

CATS 'N' CLAWS

by Nicky Baldrian

One lady who certainly should need no introduction to rock fans is the delightfully charming and talented **ROBIN BECK**. Her debut album 'Trouble or Nothing' is still my all-time favourite female fronted rock album – an absolute gem of a release fielding hit after hit of the most amazing commercial melodic rock. Robin strayed from the hard rock arena in the years after that monumental release, but with her last two albums, 'Do You Miss Me' and 'Livin' On a Dream', she has stormed right back to the top. This issue's Cats n' Claws cover CD sees a brand new, unreleased track from Robin, and with a 20th anniversary re-recording and release of 'Trouble or Nothing' this coming November, there was quite a bit to catch up on. Bruce Mee asks the questions...



ROBIN BECK

So, Robin, a year on from 'Livin' on a Dream', how do you view the past 12 months in terms of accomplishments and maybe some disappointments?

'I see it as a successful year. I developed new relationships with writers, and there are now more people aware of my return. I feel blessed to have worked with so many talented people like, Tommy Denander, Jeff Kent and all the boys from House of Lords. I can't sit here and complain or even mention disappointments, because once the record was made it was out of my hands. The feedback for 'Livin' On A Dream' was very positive. No disappointments to claim ... okay, maybe the artwork [laughs].'

On the back of 'Do You Miss Me', 'Livin' on a Dream' certainly cemented your return to the rock fraternity. Did YOU miss THEM? And do you find a difference between fans of your poppier side, and fans of your rock albums?

'Good question!! I did miss them!! But I really don't know where to draw the line between the poppier side of me and the rock side. Let me say that no one has ever said anything to make me go one way or the other. I'm a rock singer who loves all kinds of music. It's a curse to want it all, isn't it? 'Livin' On A Dream' was totally Rock, and the fans that I know who bought my other records were there to pick up the new one too.'

I guess the big news is the re-recording and release of a 20th Anniversary version of your classic debut 'Trouble or Nothing'. Can you tell us the story behind this fantastic decision?

'I have to laugh because I've been counting the years till I would be able to re-release this album. That's the core of the story. This was the best album I had ever had released by a label and the label didn't keep it alive all these years - the fans kept it alive. So I do this for them. They've been asking for this for a long time. Well, now is the time.'

And the 4 additional songs that will be included, written by yourself. From what period do these come from, and will the style fit in with the rest of the album?

'All the new songs are written by me and my writing partners. These are all recent songs and I think that they fit in beautifully with the rest. I want the fans to ultimately decide. After all... they know what they like.'

Tell us about this new song we've got on the Fire-works 'Cats n' Claws' CD this issue.

'Ahhh... 'Tearin' Down The Walls' This song was co-written by a really good friend of mine, Anne Olsen. It has a ton of energy and I love this kind of music. Good story, great melody and slammin' production by James Christian.'

So, obviously you'll be busy for most of 2008, but what are your plans for 2009? Will we see an album or new original material sometime soon? And any live dates?

'I am already writing the new CD for 2009. 12 new songs and it's gonna rock out. Great melodies, strong words, and of course James and the boys from House of Lords along with Tommy Denander will all contribute. As I always said, I am one lucky girl! Once again we are talking about a tour of Europe next summer. I'm looking forward to it. I have started my own label, MMG, which stands for Majesty Music Group, and the first release from MMG will be 'Trouble Or Nothing', all newly recorded and produced by James Christian. There will be totally new artwork and photos never before seen. There are also 4 new songs and there will most likely be some other surprises... but I'm still working on that so I'll have to take a rain check and get back to you with more news later. In the mean time I'd like to invite everyone to visit my website www.robinbeckrocks.com to get more information about new releases and sign up for my news letter to be kept informed. By the way, my new CD of 'Trouble or Nothing' can be pre-ordered at www.robinbeckrocks.com right now.'

So, what you all waiting for? Get over there now and order the album – and if you haven't picked up her last two releases, then I thoroughly recommend those too. How can such looks, talent and voice all come in such an adorable petite package?



HEAVE

There is definitely something in the water over in Sweden. Whatever style of music within the rock and metal spectrum you enjoy you are bound to find a quality band waiting to burst out of the country. One such band is **HEAVE**, a female fronted heavy rock band inspired by Priest, Metallica, Kiss and Sabbath. The band got together in 1994 and their new album 'Final Day' is their first with new female leading lady Anasoux.

'Everyone loves the album. The more you listen the better it gets. Our listeners are of all ages and even people who usually don't listen to metal like it,' explains drummer Patrik Nikolic. 'We have only sent the CD to two radio stations. The commercial station 'Rockklassiker' liked it so much that they played it on their morning show and gave it good reviews. They seldom do that to unsigned bands.'

'Final Day' took three weeks to construct, the songs had been worked on in the live shows for a long time and they were ready to just get in the studio and record. 'It was recorded during 2007 with Mike Wead as producer. Most of it was recorded in our own studio, but the guitars were recorded in Mike's studio with his special attention to the guitar sound.'

Patrik loves playing live. 'When the venue is a rock club it is always a good head-banging atmosphere. Although the lyrics are a bit dark the audience grins and jumps around. We want to have more live shows. We also have lots of new songs that we already tested at some shows. With help from TSM we hope to reach more people who have a great love for heavy metal and play the UK soon.' Check Heave out at www.heave.nu and www.myspace.com/heavemetal

'Love And War' is the new CD from Canadian band **SONIC ORCHID**. The band have released the album themselves and its rich and complex in style, perhaps even progressive in parts as songs like 'Anyone Can Be' and 'Selling Smoke' prove whilst other songs like 'Hold On' come across like Lana Lane with a more commercial edge and perfect for radio. The star of the show is singer Chris-



tina Gasparic who offers a varied vocal performance. The bands music can be described as a mix of Spock's Beard and Rush mixed with a folk and new age influences. Brad Evanochko on guitar/vocals, C.J. Cook on bass and Grant Frew on drums/vocals join Christina to complete the lineup.

Christina started in the music biz very young in an all-family band and played her first gig at eight years of age at a folk festival. She is personally inspired by God. 'I do believe in a higher power,' she says. 'We are all spiritual energies who live on this earth for a purpose and to learn from our mistakes in order to live peacefully on the Other Side. I try to balance the three-wellness energies: mind, body, and spirit and combine them with my music.'

The lyrical approach to the album showcases a very personal theme for Christina. 'Where you are exposing your deepest thoughts, emotions and personal situations you become quite venerable. The songs are about life and its situations. I write as I would in a journal, reliving past experiences, both positive and negative, and I write about other people's struggles and accomplishments. Loss of love, gaining love, addiction, obsession and war are a few of the themes in these songs. The listeners can take each song and relate the themes to their own lives, by either reminiscing or making them aware of their present situation,' she explains.

The band have had an overwhelming response to the CD and radio stations have been playing the CD which took eight months to make at Touchwood Studios in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Her brother, Radoslav Gasparic, produced and engineered the CD, with engineering assistance by Grant Hall, who owns the studio. 'Radoslav is an amazing talent who can play any instrument, sing like a bird and mix music beautifully,' enthuses Christina.

The songs are composed by guitarists Brad and Christian, and the latter goes on to explain about the band's shows. 'People love our live shows. We are very energetic, passionate, easy on the eyes and include audience participation. I want to make it fun for both my band and the audiences by having them sing along and show much emotion while performing the songs. I also like to tell jokes and act goofy when I get really giddy,' he smiles.

The band continues to promote the CD and hope to secure a deal to enable them to play here in the UK and Europe as well as plans for another CD. Check them out at www.myspace.com/sonicorchid & www.sonicorchid.com



SOPHIA MARIE

If you're looking for a rocking lady then look no further than Australia's **SOPHIA MARIE** who has put out a rather good CD called 'Twisted', which is ideal for those who enjoy such female bands as Vixen, Saraya, Private Life etc.

It all started for Sophia when she conquered a fear of heights on an indoor rock climbing trip. This was 2006 and this event led Sophia to tackle other areas of her life that she has been to afraid to pursue; music was one of them and she hasn't looked back since. She loves Metallica as a basis of her musical inspiration and has finally released her CD. It's not to say that the making of the CD didn't show its little problems where Sophia didn't see eye to eye with her producer. To make the album Sophia sold her house to invest in the project and through the producer lost all her money and was left with nothing. So

she worked hard scraping the cash together from crappy jobs to finish the project which now comes as a relief to her. 'The songs themselves are a mix of the naughtier side of my personality,' she giggles. The songs also reflect times of her life when her heart was broken. 'These two themes were coming to life, my husband saw a possible story line that we could use to thread the album together,' explains Sophia. 'That then made me write songs to fill in the gaps of the story he had in mind to make this a concept album.'

Sophia has had a good response to the record. 'I have had so many people tell me that they've missed hearing good rock music and that they love my songs and my voice. It has been what has kept me going when things have gotten tough,' she says. 'Twisted' was recorded at Soundbaker Studios in Perth, Western Australia. 'My drummer went back into the studios at Soundbaker and re-recorded his parts and the rest was then overlaid and polished up,' she adds.

She is very happy with the way everything is moving forward and she wants to continue to build up the support around Sydney by playing live. To make this happen she has had to become a promoter and network with other bands to put band line ups together. 'The next goal is to get on tour around Australia to promote the album. After that, I'd like to tour as many countries as I can. The UK included!'

Check Sophia out, we reckon she's great. www.myspace.com/sophiamariesmusic



New York's **JOY ADLER** recently released an album called 'Postcards'. It's a good, catchy pop/rock album varied in style with stunning vocals from Joy, whose voice is natural thanks to her performing from an early age in Gospel music at church. 'I could be singing and feel so high,' she tells me. 'To this day, I need nothing artificial in my system to feel that natural high that music fills me with. Hopefully I transmit that sense of spiritual ecstasy to the audience.' And she does, which makes 'Postcards' such a beautiful record with rich songs like the title track and the almost jazz fusion gospel-tinted 'Shine'.

Joy loves performing live. 'That sense of orgasmic deliverance and unity with the divine again and again is surreal,' she states. 'Rock and spirit...the real 'ecstasy'. And to get feedback from the audience that they felt the love, that they felt connection, makes it all worthwhile. To see tears of joy streaming down their cheeks, watching them rock out, that's the ultimate. I feel like my life has purpose in those moments, like my path and all my struggles have not been in vain.'

Originally Joy wanted to be a pianist but instead developed her voice. She practised everyday, developing her vocal skills but it took some years for her to nail the notes and it wasn't until she was eighteen that she joined her first rock band. Joy is influenced by everyone from Robert Plant and Steve Perry to Otis Redding and Janis Joplin. 'I always say 'If I can feel it, I can sing it' she adds. 'Being a writer, it was a natural progression to write my own songs to that end, and vibe with other creative people to write original music.'

Joy's career began taking off when other women began supporting her own vision and music. 'The Foundation For Global Humanity in CA' whose director, Connie Cummings has produced all of my efforts, as well as 'The Rebellious Dreamer Foundation' from Michigan, which is funded by women to support talented women whose dreams were deferred by poverty. I have also been graced to be part of the 'Mamapalooza' tour and 'Rockin Moms,' she says with pride.

On her new album 'Postcards', Joy explains, 'This album has been in the making for eight years. I needed to live my life and write from a meticulously honest place about the things that brought me my greatest lessons.' Joy also needed to find the right musicians and producers from NYC to work with. 'I am so happy I did that. Already three of the songs have won awards and it is being played on a lot of indie, rock and pod casts and an upcoming

movie.'

Joy also ventured out of the US and toured Ireland in the summer of 2007. 'I checked out many of the artists that I admire, their websites and schedules. I noticed they perform all over Europe! So that's where they all went! To the lands that appreciate people that actually play real instruments and write their own music. What a relief! Seriously, have you looked at the recent Billboard charts over here? What the...?' she laughs.

On her CD 'Postcards' Joy has attempted to write a 'rock epic' tune called 'Prayer' which you can check out on our cover mounted CD. 'It's getting a lot of airplay because of people 'feeling' something as we perform it. Truthfully, I just love Led Zepplin so I created a lot of space in the chorus for the screaming guitar and drums to unite and carry my angst up to the mountaintop so to speak. Also I really stretch on this CD and it's very diverse, funky, jazzy rhythms, power ballads. It's old school with a 'new age Latin American Rock' twist,' she concludes.

'Postcards' is a fantastic album. Check Joy out at www.myspace.com/joyadler and www.joyadler.com



SONJA PERNEDA arrives from Austria and has a totally awesome vocal range that is somewhere in the style of Tarja Turunen crossed with Sheena Easton and Sabine Edelsbacher from Edenbridge. The music she has created is operatic with a folky, new age mystical, Egyptian edge. Sonja is also a very beautiful woman so I caught up with her to find out more about her superb music.

Music has always been a huge part of Sonja's life. 'There is nothing like an amazing tune that touches your soul,' she tells me. It all started when she was about eleven years old. 'I discovered that I had a vocal ability distinguishing myself from other singers around me and I started to train my voice classically.' Later in her teens she performed her first gig. 'The audience loved what they heard which surprised my family and this was the start of our family business in music!'

Sonja is inspired from all parts of life. 'From people I meet, from stories I hear, from news I read. The nature in all its fascination and beauty never stops to give me stunning impressions for my song lyrics. It's similar with my musical inspiration - I'm very open to any kind of music, from all parts of the world. Turkish folklore can be found in my songs as well as Spanish guitars or Classic Rock elements. Every song of mine is kind of a unique piece of art, and I try to give it what it needs to carry emotions and tell a story.'

She is finally happy to deliver her songs out to the public via the MySpace medium, even though the album is not yet fully complete. 'After all the time and hard work constructing them I wanted my fans to hear something. 'Yes, I'm a perfectionist,' she smiles. 'My new songs cover quite a variety of styles.' She explains about some of the songs. 'Silent Screams' for example is very rock-driven and melodious, with rather operatic vocals. The story behind is a feeling of great loss, but still you are pretending to be alright in public, not allowing anyone to take a look behind the mask. But in the darkness of the lonely night, you cannot deny the Silent Screams of your heart anymore...'

'Angel of Turkey (Türk melegi)' is a fusion of oriental and occidental music and language. It's my personal love song to the country and people of Turkey. I have fallen in love with this land many years ago, with its cultural richness, natural beauty and warm-hearted people.

'Voice of Peace' is kind of an orchestral ballad, dedicated to peace. I believe that there is nothing like music when you want to tear down walls between people of different nations and cultures. When we take a look at the world nowadays, peace is what it needs the most, through mutual respect and tolerance instead of prejudices and blind hate. That's what 'Voice of Peace' is calling for. It's also the official song and maxim of the Non-Profit-Organisation 'Voice of Peace' that I am honoured to represent.

'Time has come' is again very rock-influenced. The lyrics reflect my school time and the long way from being

an outsider, mobbed by the majority, to a self-confident person who doesn't depend on other peoples' approval anymore.

Sonja is humbled by the response, especially in Austria. 'As an artist, you are always worried whether your audience digs your songs as much as you do. In that case, there was no reason to worry. People from all parts of the world gave me positive reaction, stating that my sound is unique'

Sonja is currently recording the CD. 'I prefer to take my time to collect great song material, to write meaningful lyrics for the songs and record them properly. Since I'm also in the final of my University studies - I study Law in Vienna - I have to split myself constantly between learning, recording and performing. Oh well, who needs sleep at all? The album 'Voice of Peace' should be out in winter 2008. I'm primarily a vocalist and lyricist, occasionally dropping a good tune. So I usually work like that: I receive the final backing track from the composer and then do the voice and chorus recordings in my own studio, finally do a nice mix and that's it. All the recordings have been done in 2007 and 2008.'

Sonja's passion though is in her live performances 'Playing live is the salt in my musical soup! The stage is the place where you get in contact with your fans, where you spread your messages, where you celebrate together with the audience. When I stand on stage, I give everything to my fans; I lay my heart and soul in front of them. And they notice that and lift me up. My current show 'Orient meets Occident' is a show where East meets West, a fusion of Oriental and Occidental music, language and dance. It had already led me through Middle Europe and the Middle East, through countries like Germany, Austria, Switzerland as well as Syria, Turkey, Egypt and the Kosovo. Designed as a One-Woman-Show, it allows me to be very flexible and yet pure, showing my entire vocal and dance abilities' she explains.

Sonja is currently finalising her duet with Omri Lahav a composer/singer from Israel, with stunning lyrics pleading for peace from Peace Nobel Prize winner and current president of Israel Mr. Shimon Peres. Then she will be releasing her new album and promoting it all over the world and touring as much as possible. I for one cannot wait to hear the album in full - it's going to be a big sounding record with cinematic themes and progressions. Check Sonja out at www.myspace.com/sonjaperendamusic



From Los Angeles comes **LORI STEELE** with her self titled CD. If you're into Alanis Morissette then you will enjoy Lori's music. It all started when a man bought a copy of Lori's live tape recording of a Patsy Cline song for \$10. That was the catalyst for her musical drive. She is a very spiritual lady; 'I have a lot of faith in God and am thankful for all the things that he has given me. Instead of letting circumstances ruin my life I have found a way to learn from them and I want to be able to share that with others,' explains Lori.

Her new EP is personal to her. 'Not only has it been a healing and cathartic journey for me, I wrote these songs while trying to decide what I should do with my marriage and the songs helped me make sense of pain, hurt and even realise what true joy is and what that feels like. The songs deal with real issues and offer hope. Writing helped me to realise that there was a way out of my situation.'

She has been getting a lot of good praise for her songs, especially as this is her first recorded work. 'I hear all the time how people from EMI have 'Walk Away' on their I-Pods. That people are voluntarily pitching my music to film and TV shows. It's been overwhelmingly wonderful. I'm blessed.'

Once Lori's divorce had gone through it took her three months to record the songs. 'I didn't realise that the arduous part was not so much recording, as it was the artwork, mastering and duplicating. That took a total of seven months to hammer out.'

Mike Geier at the Hidden Studio produced the EP in Hollywood. 'His input was tremendous and the first time I

heard a melody in my head and he played it on the spot I jumped around the studio like a little kid! I have been doing a lot of acoustic shows in New York City, and I would have to say that they are received pretty well because I keep having more people show up at the next gig which is cool.'

Lori is in the process of forming a full band and is looking forward to writing and recording a full CD and will continue to perform live promoting her music. Check her out at www.loristelemusic.com/



From Switzerland come **69 CHAMBERS**, a feisty hard hitting heavy rock band led by Nina Tremli. 'It never really was a dream of mine to become a musician,' explains Nina. 'I was sixteen and a classmate who played guitar in a girl band asked me if I wanted to join. I was crazy enough to say 'sure'. I bought myself a cheap bass and taught myself to 'play'. The band was awful,' she laughs, 'and I'm sure so was my bass playing, but we had some kind of success around our hometown Zurich - I guess mainly because girl bands were in fashion at the time.'

When the band split up Nina was writing her own songs and singing. 'I soon switched from bass to guitar because it's a whole lot easier to write songs with six than with four strings. I first started our band with two guys. Not that I didn't wanna make music with girls but it simply seemed easier to find male musicians for a new project.'

Nina grew up in Korea and Singapore and was inspired by bands like The Black Crowes and Soundgarden, which you can hear clearly in the band's album. It's heavy, modern but with a melodic crunch to the groove.

'I came across metal/alternative rock music pretty late. I love to listen to metal and alternative rock, from Slayer and Pantera to Gojira, Perfect Circle, Nine Inch Nails, Deftones to Bolt Thrower. But, and this might sound strange, I also like to be inspired by contemporary pop songs played on MTV, by Tori Amos or older stuff like Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix. I just like to combine elements that don't seem to fit together. I never had a role model or a favourite band but I guess you can hear a mixture of my music taste. It's merely possible to reinvent music anyway, so I just try to do my thing. I never saw myself as a real musician, as a guitar player or a singer. It's more like I'm someone who enjoys turning thoughts and emotions into music. In this, I guess it's the dark, sinister, more melancholic side of life that gives me inspiration.'

I ask Nina to tell me about the new CD. 'I managed to get a lot of things out of my system. It's like a whole cycle came to an end and I can find peace in my mind because they're finally on CD and not just in my head any more. I feel pretty relieved and happy. The songs have a whole lot to do with the last couple of years in my life. Of course, failure in love is always a good topic to write about. But what probably inspired my even more was my trip to the US two years ago. I quit my job in Switzerland, sold my car, gave up my apartment and left for California with practically no money on the side. Not that I was naive enough to believe I could become a star. It's a whole lot more complicated than that. Here in Switzerland people are wealthy and most of all they have everything to lose so they don't take risks. They play safe, music is a hobby and when they write melancholic songs they sound rather superficial. Not that I wanted to suffer, but I wanted to go out there and experience something different, something real. I played almost every open mic show I could play, hooked up with a lot of great musicians and learned a lot.'

She found it hard going financially. 'It was a disaster, and after half a year my visa ran out so I came back. But to me, it wasn't a failure; it was a great experience. And a lot of it flowed into my song writing - in fact, the ideas for most of the songs on the album came from there and the experience that came along. It was essential for my music and me.'

The band is currently looking for a deal. 'Our manager is negotiating with labels in Germany but it takes a lot of

time to decide who will bring out the CD and under what conditions. It takes so much patience it's almost killing me but I'm optimistic the album will come out late fall this year. By that, we haven't had a whole lot of response yet. So far, most of the people we showed the CD have liked it a lot. But of course, some hate it. Though I must say: it's good to polarise, to have people love or hate it, and worse if they only think its okay.'

The CD was recorded at New Sound Studio in Pfäffikon, Switzerland during August/ September last year. 'Our producer was Tommy Vetterli. He used to play guitar and also produced albums for metal bands like Coroner and Kreator. It was great working with him; we somehow had the same idea of what we wanted the album to sound like so we never really had any arguments. We didn't want it too commercial or too clean and perfect but rather heavy, sinister and somewhat dirty with a lot of different sounds and contradictions in it. I'd actually say I had the time of my life in the studio - two months of not working but concentrating only on music, that was great.'

Right now Nina is patient whilst they shop the CD. 'This summer we won't be doing too many shows but as of fall we have some options in Switzerland and Germany. We will also have our record released around that time and we're hoping to make a big deal of it. Most of all, we're hoping to support a tour in Europe to get around some more and promote our music.'

Check the band out at www.myspace.com/69chambers and www.69chambers.com



Sexy, moody and rocking best describes the excellent **AMPHETAME** who come out of California. 'Truth In Lies' is the band's debut CD and it is superb. Singer Dani Raushi has a fantastic vocal style reminiscent of Gwen Stefani. 'When I was a little girl I would rock out to Led Zeppelin. I have always felt how strong and vulnerable his voice and the band is. So emotional for me! I use to sing a lot of Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston back in the day.'

'Truth In Lies' is a story that I think anyone can follow' she continues. 'My heartache with running away at 16, struggling but always coming out on top because I worked hard and kept smiling. It's about love and loss in relationships and being independent. I am very proud of my 'self therapy', she giggles.

She is happy with the media support for 'Truth In Lies'. 'It is always great to hear someone read me back my own lyrics and tell me how it has effected them. Plus, the live shows have been great fun and full of love from the audience. I am a happy woman when I am on stage!'

The CD was demoed in Australia even though Dani lives in LA. 'From the demos to the actual album production and mixing and mastering was about 2 years. My album was recorded at Velvet Buddha in North Hollywood and produced by Mark Renk.'

Dani wrote half the album 'and co-wrote on the other half. I play guitar only for writing. Not for the shows on the album. I let the pros do that!'

Dani lives in the fast lane and is always a joy to chat with, her energy bounces back into the live performance 'Maybe I am just crazy! hah! My live shows show that! I love to move and dance!'

Amphetamine are currently putting a tour together and Dani is also currently writing with the guitarist from P.O.D, Marcos Curiel. 'He is an amazing song writer!' she beams.

Check Amphetamine out at www.myspace.com/amphetamine and www.amphetamine.com

Brighton's **ANEMO** began life in September 2002 when keyboard player Kingsley Sage was auditioning singers for a song writing and recording project. At the 11th hour a former actress and talented vocalist called Hazelle Woodhurst entered the picture. The two immediately got on well, with their shared love of different types of music and, of course, a good English cup of tea. The two set to work on penning a number of songs that would later become the basis of the Anemo's first album. They decided



that the project needed a rock edge, and to that end guitarist Matt Palmer was added to the mix.

'I have always been fortunate enough to be able to sing. In fact my great grandmother was an opera singer,' explains the gorgeous Hazelle, who then went on to study music at school. 'I think a lot of it though comes down to my dad, who was an amazing guitar player.' Hazelle listened to the likes of AC/DC, Henry Gross, Nazareth, The Stones, Boston and Zeppelin. 'Thanks to my dad bringing me up on the good stuff. I loved watching him play along with the guitar parts, or zone out with his headphones on, playing guitar late at night if he couldn't sleep. We wrote a few tunes together too and he accompanied me on stage at school performances a few times and on some early gigs, playing at the pubs. Music has always been a huge part of my family upbringing. I remember mum and dad picking me and Erika up when we were little and dancing round with us to AC/DC or something... it was fun.'

Over the years Hazelle has been in and out of bands. 'Finding people who are committed to what you are really trying to achieve is tough,' she explains. 'I think you get to an age where you think I don't want to compromise anymore and that's when - if you're lucky - things start to go right because you are being true to yourself.'

The bands new CD 'Stentorian' was written and recorded in a very different manner to our first album 'Slowburn,' explains Kingsley. 'For 'Slowburn' we were developing the band as a trio. With 'Stentorian' we did it the other way around, with many of the songs being played live long before they were recorded, That's given the songs a different edge. The new record sounds much more aggressive and edgy than the first, and sounds more like a band record than the layered song-writing that was the trademark of our debut album, and it took twelve months to complete the record.'

Anemo continue to play shows throughout the UK, which are received very well. 'The only nightmare we had recently was when the police towed our van en route to a gig leaving us at the side of the road with all our gear. They didn't believe we had insurance. We got to the show in London on time though,' laughs Hazelle.

The new single 'MusicBox' should be out by the time you read this along with the release of 'Stentorian'. 'We'll be playing some more live shows, the video will also be out. More sandwiches will be eaten on the side on the M1, but most of all, people will let us know that they are enjoying the new album,' laughs Kingsley.

Check Anemo out at www.anemo.co.uk and www.citycanyons.com and www.myspace.com/anemomusic

The lovely **MANDI JARRY** caught my attention next with her excellent catchy number called 'Girl Next Door'. Not only is this Australian lady totally gorgeous but she has a fabulous warm voice and this song by rights should be all over radio - her voice is in the vein of Belinda Carlisle and the song has a similar vibe - catchy pop/rock. Mandi's father is a professional singer and her mum a professional dancer. Both have performed around the world together as a duet and were one of Sydney's top acts for 30 years. So Mandi was always surrounded by entertainment. She started playing piano and then taught her self guitar before taking over to vocals.

The response to Mandi's music has been great, especially live. 'We always get a fantastic response,' she says.



'We are trying to push it more on radio to get it heard by more people now. Once this happens I think it will take off.' Indeed there is no reason why 'Girl Next Door', given the right promotion, could not be all over radio. The single (which has two different versions of the song on it) was recorded over the last year. She has recorded six more songs and is writing more for a full album which is being produced by Craig Portails (known for his work with Terence Trent D'Arby, Johnny Diezel, Shannon Noll etc..)

Mandi writes the bulk of her music with Ash Maklad. 'We hang out at his studio a lot and always come up with ideas when we are there. We wrote this single with another friend of ours, Angela Little.'

Next Mandi plans to take the band on an East Coast tour of Australia. 'I want to stop at every little pub and venue along the way. We'll be organising some gigs in Melbourne and Adelaide, which should be fun. But our main focus at the moment is to get rotation on the radio so we can back up the single with a killer album!'

Mandi is great and I can't wait for the album. Check her out at www.myspace.com/mandijarry



Another exciting band from Switzerland are goth/rock band **CELL DIVISION** led by the amazing Gelgia C. I adore this band and found their songs to be hugely inspirational and diverse. You must check out their new CD 'Chymeia'. I caught up with Gelgia to get the low down. 'When I saw a Christian Death metal band in a small Swiss club in the early 80's, I knew that I had to play in a band,' she says. 'We are influenced by nearly everything: The good, the bad and the ugly, dreams, nightmares, religion, politics, nature, the destruction of nature, murderers, saints, love, hate, ghosts, the outer space, art, boredom, boring people, propaganda, The Spaghetti Monster, menstruation, silverfish, athlete's foot, dröhnis, nosebleed, panic attacks, accidents, single malt whiskey and small flightless birds ... it all filters into our music,' she laughs.

Gelgia doesn't like to talk about the songs too much. 'To release a CD feels good but it is also frightening. It's like setting free a wacky teenage daughter. Anyway, the moment it feels best is when the song comes into mind the first time. When the CD is released it's already old and you are engaged again with new ideas. I don't like to talk about songs, it's something you have to listen to and judge for yourself.'

'Chymeia' has been getting great reviews. 'It's picking up. There are quite a few radio stations who are spinning our tunes.'

The CD was recorded at Tonwerk 132 Studio in Wetzikon Switzerland. 'This Studio is the playground of our drummer Dani who also produced the CD.'

The whole band write the songs. 'It's teamwork overall, but we have to admit that we have help from outside. In fact, it's an uncanny story. Sometimes when we come together we see little wormlike beings we call the 'dröhnis' (pronounced droehnees). They are blue and they fly, but they don't have any wings. I suppose they penetrate our brains through our eyes. Sometimes you see them, and then again you don't. Anyway when we're in the practice room with our instruments they make us play tunes or shout absurd words into the microphone. That's highly inspiring! But they are very shy and they don't come every time. Lately they have started visiting us at home. So we purchased home recording equipment. This way we can record the things they tell us and exchange them with the band. This way we are much more productive.'

The band continues to go out and support the album playing as many gigs as they can. 'We want to travel a bit more. There are upcoming concerts in Germany this autumn and also a little tour for next spring in Russia in the works.'

Cell Division are awesome. Check them out at www.myspace.com/celldivisionswitzerland and www.celldivision.ch

From New Jersey we welcome the excellent **INFERNOPHONIC** led by gorgeous leading lady Elaine Tuttle.

The band's new album is called simply 'Infernophonic' and mixes together many different elements whilst sticking to the roots of rock music.

Elaine is influenced by everyone from Janis Joplin to The Doors. 'My biggest influences though are Bob Marley, John Lennon and the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Phish ... and the Grateful Dead have also had a huge impact on me as an artist.'

Elaine's mum is Cuban and she was raised listening to some of the most influential Latin artists like Benny More. After studying classical piano Elaine was musically educated at Westminster Choir College (classical, choral music, opera, and voice performance). 'This afforded me the opportunity to perform at such prestigious, legendary venues as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Centre (NYC) under world-famous conductors like Leonard Bernstein, Robert Shaw, and Ricardo Muti. I have been performing and recording professionally as a vocalist for over 10 years. Those who have heard the album have been impressed with the music. Our individual performances as well as the tightness of the band as a whole, and the originality of our material, whether or not it's the kind of music they're into. And that brings up another question that we keep getting; what genre is Infernophonic? We believe that the difficulty to categorise our music as one type or another is a positive thing. To us, it means we sound like nothing else. We like that! The response to our live performances is always "WOW!" So we're really looking forward to going out and doing our thing live, away from home. Hopefully the CD will be enough of a success to get us touring and performing for audiences everywhere.'

Bassist and Infernophonic founder Kevin Bolembach writes most of the songs' basic riffs and structures while jamming with the band's former drummer. Elaine writes the lyrics and melodies based on Kevin's work and arranged some parts here and there. Guitarist Pat Piegari wrote the basic riffs and structures in a couple of tunes and wrote his own guitar parts. 'It is a team effort,' explains Elaine.



'It would be great to get signed by a kick-ass label who really dig what we're doing,' offers Elaine. 'We want someone to see us succeed so we can get our music heard by people who will love it. We'd love to tour, make videos and will soon get started on our next CD. Right now we're doing everything on our own, and although it's extremely hard work and ludicrously costly, we've been making waves and progress and it's an exciting albeit stressful process. We've had some awesome reviews in Guitar Player, Guitar World and Music Connection magazines. Of course we're honoured to be interviewed here, reviewed in your magazine and to have 'Say Whatcha Mean' on the newest Catz N Clawz compilation CD. With a decent record deal we can take it all to the next level and beyond.'

Check them out at www.myspace.com/tangtastesgood

JENEEN TERRANA comes out of New York. Her style is laid back and sometimes folkly but hugely satisfying. She has a fantastic voice that reminds me of a mix of Bonnie Riatt and Alanis Morissette and her laid back style is just wonderful to chill out with. I caught up with the lovely Jeneen to talk about her debut album 'My Creation'.

Jeneen has always loved music and signing. 'When I was young, my mom listened to Barbara Streisand, Linda Ronstadt, Barry Manilow, The Carpenters, Bread, Helen Reddy and Neil Diamond. Through the years and presently my inspirations include Dusty Springfield, Willie Nelson, Robert Plant, Damien Rice, Patty Griffin, K.D. Lang, Nick Cave, Fran Healy, Emmylou Harris, Joni Mitchell ... I could go on forever,' she laughs

Jeneen is finally relieved to have her new CD finally out. 'It's such a relief to put a new collection of songs out. This CD is about my journey in life over the past few years. A little heartache, a little love, a new beginning, a reflection on lost joy, creating new experiences'



'My Creation' has been met with a satisfying response. 'It's interesting to hear what people's favourites are, they're all different. It's a great reminder that our tastes are so wonderfully different.'

The album took about a year and three months to record. 'We started recording in October 2006 at Kaleidoscope Sound Studios in New Jersey. The actual recording took two days. We did all the tracks live & I added backup vocals later. Ben Hazard produced and mixed the CD and I think he really captured the energy and personality of the band.'

Jeneen wrote all the songs with the exception of the cover tracks. 'The band has a lot of creative freedom with the music. I give them the basic chord progression and they add their own style and ideas.'

Jeneen is currently planning a European tour and hoping to make a stop in the UK. 'I've never been in your neck of the woods Nicky. And of course I'm thinking about the next CD which I'm excited to start working on soon.'

Check out the fabulous Jeneen at www.myspace.com/jeneenterrana

Newcomer **LISE WOLDEN** is an amazing new talent from Norway. I discovered her on MySpace and was immediately blown away with the track 'Save Me', which you can hear on our cover CD. It's a great song, solid guitars and fantastic vocals up there with Annette from Nightwish.

Lise says she has always been singing. 'I sang in choirs, which taught me a lot about proper singing techniques and how to learn songs. Later I found that music is something that I have to have in my life. Music is, and always will be my passion. To be on a stage, connecting with an audience, or being in a studio recording gives me so much. I use a lot of energy but it gives back as well. Recently I have been doing backing vocals for Tony Mills' (TNT) new solo project.'

Lise is inspired by Pink Floyd's Roger Waters, Nuno Bettencourt, Queen's Freddie Mercury, Porcupine Tree's Steve Wilson and Love and Money's James Grant and is very happy to have new songs finally recorded. 'It feels great. I would like to work with different people. I love 'Save Me' which was written by a brilliant guitarist called Wegard Golebiowski and myself.'

The response to Lise's music has also been good, which enabled her to hook up with former Shy and current TNT frontman Tony Mills. 'People say to me they love the song and that it expresses something new, and although it is a Goth rock song there are many other elements to it also, and a truly beautiful guitar solo.'

Lise got to know Tony while he was touring with TNT in Norway. 'I sent him some tracks so he could hear how my singing voice sounded. Then when he needed a backing vocalist on his solo tour he asked me if I would be interested in doing that and of course I said yes. If you listen to the new album he's got out now called 'Vital Designs' I performed a lot of the backing vocals so it was a big job for me, challenging, but really good.'

Lise is currently recording more songs that will allow her voice to stretch and show a different side. 'I have a few people in mind with whom I'd like to write, but it's at the discussion stage at the moment.'

Lise is an excellent new talent; check her out at www.myspace.com/lisewolden



Italy's **THE SHIVER** have just put out their excellent new CD called 'Inside'. A fantastic melodic hard rock release with superb vocals from singer Fede. 'I started to love rock music at the age of 14,' recalls Fede. 'I listened to Metallica, Pantera, Ozzy and many more. I fell deeply in love with The Cure and Robert Smith, and from that moment I never left that side and that's when started to play and sing with bands and later, THE SHIVER was born. I secretly promised to do all that I can to strike the target. And I'm working hard to make it,' she explains.

The band has put many hours of work into these songs. 'They've been created over a couple of years, but after we had the tracks to include on the CD we wanted to make them stronger, so we changed some parts - we cut and re-arranged for some months before the recording session. The first track I've heard after the producer's work has been 'Edge of Atmosphere', the single, and I was so shocked that I had tears in my eyes. It was the result of all the work and it was beautiful,' she says with pride.

'People started to like our music and a lot of guys listen to our songs and wrote to us. This was so strange thinking that there are people all over who listen to my voice and feel the emotions that I tried to sing! The last places where we played were crowded and this is definitely a good sign! It's an encouragement, to realise how great we must make our next album to give to those people who have supported us.'



'Inside' took a whole month to record. 'The Studio was in Tuscany: the drum's recording took place somewhere in the Chianti's hills, instruments and vocal were recorded in Florence. We were staying in a small hostel in the central square, 5 minutes from the Studio. It was Christmas and by night, after the long working sessions, we used to go around in the streets...there was an incredible atmosphere!'

'Usually I write the songs. Finch, our drummer, also writes, but it's a really democratic thing: if the others want to propose some ideas they're welcome and I'm the first to ask their help if the song requires it. I hate those bully guys who trust they're the best in writing good songs, actually the track is the most important thing when we're composing, not the individual skills.'

Reports state that the band concerts are always explosive. 'We enjoy ourselves on stage. I always try to give the people emotions and excitement, and believe me it's a really hard job to enter into other people's minds. In my life I'm a thoughtful person, I don't like being the centre of attention. I like to be on my own and watch the outside, but on stage I feel like I'm exploding for the energy and I think that this is another visible thing. I could do anything to make the concert worth seeing.'

The Shiver are currently working on their next CD. 'It will be recorded the next winter. We'll be around in Europe this autumn, playing aloud in the best venues. After the next recording session there will be a tour but it's too early to talk about it.'

Check them out at www.myspace.com/theshiverband and www.theshiver.net

SANDRA LEE is from Switzerland and she rocks. Lee is influenced by everyone from Bonnie Tyler to Whitesnake and Def Leppard. Her new song is called 'Black Bastard' and it hits hard. The song was originally written for a German energy drink named 'Black Bastard' and the response has been great, especially on Sandra's myspace page.

The song was recorded at several studios in Switzerland and Germany earlier this year. 'It's co-produced by Jens-Peter Abele, a German producer, who also worked with Hermann Rarebell (ex-Scorpions) and Living Colour and Scott Leach (Crystal Ball),' explains Sandra. The track is also written by herself and Scott Leach from Crystal Ball.

Sandra's world is in the live field. 'The reactions were very enthusiastic. I'm definitely more into playing live,' and she continues to perform whenever she can. Sandra



is currently working on more songs for a complete album and also hopes to secure a record deal. Watch out for this feisty rocking lady in the future, it's fair to say there are not many rocking females like this in Europe these days. www.myspace.com/sandralee7 and www.sandralee.ch

Finnish metal titans **BATTLELORE** earlier this year played in our hometown of Swansea. I was there with my mate Dave Williams and I suggested that Dave put on his warpaint and armor and challenge the band to an interview, so with swords in the air it's over to Dave.

I love this band so it was cool of Nicky and Fireworks to let me do this. I start off by asking the band how they felt the gig went tonight at Sin City in Swansea.

'It was one my best gigs,' replies Jyri enthusiastically. 'Great atmosphere.'

'It was absolutely great,' chirps in Maria. 'The audience was awesome, we felt incredibly welcome and a sincere support from the people. A beautiful evening.'

'Usually we can't play long sets like in Swansea,' says Jyri. '45min-60 min average. It was great to play for as long as we wanted. First it felt like 'How am I going to make it through one and a half hours' but until then I didn't even notice it was already over,' he grins.

'And also we enjoyed the other bands, they were great and supportive,' adds Maria.

By the time you read this the band will be hard at work recording their next CD. I ask them what the theme of the album is going to be like. 'I think we will have a certain theme this time. A mixture of tales,' says Maria.

'I see the new album more like 'back to the roots' again,' adds Jyri. 'It's not going to be a concept album. Of course the Tolkien theme is there but not any continuous stories. It will still be epic, bombastic, a bit more of everything. And all the songs aren't as dark as on 'Evernight', so there's definitely the old spirit of things again.'

The great thing about Battlelore is that after a few years the songs take on a life of their own in the live field and are always exactly the same as they are on record. 'I think it gives more to the audience. It would be very easy and safe if we would use background tapes for extra vocals and keys, but in our case it would totally destroy the meaning of live playing,' explains Jyri.

This I agree with as for me the track 'Buccaneers', at the tempo they performed it, was for me better than the album. The band also hope to come back to the UK for more shows later in the year once the new album has been released.

As far song writing, Battlelore have long based their lyrics on Tolkien's work. I ask the band why.

'He was the first writer who really 'touched' me,' replies Jyri. 'I was totally amazed about his writings. After that all the other writers have been like a 'follower' of Tolkien's works for me. It was just like a very natural choice. I think that I didn't even question it in anyway, it just happened.'

'That's also an endless world of inspiration,' Adds Maria. 'An endless fountain. A whole world full of happenings and characters and personalities, millions of stories. You can pretty much do anything with a world like that. And since the tales have some connections to the Finnish folklore Kalevala, somehow the stories seem close to us.'

'Yeah, and that is what some of the people can't understand' interjects Jyri. 'They're like It is just a few books. How can you write many albums based on them? For me it is not that narrow-minded. Everything's not so obvious. Loads and loads of possibilities, that's what imagination feeds on and inspires.'

I explain to the band that I play a lot of role-playing games and the worlds are nowhere as rich. I think Mr Tolkien did that on purpose because in Britain we don't have a folklore as rich as in Finland, so he created one,

and in turn made an epic. 'There are many so many levels how to write. As you can see on 'Evernight', some people might say that it is not Tolkien based at all because I don't mention the names etc. There's just room for wider imagination. It doesn't have to be so clear and obvious all of the time.

We don't have to write about 'Frodo climbing up the Mount Doom'. Tolkien did that already. We can write about how the orcs felt while waiting for war, what happened to the forgotten wizards etc. As I said, endless possibilities to choose from.'

'For me 'Silmarillion' is the main book for inspiration,' adds Maria. 'Could there be a more beautiful tale than the making of a world by singing?'

Growing up Jyri was into black metal and took a lot of influences from bands like Bolt Thrower and the likes. 'It all goes in cycles,' he says. 'There are time periods with softer and moodier music and after that comes more brutal and heavier periods.' Maria loves classical music but also loves the classic rock stuff like GN'R, Metallica etc through to modern metal bands like Within Temptation and Theatre Of Tragedy.

Just as were getting comfortable in the conversation in walks singer Tomi Mykkanen. 'The good thing about us is that we are becoming a bigger band so there are labels that are interested in us, we don't necessarily need to sign the first deal that is offered. We may go back with Napalm, it depends what is offered. Nowadays it is very important to keep the merchandise rights to yourself because it is a growing business. CD sales are going down every year but people still buys the t-shirts and stuff a lot.'

Tomi joined the band as he wanted 'totour Europe and be in a rock band' and he's achieved his dream. On the new upcoming CD Tomi's vocals will be a lot cleaner. 'It's easier physically to sing clean than growl,' he laughs. 'I think I'm able to overcome the terror of singing clean and not doing it perfectly so I think it's about time to add them on the album.'

'You have the voice,' pipes Jyri. 'You just have to 'master' it and now is the time.'

'I will be taking some lessons before we go into the studio to be able to breathe correctly' continues Tomi. 'Which should also help in the growling too,' he laughs.

'Let me see my calendar,' interrupts Jyri. 'Tomi. We decided with the band that you'll have 4 hours and 27 minutes for your vocal recordings booked for the new album, I'm sure you'll manage with that,' he laughs.

With that I wish the band well for the future. Battlelore are a great band, live and on record, if you get the chance go see them and check them out at www.myspace.com/battleloremusic and www.battlelore.net



NICKY BALDRIAN PLAYLIST

1. **Journey** - Revelations
2. **Motley Crue** - Saints Of Los Angels
3. **Keldian** - Journey of the Souls
4. **Sylvan** - Leaning Backstage
5. **Midnite Club** - Circus Of Life
6. **Addison Road** - ST (thanks Coco)
7. **Michael Vescera** - A Sign of Things to Come
8. **Whitesnake** - Good To Be Bad
9. **Guillemots** - Red
10. **Dark Sky** - Empty Faces