

BOBBY KIMBALL

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Interview with Rock Rebel Magaine

The title of your new solo album is "We're Not in Kansas anymore". Could you explain to us the meaning of this title?

Bobby: Over the past five years while writing and recording this album John Zaika and I, as well as several of the musicians involved in the recording, were asked many questions related to Toto, such as "Are any of the Toto members going to be on this record?", "Will I ever rejoin the band if asked?", "Is the style of the record intended be like a Toto record?", etc. These and many more questions were also asked at last year's NAMM show. So, in reflection, at the end of the day, I am not in the TOTO band anymore, as it relates to my life and my career I'm definitely not in Kansas. This is my solo project. It's title, in my way, answered the onslaught of questions and focuses on my moving forward rather than looking back.

The songs in this new album are very different, very A.O.R. but with funk and soul influences, probably the best mix to highlight your vocal abilities...

Bobby: The plan from the beginning when John Zaika and I talked about starting this record was to capture as many styles and genres without it sounding disconnected. I think that's the beauty of having John, Dave Barnett and myself collaborate on all the writing. We had lots of ideas, a great production team, and incredible group of musicians that allowed us to capitalize on all that combined creativity. We weren't reaching for a "traditional" AOR record and we purposely set out to cover a lot of areas but keep the flow of the project.

"Scam" is probably the most rocking track on the album, but there are also some ballads. Do you have some kind of preferences on the style of music you sing?

Bobby: I have so many styles of music I love to sing, but for me, and I know I speak for John Zaika as well, going back to "All I Ever Needed" (our last collaboration together), and on this new project, it's all about the hook, giving the fans a great performance, and hoping that you leave the listener with memorable hooks that they just can't get out of their head no matter if the style is Rock, R&B, Funk, Gospel.

On "One Day" you play a duet with Johnny Zywiiciel. Do you have an artist you would have liked to sing with in the past or even today?

Bobby: Ray Charles !! In fact I'm doing a tribute CD with his daughter next year. There is one thing I do want to say about "One Day"...originally John Zaika had reached out to Richard Page from Mr. Mister to sing the verses that Jonny Zywiiciel ended up recording, but Richard was called into last minute rehearsals for the Ringo Starr All Star Band, so John Zaika had to change it up and the decision was made to bring in the young gun, Jonny, who is a very talented singer and a great guitar player out of San Francisco... turned out to be the perfect decision.

The presence of winds in a couple of tracks (Some They Do) a little reminiscent of the band Chicago with which in the past you have sung both live and in studio, right?

Bobby: Yes, this is the same horn section we used on the All I Ever Needed record minus sax player Doug Webb. Bill Champlin, who was with Chicago for many years, is one of my best friends. We've performed together many times through the years, in and out of the studio, and I have made many appearances with the band Chicago along side my other good friend Jason Scheff.

The musicians in this album are top class, for example Derek Sherinian (former keyboard player of Dream Theatre), and they have done a great job! Did they record as a band or each one with single sessions?

Bobby: That's pretty much where John Zaika did his thing, We have both worked with many of these musicians but John and Derek's Family grew up together in Michigan, so there's already a connection between them. I also want to mention that most people when referring to Derek automatically think of Dream Theater or Alice Cooper, Kiss, and Billy Idol, but he has done so many other great projects like Black Country Communion with Joe Bonamassa, Glen Hughes, Jason Bonham. As far as the recording of the album most of it was done in parts due to my touring schedule. John started sketching out the songs back East. He would send me a constant flow of ideas with some lyrics, melodies, etc. while I was on the road. Then I would do my thing ... Play with the melodies, change up some of the lyrics. During that time, John went back and forth to Dallas a few times to produce tracks with Dave Barnett. and then back to Los Angeles where Joel Taylor cut his drums. When I returned from the road, I went into the studio and recorded all of my initial scratch vocals on each song. So there was a lot of traveling and, thanks to technology, many parts being sent back and forth over the internet. We did some tracking at Brian Bromberg's studio, B2, in LA with John, Mitch Forman and Brian Bromberg, while at the same time, I would cut some new vocals on those session days .. So, for the most part, the recording was done in phases, and then the last step mixing at Brian Bromberg's studio, and mastering with Jim Linton at Soundwaves Productions.

I must say that after listening to the album the sounds in it are very modern and catchy, John Zaika did a great job on the production and the organization of everything; how long did it take to write and finish the album?

Bobby: Start to finish over 4 years. John worked very hard and never let up.. we all did. There is a certain style to the way that John approaches producing and I think he would tell you himself that he learned a great deal from his years working with producer Jeff Lorber. Whenever John brings a musician or a singer in to record, he never says to them I want you to sound like "this person", "that artist" or "I want this sound" .. He'll play the track down, let the musician play and then dial it back if needed, I think in taking this approach you'll find you get some really creative tracks, especially with the caliber of musicians on this record. And, every now then you find these diamonds in the rough like Adam Schwem who did the lead guitars on "Scam", "Hey It's Me" and "Too Far Behind". John happened to hear him play in a club in Dallas and took a chance on having him record on the project and well, you can hear the outcome. He played his butt off and took all of us for a ride.

Will you go on tour to promote this new album? If yes, do you already know the musicians that will accompany you on tour?

Bobby: Yes, right now John and I are working on setting up rehearsals here in LA. We would like to put a solid week into rehearsing and then perform a dress rehearsal and shoot some video footage, do a few shows in Los Angeles and San Francisco and then we'll be ready to tour. The band will include some of the musicians from the CD, and some really great surprises. Trust me, it will be one for the books and no doubt bring down the house.

We're looking forward to performing these songs live.

Will you come to Italy to promote the cd?

Bobby: We'd love to. I certainly hope we'll tour in Europe. If and when we do, we've discussed most likely using the Tom Pfeiffer band based in Europe who I've worked with many times. They're excellent musicians. Like all touring, it will depend on cost and availability of musicians. In some cases, it will be the US band, and in others we'll use local musicians.

Which songs do you think you will be playing live from the new album?

Bobby: Our current thinking is to start performing more of my solo material and add a few Toto songs to the set list. So, that being said, I can say there will be songs from the "Rise UP" and "All I Ever Needed " projects, and from the new record, probably Flatline, Hey It's Me, On MyFeet, Scam , Too Far Behind and You'll Be With Me... We'll make those calls during rehearsals.

Thank you for the opportunity to chat about the new project. We're excited at the response from the fans, and can't wait to see you all soon.

Interview by: Rock Rebel Magazine

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