

## Interview Mike Keneally

01.) You and your Friends will be the Special Guest for the forthcoming Germany Tour of JJ Grey & Mofro. Who are "the Friends"?

The bass player is Jaan Wessman from Finland and the drummer is Schroeder from Germany. Both brilliant musicians with a great deal of experience and love for many different kinds of music. We toured together in Germany, Finland and Sweden in 2002-2004, but we haven't played together since then, so we are quite excited to get together again and pick up where we left off.

02.) What was your greatest Moment in your Career so far?

I don't suppose anything can ever quite compare to Frank Zappa hiring me to play in his band, as he was the most important and influential musician in my life when I was growing up and his belief in my musicianship meant so much to me. And it was at the very beginning of my professional career, so quite literally everything good that has happened in my career since has followed on from his belief.

03.) How was it to work together with Frank Zappa?

It was true joy for me. I loved his music so much, so it was ecstasy to play it live with him. And the format of the show left room for all kinds of crazy improvisational happenings, so it was an adventure every night. That feeling has really stuck with me, and my own shows tend to be the same sort of thing - we (usually) know what songs we're going to play (although I'll often change my mind about that during the show), but within the songs themselves, almost anything can happen. I welcome the unknown, and I think it was Frank who planted that seed in me.

04.) Who's the better Guitar Player? Satriani or Vai? Be honest please...:-).

I'm going to be completely honest - and it has nothing to do with the fact that I've played in both of their bands and they are both good friends of mine :-). They are both absolutely brilliant in their own ways, and in the context they've each created for themselves, no one is better at what they do. Steve has insane technical facility and the ability to execute ridiculous composed lines of a sort which are not Joe's specialty, and Joe has perfected a kind of legato rock and roll phrasing and a command of special effects on the guitar that Steve doesn't specialize in - they are both unique and at the top of their respective fields. I believe the concept of "better" is meaningless here. And on to the next question please :-)

05.) You play Guitar and Keyboard in Studio and on Stage. What do you prefer?

Keyboard is my first instrument and I probably feel more at home with it. In some ways I still feel like a beginner every time I pick up a guitar. But I can do things on a guitar that I could never do on a keyboard, and my soul flies higher at times with the guitar than it ever does with the keyboard. But you can get so much more harmonically layered and deep on a keyboard, which I love so much. Similar to the Satriani vs. Vai question, I don't think I can flatly state a preference :-). They're such different instruments and I'm grateful that I can do things with both.

06.) What was the biggest Concert you'd ever played?

In the Satriani band we played a festival with Metallica a few years ago where there were 100,000 people in attendance - that's the most people I've ever played in front of. It almost doesn't feel real to be in front of that many people, but when they all cheer, there's no other feeling like it. We were all stunned afterward.

07.) Are there any Plans to work with a Orchestra again? In Studio and on Stage?

I was very grateful to have the opportunity to compose *The Universe Will Provide* for the Metropole Orkest with myself as guitar soloist, and to perform the piece live in 2003 and 2006 (as well as make an album of it with the orchestra in 2004). That's another unique feeling, to play in front of an orchestra, and I would love to do more of it, but the logistics and expense of it are quite absurd. (I am grateful that Co de Kloet of Dutch public radio made it happen the first time, and that there was more government funding of the arts happening in those days.) There is some effort being put into to performing the piece at a university in South Carolina next year; I played it with a CalArts student orchestra at Disney Hall in LA a few years ago, and it was a great pleasure to play it with college-age musicians, with their freshness and enthusiasm - I'd be happy to do more of that.

08.) Since 1992 you´d released 24 Albums (!!!). That is really amazing, isn´t it. It seems that you are a real creative Musician. Do you have any Time for some other Things in Life?

When I am home I make time to spend with my girlfriend, and to see my 22-year old daughter whenever I can, so yes it's very important that life not be all about work. But it's been a complete pleasure to create a lot of music over the years and I'm grateful that it's all out there for people to discover. It's what I'm best at and I'm glad I've done so much of it. But I do manage to have time for a private life, and it's very precious to me.

09.) How does your private Albums Collection look like? And what is your absolutely favourite Album ever?

I haven't counted, but I'd estimate something like 1000 vinyl albums, and maybe 1500 CDs. I've gotten rid of a lot of records over the years - I'm sure that during the course of my life I've bought well over 20,000 albums, but eventually you run out of room for them, and there's never time to listen to it all! Now I try to limit my collection to just albums I truly love. Favorite album is so hard to choose, but it's either *The Complete Plugged Nickel 1965* by Miles Davis, *OK Computer* or *Kid A* by Radiohead, *Pet Sounds* by The Beach Boys or *We're Only In It For The Money* by The Mothers of Invention.

10.) Are there any Plans in June to play together with JJ Grey on stage?  
Must be great to see you on guitar when JJ sings!

I'm open to such a thing! No plans yet but we'll see what develops. I'm very happy to be doing this tour with JJ and I think it's going to be a great night of music no matter what - I'm really looking forward to these shows!

11.) Which Guitars and Keyboards you'll use on Stage?

I'll have a 1988 Fender Eric Clapton Stratocaster, and a custom-made 2015 Black Devil SG-style guitar. Both very different-sounding with very unique personalities. The keyboard will be a KORG SV1-88, a great-feeling keyboard with very authentic analog keyboard sounds, great warm pianos and organs and clavinet sounds. I use these same instruments in Satriani's band as well, they're all great axes.

12.) How do you see the actually Music-Scene? Any new Bands/Singer you really like?

I try to keep my antennae up for new creative stuff going on and I know there's a lot of it about, but I'm sure I miss the vast majority of it. I very much enjoy the Flying Lotus/Thundercat axis of players and innovators, and I think Kendrick Lamar and his live band are making some of the most exhilarating music I've ever heard these days. And Radiohead just put out a new song today called "Daydreaming" which is absolutely gorgeous, so that's kind of crowding all other music out of my brain at the moment :-)

13.) 2016 seems to be the Year Music Hereos dies. Bowie, Prince, Glenn Frey...who is your alltime Favorite in Music Business?

I will always love Frank Zappa for the incredible music he created, his adventurousness and his genius, and for what he did for me personally. But The Beatles had an incredible impact on me when I was a child and I will never get over it - I think maybe, emotionally, they are the most significant for me. They were simply magical in a way I don't think any other band could ever be. Radiohead had an incredible emotional impact on me in the late 90s and I am very grateful that they are still together doing music that only they can do. I'll be seeing them live later this year and I'm really excited about it!

14.) Are you interested in Politic? How do you see the Situation in the US at the Moment?

Allow me to vomit for a second...

15.) Last but not least: Your plans for the Future?

I have a new album coming out soon called *Scambot 2* - I'm very excited to get that out! There will be more Satriani touring this year as well - we're doing festivals in Europe as soon as I'm done with the tour with JJ Grey, and then later in the year the Satriani band will tour South America (we're also hoping to visit Australia and Asia early 2017). I'll also be touring with my regular American band (Mike Keneally and Beer For Dolphins) in the Midwest and East Coast of the US in October. And in August I'll be teaching with Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, Eric Johnson and Alex Skolnick at The G4 Experience, a weeklong guitar camp in Long Island, New York. Long term future plans: keep making music, having a good time, and hopefully making entertaining people with the stuff that I do!