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## Interview w/ Helloween co-lead vocalist Michael Kiske

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Posted on April 4, 2023 by [Marcelo Vieira](#)

### INTERVIEW WITH HELLOWEEN CO-LEAD VOCALIST MICHAEL KISKE

**Date:** April 3, 2023

**Interviewer:** Marcelo Vieira

**Photos:** Gustavo Maiato

**Sleaze Roxx:** Helloween is about to return to Brazil for, I don't know, the 100th time [laughs].

A Tribute to Warrant & Jani Lane including tracks by Jani's daughter and brother

**Michael Kiske:** Not so much, not so much... The first time I was in South America was with Avantasia in 2010 or 2011. I'm not sure. I didn't get to go in the 1990s.

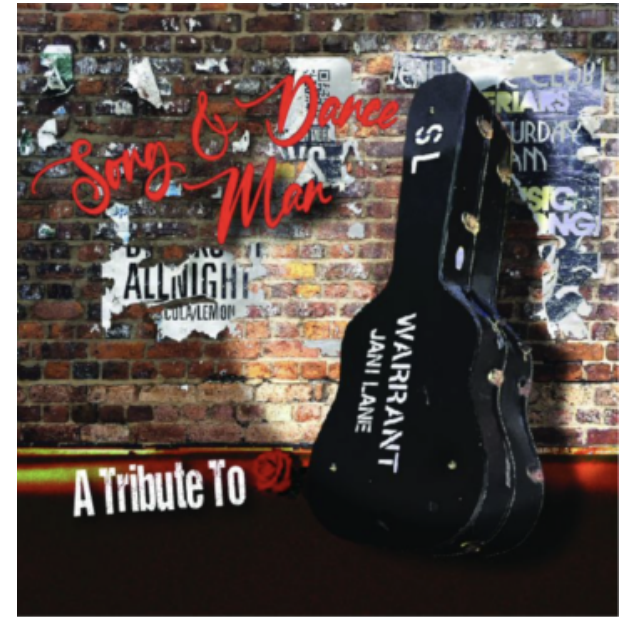


**Sleaze Roxx:** What, in your opinion, makes Brazilian heavy metal fans so unique compared to fans from other countries?

**Michael Kiske:** I think the fans in South America in general are very passionate, you know? But I also think that this "savagery" has everything to do with the time that everyone was unable to watch shows. People were kind of hungry for it. This resumption has been really, really cool. But in South America... I don't know... It's like there's fire in your veins!

**Sleaze Roxx:** I believe this hunger also applies to the band itself, right?

Michael Kiske: Sure, sure. But believe it or not, we needed a break. We returned to the stage in February last year and took a few shows until things got going again. [Those first shows] were weird not just for the fans, but for us as well.



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**Sleaze Roxx: You returned to Helloween in 2017. It's been a few years, but is the newness still in the air?**



hit the road like this. Playing bigger venues than we've ever played before is really easy. And, yeah, it feels like yesterday [that I got back in the band].

**Sleaze Roxx: And what's the secret to keeping everything up and running as a septet?**

**Michael Kiske:** I don't think it's rocket science. I joined the band in 1987 at the age of 17. The energy emanating from the audience prevents boredom from taking over. As soon as you hit the stage, you feel that overwhelming energy. All those people are there to see you. We are not a new band, nor are we an unknown band. Even if you can't hear certain songs anymore, when you rehearse them or play them on

**Michael Kiske:** Well, it's been almost 20 years since I've played a show, so it's not like I'm "tired" of it. And it's very easy when you can do things at the level we do now. We are headliners at most of the festivals we play in Europe. It's very comfortable to



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Guitarist Larry Gillstrom recalls Kick Axe being asked to write songs for [Black Sabbath](#) during [Ian Gillan Official Site](#) era.

Photo by [Christopher Lee Helton](#).



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✓ **Guitarist Larry Gillstrom r.**  
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stage and you feel the reaction, you feel the emotion of the audience,[and] it's like you're playing it for the first time. It saves your life all the time because it keeps things from getting boring!

**Sleaze Roxx: Which song do you most like to sing when you think about the reaction and emotion they cause in people?**

**Michael Kiske:** There's a lot. I love "Eagle Fly Free." I think it's always very powerful [live], and ever since 'Keeper of The Seven Keys Part II' has been a very successful album for the band. Sometimes I see people cry in the audience, believe it or not. "Eagle Fly Free" is an epic song, but there are many others that are incredible. I love "March of Time", "Keeper of The Seven Keys", "Halloween", "Skyfall" — we have a bunch of podium worthy songs... but "Eagle Fly Free" is still my favorite.

**Helloween's** "Eagle Fly Free" video (from *United Alive* live album):



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**Sleaze Roxx:** Speaking of Helloween's most recent album, do you think it can, perhaps, boast classic status over time?

**Michael Kiske:** In time, yes. A new record will never have the impact of a record that came out 30 years ago or so, because people grew up with it, you know? But after a few years, if we keep playing some songs... I'm sure they'll become classics. I doubt it will ever come close to the two 'Keepers' because they had an unimaginable impact. Every band has specific albums that marked their career. Iron Maiden, for example, always has to play "Run To The Hills", "Hallowed Be Thy Name", "The

Number of the Beast". Metallica the same story; they will always have certain songs that are unsurpassed classics. But I think we did really well [on the 'Helloween'] album. Hopefully next time we'll be a little more creative. Andi [Deris, vocals] has a great ballad that I thought was amazing and that's going to be on the next record. Kai [Hansen, guitarist] sent me a song last night that I thought was amazing. Half Queen, with piano parts and then more rock parts. I hope we can surprise a little more. The last album was pretty much what everyone expected, right? We didn't plan to do that, but it happened that way. Hopefully the next one will be slightly different.



**Helloween's** "Skyfall" video (from *Helloween* album):



**Sleaze Roxx: Thinking about your career as a whole, in all the albums you sang on, which one is the most special?**

**Michael Kiske:** I think "Keeper of the Seven Keys Part II". It was also the [band's] best moment. Things started to go off the rails when Kai got out. The balance has been lost. We stopped functioning, we were constantly fighting. Therefore, I will always link the best memories of my career with the "Keeper II" era. It was a hell of a time.

**Sleaze Roxx: So do you think that both 'Pink Bubbles Go Ape' and 'Chameleon' suffer from this "lack of balance"?**



**Michael Kiske:** Surely. We did the best we could, but it wasn't the same band anymore. I still think there are some great songs on them, you know? The songs themselves were really good, but we weren't really functioning as a band at that time. It's like a marriage: as much as you still love each other, it can work out or not. Kai was very important; your personality and everything. Then there was Roland [Grapow, guitarist], who is a nice guy but a completely

different person, so the whole mood changed. I ended up not enjoying the post-"Keeper II" era as much because of that.

**Helloween's** "When The Sinner" video (from *Chameleon* album):

HELLOWEEN - When The Sinner (Official Music Vi...



**Sleaze Roxx:** And is that why you decided to leave heavy metal behind for a while?

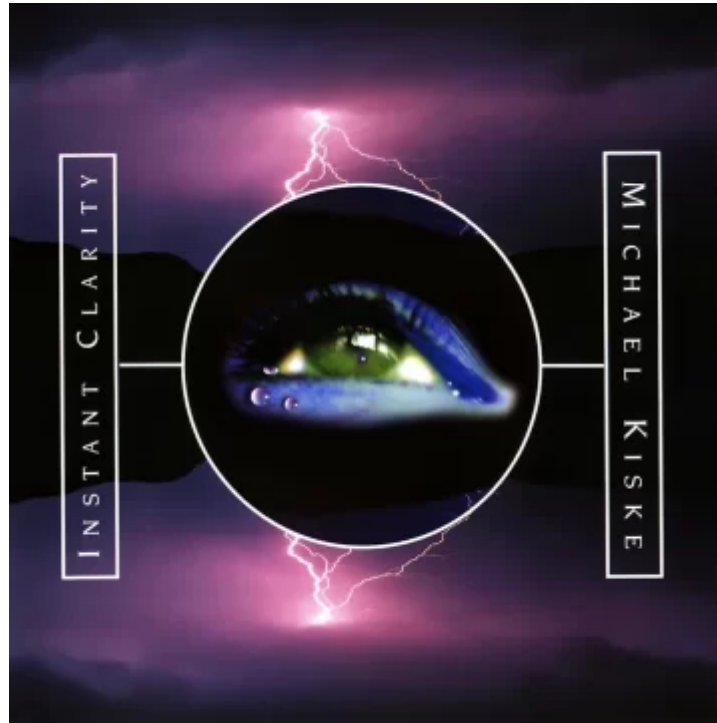
**Michael Kiske:** It's a mix of factors. I was sensitive to certain things. I believe in God although I don't give a shit about religions as I feel they misuse the Word. In fact, I see most religions pushing people away from the spirit world, demonizing everything they can. I consider myself a witty person, a Christian, even though I don't attend any church. So I became resentful of certain things that happen in heavy metal. Satanism? I think it's ridiculous. It's okay for the music to be aggressive. It can be very invigorating and help release some anger. It's not necessarily a negative thing. Back then, I was seeing things very much for what they are. It was a mix of disappointment with the band, with the music scene itself, and with how poorly received certain solo work I've done.



**Sleaze Roxx: Do you think people should give your '90s solo material a second chance?**

**Michael Kiske:** I don't think so. Sincerely? Whatever. When I record an album, I scratch [it off] my list. I never hear it again. As for those records, I know some people like them, but if they don't like anything that isn't metal, I'm sure they'll still not like it, because they don't have anything metal. They were important records for me. I think there are good songs on them. Making a solo album isn't as cool as making a band album, with a bunch of people working together and pitching ideas. That said, I have a new solo album on the way. A cover album, songs I like, mostly acoustic, like Chris Cornell's solo work outside of Soundgarden.

**Michael Kiske's "Always" video (from *Instant Clarity* album):**



Michael Kiske - Always - with lyrics



**Sleaze Roxx: Can you anticipate some of the artists you'll cover on this new album?**

**Michael Kiske:** There's a Billy Joel song, a The Police song, a Beatles song, a U2 song... These are my favorite songs, songs I really love. Of course, they won't sound like the originals, because most of them I recorded with just a guitar, a little keyboard here, a string quartet there. But I will also include some of my own music.

**Sleaze Roxx: Will this new album be released later this year?**

**Michael Kiske:** I don't think so. Maybe in the next one. I've had a lot of free time since October, but I ended up not working much...

**Sleaze Roxx: What was the most valuable lesson you learned throughout your career?**



**Michael Kiske:** I didn't learn just one lesson. I think I grew up. I grew up under extreme experiences, disappointments... and I learned a lot in the 20 years I was adrift. I don't want to go through that again. It's like a marriage gone wrong. It's not easy,

you know? But everything happens for a reason, and I believe I had to experience all of that in order to grow and learn. Everything is completely different now. My relationship with Michael Weikath [guitarist] is completely different. It was very bad already in the 1980s, but it has improved substantially. Priorities are also different. It's not just about making money. Money is mere consequence; we all need to earn it, but that's not all we're here for. This world is God's kindergarten. I'm sure there are many worlds beyond this one, all far more developed than ours.

**Sleaze Roxx: Is Helloween planning to do something special for the Brazilian audience at the next show?**

**Michael Kiske:** It's a festival, right? So our stage time will be reduced. We will have 60 or 70 minutes maximum. So let's fire off one hit after another. It won't be a

conventional Halloween concert, but a more compact performance. That's the idea of playing at these festivals: to attract people who, until now, don't know you.

**Sleaze Roxx: Finally, what do you still want to accomplish as an artist? Do you still have a dream to chase, or it could be said that you have been awarded much more than jam did you imagine?**

**Michael Kiske:** I am never satisfied with anything. I always want to be better and better. I would love for Halloween to do more “out of the box” work. The previous one even had its degree of creativity, but the songs were handpicked so that they worked within a comfort zone. We've always been a band that's done a lot of different things. All our records, from the beginning, are very different from each other. They have metal, but they also have more pop music like KISS. By the way, KISS is a good example — they have a wide range of materials, and Halloween, in its own way, too. I would love for that diversity to be reflected on the next album, but that takes courage.



**Sleaze Roxx: So, is the legacy you hope Helloween leaves to be a creative band above all else?**

**Michael Kiske:** Yup. It is always comfortable to live at the expense of one's own legacy. Metallica, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Scorpions, KISS — these bands all live off their legacy. They all made great records that the fans love. These fans go to shows to hear these songs, these same songs over and over again. It's fun? Yes. But it's also [a] safe [way to] play. We did really well with the first record since the reunion, but I think we can do a lot better with the next one.

**Sleaze Roxx: That said, is the best yet to come?**

**Michael Kiske:** I hope so. I can't promise anything because it's not up to me, but we have the potential to do so. It's just a matter of being brave and capable enough. That's what I envision for this band: to make records that stand the test of time and songs that mean as much to the public as the oldies. That would be awesome. Some bands can do that, and I would love for Helloween to be one of them.

**Helloween's** "Keeper of The Seven Keys" video (from *United Alive* live album):



Helloween - Keeper Of The Seven Keys (United Ali...



The original interview first appeared at **Marcelo Vieira Music** in Portuguese and was translated from Portuguese to English by **Marcelo Vieira**.