



GOTTHARD

Firebirth

In a way you could say that Gotthard was perished with the tragic death of singer Steve Lee, one of the founding members and a driving force of the band. While realising a dream to ride motorcycle across the USA with some friends he was killed by a motorcycle hit by a skidding trailer, a blow not only to the band Gotthard but also to rock music to loose such a character. The remaining four of Gotthard was left with a difficult path of mourning their friend and college but also to decide wether or not to keep Gotthard alive. But as the phoenix rises from the ashes so does Gotthard with the album Firebirth that marks a new chapter in the career of the most successful swiss band ever.



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The career of Gotthard is distinguished to say the least with around three million albums sold, multiple platinum albums and all their 13 albums having seen the top of the swiss album charts, they have also done the official hymn for the swiss olympic team and lots more. All of this became completely forgotten and unimportant on october 5 2010 when Steve Lee lost his life on Interstate 15 near Mesquite in Nevada, USA. And still when talking about it you can hear that this is

still fresh in memory with Marc Lynn, bassist in the Gotthard with whom I had the fortune to speak about the new album and about the difficult times.

It was not always certain that Gotthard would live on after what happened, the guys did not know how to proceed as it was a bit of a roller-coaster ride where they could decide to continue Gotthard one day and then the next it made no sense whatsoever. But as you know they did and the result is out already but there were of course quite a few goings on and about before that, before even planting the seed to continue Gotthard.

- To make a long story short we all discovered that we wanted to make music together and that we are friends and want to stay friends, and that we wish to go on to make music.

But all was not ready for a grande comeback just yet, more things had to fall into place for them before they could start over. One thing missing was of course a singer and not just any singer, Steve Lee was definitely a person not only of musical talent but also a really nice guy and still one of the musicians I have spoken with that has made the biggest impression on me and he was great to talk to. And the reemergence of

Gotthard depended on finding that person till fill that void, not replace Steve of course but take the role as the frontman of the band.

- We decided that if we could find the right frontman for Gotthard and if the rest falls into place, then we will go ahead.

Marc also explains that the fans supported the decision to move on once the decision was revealed and the endorsed them and sent them messages saying it was great that Gotthard was to live on. The situation before though was more difficult as the fans were in as much of a shock as the band themselves and some wanted the

band to go on as they were more than just Steve while others said there is no Gotthard without Steve and so on.

Finding a new voice

Our writer always says that a band is always more than any individual in that band and no one is really irreplaceable and Gotthard did eventually find a new singer but it was not easy.

- It was a long, long process we had over 400 tapes from singers who wanted to be in the band and we chose about 30 tapes where we send some playback version of our old songs and asked them to sing these songs in their ver-

sion with their voice. From these results we invited some people to spend two days with us, one day in the rehearsal room and one day in the studio, to work a bit more intensive with them and learn to know them.

And if these guys made a good impression they were invited back for an extended period of work with the band, ten days which would be spend writing music and such. This to find out the level of creativity within the singer and also to get to know the person better. Nic Maeder, the new singer of Gotthard however, came in through a slightly different way.



- Suddenly a friend of ours called from the french part of Switzerland and said that he had a great guy who would love to have an audition, he said its Nic Maeder from Australia and we said that we don't know him but will check him out and we got the tapes and then the friend called again and said that he was visiting his parents in Switzerland so he was here and that if we wanted to try him he would be here. We decided that we should do it and we met him, prepared a few songs and went to the rehearsal room and let the music do the talking.

And they hit it off immediately.

- We had a great time together, it was really fantastic and in the end he said he had prepared on more song and he sits down by the piano and performed a piano version that he had prepared and it was really a magic moment for us because we didn't expect that and it was really a big surprised. We asked him if he could stay a few days longer and we started to write the first songs, the first four songs in the first ten days he was staying with us and all of those songs made it to the album.

Marc explains that Nic fitted perfectly into the band not only on the musical side of the equation but also on the human side of it and he just set the bar too high for anyone else to challenge.

- It was just the missing last piece of the puzzle which we were looking for. So for us it was really simple to decide for Nic because he put the level so high and made such a fantastic work and was such an emphatic person and as he went home we all knew that if we tried other people we would really have a hard time because he put the measure that high.

According to Mark Nic is the perfect man for the band and he says that they are really happy with deciding to go with Nic as

the new singer as he so creative and he plays guitar and piano so he is a skilled musician that according to Mark is quite fantastic.

- He is a fantastic singer and has a fantastic voice.

And he did bring in the courage but also a lot of important things to this ailing band, they were going to continue if they found the right singer was the idea earlier on and now they did find the right singer but what did he really bring to the band?

- What he brought was a lot of creativity because he was playing so many instruments and of course the courage to make a few steps that are really difficult.

Firebirth

"Firebirth" is the name of the new album by Gotthard which was released on june 1 and marks a new chapter in the history of Gotthard. They walked a fine line when creating the music for this album explains Mark as they on one hand had the history of Gotthard with that particular sound and one the other hand they had a new singer and comes back after a tragic event. This of course required some fresh thinking in terms of the songwriting.

- We went over all the albums to see what was good, what was bad, what we could do better. In one way we wanted to present a new singer with new songs with a new sounding album but it should sound as Gotthard ever sounded.

In one way of looking at it, that is impossible as you cannot really change but remain the same but you can change and retain an essence of what was which is what Marc thinks Gotthard has done and succeeded well in doing. And he explains that he is really happy that they managed to achieve this target, which was accomplished by looking at the earliest stages of Gotthard.

- We were talking a lot about the sound of the album and we went a few steps back to the first album and it's really raw, it's really kind of alive. We just gave the groundwork to Hena and said close your eyes and play it like you feel it so it turned out a fantastic, uncomplicated and high class sounding album.

On any high class album there are songs and some of them are probably better than others, so in my regular tradition I asked Marc which song he had as favourite. He said that it was a difficult question but he has a few favourites.

- I like for example *Give Me Real*, the second one because it is a really intelligent song which combines three different styles in one song. It is the new version, or new direction of Gotthard which really has intelligent songwriting and is interesting to listen to. Then I like *Shine*, it is a song where you during the verse hear the character of Nics voice and this is really fantastic. And the third song and the one we wanted to write for Steve is *Where are You*, the homage that Leo wrote for Steve about what happened and Nic helped him with the lyrics and stuff like this, just to remember him for every time and just to show him to the people that he is with us but now we go a new way.

And it seems as though most people really likes this album, some reviews has been raving to say the least although lets be fair there has also been one or two of those you always know will come when a band changes something major, those who cannot let go of the past. Those who has to hate it because they think the band should have died with Steve, I spoke to Steve once and the impression I got from him is that he would have liked the band to move on and not just lay down and die, I didn't ask him of

course but from what I gathered from speaking to him it seemed that way. And Gotthard is a band which means they consists of more than one thing, Ayreon can't live without Arjen because he is Ayreon but Steve Lee was a member of Gotthard and most people seem to like the fact that they moved on and that "Firebirth" was a good way to reemerge.

This about most fans being positive towards "Firebirth" and the band's reemergence seems to be seconded by Marc as well who states that a majority of the fans seems to be positive.

- I would say that 95-98% of the fans are really positive, they say it's the same quality as before and it sounds like Gotthard and Nic has a fantastic voice so i think we have a good chance of keeping our old fans and make some new fans as Nic is with his voice a new character and a real guy, he is a fantastic guy and a rock'n'roll guy.

For the members of Gotthard this album is as important as their first album as it has to live up to a past and yet it has to be something new, and that might not be the easiest thing to achieve but Marc explains that he is very pleased with the album. He thinks that it is a raw album but with some great ballads and happiness and it is an album that is alive he says. And of course it is a bit of a result of hard times passed recently, the loss of a friend is never easy and getting up again can sometimes be very hard and that is one thing "Firebirth" is about.

- It's the story of the Phoenix, in one way it shows what we had in the last one and a half years. When everything burns down so that only ashes is left and out of these ashes new life is created, a birth of new life a birth of new fire and that's why we call it the "Firebirth".

Tour & ending

Gotthard will do some extensive touring for this album, Marc explains that they have around 60 shows already planned for 2012, which is a busy schedule, they started in South America to return to Europe for the summer festivals like Sweden Rock, Bang Your Head and several other festivals and open air shows. And at the time we were speaking he had yet to see Nic perform live so he as well as anyone else had no idea about how he would act on the stage but that did not stop Marc from speculating (and you can now see if he was correct).

- How he will act I don't know, I will have to discover it myself, but he is a fantastic sympathetic live singer who even sometimes makes a joke, he is a happy guy on stage and a positive person and the singing is no doubt, he sings perfect both the old tunes and the new tunes and has even an outstanding voice and reach levels that Steve already sung but he will do it with his character and his style and for sure we will bring all these songs together.

As I said, if you have now seen Gotthard you will know if Marc was correct or not, if you have yet to see them there are still many opportunities to see them this year, the website will probably be the source to find out where you can see them and when.

And with that there is not much more to say, "Firebirth" is out now, our review is due soon and it seems to keep the tradition as once again for the 14th album in a row Gotthard reached the top of the swiss album charts, impressive. So be sure to look into that album, and with that we leave the final words to Marc and thanks him for taking the time to speak with us and of course we wish Gotthard the best of luck in their endeavours, so here's what Marc has to say to you:

- I want to thank all the fans that has supported us during this hard time, that gave us positive feedback and really gave us the strength to go ahead. And I want to reach out to all the fans and say thank you for all the thrust and for their support and for their power and I am sure we will not elude them, we will give our best.

Some Gotthard links

www.gotthard.com

[myspace](#)

[Hallowed review Domino Effect](#)

[Hallowed review Need to Believe](#)

