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Hi guys, here's the Scorpions article for May 29th.
Pictures are on the way. Talk soon, Perri-

Caption: Scorpions 2009: They're smarter than you think

Perri Pagonis

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perripagonis@yahoo.com

Greece, and Athens in particular, is a strange place for rock. Greece's capital city is way off the beaten path of most name band tour destinations. As costs of transportation, unsure fan support and lack of a variety of promotion companies are big concerns, Athens many times is off the lists of European tour dates for many name artists. However, like most things in life, there are exceptions to the rules.

Greek rock fans have always had an appetite for classic rock, even when classic rock was new. As a teenager, I first came to visit Athens in 1972. At that time, the "in" crowd teens met at the Everest tiropita shop on Tsakalov street. If you can imagine, at that time, there was only one Everest restaurant. That's it. Now it's the biggest fast food chain in Greece. The kids at Everest, back then, were absolute drooling spider-monkeys for bands like Deep Purple, Black Sabbath and Pink Floyd. Now, as I go to many classic rock shows to do reports, the same kids are now drooling, middle-aged business-zoids who are still into Deep Purple, Black Sabbath and Pink Floyd. However, there is a special place in their hearts for German rockers, the Scorpions.

The Scorpions are not only a fine band, but they appear to be good business men as well. They know that a dedicated fan base is their bread and butter. Ergo, when many big name acts pooh-pooed Athens from their tour itineraries, the Scorps were always coming to town, at least once or twice a year for the past couple of decades. Now they have been voted the most popular rock act in Greece and have a huge fan club that follows their movements like devotees.

The Scorps, in various incarnations, have been at it since the mid-70s. They have featured a variety of excellent lead guitarists, most notably the heavy Hendrix-influenced Uli Roth and straight-forward fretboard speed-demon Michael Schenker. Their mini-reunion, all-star concert coming on July 6 to the massive Kairaskaki stadium appears to be something of a calculated risk, which has been in the works for many months.

Although the band is a household name, they never reached the meteoric heights of arena icons like Led Zeppelin, Queen or David Bowie. They've always been a very strong middle-act, who could easily sell-out local arenas, but needed strong support acts to headline stadium shows. Only during the mid-80s, with their massive singles *Rock You Like a Hurricane* and *Wind of Change*, did they have the airwaves and muscle to play the mammoth venues with minimal support.

They have been, and are, fine musicians with an ear for the power-ballad. They are one of the few bands I can think of who actually play slow songs better than fast ones. Their one flaw appears to be, as is the case with many German bands, is coming up with a catchy riff and corresponding counter-melody line. Their product has great crunch and style, but often lacks the extra adrenaline-rush you get from bands like Guns 'n' Roses, Metallica or Motley Crue.

I covered the Uli Roth solo show in December. His set featured his personal solo material, Electric Sun classics and almost the entire set list from the classic Scorpions album *Tokyo Tapes*. It looked to me, at that point, that something of a reunion/reconciliation was in the works.

On Thursday, May 21, more than six weeks before their scheduled July 6 concert at Kairaskaki, a press conference was given by production group Cultural Action, which featured the Scorpions's extremely affable and well-spoken front man, Klaus Meine. At this gathering, the press corps learned that the Athens show is the only one of the tour which will feature all their previous guitarists. It is billed as "A Night to Remember" and will have veteran Greek rocker Vasilis Papaconstandinou as the support act. It appears that they are really trying to pimp this show pretty hard, and they're smart enough to start the process early.

Just as the Uli Roth show could be seen as a diplomatic move towards reconciliation, one could view this multi-guitarist Athens show as a test-market for a future package-tour. It appears to me that a possible travelling show of Scorpions, Michael Schenker's UFO and Uli Roth's Electric Sun could be in the works. All bands could greatly benefit from each other's name appeal and individual fan clubs.

Rock and roll is about style and emotion, but it is also about business. A three-headed monster, all-star show could keep the Scorps and their various splinter/handmaiden acts in clover for the next several years. I wish them luck as they seem to be nice guys who really care about their fans, but are also clever enough to keep a watchful eye on the bottom line of the balance sheet.