

Attached you find the original interview before the translation from English to German between Michael for Soundmagnet.eu and Ed Aborn from Siren:

Congratulations to the awesome comeback of Siren.

Thank you very much! We are both amazed and incredibly happy to be back.

It is such a powerful record. But not only your drums are outstanding, the guitars are brilliant as well, the basslines are strong and the vocals of Doug, with whom I had problems with the old recordings, goes perfectly with it and gives Siren its own note.

Thank you, again. Other than the mastering, we did everything ourselves with the recording of the album. It was a lot of work, but we are very happy with the results. We know that Doug's voice and delivery style are very unique and definitely are an integral part of our sound. When you hear it, you know it's a Siren song. With that in mind, we really tried to write songs that were true to our influences such as Priest, Maiden, Accept, Saxon, etc. that would also be very complimentary and true to Doug's style. It was great to create new material again after so many years away.

It is your first participation in a Siren record since you left the band in 1986. How did you manage to get in shape so well?

Even though I have worked as a Software Engineer, and haven't been in a band for many years, my love for making music has never waned. Siren guitarist, Todd Grubbs, and I have collaborated on some recording projects through the years and I really enjoy recording in my home studio as a hobby. My wife, Jennifer, and I have also released an album of orchestral-based rock songs and several albums in other genres. So, musically, I've always stayed active. Getting in shape to perform, though, did require spending a lot more time behind the kit. Once everything came together, and we committed to performing at Keep It True, I started practicing again daily to build up my conditioning and re-familiarize myself with the old Siren songs.

I have currently read the book you wrote, Siren - the early years, If I remember well, you tell that afterwards you left the band, you played never in any other band, why !?

After I left the band in 1986, I focused on finishing my college degree and went right into the Information Technology field. I stayed very active in the local music scene but mainly focused on doing promotional work for bands. Then I got married and my two daughters were eventually born and life just kind of moved along. I didn't really have time to be in a band, but it was during that time that I began to get more into learning recording. I'm lucky to have known recording legend Jim Morris since the 80's. He's a straight-up genius. In 1993 I introduced him to the Internet for the first time and in 1999, he got me started in home recording. By 2017 the timing was right so that when Siren was unexpectedly resurrected, I had the time and resources to devote myself to playing again.

The book is also very informative and incredibly entertaining. There are deep personal insights into the development of the band, the many personal changes and the circumstances that prevailed for a heavy metal band like Siren in the early 80s. Did you think while writing that book, it could lead to a reunion of Siren in the end?

Thank you for the kind words. I had ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA that it could lead to a Siren reunion! I mean there was zero thought of that at all. Everything happened so unexpectedly and somehow fell together very naturally. In late 2015 several fans from around the world reached out to me on Facebook asking about the band. That was very surprising to say the least. Rather than answering them back individually, I thought it would be fun just to capture all of my memories about the early days of the band for myself and friends. I ended up accidentally writing what turned into the e-book.

I was still in touch with everyone from the old days except for Doug and Gregg. I tried to have all of them read the book before I finished it for their input and to fix any mistakes in my memory. I tried to find Doug and Gregg, but I just couldn't make reach them through any channel. It wasn't until after I finished the book and sent it to the handful of fans and my friends that I found out a mutual friend was still in touch with Doug. I sent a copy over to him and, a few months later, he reached out to me. Once word got out that he and I were talking again, things started to happen and we received the offer to play Keep It True and Headbanger's Open Air. We also had offers to release an anthology of our early material.

Back from the Dead only features musicians who have played with Siren over the years. Was that your express wish?

Absolutely! We wanted the reunited lineup of the band to be as original as possible. Of course, Doug, Gregg and I were on the "Dead of Night" demo together. Although he didn't appear on any of the early recordings, guitarist Hal Dunn was an original, founding member of Siren in 1981. After leaving Siren in 1983, Hal and current guitarist Todd Grubbs founded Atomic Opera. Siren and Atomic Opera would each release several demos between 1984 and 1986. Rob Phillips, the other founding guitarist did not have any interest in performing as a guitarist for the reunion although we remained good friends. Eddie "Faxon" Kotz, who appeared on the "Dead of Night" demo, has lived in Los Angeles, California since the late 80's. That's completely on the other side of the country, so it wasn't feasible for him to be a part of the reunion because of the distance.

Bassist Ed Hauser, who appears on the "Iron Coffins" demo, was initially a part of the reunion and rehearsed with the band for several months. Unfortunately, complications from injuries he had sustained in his years as a military helicopter pilot forced him to step aside just a couple of months before the Keep It True performance. Thankfully, and by total chance, Gregg Culbertson had reached out to us a couple of months prior to Ed Hauser having to leave and graciously agreed to jump in and join us on our path to KIT.

Siren's early years were marked by changes in the line-up. How did the cast for "Back from the Dead" come about?

I touched on how the lineup came to be in the previous question, but the initial process was a collaboration between Doug and myself. When we received the offer to play at the festivals, we genuinely had to give it some serious consideration as to whether it could or should even happen. The band hadn't existed in almost 30 years. Was it even going to be possible to pull together a lineup that was original and capable of doing justice to what legacy we had? Doug and I both agreed that we didn't want to perform if we weren't 100% confident in the band as a unit. We also agreed that it needed to be as old-school and original as possible. That's when we began the process of reaching out to the guys to see how they felt about getting together and committing to perform.

Why isn't Rob Philips included? He released two CDs in 2007 and 2008 under the brand of Siren, although no other member of the band was involved, except him. What do you think about that records?

I have remained friends with Rob Phillips for virtually the entire time following his own departure from the band back in the 80's. We both spent the 90's working on our careers and families, but in 2002 or so we got together again, and I introduced him to the wonders of home recording. He hadn't been doing anything musically, and it really lit a fire in him. Rob had built a very successful business in south Florida and had the financial resources to set up a great home studio. He eventually built an amazing, full-size studio in one of his business properties. That is when we assembled the group of musicians that recorded the two albums he released under the Siren name. He didn't play guitar on them, though. He was the singer and lyricist as well as collaborating on the music with the other guys. I think they came out really well. It's a different style of music than Siren the metal band. Rob's Siren stuff is not metal. It's actually kind of hard to define. It's rock but also has some fusion and other elements.

Speaking of Rob's music, I actually just helped him to resurrect a third album that he had recorded but never saw the light of day. And Todd Grubbs helped it along by contributing new guitars to the songs that had originally been recorded back in 2011. Rob is preparing this new album for release right now. Once again it is a different genre of music and not in competition with Siren the metal band in any way. We are friends and are happy to be a part of helping him with his musical endeavors.

With Doug Lee there was a decisive break as you left the band in 86. Was it difficult to get you together for the reunion?

No, it wasn't really difficult, we just hadn't been in contact in a long, long time. I didn't hold a grudge or any animosity towards Doug for what happened with not being told about the contract for "No Place Like Home" or receiving no thanks or credits on the album for the songs I wrote or contributed to. Yes, I was mad about it back in 1986. But I'm not someone to hold on to negative feelings. Doug was a bit upset that I shared my experience about that period of time in the e-book but, ultimately, it's what brought us back together. Once the ice was broken and we started to talk, our friendship was rekindled, and it was just like working together back in the day.

How did the songs for "Back from the Dead" come about? Was there still old material that you could fall back on, or did you only focus on new songs?

No, there were no old songs used on "Back from the Dead." Everything is brand new. Having been back together for almost a year by the time we played at Keep It True, we had started to find our groove again as a band. We knew that we wanted to remain true to our influences but also make songs that were in line with our earlier material. Todd Grubbs is an amazing songwriter and ended up writing a lot of the new songs. He's a machine! It seemed like he was offering up another killer demo every other day for a period of time. Having known and worked with Todd musically since the 80's it was a very natural fit to be collaborating with him once again.

The recording techniques have changed significantly since then. How did you record the songs? Just like in the studio, or does everyone have their part in their own home studio?

What can you tell me about the recordings?

You're absolutely right about that! My modest home studio is many, many times more powerful than the professional studios that we recorded in back in the 80's. But, even though the equipment is available, you still have to spend time to learn and apply the basics of solid recording and mixing techniques. I did the best I could as the engineer and co-producer of the new album. Hal Dunn and Todd Grubbs both have their own studios as well. After coming up with the foundation of a new song, Todd would usually perform and record a couple of rhythm tracks to a click. I would then record the drums in my studio which I'd then put out to our shared online collaboration space. Hal and Todd would then track their guitar parts in their studios and send them over to me to integrate into the master session. Once Gregg had finalized the writing of his bass lines, he would come over to my studio and lay them down. On that note, I have to say that Gregg is an incredibly prepared and consistent player. He would usually only do two passes through each song and I'd have everything I needed.

Lastly, Doug – who had been preparing his vocal parts along with the song-in-progress – would come over to my studio to record his tracks. We took the time to capture performances that were true to his style and represented the Siren sound. After that, we would record backing vocals, Todd's leads would be added and any other enhancements that we felt the songs needed. Lastly, I would mix the songs and send them out for the guys to listen to and make suggestions for changes. The mixing process definitely takes some time!

How did you get in touch with Holger from GOM Records and Andy from Battle Cry Records who are releasing the CD?

Holger has been a fan of Siren since the 80's and he is an awesome guy. We met again after all the years when we played at Keep It True and really struck up a strong friendship. Following KIT, we remained in touch and keep him informed as we began the recording process for the new album. He knew that we were looking for a partner to work with for CDs to go along with the vinyls that would be produced by Underground Power Records who created the phenomenal, triple-LP edition of our "Up from the Depths" anthology. Ultimately, Holger also partnered with Andy from Battle Cry on the CDs.

Unfortunately, the current situation with the covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to perform with the album on stage. How is the current situation in Florida?

Overall things aren't too bad here in Florida in regard to COVID-19. We are fortunate that our state doesn't have a high rate of infections compared to more populated areas like New York. We are still social distancing and largely staying at home and the state, as-a-whole, hasn't opened back up yet, but they are preparing to start slowly re-opening some stores, restaurants, etc. It's all about being sensible and taking precautions but we can't keep hiding forever and many people are ready to get back to work.

Did you have had any plans for touring, before the worldwide shutdown took place? German fans in particular may have hoped to see Siren on stage again after their appearance at the Keep it True Festival.

Yes! We were scheduled to perform at the Headbanger's Open Air festival this July and we were very excited to be coming back to Germany again. As of right now, Thomas from HOA hasn't made a decision about the plans to reschedule or cancel the festival, so we are waiting to hear what he has to say and then we will figure out our path forward. One way or another we will make it back to Germany – hopefully more than once or for more than just a single show. We honestly love your country and can't wait to be back among our German friends again!

You made a documentary about the Reunion appearance at KIT "I'm too old for this sh **". When and in what form the film will be shown. The trailer made me curious!

Actually, we didn't make the documentary, we just lived it. The film was produced by Chris Jericho who is a professional wrestler, actor, the singer of Fozzy and a lifelong heavy metal fan. When he heard about our unexpected reunion and that we were preparing to perform at Keep It True after three decades apart, he thought it would be a great story to capture on film as we lived it. It's not really a movie about Siren. It's a movie about five guys in their 50's who had a dream all those years ago and now – to their surprise – had a chance to live that dream again for a moment. It's a very relatable story to anyone who has had a dream in their youth that eventually got set aside for real life, work, families, etc. Whether it was music, or sports, or being an actor or performer, so many people have that dream that was buried in the past. We were lucky enough to have a chance to experience that magic one more time. The film really captured that story and we are just grateful to have lived it. Right now, Chris Jericho and his team are working to find a distributor for the movie so that it can be made available for everyone to see. One way or another, he will make it happen.

Thx for your time Ed and the opportunity to do this interview for Soundmagnet.eu with you.

Take care of you and stay safe. I hope to meet you and the Siren guys somewhere on tour here in Germany in the close future.

Again, thank YOU for your interest and support of the band. I can't stress enough how grateful we are to everyone who reaches out with an email, writes a review, asks for an interview or just listens to our music. It really is a dream-come-true to be a part of the heavy metal world again after so many years. As you are aware, there is a movement called the New Wave of Traditional Heavy Metal. We think this is fantastic and have shared the stage with and support the NWOTHM bands in our state such as Midnight Spell from Miami. We like to joke, though, that Siren is a part of the Old Wave of the New Wave of Traditional Heavy Metal. We were there for the first wave and hope to surf the new wave a little bit too.

Thank you, again, and I look forward to also meeting you in person before too long hopefully. I hope you and yours are all happy and healthy and that you have a great week!

**Thanks,
Michael,
May 2020**