to play and sell our music in other countries. Italy's got no big 'rock n' roll circuit' and this is a big mess if you are looking forward with it. Dear friends, if you like our music give us a shout and help our band to play in your country!"

Check the band out at: www.myspace.com/backstageheroes



'Music From The Void' is the latest album from WARREN ROBERT who comes from Halifax in Canada. Warren started playing guitar when he was seven. "I was inspired by hearing both my father and older brother play," he says. "I was very lucky to have the chance to learn from a great guitar teacher named Russ Townsend. He introduced me to rock, metal, blues, jazz, Celtic, gypsy, finger picking, bluegrass and country and his enthusiasm for learning music rubbed off on me in a big way. I was always very interested in theory, so I worked for several years to complete the Royal Conservatory of Music theory program. This is what gave me a nice foundation upon which I could further my composing and guitar playing."

The most significant part of Warren's development took place during the eight years he was lead guitarist/writer for the band Avacost. The group played very experimental progressive rock and released two recordings, the 'Avacost E.P.' (1989, Independent), and 'A Peace of the Sky'. (1993 Nudibranch Records). After the band stopped playing together in 1995, Warren took a break from live performance and focussed on learning and composing new styles. It was during this time that he honed his orchestral writing abilities and began a career as a film and television composer. Warren's composing career has allowed him to acquire the equipment he needs to record his solo music.

On both his first solo instrumental album 'Thoughts and Realities', and on his third 'Mozart: Requiem in Dm', Warren sequenced all of the drum, percussion, keyboard and orchestral instruments, and with the exception of a guest solo by his friend Shawn Sutherland, Warren performed the entire guitar and bass parts himself.

For 'Music From The Void', Warren wanted the drive and feel and a real drummer so three friends, Zach Smith, Scotty MacCulloch and Chance Gillis played drums on different tracks. Warren again sequenced all of the keys and orchestra, and played all of the bass and guitar parts.

To satisfy his live performance fix, Warren plays and tour with an excellent Celtic rock group named 'Pogey'. "My band mates are great guys, and we have a ton of fun travelling, meeting people, and performing our original tunes in different cities," he says.

'Music From The Void' was recorded and mixed at Common Ground Studios in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. "The drums were recorded and engineered in a nice big room by my good friend, experienced audio/music guy and fellow 'Avacost' band mate Christopher Mitchell. I recorded, engineered the rest of the instruments. The album was co-produced, mixed and mastered by Christopher and myself," he says.

Next up Warren is focused on his solo music is primarily on recording. "So I am currently writing songs for a new instrumental orchestral rock album. The new album will feature the orchestra complimented with a slightly heavier and riff oriented battle metal feel than some of my earlier stuff. There will be some Celtic influence in there as well. I am hoping for a summer 2011 release. After that, I'll have to start thinking about the next one." Check Warren's music out at www.thoughtsandrealities.com



Out now through Inferno Records is the excellent new CD from Bulgarian female led metallers RAMPART. The band are Maria D.S. on vocals, Yavor Kamenov on Guitars, Borislav Glavev on Drums, Victor Georgiev on guitar and Alexander Spiridonov on Bass.

I had a chat with leading lady Maria D.S. to find out more. "According to the scientific school of determinists everything is genetically preordained," advises Maria. "We have a serious suspicion that the reason found guilty is that we have a good ear for music. In our case some additional factors which I can point are the listening of classical music for a long time, the moderate listening to classic heavy metal bands and the absolute refusal to listen to Balkans' folklore music. Heavy metal burns inside everyone of us! Thus we found ourselves as a band and the further evolving was only a question of time," she explains.

The group's guitar player Yavor and the drummer Bobby founded the bases of Rampart. "With the development of the composer's skills of Yavor, who has classical music background, they started to enrol musicians from the Sofia metal community to form a band of full value," she explains. Maria participated in different heavy metal projects before she got bored from singing cover songs. She then began to sing with Rampart as a lead vocalist. "I also started to write the lyrics of the songs and to bring my ideas into the band's compositions," she says. Rampart then went into the studio and recorded the rather excellent 'Voice of the Wilderness' which they recorded as a trio with Victor and Alexander joining the band later. "With them on board we were able to undertake our concert engagements. We signed to the French label Inferno Records for the release of our debut album. Our songs appeared in two American compilations this year and we participated in a tribute release to Helloween and Gamma Ray as well. Currently we are writing new songs for our second album."

'Voice of the Wilderness' was recorded in a digital studio in Sofia. "Our expectations were definitely higher than the final result. Yavor (besides the Music Academy) has graduated sound-engineering and his knowledge of theory in this field contributed to some good sides of the recordings and at the same time to some not quite good sides which could be heard in places. This already gives a hint that the album is entirely produced by us. We gained considerable experience in the studio."

Rampart are currently working on their next full length album to be released in 2011. "We expect the number of our engagements to be on the increase. We believe that our songs touch the hearts of the metal fans and we hope your readers to hear our music and to judge it on its merits!" Check this excellent band out at www.myspace.com/rampartbg and tell them that Fireworks sent ya!

NICKY BALDRIAN'S PLAYLIST

1. Coldspell - Out From The Cold
2. Eden's Curse - Trinity
3. Whitesnake - Forevermore
4. Angus And Julia Stone - Memories Of An Old Friend
5. Last Known Addiction - One Left Standing
6. Guru - Guru
7. Voodoo Circle - Broken Heart Syndrome
8. Within Temptation - The Unforgiving
9. Big Life - Big Life
10. Lucky Peterson - Every Second A Fool Is Born