

Heavy metal veterans Queensrÿche rock NM

Written by By Dee "JC" Velasco Sun Correspondent
Friday, 10 June 2016 02:53



Queensrÿche guitarist 'The Whip' gets real with the Sun

New Mexico definitely gets its fare share of rocking concerts, and this reporter was privileged to see one of those recently.

The Scorpions & Queensrÿche Tour made its way down to the Isleta Amphitheater in Albuquerque on May 25, and I got to sit down and chat with Queensrÿche guitarist Michael Wilton (born Feb. 23, 1962), otherwise known as the "The Whip" for the speed of his fingers on the fretboard. Wilton, an American guitarist, co-founded Queensrÿche in 1982.

JC: Michael, how is it going brother? How has the tour been?

Michael: It's going great! It's a great pairing of bands; we've kinda built this relationship with the Scorpions. It's a good diversity of music, and everybody loves the show. I tell you, the fans are

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so loud, they were singing the songs — just a very active and great crowd.

JC: Right on. Now on this tour, you guys are definitely pushing the new album?

Michael: Yeah, the new album *Condition Human* — it's the Condition Human 2016 Tour. We're busy, we're going all over the world ... a busy band this year.

JC: Cool, what's the feel for the new album with the crowd?

Michael: They love it! They wanna hear more music! How 'bout that!

JC: Well cool, yesterday you guys were in a different place and you look refreshed like it's not doing anything to you, just having fun.

Michael: Yeah you know it's rough ... I've been doing this for 35 years. But you know, I just take it in stride, I'm a seasoned veteran, road-dog at heart and ahh ... I love what I do. I try to take care of myself ... keep in shape mentally and physically.

JC: Does it amaze you that you guys are still cranking this long?

Michael: Yeah, I mean, it's great to be out here and seeing all the people that have supported Queensrÿche like from the EP [earlier past]. Now this next phase, Queensrÿche is bringing in new fans, younger fans that are checking out the band. We're still making records; we still have record deals; we're still touring.

JC: How long do you guys still have left on the tour?

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Michael: We're booked through I think December 16. In January, we start working on the next album.

JC: That's cool that you guys are continually working, do you guys say, "Hey, this works or doesn't work?"

Michael: We take the strengths and collaboration, everything gets worked on, everything gets built, whether it's a full song or a guitar riff or a vocal melody. You know we work together as a band and we build it and see where it ends up. But everyone is giving their 100 percent in the writing process. It's not about outside writers or one guy writing tunes, everybody has the opportunity to write and to just see what everybody's input does to a song — it's fun, it's exciting.

JC: How does your family handle it?

Michael: Fortunately, the family supports what I do, and when I am home, it's quality time. You go from performer mode to civilian mode, and sometimes it's difficult to do that, especially when you first get home. It puts you straight and makes you a real person again (laughs).

JC: Now, aside the band Queensrÿche, do you have side projects that wherein collaborate with other artists as well?

Michael: You know, I have, but now that Queensrÿche is firing on all cylinders, things are happening again, all these opportunities for Queensrÿche, I'm pretty much focused on Queensrÿche right now. As far as my other projects, I have a beer called Whip Ale, which I brew in Seattle at a brewery and I sell it there and online.

JC: So when you're just kicking back and hanging out, what do you like to do that you don't get to do much of when you're on tour?

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Michael: I like to golf.

JC: Really?

Michael: Yeah it clears my mind.

JC: Okay, on your iPod, what music do you listen to?

Michael: I usually put it on shuffle, I have a bunch of different music and sometimes I just don't even listen to music, I just need a break from it. Sometimes, I'll go back and listen to our earlier albums. Just feeling nostalgic — man I was so young back then (laughing).

There's a lot of bands I like listening to: Tool, Mastodon, Sound Garden, Alice In Chains, Rush. I try to keep it refreshing as much as I can, when you get stale, when you get in a rut, you gotta get out of it somehow.

JC: Well Michael, I appreciate this very much and much success on your guys' tour, and hope you go another 30, 40 years, man, you guys definitely are set.

Michael: We're thankful that the fans definitely want to hear us — we're here for the long haul definitely.

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