

# BRIDGE TO MARS

Interview by James Gaden

*A new power trio hailing from Sweden, Bridge To Mars play 70s inspired Classic Rock and are led by JJ Marsh, best known for his ten year stint as songwriting partner and lead guitarist for none other than 'The Voice Of Rock', Glenn Hughes. Amicably parting ways with Hughes in 2005, Marsh issued a solo album which saw him attempt lead vocals for the first time. It's a role he's grown into, and Fireworks caught up with the frontman for this interesting new group...*

A natural starting point for the interview was to mention to Marsh that I have seen him live with both Glenn Hughes and the Hughes Turner project.

"I was speaking to Glenn only last night," he reveals. "It was so nice of him to send out a Tweet about our new record, that was really big of him."

The two obviously have a strong friendship, so I inquire how it actually started.

"Wow man, that's a long story," JJ murmurs. "Back in 1995, one of my friends was getting married. Glenn was spending a lot of time in Sweden during 1994, playing with the guys from Europe, and I had a friend who was a weather reporter. He convinced his bosses to allow him to interview Rock stars, he interviewed Robert Plant, Coverdale, Gillan, all those guys. Glenn was in Sweden a lot because he had a Swedish girlfriend, so to cut the story short, when my friend was getting married he asked Glenn to be his best man. Of course I had always been a fan of Glenn from Deep Purple, and I had a plan. I asked to be put across from Glenn during the dinner and we asked him if he'd join my band on stage to play a Purple track. I told him we had also rehearsed some Trapeze stuff, and that really caught his interest. We did that and I did something clever, I had some Deep Purple bootleg records, and there was a thing he did with Tommy Bolin which never made any record, it was just something they did live, it was this bass riff and he used to sing 'Dance, to the rock and roll' over it. So we did that and he was really impressed. So the next day he asked me if I wrote music. I said sure, that was my life, and I sent him a couple of demos. Three days later, he had written lyrics to them all! And we did nine albums together."

And after a decade of working together, Marsh issued his solo album 'Music From Planet Marsh' in 2005, which saw him become a lead singer.

"Yeah, and Glenn offered to sing on it for me, which was really nice of him, but I needed to do that myself. I wasn't really a good singer then, I'm much better now I think."

One of the most surprising elements about Marsh's vocals are the high notes and screams which are very reminiscent of Hughes.

"I learned from the masters," he says. "My vocal cords have some similarities to Glenn, he and I have a very strong soul connection. It goes beyond working together, it's stronger than that. We have the same kind of voice, where we are kind of baritone and tenor, like Michael Jackson was. That's just one aspect, there is much more to it. It's quite interesting actually how that's developed because I always just played guitar, but I always felt I could sing pretty high stuff. So I just went for it. We couldn't find a singer for Bridge To Mars - Joey Tempest and Goran Edman were busy," he laughs. "And we didn't want to do that anyway, for a lot of

reasons. I always had a feeling I could sing, so I went for it and it turned out pretty good. Glenn asked if it was actually me and yes, it's all me. So Glenn said 'Well you have my vote,' and that just made my day. I'm not saying I'm like Glenn, but there is a little sound of him there. We have the same references when it comes to music and also we have some similar sounds on the screams and the high stuff."

Choosing to step up yourself because you can't find anyone suitable is brave, so I ask if Marsh got a kick out of the results.

"I wanted to do it because I'd been listening to Chris Robinson for the last few years and I started to enjoy singing. I couldn't find a Glenn Hughes or a Chris Robinson in Sweden, it's a small country!" he laughs. "The thing is, Thomas Broman and I, when we stopped working with Glenn, we didn't know what we

were going to do next. I have so much music in my head all the time, it just keeps coming out, so I needed to do something. I called Broman and asked him to work, we didn't have a bass player because Glenn wasn't around, so I said 'Let's be like Eddie and Alex Van Halen' and he played drums to my guitar. We were just bashing out ideas. That was three years ago. Eventually, we found our bass player Robert, and that was the start of Bridge To Mars. I was tired of waiting around. We started without any big plans, we just wanted to play."

Bridge To Mars has a 70s sound, clearly influenced by Led Zeppelin, but with a more modern production.

"It's quite interesting, our heroes are from the 70s," Marsh explains, "but our sound is more modern. We're not retro, you can't do it like 1972 unless you use all the equipment from 1972. I don't know anything about that side, I'm just a guitar player and singer. But making a record these days is hugely different to how you would do it in 1972 with all the technology. Maybe if you went to Abbey Road they

would have a room and equipment all from the 70s and you could get that actual sound, but I'm not interested in that. I want to take the 70s feel, but mix it with a modern sound. We did the drums, bass and guitar together and then I would overdub some guitar bits, and then I sang at the end. I sang some stuff when Broman was putting the drums down so he knew where he was, because he's a drummer, you know?" he laughs. "But yes, it was quite a band thing. The writing comes from me, but then we arrange it together. I'll bring the ideas to the table and when I do that, the guys will take my riff and Broman will say 'Man, let's do this!' and come in with the drums and then I'll feel it."

The impression I'm getting is this is a full time thing, not a project.

"That's exactly what it is, we are a band," Marsh says definitively. "Yes, we have a retro style but it's not like Rival Sons, we have little bits of The Beatles, little bits of ABBA, things that you don't hear in Rival Sons music. I think we can fill a gap in the market!"

