

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

A five-minute chat with Gus G reveals that Firewind have no intention of resting on their laurels.

I think for all of us at ProgPower UK, the realisation that we'd finally pulled it off didn't sink in until Firewind hit the stage, all guns blazin'. The crowd went nuts, and from memory we all stopped running around for two minutes to see how things were unfolding, before getting back to work once more. The overall reaction to Firewind was just what we'd wanted, and I don't think we could have picked a better band to launch ProgPower UK. The other thing that we tend to remember about Firewind is how, on arriving at Cheltenham close to midnight, they then all tramped off to a pre-arranged rehearsal session for a couple of hours: these guys were taking things very seriously indeed.

With the band having just played a stunning set at Bloodstock Open Air, it seemed a good time to catch up with guitarist extraordinaire Gus G, and to ask him how things were going.

"All's good at this end!" he confirms. "We've just got back home from some summer festivals, and have had a great time."

And Bloodstock?

"Bloodstock was fantastic," he replies. "I can say it was the highlight of this summer for us. We played on the Thursday night just before the headliners, Testa-

ment, and that, of course, was a real honour for us. But we played a killer show in front of

5,000 screaming metal-heads - we did what we do best! We did a fairly mixed set of songs from our whole back catalogue. We still play songs like 'Between Heaven & Hell', 'Destination Forever' and 'I Am the Anger', but of course we emphasize the 'Allegiance' album a lot as well now. It's our most successful album so far, no doubt about it. "And then afterwards I got to see most of Testament's set and I thought they were brilliant! These guys know how to deliver, you know. Eric Peterson and Alex Skolnick are guitar gods!" he adds. Praise indeed, being as Gus isn't exactly a slouch himself when it comes to guitar playing! It's been about 18 months now since Firewind kicked off PPUK 2006, and, although that wasn't their debut UK show, the band have been back here three times

since then. I joked that they must like it over here - I mean, it can't be the weather or the food! Gus laughs. "Yes exactly! But no, we love it in the UK. After the ProgPower UK show

things only went up for us in the UK, and it's become a very important market for us, kind of like Japan. We have a very strong and very hardcore fanbase that seems to

grow more and more each day. And," he pauses for dramatic effect, "we have a lot of cool plans for next year as well."

In the meantime, the immediate future involves packing the suitcases once more. "We've got our maiden US tour coming up, then straight to Japan for a co-headline tour with Kamelot. [What a bill! - jealous ed.] And then we will close the World Allegiance Tour with two festivals in November - one in Saragossa, Spain, where we're headlining, and then we're off to Copenhagen for the first ever ProgPower Scandinavia in Denmark. After that we go straight back in the studio to record our new album.

"And if you'll have us back," he adds with a smile, "we'd love to play ProgPower UK again sometime!"



