

V NOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti

Interview with Jock Bartley of Firefall



Firefall

During the 70s, many popular bands had signature hits that many fans remember. Firefall is one of those bands whose hits include "You Are the Woman," "Just Remember I Love You," and "Strange Way." The band has remained in the public eye over a span of 45 years. Their latest CD titled *Comet* was released on December 11. Original band member Jock Bartley took some time to discuss the history of Firefall and current projects in the midst of the pandemic.

"I was born in the back woods of Kansas. My mom was an accomplished musician and my dad was an artist. We moved to Colorado in 1959 when I was eight years old," recalls Jock. "That same year I saw a red electric guitar in a Sears catalog for \$59. I remember showing the picture to my mom and telling her I wanted that guitar. She was smart enough to know that a guitar from the Sears catalog was probably not a great instrument." (laughs)

"My mom did some research in the area and discovered that famous jazz guitarist Johnny Smith had dropped out of the New York City music scene and moved to Colorado. [Colorado Springs]. He opened a music store and started giving lessons. I was one of his first students. I was eight years old at the time," Jock said. "By the time I was 12, I was playing Bach and Duke Ellington. But then that all changed on February 9, 1964, when The Beatles played on "The Ed Sullivan Show." Seeing that show changed a lot of young people's lives. I started growing my hair long and wanted to be in a band. I didn't care any more about playing jazz. I wanted to play rock and roll. By this time, I was 14."

He continues: "I was always involved in the



Arts at school. I performed in plays and painted. I still paint to this day. But the one thing I always knew was that I was a good guitar player. I had spent one year at the University of Colorado and while I was there a switch was flipped for me, and that's when I knew I wanted to play guitar and be in a band. It was always cool to have people listen to you play and dig what you are doing."

In 1972, Jock was asked to join Gram Parsons & The Fallen Angels featuring Emmy Lou Harris. "I remember we were playing a gig at Liberty Hall in Houston, Texas, and while we were onstage, Neil Young and Linda Ronstadt showed up. It was the first time I had seen Emmy Lou and Linda sing together. It was exciting to witness."

"In 1974, I had met Rick Roberts and found out he was from Colorado, too. We started playing together and formed Firefall. We were joined by Mark Andes, who had been with

the band Spirit. Michael Clarke, who was the drummer for The Byrds, had joined us for a period of time. We had our sights set high. We knew we wanted to be more than just a club band that played only four sets a night. We had songs written, we were ready. Eventually we secured a record deal and went on tour with The Doobie Brothers, The Band, and Fleetwood Mac."

For the first time in many years, Firefall has a new CD. "It was time for us to work on new material. We had been putting things together over the past several years but it was time to get it out there. I produced the record and wanted it to sound like Firefall of the 70s. I wanted it to be reminiscent of what fans remember from our first three albums and that includes the look of the cover. There are ten tracks. I wrote four of the songs." The 10-track CD is filled with a variety of songs that have something for everyone.

"Way Back When" is one of the songs written by Jock. It pays nostalgic homage to the 60s. The song reflects 1965, 1967, and 1969. "The 60s were an amazing time. I wanted the song to be historically correct. It's a song that I really like. We are getting great responses to the song," he said.

One of the other tracks that may resonate with people is "Never Be the Same," written and sung by Gary Jones. The song is about the loss



of his mother. It is a song that resonates with anyone who has gone through the loss of a loved one.

"I love when the fans tell us how much our music means to them. I am humbled. Due to the pandemic, all of our shows for 2020 were cancelled. We remain hopeful for the summer of 2021," said Jock. "Meanwhile, I have been painting. I recently did a painting of The Beatles on "The Ed Sullivan Show." I am teaching my grandson who is 16 years old how to play the guitar. All of these other outlets have been fulfilling. I feel blessed, excited and motivated. It's nice to play our old tunes but it's great to have new product on the market. I am honored to have been part of the 70s music."

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