

HOWE ABOUT THAT?

Former Bad Company vocalist Brian Howe first came to attention singing with Ted Nugent on the Motor City Madman's 'Penetrator' album and tour, before replacing Paul Rodgers in the reformed Bad Company - Brian brought a different feel to Bad Company, less bluesy with a unique voice totally different to that of his predecessor - a voice that has not been heard on record since his solo album 'Tangled In Blue' was issued some thirteen years ago, after his acrimonious split with Bad Company's Mick Ralphs and Simon Kirke. With his tenure in the band heralding hit singles and albums, Brian has been keeping active playing shows featuring the best of both eras of Bad Company, as well as recording a brand new album, 'Circus Bar', on Frontiers. James Gaden was suitably delighted with the results, and couldn't wait to call Brian up for the full story - he got in return a thoroughly entertaining chat...

I must say, I'm really pleased to get the chance to talk to you, because I've been a fan of yours for ages. It was you who got me into Bad Company - the first Bad Company record I bought was 'What You Hear Is What You Get - Live', and the first studio record I bought was 'Holy Water'... I liked it that much I bought all your stuff first, before backtracking to Paul Rodgers and the work they did with Robert Hart.

Aw, stop it now! Really? That's very nice.

Yeah - I knew the Rodgers era classics from things like '10 from 6', but the first proper Bad Company studio album I bought was 'Holy Water'. I've been a fan for years, I even have 'Tangled In Blue' - the proper one that came out on Touchwood records, not the reissue as 'Touch'. It took some finding though!

Oh, right! That label... both versions are hard to find actually. The first label disappeared, I don't know what happened to them. The second label, they disappeared even quicker than the first! I think they lasted six weeks after the records were released. I think you can still buy it online though, which I don't understand, because I'm getting no money from it!

I get so many people tell me that, when I mention a record or compilation and they see nothing from it. It's so wrong, it's unbelievable.

Yeah - it's probably my own fault for not looking into it.

I liked that record, but it was a lot more mellow, more mature, and nothing like your previous work with Bad Company.

Yeah, that was my divorce record! (Laughs)

And that was your last record, until now, which was thirteen years ago! You're about to release a brand new album on Frontiers, 'Circus Bar'... I heard the promo and I was blown away, I loved it! I didn't know what to expect, whether it was going to be more mellow, but it came blasting out and I was delighted with what I heard.

Really? Cool! It's a bit of a change for me. You know how you get into a rut when you work with the same people all the time, doing the same things all the time... I needed to do something to wake myself up, more than anything else. I met this guy, Brooks Paschal, an up and coming producer from Orlando, and he's really switched on to what's happening in the modern music world. It's weird, it's the reverse of how I was brought up in the music business. I'd say simple things like 'Man, we need to record this to get real top quality,' and he'd say 'Why?' I'd be like 'Whaddya mean why?' He said 'Brian, nobody has a stereo anymore. Go to anyone's house nowadays - twenty years ago the stereo would be a centrepiece, with great speakers, amps, all the rest of the bollocks, nobody has that anymore. They've got a fucking iPod! They

normally wear cheap headphones, listening to it when they're travelling, not sat at home anymore.' I was like... fuck! He's right! It never dawned on me before. Forget the old thinking Brian... if people listen to this album, it'll be on a bus, a train, a plane... very few people sit indoors listening to music. Do you do that?

I do, probably because I'm a music lover. I write about music, and with my day job, I work from home so I always have music on, but I do all the travelling thing with the iPod too. I know my friends tend to have speakers plugged into their computer and use that to listen to music indoors with iTunes, I'm a bit of a relic for having a proper CD system.

Right! See, I've got that too, but I never thought of it as being the general, preferred method for listening to music nowadays, for maybe 90% of the population. When we were making the record, I was looking at a tracking order and I said to Brooks 'We need to plan which songs go where'. And again he said 'Why?' I said look, they have to have some sequence, it should flow and he said 'Brian, this is the iPod era. People

have stuff on random, and most people don't listen to records as albums. You're wasting your time.' Oh my God, I'm so out of touch! Thirteen years and the fucking world has changed! Do you want me to get into how we started making the record?

Sure thing, go for it!

A year prior to starting it, I found this place called Lake Atitlan, up in the highlands of Guatemala. I used to hang out there and I planned a trip there and said to Brooks that I was headed up there and if he wanted to come for a week, maybe we could do pre-production, try and write some songs, see what happened. We get there, just me and him, and we're there for like two or three days, and in that time frame, no exaggerating, we had the basis for nearly every song we were going to do. We were like 'How the fuck did this happen?' Maybe I've had it bottled up for thirteen years, but it's come out so FAST! We wrote seven or eight of the songs in three days - they kept falling out of us. So every night, we'd go to this little bar. It's called the Circus Bar, and it didn't dawn on me then, but when we were near the end of the album, I was looking at the

Well it's odd you should say that, I think that's maybe your perfectionist's ear. One of the notes I made when listening to it was that your voice sounds magnificent, it doesn't sound any different to when you were in Bad Company. I even have a question here that I wrote with a point of asking you how you keep it in such good shape, is it the constant live shows you do in the States or do you have a set ritual or product you use?

No, I don't really do anything to take care of it. People say to me 'Why don't you warm up before a show?' You'll shred your voice!' But no, it seems the more shows I do, the stronger it gets. It's not like a lot of singers, who if they do three or four shows in a row they start losing their voice, mine

wants more shows, it keeps going like a fucking steeplechaser! It's weird, man. But I made a big mistake. I have a terrible fear of doctors. I had a really bad cold that dropped into my chest, and by the time I went to the medical centre, they said I'd had pneumonia for well over a month and should have been in hospital. But I was in the middle of recording - I'm amazed you can't hear some of that stuff, because I think I can.

Like I say, maybe that's you being a perfectionist - to me, because I haven't heard any new recorded work from you since 'Tangled In Blue', I was amazed at how good your voice sounded, you've lost nothing, every little nuance and trick I'm used to from you is there. So I can't hear it at all - unless it's because Brooks didn't record it in top quality and I'm listing to it on some cheap head phones!

(Laughs) Maybe! When I said we didn't record it top quality, I'm not saying we recorded it badly, but we didn't spend ages - with Bad Company, Terry Thomas would spend ages getting it sounding right, and polished. This was a whole new ball game, a new way of working, and it worked for me. I didn't have time to think about the fear of being accepted again. I was so busy writing and recording, I never sat back and wondered if people would like it, was it up to standard, I didn't have time. We ploughed through it.

I think you can feel that on the record. It's very vibrant, it bounces out at you, it's got a modern, fresh production, but still has all your trademarks present too. I don't see how anybody who is a fan of you won't enjoy this.

I hope not, but I'm not sure how many people are left that like my stuff, y'know? My heritage has been wiped out. If you look at Bad Company's website, I don't exist.

You're right, I was going to mention that. Like I say, I bought your Bad Company records first, I bought the two they did with Robert Hart which, as much as I like Robert and enjoyed the albums he made with them, it sounded to me like he was having to sing like Paul. It was as if the band thought 'we haven't got Paul, so we'll get the next best thing, a soundalike'. Then Paul came back and they did the Bad Company anthology, with some new songs, updated the website, and there's no mention of Robert or you, the albums aren't listed on the discography... what happened there? It's not like the band didn't enjoy success with you - you had hit singles AND hit albums.

I think that was maybe Paul, he has so much control over everything and Mick and Simon are pretty much his lapdogs. That might have been a condition of him coming back. I'm sure they have to respond to Paul, maybe they're happy with that, I don't know.

Well Robert has gone onto the Jones Gang which I think is great, you've got a new album coming out, but Bad Company haven't gone very far. Mick Ralphs especially hasn't moved on - I thought the stuff he came up with from the anthology just sounded like his old songs.

I thought they were worse than his old songs. I'll be honest, I thought they were bad and I was surprised. He spent years trying to get rid of me because he wanted to go back to the old Bad Company sound

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Well I'll tie Bad Company back to your new record, because you have re-recorded two of your songs from your time there - 'How About That' and 'Holy Water'. Did you do that to have something familiar on the album?

I did it because I thought to myself, it's been thirteen years since my last one, and people aren't going to know who Brian Howe is unless there's something that might trigger 'Oh, it's THAT guy, I didn't know his name!' But they might recognise the songs. I didn't want to do it so blatantly though. With 'How About That', it's changed a little bit, the arrangement is different. This time there's a real drummer on it, on the original it was a machine - I don't think Simon even knows that because he didn't spend any time listening. I think it's got a better feel. With 'Holy Water', we tried to recreate it, play it the way it was, but in the end I snapped in the studio. To everyone's shock, I fucking snapped and said look, enough, either we do this completely different, or we don't do it. End of story. I'm not going to copy it note for note, which is what my guitar player, Dean, was doing. It was like going back again. So Brooks and I went into a different room and restructured it, redid it in about half an hour, if that, and I think it turned out better than the fucking original!

I absolutely love the new version. I liked 'How About That' but could still tie it to the original in style, but when 'Holy Water' came on, it was totally different, and brilliant to my ears.

I was so pleased with it, I called my

agent and said 'Hey, I think I've done something really good!' (laughs) I think I've made a milestone song for myself, I can't stop listening to it! Normally, I'm not like that at all, I never listen to my stuff once it's done. But with this, I thought it was powerful. The weird thing is, there's three songs on the record with no drums, and 'Holy Water', the only drums on there are some toms accenting the middle eight. It's one of the most powerful songs on the record, but there's next to no drums in it! Weird.

On first listen the songs that jumped out at me the most were 'I'm Back', 'If You Want Trouble' with that being such a no-nonsense rocker, and 'Holy Water'.

It's funny you should mention 'If You Want Trouble'. That's a demo. I did it about five years ago and we re-did the guitars. I thought that was a throwaway song, I didn't like it, it was a bit too AC/DC-ish. It talked itself onto the album. I played it to the mixing engineer, Rafe McKenna, and I wasn't thinking about putting on there and he said I should. I didn't think it fitted with the rest of the record but Rafe said 'It does the job!' and said about the circus idea, with different acts. He asked to mix it and see if he could pull something out of it to see if I would like it. He did a good job so I thought fuck it, we'll stick it on there and see if people like it, and people DO seem to like it. It was literally a demo I recorded, a throwaway to start with.

I liked it because it was a classic eighties style rocker, a feel good upbeat tune that you could work out to in the gym, or end up speeding to! I thought it added to the record like you say - there's some stuff on it that's a bit more melodic, a bit poppier, the Bad Company stuff, some ballads, the outro with 'Little George Street' - I think you've ticked all the boxes.

'Little George Street' - the record label weren't too happy with that at first. I can understand it - it's a personal song for me. It's the street I was brought up on. It was a little tiny street, 150 yards long, I'm not joking, and it had fifteen houses on it. I lived on there until I was twenty. I've always wanted to do something, and I've had that song in my head for like fifteen years. When I sent it to the label, they said 'What's this?' I told them it was the outro, put it on at the end of the record. They were like 'Well, that's not a song'. I said yeah, I know, it's supposed to be like a - like the Beatles used to do, something interesting and different to end with. 'No, we don't like it.' Ok, great, you don't like it. So what do we do, scrap the album? They said 'No, you have to do something else.' I thought oh, for fucks sake, here we go. So I offered a deal. If they put that on the album, I'd give them an extra song. And they said 'Alright!' So I called my producer, went up to Orlando, and wrote 'Flying', which until a month ago didn't exist. So that was the compromise to allow 'Little George Street' on there! (Laughs)

That's ok though, everyone got what they wanted. I know with you signing with Frontiers, they know their market pretty well and have a good idea how to put together a record that pleases their fan base. A lot of people I interview are on Frontiers and they all say Serafino and his team are very good at knowing what they want and what will be well received.

I just hope I don't get pigeonholed. I don't know how well my stuff fits with the

general area Serafino operates in. There's some rock on there, a few ballads... They're not ballads about devils and wizards, so that's ok! I don't know how this record will do, I hope it goes alright.

I think you'll do well on Frontiers. Their favourite things tend to be Journey, stuff like that, that brand of melodic rock, and you could certainly classify yourself in that genre with no worries. This record is melodic but upbeat, with some rocky moments and some ballads. That sounds a perfect fit to me. It's not like it's a full album of ballads and love songs, and as a comeback record, I think you've done well.

I hope so, that would be nice. That would rub salt in Bad Company's wounds with their last few things being fucking dire. (Laughs)

I noticed on your online diary, Pat Travers is on the album, but you said Mick Jones was due to come and play on this record, but couldn't do it at the last minute. Which song did you have in mind for him?

I wanted Mick to play on 'There's This Girl'. I thought he'd have done a great job on that, but for some reason it didn't happen. He's very good friends with Simon Kirke, so maybe that affected his decision. I don't know. I was told he couldn't come to the studio because he'd done his back in and it was too painful, but he was always ok to play gigs. It didn't ring true with me, but whatever.

He played on 'Don't Ask Me Why' on 'Tangled In Blue' at least.

Yes he did. Mick, when he's in form, is unquestionably to me, the finest rhythm guitar player in rock. He's a king, he's unbelievable, when he locks into a pattern, it's unstoppable.

I was lucky enough to interview him for the new Foreigner record, in this very issue. I met him and Kelly Hansen in London. It's been a long time since his last record, but I thought the new one they've got coming out is awesome. It's out here in March, I know it's already out over there.

It is, it's not bad at all. What really got me, Kelly to me is doing what Robert did in Bad Company. Some of it sounds like he's trying to sound like Lou. Why? I've heard the Hurricane records, he doesn't sound like Lou. Maybe Mick told him to, and he has that ability to sound like that, but I thought the band could still have been called Foreigner, with a singer who sounded different, and it would have been just as good, if not better.

It's much better than it was with Johnny Edwards, he couldn't do it at all for my money and he was really trying to sound like Lou.

Sure, sure. Why would you want to? Lou was the archetypal 70's and 80's rock and roll singer. Why would you want to try and copy him?

True. Were you ever in the frame to join Foreigner? Yeah.

I thought so. When Lou first left I saw loads of names, some plausible, others not so much. I know Joe Lynn Turner and Stan Bush were both talked about, and I saw your name mentioned, so I wondered if that was true or speculation. I think you'd have done a

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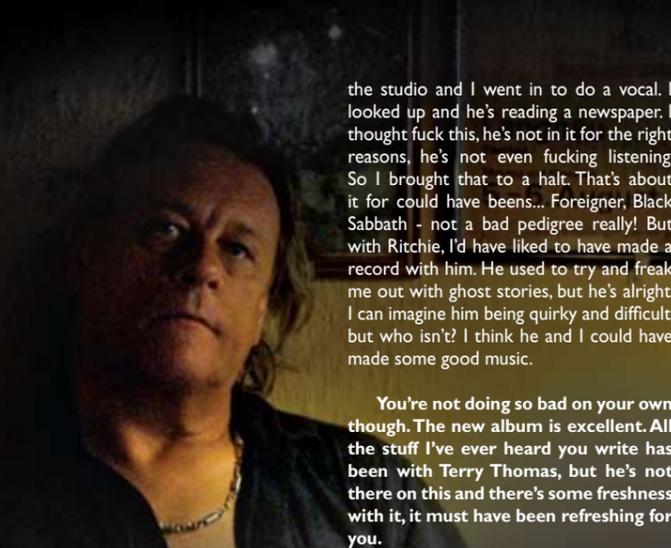
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really good job.

I'll give you the story - Lou and Mick are chalk and cheese. Their upbringings are so different, there's an age difference. Mick is awfully British, and a bit of a snob, is our Mick. Very high class kind of guy, where as Lou is a street punk, likes his cars, rock and roll, leather jackets - a genuine street rock and roller. I didn't know Lou was leaving, back in the eighties, and I had the same management as them, which was ESP, Bud Prager. He called me in and he says 'Brian, if you were offered the job as lead vocalist for Foreigner, if that should happen, what would you say?'

Purely hypothetically. (Laughs)

Yeah! I said that I would say absolutely no. Bud said 'Really? If that happened and you said no, why would that be?' I said Bud, you're asking me, in a roundabout way, to join Foreigner. I've just replaced Paul Rodgers. Do you honestly think I want to step into that second arena, replacing Lou Gramm? He said 'I see your point, but I think it would benefit you if you did'. I told him that I had sworn to myself, when I teamed up with Mick and Simon, there was so much animosity toward me, if I jumped ship now, all those people who said 'Oh, he'll never take the place of Paul Rodgers', they'd all be right. They'd be fucking right, and I'm not giving them the satisfaction. I swore I wouldn't leave Bad Company until I had a gold record on my fucking wall. Then I could point to it and say you know what? That's what I fucking did. As it happened, I ended up with three golds and a couple of platinum, so I did alright. But yeah, I was offered it, but in that context, that roundabout way. If I'd said yes, I have no doubt I'd have been the new singer of Foreigner. I wouldn't have wanted to have been asked to try and copy Lou either, nor did I want to do a lot of keyboard heavy ballads. I want to fucking rock a little bit. I don't think Mick wants to rock too much - I'm not knocking him, but I think Lou was the aggressive rocker, that force in the band. Without that, they can get a bit soft, a bit unfocused.

I'm always interested in hearing who tried out for other bands, picturing what might have been. Some you think 'Yeah, that could work', and others I just think, 'Nah, no chance!' What about Deep Purple? Did that come up? I know you were friends with Ritchie Blackmore.

Not Purple, no, no. Although I did hang out a lot with Ritchie. I like Ritchie. He's a complete nut job, but he's alright. I did audition for Black Sabbath actually, but nobody knows that. I went, and only Tony Iommi turned up. He wasn't even fucking interested. He sat in the control room in

the studio and I went in to do a vocal. I looked up and he's reading a newspaper. I thought fuck this, he's not in it for the right reasons, he's not even fucking listening. So I brought that to a halt. That's about it for could have beens... Foreigner, Black Sabbath - not a bad pedigree really! But with Ritchie, I'd have liked to have made a record with him. He used to try and freak me out with ghost stories, but he's alright. I can imagine him being quirky and difficult, but who isn't? I think he and I could have made some good music.

You're not doing so bad on your own though. The new album is excellent. All the stuff I've ever heard you write has been with Terry Thomas, but he's not there on this and there's some freshness with it, it must have been refreshing for you.

It was incredible. I was in contact with Terry, I don't know what's going on with him. He's not interested anymore. I want people who are positive, want to do things, have modern ideas. I sent Terry the new version of 'Holy Water', because he and I wrote it. He heard it, and said to my mixing engineer 'Well, it just sounds old to me - old and boring.' I thought wow, that's coming from a jaded guy. He could have said it was interesting, no drums, it's open, more expression, I can see what you're trying to do but I don't like it... but no, he just said its old fashioned and boring.

I don't agree with that at all, I think you've done a good job and I think it's a great fit for the record. I'll admit though, when I saw the provisional track listing, before I heard it I thought 'Oh, what on earth has he redone that for?'

(Laughs) Well, lyrically it fit too. It says 'In my life, there's been changes'... and boy, have there been changes! So I think it fits lyrically, it fits musically, it's a nice end piece to the album. There have been some changes, but it ain't all bad!

I have a final question before I go - whether you know about it or not remains to be seen. I saw on Amazon there's a DVD of one of your shows before I heard it and I wondered is it official, or some bootleg somebody is flogging?

I'll be honest, I don't know what 'official' means, but yeah, it was done in Myrtle Beach, about three years ago I think. I don't know what it's like, I've never seen it. I don't know if it's any good... I know the show wasn't that good. The show was a bit rinky-dink. The venue was really cool, but we didn't play that well that night, and we had a lot of sound problems. How they got a show out of it I'll never know, they must be geniuses. We had sound problems, tech problems, and it was not the best show we ever played. I'd be curious myself to see how it looks.

Like I say, I saw it purely by accident. It said it was supposed to have come out last September, but it didn't, it's not been released yet. I saw the photo of the cover and hadn't heard anything about it, so I thought I'd ask. To me, 'official' means you knew about it! It's ridiculous the amount of times I do an interview with someone and ask them about a CD or DVD and they say 'Oh, that's out is it? I won't see anything from that.'

Sure, I won't see any money from that, I'm under no illusions. I know how this business works. If I remember rightly, we were paid some money upfront at the gig for it. It was a fun idea, but as it turned out the show

wasn't great that night... but then again, I never thought the 'What You Hear Is What You Get' live album with Bad Company was particularly good either. I thought that was messy and sloppy in places, but some people liked it. I dunno.

I enjoyed it, but to be honest, I have a live bootleg of you from Christmas 1991 with Bad Company, and that's a great show.

What show was that?

I'm not 100% certain - the bootleg simply lists it as Christmas, 1991 in USA. It's a live radio broadcast, not a King Biscuit show, but something like that - maybe Westwood One, something like that.

Oh, you know what? The only one we ever did that went out live, and I've never heard it of course, because it went out live, was from New York City. Blackfoot opened up for us - it was genuinely live. I dread to think what that might be like, I've never heard it.

Do you want me to send you it?

Oh, yeah man! Please! Cool, thank you.

It's a good mix in the show - half your songs, half Paul Rodgers era.

Hold on a minute, that must be with Mick Ralphs not in the band then.

Yeah, that's right, he didn't tour for the 'Holy Water' album did he, and that's what tour this was. Was he injured, or could he not be bothered?

He just hated music, hated travel, he didn't play much on the record which pissed him off, and when he was allowed back in the band, he came in and said 'I'm not doing that live, not doing that live, not doing that...' and half my stuff went out the window as soon as he came back. I could tell you some more stories, but it's just not worth the aggravation. Silly stuff.

Well, onwards and upwards. You've got a stunning new album and Mick... hasn't.

Yeah, exactly. I wouldn't call mine 'stunning', but I do enjoy it. I've heard most of what Mick's done in the last twenty years, and I think it's poor - in my humble opinion! And Simon Kirke is still writing letters, trying to interfere in my shows, claiming I have no right to use the name and all this stuff. And that's illegal for him to do.

I see this on the net time and again - if you went out and said 'Hey everybody, I'm Bad Company!' then fair enough, but you don't, I've seen the adverts where it says Bad Company former lead singer Brian Howe. That cannot be disputed.

Yeah, and I had to fight for that too. When I agreed to leave the band, they agreed to give me a certain amount of money. Well, they defaulted on that, which is typical. So we went to court, and the judge said 'You know what, you didn't pay the guy!' That made the agreement null and void, which meant I could advertise myself as Bad Company former lead singer Brian Howe. But that's how I got to use the name at all - they didn't want me to have anything to do with it, but they didn't want to pay me, so... that's what happened.

It's pretty pathetic isn't it?

It's sad. I've got a lot of time for people like Paul Rodgers. I wish, although I've no right to tell him how to run his career, I

wish I could get in a studio with Paul and Brooks, my producer, and help him make a really fucking good Paul Rodgers record. I'm not comparing myself to Paul, but sometimes singers can help get the best out of other singers. I think I know where Paul should go next in his career, and I'm not sure he does.

From what I heard, he was all set to retire until Queen came up, and then he's done two tours and a studio record with them. But now that's come to a close, he seems to have just drifted back to Bad Company.

I think Paul was a good fit with Queen because he is quite small and sometimes dresses in... a feminine way, you know? With his voice and that style, it worked ok. Not like me, I'm six two, 225lbs, there's no fucking way! But one thing did amaze me, and I'm not looking for a bitch fight with Paul, I'm really not, but you know when singers from the 60's and 70's get ripped for having plastic surgery, cosmetic work whatever - nobody seems to have had a go at Paul Rodgers! (laughs)

Some people I know did. (laughs)

(Laughs) No, he's very fit and slender, but his hair looks a bit unnatural. He must use the same guy as Elton John. (Laughs) For fucks sake. I'm not having a pop, I'm just amazed that people haven't jumped on it and said 'Hey, how can this be?' I can't talk though, I haven't got enough money for a plastic surgeon for the work I'd have to have done, so I'm not bothering. (Laughs)

Yeah, there used to be that whole wig wearing thing back in Kerrang! years back, so I know what you mean - Paul has escaped it! Well, I've had an absolute blast talking to you Brian, and I hope the new record does well.

I hope so too. I'm hoping to get a bit of promotion in Europe, talking to you, Dave Ling, people like that. Dave Ling was my first ever interview, back in the Greyhound pub in 1982. I think. He was nervous as fuck, and I was in a band called White Spirit...

Yeah, Janick Gers played with them, right?

That's the one, he'd just left before I joined, to join Gillan. So we did this gig, and Dave Ling turned up and said 'This is my first interview, so go easy on me.' And I said fuck me, it's my first gig, go easy on me! We go back quite a way... '82? Yeah, must have been '82. I think.

Yeah, because you joined Ted Nugent's band in 1983.

Yeah! You know what, maybe it was '81 then. Fuck! I joined Ted Nugent in 1983.

Yes, and did the 'Penetrator' album, a tour, and then it was Bad Company and 'Fame And Fortune' next.

That's right. I was in Bad Company two years before we released 'Fame And Fortune'. Funny innit? Yeah, I joined at the end of the Ted Nugent tour, and it took two years to write material for one reason or another.

I thought it was a good album. I enjoyed it - totally different to the Rodgers era, but a good record. The only criticism I'd level at it is it's one of the worst album covers ever.

I agree. (laughs)

The music and singing is great, but I looked at the cover and thought 'what the - how long did that take to do?'

About two minutes. (Laughs). I had no control over things like that, but the big catch phrase in Bad Company when I was there, from the other two guys was 'That'll do.' I was the guy saying 'Dude, it can be better!' and they fucking hated me for that! They didn't care. It was my first chance at a career and I thought fuck it, I want to write songs and try and do a good job. But that's in the past, I have a new record out now, hopefully people will like it, hopefully plenty of people will hear it if there's enough promotion, who knows?

And hopefully it won't be thirteen years before you do a follow up!

No, I've already started work on the next one. I've got two songs already written. It'll be a lot quicker this time, not thirteen years, I promise you!

In 1980, Iron Maiden made a big splash with their attitude-ridden hard rock that meshed power and melody along with fan-pleasing, hard-hitting live shows. Flash forward some 30 years, and it seems like Fury UK could be picking up the baton for British heavy metal - and running fast!

Having their song voted a 'Future Classic' by listeners of Rock Radio and playing a multitude of festivals, the band recently released their second album 'VR' on Rocksector Records. Founder/singer/guitarist Chris Appleton lists the likes of Dio, Rush, Dream Theater, Glenn Hughes, Tony Iommi, Iron Maiden and Joe Lynn Turner amongst his influences - a really interesting mix. Bruce Mee thought it was about time we found out a little more...

Can you tell us how the band came together?

I started the band when I was in my early teens. It wasn't called Fury UK then but it was the beginning of this band. It evolved with various line-up changes until it became more serious from around 2004/5.

What pre-empted the line-up changes after your debut album 'Face of Adversity'?

A combination of musical differences and opposing levels of ambition. My taste is a bit heavier than what the other guys wanted to do and they weren't as serious as I am about the band. I had pretty much by this point decided that my whole life was gonna be dedicated to music and the band. It came to a head which it perhaps should have done a little earlier but we were all friends and there was a loyalty and attachment at the time. However, like often happens with these things the change was very much for the best and everyone felt better afterwards.

You list quite a varied list of bands as influences. Myself, I hear a lot of early Iron Maiden - more the Dianno era, especially in the guitar melodies, and also vocally there's a hint of Udo Dirkschneider from Accept. Where do you see yourselves within the UK metal scene?

We enjoy making music which doesn't follow any particular trend and we stand or fall by that. Classic or traditional metal has seen a rise again recently in any case so I think we benefit from that but in honesty that's good fortune, not good planning. We like to think our stuff has a modern side to it also but whether that comes through fully I'm not too sure. We're happy to be

When that one is ready, let me know, because I'll happily interview you again. I've loved this, it's been great!

(Laughs) No problem man - I'll be in touch with my address so you can send me that show. I've never heard that - is it better than the live album?

Er, on a par I'd say. It's a good show, good set list... I know on 'What You Hear Is What You Get' it says on the sleeve it's absolutely live, and considering this bootleg didn't have Mick and was basically you, Simon and hired hands, it shows you were still a good band and that you can sing live, without having to go in the studio and clean everything up like most bands with 'live' albums do.

Well let me dispell that rumour - on the 'What You Hear Is What You Get', that was a Simon Kirke

seen as British metal but mainly I think our music is recognisable as Fury UK and that's a good thing!

You also list Rush and Dream Theater as influences - are there prog fans in the band then? I don't hear so much of those influences - is this something you'd like to explore further in the future?

All 3 of us are into progressive stuff. I'm a long standing Rush fan, Dream Theater too - both these bands blew me away when I saw them live for the first time. Luke's very much into Dream Theater. Martin likes some things which are a bit more off the wall such as Primus. I agree that these influences aren't obvious in the songs. I think they'll come through more in future but not in a big way.

You've played a lot of UK festivals over the past two years: Bloodstock, Hellfire Fest, Bulldog Bash, Rock of Ages etc How do you go down with the crowds there?

We've been really happy with the response at these shows. At Bloodstock and Hellfire especially we reached people who hadn't been ever aware of the band before and I think it opened their eyes. That felt good and we hope for more of the same in future although hopefully there'll be more of the Fury UK faithful at future shows simply because the fanbase has improved a lot in the past 6/9 months. On our recent tour with Michael Schenker it was brilliant to see quite a lot of our T-shirts out there in the audience but we definitely made more new friends around the country on that tour too. We're growing steadily and it's all good. We put on an energetic show, we're a live band first and foremost and I'm sure that helps win over the audiences.

And now you're getting ready for Hammerfest II on March 13th. Any special plans for this event?

We expect to put 1 or 2 new songs in the set, hopefully that'll go down well. Overall, really looking forward to it, especially Luke who's a big Iced Earth fan. I'm also looking forward to seeing Tony Martin on the Friday - I'm a Black Sabbath fanatic!

How was the reaction to the new album 'VR'?

Pretty much everything we might have wanted. The reviews have been really good and people have understood what we're about more than ever before. 'VR' really shows what we're about and points well to what the future will bring. The album was well-packaged too with the cover art from

Mark Wilkinson - he's done Judas Priest, Marillion and many more. The fantastic response to the album overall from fans has been humbling at times and we've seen more interest again in our previous recordings which for some reason we hadn't thought about or expected. We had a great response in Greece and Switzerland also which we loved, and can't wait to go back there.

Although it's only been 6 months since the release 'VR', does the band have a grand plan for the coming few years? Has the next album been discussed yet, or even some new songs written? If so, what style are we looking at - continuing the theme or exploring some of those more eclectic influences?

Writing for the next album has started, bearing in mind it's a year since 'VR' was recorded and obviously even longer since it was written. We're excited about the new stuff which is so far sounding a little heavier... still classic, maybe a little more thrashy and you'll

production. He lied through his teeth. It was completely retouched. Everything was retouched, apart from my lead vocal. If you listen to the background vocals, it's all Simon Kirke. There's a lot redone on there, backing vocals, bass... I think the only thing that wasn't redone was my vocal, for the simple fact the record was done without my knowledge.

Oh, I see. It stands you in good stead though, you still sound good on it though.

Thanks - yeah, the lead vocal is live, that much is true, but not the rest of it, no, it was retouched.

So on the sleeve notes, underneath where it says 'This is a true live recording' then, I'll just write 'bollocks'.

(Laughs) Yes, it really is bollocks!

probably be able to spot those prog influences a bit more here and there. The theme will be different but as songwriting goes the music and lyrics will focus on aggression, dark sides, the insanity of politics, gang warfare. That dark side of life is there in our writing but we're not all doom and gloom - we still aim to make sure the crowd enjoys the live shows and a connection with the crowd is important. We hope to be able to release the new album in the late Summer/Autumn. Other than that the plan's quite simple - world domination! But seriously, we just want to carry on making the best music we can, continue attracting fans, playing bigger and better venues, playing more international dates. Most of all it's about doing things the best we possibly can - song-writing and live performances. We're currently living and breathing Fury UK - no day-jobs, we're living the life we choose and if we continue doing everything as best as we possibly can then we have a chance of surviving long term.

