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Hi guys-

Here's the Uli Roth article. Rock, rock, rock....

Talk soon, your bud, Big P

Uli Jon Roth
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When I was a kid, back in the 70s, there were piles of Hendrix clones out there to listen to. Every neighborhood had a couple of teenage guitar heroes who spent untold hours in their basements listening to *Are You Experienced* and *Axis: Bold as Love* doing their best to imitate the work of the lost master. If you couldn't go to one of your friend's houses to hear them play, the record stores were your next and best option. Guys like Frank Marino and Mahogany Rush, Robin Trower and Ernie Isley would do nicely for an immediate rush of wild distorted-guitar pandemonium when you'd completely burned-out from listening to Hendrix discs like *Electric Ladyland* and *Band of Gypsies*. If Uli Jon Roth had lived in my neighborhood back then, I definitely would have hung-out in his basement a lot of the time.

Roth's show at the Fuzz club last Saturday was a visceral guitar workout from a genuine master of his craft. The former guitarist for the Scorpions showcased piles of old and new material, playing 3 sets for the nearly sold-out crowd at the massive warehouse club. Roth's talent, playing style, stage presence and demeanor remind one of several different rock icons of the last few generations.

His passive-aggressive stage presence and choice of band mates is analogous to Chuck Berry's titanic egoism and approach to concert performance. While Uli is not terrifically animated on stage, he makes sure he's the singular presence to be watched. His support musicians, who go by the moniker Sky of Avalon, take distant support positions during the performance. Chuck Berry never had suitable support players, as he never wanted to be overshadowed or challenged in his position as one of the genuine founders of the rock genre. Roth, similarly, appears to shun stage competition.

Make no mistake, Sky of Avalon are fine musicians with consummate skill, but lack any kind of flash. The bassist and guitarist look like math nerds picked-up from the astrophysics laboratory. The keyboardist reminds one of a character from the Muppets band, Dr. Teeth. Singers Liz Vandall and Mark Boals are outstanding vocalists, but when not delivering their lines, are relegated to the back of the hardboards.

Roth's presence in center stage is the focal point of the entire show. With his long, flowing tresses, glittering gypsy costumes and futuristically shaped guitar, one's eyes stay riveted on him alone.

Roth's solo material from previous band Electric Sun and with various other musicians have Arthurian themes of epic journeys and magic. Highlights of this segment of the set include "The Letter of the Law," an instrumental version of Hendrix's "Little Wing," and "Yellow Raven."

He is credited by many historians as the cofounder of neo-classical metal, along with legendary Deep Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore. Both Deep Purple and Scorpions tour Greece on a regular basis and,

ergo, both have large fan clubs in Athens. All of Roth's songs were greeted with wild enthusiasm. His second set, center-stage guitar solo was forebrain shattering to behold. With 2 microphones working to pick up harmonic frequency string feedback, he dive-bombed, screeched, trilled, tickled, pummelled, and literally squeezed end-of-the-world Armageddon-like war cries, belt-fed chatter, dinosaur death-moans and seismic gun-fire sounds from his instrument. Similar in playing style to Ritchie Blackmore, Roth uses Mixolydian scales combined with blues style playng. What is missing from his work is the dark, brooding nervousness of Blackmore's compositions. Roth's themes tend to be more light and fantastic. There's nothing like Deep Purples' "Burn," "Wring That Neck," "Speed King," or "Highway Star," in Roth's musical oeuvre.

Roth's final set included pieces from the classic Scorpons album, *Tokyo Tapes*, which is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary release. Roth spoke fondly to the crowd of his previous association with the Scorps and appeared to remember his time with them fondly as he performed their songs.

It is ironic that so many of Roth's compositions incorporate fantastic worlds and escapist themes while the current version of the Scorpions sing about, for the most part, unity, solidarity and power as testified to by their classic songs "Winds of Change" and "Rock you Like a Hurricane." Perhaps a future reconcilliation is in the works. It seems to this reviewer like Roth is looking homeward after years of searching for Satori. The Scorps could use his chops and vision to add musical roundness and more diverse themes to their music, which, in recent years, has become staid. It would be a poetic move by all players: Roth, the wandering son coming home, and the fathering band welcoming him again to the flock, all parties wiser and more seasoned from their outside collaborations.

Whatever will happen, Uli Roth's live show is an epic, monstrously talented, electric circus of fantasy and metal craftsmanship. In these days of digital sampling, instantly composed pieces and electronic templates it a joy to behold a guy choking the hell out of his guitar to get it to scream a bit higher.