

>> How to record heavy metal numbers and enjoy it<<

We could not have missed the first gig Angel Witch played in Poland in their 39 years history. Armed with a list of questions and appropriate passes we entered the ŁódźMagnetofon backstage, where two forthcoming Englishmen waited: Kevin Heybourne (K) and Will Palmer (W).

You were one of the precursors of NWOBHM, but you did not managed to live on it. Was this the reason for the split of your first line-up? Or maybe the termination of the contract with EMI had something to do with it?

K: EMI contract went down the drain even before the first album came out. It was difficult to play the tours and make a living. Later, we started to fall behind the other bands from NWOBHM. There were some personal issues as well - with my divorce in particular. You know how it is... divorce, work, it all makes record companies stop believing in you and prefer to invest in other bands. Let alone that it was my ex-wife who got us into the label.

In the past, record labels were more important. They practically decided who would succeed and who would not.

K: Not much has changed. To this day it is relevant, but not crucial. They choose who they prefer to support, and that's what makes the difference. Each label also specializes in something - some like heavy rock, others prog music. You need to know where to go to get attention. If you get their attention, you have a chance of a deal. Some labels invest all in one band. And it's bad, because if this band leaves the label, often the whole thing falls apart.

Let's move to modern times. In 2008 you came back for good, finally with a stable line-up after many years.

K: It's our longest lasting line-up so far! We play a lot, we are on the road most of the time. We are currently a very close-knit band. We've known each other for years and it works great.

You're the chief of "Iron Fist Magazine", so you have a press spokesman and a band musician at the same time. That's probably good for the band?

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W: You know, it's good for business. I did all the press promotion for the last album - maybe except Germany, where we had somebody from outside. Surely thanks to this we keep our finger on the pulse, but it's not easy. You must like it or at least learn to like it and live with shit that sometimes spills out. Sure, when it's cool, it is the best thing in the world, but sometimes it's a havoc that wears you down completely. You're in the van and you're working all the time.

Why did you include the second guitarist in the band?

In: Because it brings a lot of good. The two live guitars are not so flat, everything sounds fuller. Same as on the oldest demos, where there were two guitars as well. Sure, Angel Witch can exist as a power-trio, and it works. There were a few difficult tricks on the first CD. Despite the fact that none of the original line-up likes the sound of this album, we, the younger generation, grew up on this album. We love harmonies and how this band works. It is difficult to play it live. The first album gave the foundation for Angel Witch finally playing two guitars! Kevin got seriously relieved and it is certainly a lot easier for him to play. Admittedly, it required a slight rearrangement, but it's a good idea!

We are waiting for your new album!

W: So are we, but we have not finished yet! We have 4 completely finished numbers, maybe a few lines of text are missing. Added to this there are three almost finished pieces. One of them we will play tonight, one we could play, but probably will not do it. And we have two that we will leave as a surprise for later. You know, it's hard to say when it comes out, we have to practice some more. But you'll like it, it is going to be very heavy metal.

K: The whole thing is being born somewhere in our heads. We feel great about it. We even have some demos recorded on a computer, but it all has to come together in a moment we play it as a band.

The demos from the 70's have been recently put on bandcamp as MP3s. Are you planning to release them the right way someday?

You know, they are added as bonuses to the disc reissues. This material was also included on the "Sinister History" compilation. We put it on the bandcamp, where you can buy these track for any price as charity. For now, we have already given over 2,000 pounds to charity!

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A few more historical questions. What made you think that Deep Machine and Blind Fury were more likely to succeed than Angel Witch?

K: I did not think so.

Then why did you join them? To have a chance to just play?

K: I am a compulsive player. When things went bad at Angel Witch, I wanted to have some sort of getaway. Besides, I liked it, especially Blind Fury. It was also good to not have everything on your mind. I have never recorded anything with Blind Fury. When their vocalist wanted to bring the band together "anew", I withdrew. They recorded a full album, but they did not use my numbers. It's just a small episode in my past.

"Screemin 'n' Bleedin '" was much lighter and more commercial. Was this tendency somehow imposed on you?

K: We were in a small label back then. Hmm, those were different times, we were going in different directions ourselves. We changed our mind a little at the time. There was also different vocalist.

Why didn't you want to sing then?

K: I decided it was better for someone else to do it instead of me. I wanted to focus on the guitar, not on using my the voice.

Have you had any control over the 80's releases? These compilations sucked balls!

K: I've never had control! The label came up with all these compilations, we did not authorize this.

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Why did you transfer to California in the late 1980s?

K: Hmm, some personal matters, I would not like to discuss it in public.

You recruited some great musicians there: Tom Hunting, Lee Altus, John Torres...

K: Yes, it was a bit of a tendency to experiment. But it went great, I enjoyed playing with them all! A lot of awesome songs came to life, but they did not sound like Angel Witch. Same with "Screemin 'n' Bleedin'", it does not sound like us at all. The Californian line-up changed a lot, because they had a big influence on the music. This band has ceased to sound British!

When did you realize that you are a cult band?

K: Since 2008, when we saw so many people coming to see us. Look, even our younger musicians say they were brought up on our music<laughs>. But we had no idea that we had such an influence. All that mattered to us was to record heavy metal numbers and enjoy it.

Thank you for the interview.

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