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'We're coming and we can't wait!' says Maria Brink

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Cornerstone

Michael Wachelhofer chats to Allan Bannerman

It's been the wettest June on record and July looks like following suit. Us Brits are both obsessed and cursed with crap weather. After a nightmare return journey home through rain that would have made Noah soil his robes, what the worst thing you could hear? Yep, an Austrian rubbing salt in to drenched wounds by telling you that in his neck of the woods its thirty odd degrees and the skies are pure blue.

'Confused of Condorrat' (Glasgow) had to ask about the line-up changes that Cornerstone have gone through over the past thirty months. "It's been a bit of a roller coaster ride. We were struggling to get our first album [*"Head Over Heels"*] done and in the bag. Anja and Hannah stepped in to help with the vocals and drums, and they did a fantastic job. When that album came out, things just went crazy and tours and promotion stints just kept on coming at us. I guess Steve and I knew that due to personal and family reasons, Anja and Hannah didn't really want to do as much work with the band as was ahead of us, so we headed out to the States with Carina Sethaler on vocals and Martin Key on drums. The tour was a great success, but it wasn't really until after all the travels that Patricia [Hillinger] and Mike [Pawlowitsch] came on board. Patricia and Mike were full of enthusiasm for what we are trying to do, so it's worked out really well in the end. I know we've chatted [in the past] about the culture of 'teamwork' within the band and the focus that we had in trying to forge our own specific sound, and that hasn't really changed. With new people around us, we've tried to continue with that. Patricia and Mike are very talented musicians and strong individuals, which has given Steve and I added impetus to keep that all going whilst combining their talents and our ideas. It's not quite a Cornerstone Mk II, its more Cornerstone the continuing story, only better."

The band's second album, *"Somewhere In America"*, has been out for a good few months now, so what's the story behind it?

"The title of the album is a little misleading. Some people have assumed that it's based around the tour we did in the States. To a certain extent it is, but only about half of the songs were influenced by our experiences when we were over there. We didn't want to write about specific places or things that happened during the tour, although some of those things were quite inspiring. It was more about the feelings we had and the differences in people's attitudes and perspective on things and life in general. Much of that is just down to the sheer size of the country. A simple example is

the way people treat travelling to an event or meeting, or whatever. They don't really think twice about a three or four or five hundred mile round road trip to do what they want to do. Things like that kinda amazed us. I know we'd think twice about it. Fuel costs, time, possible delays

down, give them a bit of an update and show them to the world. If I'm totally honest, from a 'getting it done' point of view, this album was the typical second album cliché. It was difficult in the sense that away from any

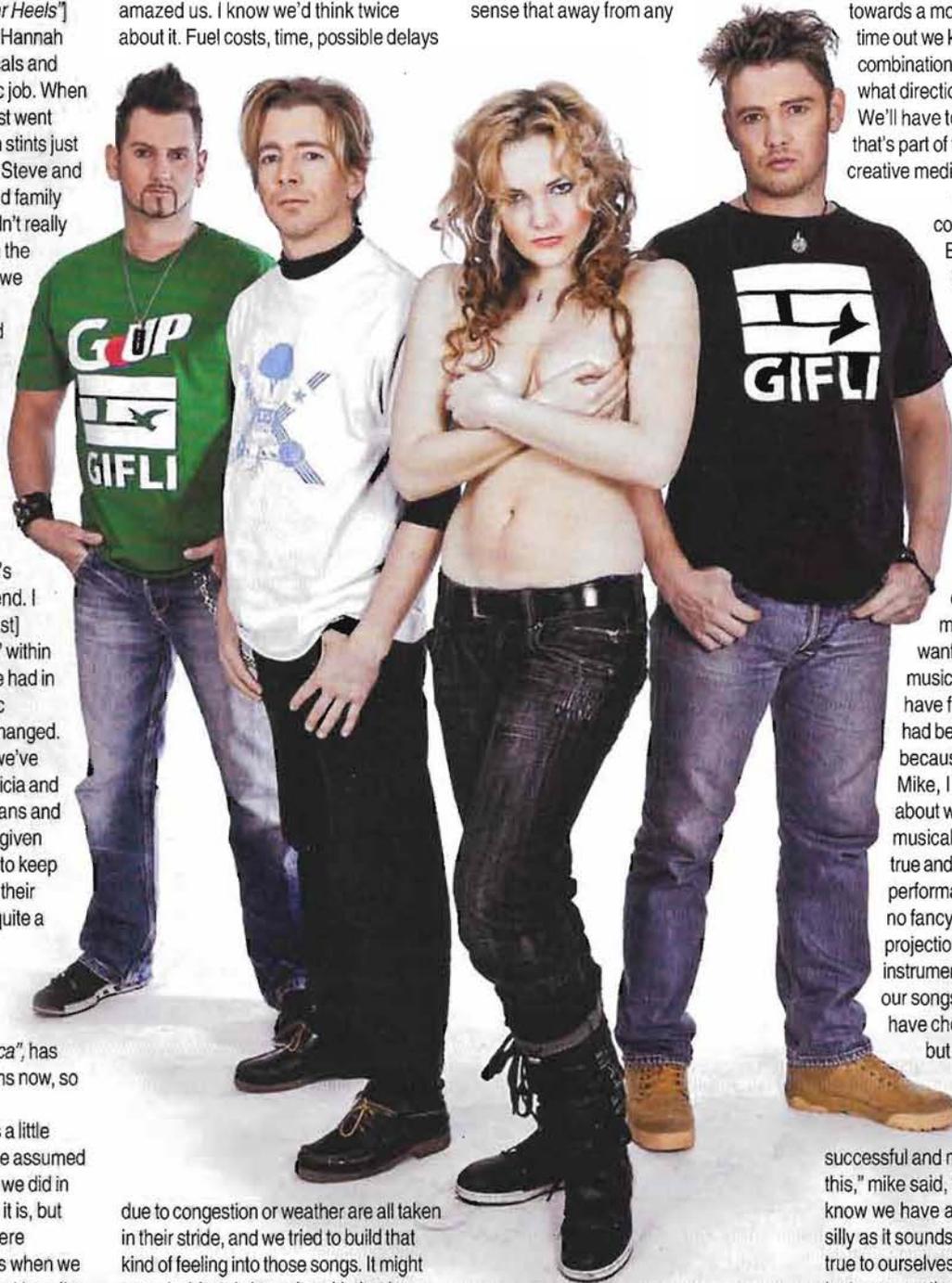
and get it out to the world. Maybe we were caught out a bit on that score, but that's how we all grow and learn, hopefully. The first album, to my mind, was a rock album that had leanings towards a more AOR sound. This time out we kinda turned that combination around. I'm not sure what direction the next album will go. We'll have to wait and see. I guess that's part of the fun in working in a creative medium like this."

Cornerstone have just completed a UK & European tour under the banner of the 'Get Naked Tour' which is a tour title that's been used before by others. How did that go? "It went very well. We honestly didn't know it had been used before. I think our take on the tour name came partly from the tour promo picture used, which you've obviously seen, but more from the fact that we wanted it to be about the music on the tour. We might have filled more venues if it had been literal... and not because of me, Steve and Mike, I might add. It was more about what we wanted the musical experience to be: raw, true and a wholehearted performance with no gimmicks, no fancy lights or back projections, just us, our instruments and stage gear and our songs. In hindsight, we might have chosen two better words, but at the time it felt right."

As for the future of the band, "Of course we'd like to be successful and make a decent living at this," Mike said, "but at the moment we know we have a long way to go and as silly as it sounds, we'd much rather be true to ourselves and the values that we try to convey through our music. Album number three should be out within a year, so at the moment we're concentrating on that and looking forward to playing a few festivals over the summer. If any of your readers catch us playing live, then please stop by after the show. It's always good to get feedback from people that have caught one of our shows."

due to congestion or weather are all taken in their stride, and we tried to build that kind of feeling into those songs. It might sound a bit weird to write with that in mind, but when it's not something you've really experienced before, it does hit home. There are also a few older songs, pre *"Head Over Heels"* songs, which we felt didn't fit in with the timing for that album, so these are in there as well. We had these songs sitting there and we felt that this was the right time to dust them

personnel or musician issues, as we had previously, there was a fair bit of pressure on me and Steve to get most of the songs to the stage where we could all get together and get the songs to a place where we were all comfortable with them and ready to record. We only had a certain amount of time to record the album





I had to ask Whitfield what he remembers about the writing of "Everything About You". "Klaus wrote that when he was nineteen, or even younger, and it was inspired by a guy called Farrell T Smith. Farrell is actually on the back of the "Menace To Sobriety" album; there is a picture of a drunken guy on the back with a baseball cap on. He's shitface drunk, and that is Farrell. He is that dude. And "Neighbour" is about me. Farrell is negative in the most genius way that I have come across, and hence the song."

Whitfield says the band has no intentions of following up their new EP with a full-length album. "No one wants a full length release anymore. I don't want that. You don't need to do one. Think of vintage Black Sabbath, Van Halen and Judas Priest: those are eight-song records, and that is about as much as anybody wants to hear. For rock bands, the only reason people did thirteen-song albums was to get full royalties. It was greed based. It was all bullshit. Think about it: if you are in a rock band, you could probably spit out eight songs a year, and that is good for the fans and the band. I, as a fan, don't want more than eight songs from any band. Think of any band you like and think of those thirteen-song CDs. Don't you think there is filler on those records? I will never make a full-length record like that again, and never will I have to. Never, no fucking way. The other luxury we have is that Dave Fortman has become a bad ass producer. I mean he has done Slipknot, Evanescence and all that shit. So we don't need management or labels in our way. I just did a photo shoot and I don't have a fucking label. So all this stuff is grass roots. You are here doing this interview without any bullshit. This conversation is natural - there is no manipulation, there is no bullshit with it, and that is good. And for me it feels really comfortable."

What else does Whitfield want to achieve with UKJ? "I want to be inspired and I want to inspire. I want to go up there and sing and communicate through music and have cool experiences and meet cool people. Musically I have done a lot of things. Life Of Agony had no vibrato, Medication was a dreary awesome drone. I don't know, I am probably going to do an acoustic record within a year with Lee Richards, the guitar player from Another Animal, and his singer from Drop Box. There will be three lead singers. It's going to be called Kosco, Richards and Crane. It's going to be two acoustic guitars and three singing voices. Lee Richards is from the land of the Beach Boys, so you will hear voices in harmony like you have never heard before."

Finally, Whitfield had this message for the band's fans. "We are all excited to be here and we are grateful to be here."

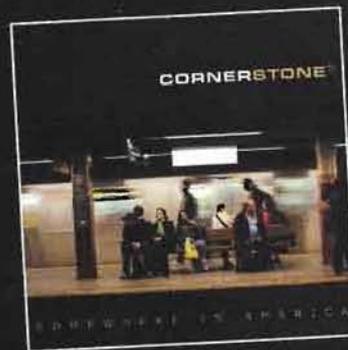
band, make music and go and master it, and can release it worldwide. And it doesn't take a label to do it, especially if you had a name before. Ugly Kid Joe is back after a thousand years. We can make music and we can release that worldwide, and if people enjoy that music, then that is awesome. Come to our show and we will play some songs off our EP, or whatever, but yeah you don't need a bunch of fucking people in your way. I talked to our booking agent yesterday and he said that it has been quite easy as there are a lot of people in positions to book us now that were fans growing up. So in 2012 the worm has turned."

Ugly Kid Joe divided opinion among rock fans like no other band both back in the day and now. What does Whitfield feel that is down to? "I don't know. We came out at a funny time and we were cynical and funny. We came out just before grunge came in. Fair enough, grunge needed to come, and we were starting to peek out when humour was outlawed, but we were never going to outlaw humour. I was born to overturn the apple cart."

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