



Photo: Marcus Maschwitz

KNOCK OUT KAINE

Newcomers Knock Out Kaine have spent years on the live circuit honing their craft, winning Kerrang's "Best Unsigned Band" competition and touring with Adler's Appetite as an opening act. Keen to do things on their own terms, the band self-financed the making of their debut album 'House Of Sins', taking full advantage of having no record company deadline to make the best record possible. The decision has paid dividends, as the album is a superb sounding slice of Sunset-era rock. Calling about the record, James Gaden enjoyed a most entertaining chat with vocalist Dean Foxx...

Can you tell me a bit about how the band began, with this being your debut album?

Yeah - I suppose it all kicked off in 2004, we've been around about seven years or so. Jim, the guitarist and I met at a music college we were both attending. We decided to form a band and got together with a couple of other geezers from the college but they fell by the wayside... the band, as it stands now, has been together for about four years. We really only think of the band as four years old because we only became the animal we are now when this foursome got together.

It's an interesting name for a band, is there a story behind that?

When we first started thinking of names for the band, I wanted to call the band Cocaine. It was simply as a metaphor for getting high on rock and roll, as opposed to condoning recreational drugs! (laughs) I googled it as a band name and over the years there have been hundreds of them, so we decided against it. Literally over a drink in a bar one day, one of our friends said "Why don't you call the band K.O. Caine?" We liked it, but thought we'd go with 'Knock Out' rather than just the 'K.O.' - if anyone reads anything more into it they might work out what we mean.

I've been listening to it all week and there's definitely the influence of bands like Mötley Crüe and Guns N' Roses - was that a style you were aiming for or a natural sound you gravitated to?

We have loads of influences when it comes to music... when we did form, Jim and myself especially are really into that late 80s, early 90s American rock thing. However, we didn't make a conscious decision of wanting to go down that road. It's just how we are. I think that the more you listen to the album, the more influences of ours you'll probably pick up on. Certainly when it comes to some of the harmony vocals, we have a country rock influence and bands like Fleetwood Mac, those sort of acts were a real influence on what we were doing there. But it's not for us to say what we are or pigeon hole us - that's down to you guys in the media and the fans to decide what we sound like.

There's some great songs on here - the first ones that grabbed me were 'House Of Sins' and 'Back Street Romeo', but the more I've listened to it, the more I've come to the conclusion that

I don't think there is really a duff track on here - which, for a debut album, is a very good sign.

Well, thank you very much for that. I must admit, we haven't had a bad review yet, and hopefully we won't! A lot of the reviews, especially in Europe, have said the same, that there isn't a weak track on it. I suppose we will have our work cut out for the second album! Some of these songs have been kicking around for a long time, they've had a chance to evolve and mature. Some of the songs... you mentioned 'Back Street Romeo', that predates the band altogether! I wrote that back in about 1998. I just wrote it on acoustic guitar, just for me, I wasn't in a band at the time. When it came to putting this band together, I was just strumming it in a rehearsal room and Jim said "That's ace, let's have a go at that!" So that's probably why the songs are of high quality, we haven't been pushed for time. The album was self-financed, done over a certain period, so we had no deadline. We'd just go into a studio, do a session, wait until we had some more money and do another. Doing it bit by bit, we had no deadline and no hurry to finish. We took our time to make sure we didn't put out a terrible record! (laughs)

That makes sense, I saw on your press release you were voted Kerrang's 'Best Unsigned Act' back in 2008, so I assume you were playing songs that ended up on this record back then?

Yeah, we were. It wasn't actually voted, it was a competition they ran. Unsigned bands had to go and play live, go through heats, blah blah blah and at the end the last one standing would be crowned 'Best Unsigned Band'. We were lucky enough to win the whole thing, which was quite cool.

So looking back to that period, I assume you had an album in mind. Did you always think you were going to self-finance it, or were you looking for a label to sign to? Because as much as I love this genre like you do, it's not exactly fashionable anymore.

No, you're right there - we figured our market might not be the UK, it might be more like Central Europe, Germany, places like that where this kind of music is still relevant. We did get signed up to Dust On The Tracks which is a German label - they came to us after we had said we had finished the record. Our idea was to make the record and either release it ourselves, if we could, or see if we could find a label to licence and distribute it

for us. That's what we have done, licensed it and signed publishing to MIG via D.O.T.T.

A lot of people I've spoken to, on the first rung of the ladder so to speak, finance and make the record themselves, and then find a label to act basically as a distributor at the end.

I think it's a good thing actually. I had the idea to do that with us years ago, after the Darkness put their first album out. I read all the interviews with Justin Hawkins and he'd sold a song he wrote to a TV advert and got a big payout, which he used to finance the first album. They actually recorded that at the same studio, with the same engineer, that we used! He financed everything and then licenced it to Atlantic. It means that going that way, you have much more of a chance to get a return. You're not paying back advances or anything like that.

And of course, you have nobody interfering if you do it yourself.

Which is fabulous. (laughs) We're lucky to have a friend in Ewan Davies who engineered and co-produced the album with us. He'd worked with The Darkness, The Kaiser Chiefs, loads of massive names. After that, we decided we had a decent recording so we thought we might as well have it mastered properly. So we had Ray Staff do it, who had done Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, just everyone basically! To get a quality product, you have to go through these channels. If you cut corners you'll end up playing it for someone and coughing over a certain bit that isn't very good, you know what I mean? (laughs)

It's really refreshing to hear someone like yourself Dean, who knows what they are doing in the music world. So many times I'll hear a great record from a new band and they'll say things like "Well, we've made the record and put the details on our website, but it's not selling..." There's a bit more to it than that! Are you self managed too?

Yeah, we are, we are looking for pro management. Everything is going very well at the moment, but with the workload coming up, we're touring the album and then will have to be back in the studio to do a second album. I know we plan to do the States next year... the album has rotation on something like sixty different stations there, and we're told that will increase. So we will need someone to help take the strain, but at the moment, it's just us.

It said on your press release you gained some touring experience opening for Adler's Appetite. Without management, how did you bag that slot?

One of the venues we pay regularly in the UK is Yardbirds in Grimsby. It's one of my favourite venues to play in the UK, run by the Warlocks Motorcycle club, they always look after you and we play there quite a lot. Their promotions man phoned us up to tell us Steven Adler's band were coming and they were looking for a support act. We got the details, got in touch and it just went from there. We paid a very small buy on fee and they used all of our backline for the whole tour. That was the price we paid but it was a great experience, hanging out with Steven Adler and, for me, hanging out with Chip Z'Nuff, he's a hero to a song writer like me, it was rather good!

As for the album itself, you've called it 'House Of Sins' and I'm told there's a story behind that?

Just recently, a very good friend of ours called Rob died. He had this house that was basically a party house - he lived on a boat and he kept the house as a party house. It really was, without the need for exaggeration, it was just a den of debauchery! (laughs) It was full of strippers, prostitutes, all sorts of illegal activities, but nobody ever died... well, until he did! (laughs) It was all good clean... I won't say clean, but good fun! We wrote the song 'House Of Sins' after a particularly wild party that lasted a couple of days. We weren't going to put it on the record, but after a bit of work it started to sound really good and when Rob died, we thought it would go on as a tribute to our good friend and it became the title track.

I think you made the right choice, it was one of my favourites on the record. It's been a pleasure talking to you Dean, I hope the album does well because it's very good - expect another favourable review to go with your collection!

That's great mate, we appreciate it!