

WARLOR interview – TNT RADIO ROCK by José Ant. Marroqui “Brujo”

WARLOR interview – TNT RADIO ROCK by José Ant. Marroqui “Brujo”

Next June sees the release of “The Lost Archangel,” the new release from veteran band WARLORD. This work compiles the four songs released digitally in 2024—including adaptations of Lordian Guard songs—and accompanies them with re-recordings of the band's classics, as well as several live recordings recorded during their European tour last summer. A combination of tribute, archive, and rebirth.

We took this opportunity to talk with Mark Zonder, one of the group's long-standing pillars, not only about this release, but also to review Warlord's career in recent years, from the painful loss of William J. Tsamis to this new phase.

How are you, Mark? I understand you're very busy with the releases of Warlord, A-Z, and who knows what other projects you're currently involved in?

All good just busy with the upcoming release of the A-Z album.

Were there any doubts about whether or not to continue with Warlord after Bill's passing? What motivated you to keep the band alive, and how did you make that decision?

Bill's documented requests for us to continue was the major factor to continue. He told me many times to get a guitar player and go play as it was important to spread the Warlord music. He also requested to put out the music that he and I started working on.

On “Free Spirit Soar,” the creative influence of William J. Tsamis was still strongly felt. Shortly after, they surprised us by releasing four new songs for free, and three of them turned out to be adaptations of songs from Bill's time with Lordian Guard. What led you to revive those compositions? Was it a conscious way of paying homage to him, or were there other reasons behind that choice?

Just doing what Bill asked. Why would we not honor what he requested?

In addition to the four new songs, on “The Lost Archangel” you've included re-recordings of three classic songs: “Enemy Mind,” “70,000 Sorrows,” and “Night of the Fury.” I imagine they function as a kind of complement to what had already been done on “From the Ashes to the Archives – The Hot Pursuit Continues.” Why did you choose those three songs? What significance do they have within Warlord's repertoire?

No reason just wanted to give the fans something new to listen to. You have to remember that Warlord was not a band with several various releases and massive touring.

Giles mentioned that "The Rainbow" is a re-recorded demo from the 1980s. What was the biggest challenge in "reviving" that song after so many years?

No challenge. Just like all the rest of the songs we need to keep it true to the originals. Actually one of the more simple Warlord songs.

The Lordian Guard songs that "Warlordized"... What was that adaptation process like? What did you keep and what did you change?

You forget that there were plenty of Warlord songs that became Lordian Guard songs. So the process was simple. Songs like Worms of the Earth and Bell Tolls were songs Bill and I were playing 40 years ago.

The album also includes live recordings from concerts in Greece, Italy, and France during the summer of 2024. It's clear that these last two years have been particularly intense for Warlord. How was the public reception to the new material from "Free Spirit Soar"? What feelings did those European concerts leave you with?

We are playing the 17 classic Warlord songs. These have been around for decades and what is what the people want to hear. We never played a lot of shows so this is new for many of the fans. The songs seem to really bring back memories for people. There are so many more fans that are into the classics that grew up with it. The new record had a very limited sale base.

If you'd like, let's go back in time by recalling some key Warlord moments. What do you remember from the early days with Bill Tsamis? How did that creative alchemy that defined Warlord's sound emerge?

It was very very easy, We just played. It all came natural and we never had arguments. We both were pulling in the same direction so it was very fun as well.

Together with Bill Tsamis, you created a sound very different from your contemporaries. What was the artistic vision behind that blend of heavy metal, power, and that characteristic, almost liturgical, medieval feel?

We both just added our creative touches and that was the magic. We never told each other what to do. We just played and created. We both had the same vision so it was easy.

With "And the Cannons of Destruction Have Begun," they created something very unusual for the time: a kind of "video album." What did they want to achieve with this? Was it an artistic experiment or a logistical necessity?

We knew Warlord was an international style band, not an LA band. We wanted to reach the world and we thought through a video we could show the world Warlord. Remember there was no internet.

WARLORD's first phase was brief but left a profound mark. After the initial dissolution, Bill channeled his musical vision through Lordian Guard, a project with a very different identity but the same spiritual charge. How do you view this chapter of your career today? What connection do you think exists between Lordian Guard and Warlord's legacy?

The link is Bill. That is all. He used a drum machine and wrote much longer theatrical pieces. This chapter gave me the opportunity to join Fates Warning for 15 years. Do alot of albums and alot of world touring. It worked out well for me.

Warlord was always more of a cult band than a mainstream band, but with a fierce following, a passionate fan base, but always somewhat removed from the more commercial circuit. How did you experience this position within metal?

Very disappointing. We always tried to breakout to the masses, but it never happened. It was always tough without a permanent singer.

In 2002, the band returned with "Rising Out of the Ashes." What prompted this return, and what was it like to reconnect with that sound almost 20 years after the first releases?

Bill and I just started talking about doing new stuff. Also the fact that we were able to secure Joacim Cans as the singer was very very exciting.

The last album with Bill was "The Hunt for Damien" in 2015. I imagine the following years weren't easy, given his health. How did you personally experience those final years with him?

Very sad. We were trying to work on material but he was just not up to it. I would record stuff and just not hear from him for weeks. I understood that he was very ill. The last show in Crete we basically had to carrying him to the stage.

After Bill's death, the decision to continue with Warlord and release "Free Spirit Soar" generated mixed reactions among some fans. Do you feel that this resistance has dissipated over time? How has the relationship with fans evolved in this new phase?

Don't really care about the neg comments. We did this for Bill. We honored his request. If some of the fans don't like it, don't listen to it. I think the true fans are more excited about the live shows and getting to hear Warlord played properly.

With the fresh input of musicians like Giles, Eric, Diego, and Jimmy, along with Philip and yourself, Warlord seems to have found a new chemistry. Beyond this compilation that is "The Lost Archangel," are there plans to work on new original compositions for the future?

We are talking about it.

I assume the band's immediate plans are to play this summer. Considering that all the musicians are involved in other bands and projects, how do the next few months look for Warlord?

Just trying to get out and spread the Warlord music.

How do you see Warlord's legacy today? Do you think it's finally being given its fair share of recognition?

Not really sure. I really don't think about it much. I am more concerned of possibly moving the band forward and writing new Warlord music.

One last question: How would you describe Warlord to someone who's never heard a note of the band?

Great songs, original and emotional music.

Thank you so much for your time and for answering this interview.