

From GILGAMESJ to ZIXTH ZENSE: A Musical (R)evolution

GILGAMESJ is one of the most underrated bands in Holland. No, let me rephrase that. GILGAMESJ is one of the most underrated bands in the world. They were never chasing for success or the 'big money' thing. They played just for fun. But they did this so incredibly well, that it's hard to believe that no record label ever wanted to sign them, except for Jac Hustincx at Rave On Records. He knew that there was a lot of potential in this band from Leerdam. I saw GILGAMESJ several times on stage at various clubs and I always had a good time. The solid rhythm section consisting of Jan Vos (bass) and Hans Laponder (drums), the killer guitar solos of Henny van Santen and the Dutch equivalent of MICHAEL SCHENKER, named Gerrie den Hartog, the crystal clear voice of Frank van Stijn, who sounded like a cross between Klaus Meine (THE SCORPIONS) and Ronnie James Dio (DIO). In my eyes, they meant so much for the Dutch melodic rock scene that I'm glad that I can finally do something back for these guys. After all, they gave so much in return with their music, and they still do. I got in touch with Frank van Stijn, who's still a very fine singer. I invited him at my home, which is only a few blocks away from where he lives with his wife and little son. Together we completed the full history of GILGAMESJ. The last news would be that Frank will record some new tracks soon with his new band ZIXTH ZENSE. In this band, we also find back his old buddies Gerrie den Hartog on guitar and Jan Vos on bass. But let's get back to the very beginning. It's 1975 and GILGAMESJ was founded. The story of twenty-five years of the finest melodic rock unfolds itself thereafter.

When did the first line-up of GILGAMESJ get together and how did you guys meet?

“GILGAMESJ was formed in 1975. We knew each other already from other bands and so that's how we met. I had played with Gerrie den Hartog before and through him I got in contact with the other guys. However, Gerrie wasn't a member of the band at that time. He joined a while later.”

Who exactly were in this first line-up of GILGAMESJ?

“We existed of Jaap Besterveld (guitar), Hans Laponder (drums), John Stam (bass), Anton van der Ham (guitar) and me, Frank van Stijn (vocals).”

Did you guys play in other bands, before GILGAMESJ was formed?

“Yes, we did. When I speak for myself, my first band was called SQUAW. A cover band doing songs of CREAM, WISHBONE ASH, etc.etc. I played in SQUAW together with Dick Stam (who joined GILGAMESJ later on), and two guys from Geldermalsen (a small town in the area of GILGAMESJ's hometown Leerdam). It didn't last very long though.... Then, Gerrie den Hartog asked me to sing in this band from Leerdam, called JARGA. Musically, they played the same style as SQUAW did, plus they added some of their self-written material to it. But that didn't last very long either. After that, I joined GILGAMESJ.”

Do you know of any other well-talented bands in Leerdam at that time? I can remember SAPPHIRE, DIAMOND EVIL and VAN HEUKELOM, although this last band can't be called a real talented band, by the way.

“Yeah, VAN HEUKELOM was more or less a real party band, that only played occasionally. DIAMOND EVIL was a nice band. They created their own style of music, which was very innovating in those days. Although they played a different kind of music than we did. We played melodic hardrock, while they played a more metal style. I was a member of SAPPHIRE myself, so this must have been a very talented band (laughs!). The line-up for

SAPPHIRE was Bert van der Velde, Bessel Bakker, Harold Sengers and myself, Frank van Stijn."

What do you think of the newer bands like GARLIC or NUCLEAR GARDEN from Leerdam?

"I think that GARLIC is a very good band, although I don't really like the style of music that they're playing. I can't say anything about NUCLEAR GARDEN, because I've never seen them play. I've heard some very positive things about them though. They play thrash metal, which is not exactly my cup of tea."

Do you know any other interesting bands that play the more melodic rock style?

"Yes, there's this band called SANITY. I have seen them play live only yesterday. Their style comes close to bands like DREAM THEATER and SAVATAGE, who are obviously one of their biggest influences."

Who came up with the name GILGAMESJ and what does it mean?

"Actually, Jaap Besterveld came up with this name. It means something like 'King of Oeroquest', which is a Babylonian half god: half man, half horse or so and unbeatable. I didn't really think it was the best choice for a band name. Through the years, there were a lot of people, who even couldn't pronounce it properly. Either they couldn't pronounce it or they couldn't write it.... I think that I would have chosen a name that speaks for itself. I also think that I was the only man in GILGAMESJ that thought in a bit more commercial way, sometimes...."

Who designed the band logo of GILGAMESJ?

"The first band logo (a circle with a waterfall inside) was designed by a friend of our drummer Hans Laponder. I designed the logo which we used later on."

Who were your biggest influences back in those days?

"I think, we were obviously influenced by bands like DIO and THE SCORPIONS".

Okay, but in the early days you sounded much more symphonic, like for example RUSH or STYX. Were these bands also of an influence to you or just the first step to what the band would sound like later on?

"Before you start playing in a band, you always have some kind of direction in mind. How you want to sound and what sort of music you want to play. Bands like RUSH and STYX were those directions at that point".

Your voice has been compared to Klaus Meine (THE SCORPIONS) and Ronnie James Dio.

What do you think of that and do you want to add any names to it?

"I liked them both very much, but I didn't experience it that way. This is the kind of music you want to make, so without really knowing, you're also going to sound like them in a way, I think. Maybe it was a mix of these two. Singing wise, I have one main influence and that's Robert Plant of LED ZEPPELIN. Sounding like the man is something different. For me, he's definitely the best vocalist of the last century. You must not focus on trying to sound like somebody else. That's one thing you really mustn't do. Then you're duplicating, and you have to keep your own input. To put it this way: you simply can't create a motorcycle from a normal bike....."

Like I already mentioned, in the very beginning of GILGAMESJ you played a lot more symphonic. Why did you change to a more melodic style of hard rock?

“I think it had something to do with how the audience reacted to our music. You want to release a lot of energy, and we could do that by making the sound a bit heavier. We didn’t really do it on purpose, but it just slowly happened that way. Although, when Gerrie den Hartog joined the band as a second guitar player, this also changed our style a bit and contributed to that fact. Not on purpose because he wanted it that way, but with two quite heavy guitar players it’s just a normal evolution”.

About the line up now. I read about Anton van der Ham being your guitar player. How long did he play in GILGAMESJ and why did he leave the band?

“Anton didn’t have fun playing in the band anymore, so that’s why he left. He played about five years with us. Anton actually liked the more symphonic, melodic music. He liked bands like CAMEL and that kind of stuff. Gerrie den Hartog replaced him, but for a short while they were both members of the band”.

Why did you guys never get a good record deal? Especially in the early days you played everywhere on the Dutch stages. And why did the deal with BACKDOOR MUSIC didn’t happen?

“We didn’t get signed, because we didn’t want to choose for GILGAMESJ alone. We wanted to be sure that we could do our regular jobs besides playing in a band. We had to buy food and pay the rent after all. At that time, these things were quite insecure. Besides that, we didn’t really set a goal for ourselves to make a record. For us, playing on stage was the most important thing and the most fun thing to do. We also didn’t like to shop around with demo tapes and things like that. These things had to happen in one single day, otherwise it didn’t need to happen for us at all”.

Didn’t it have something to do with the fact that BACKDOOR MUSIC had to choose between GILGAMESJ and PICTURE?

“Undoubtly, this will have got something to do with it. To be honest, at that point if I had to choose between GILGAMESJ and PICTURE, I also would have chosen for PICTURE. It’s a pure commercial choice. There was a much better market for them than for us”.

Dick Stam (now bass player/singer for Dutch bluesrock band DIRTY WHITE BOYS and manager of the Dutch booking office D.D.A Agency) also had his space in GILGAMESJ over the years. When exactly was that? And did I forget someone here (besides Dick Stam and Anton van der Ham)?

“Nope, besides Dick and Anton, you didn’t forget anybody and we already mentioned Jaap Besterveld earlier. He was there at the very beginning of GILGAMESJ. To put it this way: He wasn’t such a big talent..... Dick and I knew each other from our days in SQUAW, where we both played together. We needed a bass player because John Stam was leaving the band. My first choice obviously was Dick Stam.”

A musical family, these Stam family members....

“As a matter of fact, they weren’t even related to one another at all. But it was easy to change their names on our promo material. We only had to put a cross through their initials and the name Stam remained the same.”

How did you get in touch with Jac Hunstinkx and Rave-On Records and why did you cooperate with him for your first release, the four track EP “Take One”?

“We got to know him through Stefan Rooyakkers from Aardschok magazine. He told Jac that we were doing our thing in Holland and were doing it very well. We also owe a lot to

ourselves of course, because of the many gigs we played in the South and made the people aware of us this way.”

How did you get on the “Metal Clogs” compilation in 1982 together with CROSSFIRE, IMPACT and FRANKENSTEIN and why did you choose for “Heavy Duty” and “Ticket To Heaven” to be on this album?

“Ferry Bovet (also known for his work for Aardschok) was kind of charmed of GILGAMESJ and he asked us to contribute to this sampler. He knew that we weren’t that difficult to handle and we didn’t demand strange things. We were never a band that wanted to talk about big bucks first and only then wanting to play. I think we choose for these two songs, because they were simply our best songs at that time. They were outstanding and most representative for GILGAMESJ in 1982.”

Did you also do a tour in Holland with the other bands of “Metal Clogs”, after the release?

“No, unfortunately that never happened.”

Who is Bert de Groot – the painter of your mini LP “Take One”? Was he some kind of local artist?

“Bert de Groot was indeed a guy, who came from our neighbourhood. He could draw fantastic pictures.”

Was there someone, who modelled for the cover of “Take One”?

“Not that I know of.... Otherwise, I would have loved to be there when he made this drawing (laughs all over).”

Who choose the four songs that came on “Take One” and why did you pick these particular ones (“Oppression”, “Daybreak”, “Revolution” and “Headshaker”)?

“Again my answer would be these were our best songs at that moment.”

Wasn’t it possible to complete this mini LP with old demo songs to make it a full length release?

“Well, it’s like this. If you make an album or EP, then you only want to record your best songs. Older songs like “Ticket To Heaven” and “Heavy Duty” weren’t our strongest songs anymore. You want to move forward with your band and not backwards. This would have worked for a “Best Of...” album, but not for a new LP.”

You also had a large fanclub. What kind of activities did they develop exactly?

“The fanclub sold t-shirts, buttons, LPs, ballpoints, etc.etc. Shortly, everything that had something to do with the band. They published a quarterly fanclub magazine, which contained tour dates and a lot of inside information. In a way, the fanclub was part of the band. It was our own family, who took care of the fanclub. Besides that, they also organized two fanclub days: one in Asperen and one in Oosterwijk (two very small town near their hometown Leerdam).”

Is there still any merchandise left from those good old days or did you sell everything?

“I think there’s not a whole lot left. Maybe there are a few of our EPs left in boxes at the attic, but that’s about it, I guess. For sure, we don’t have any t-shirts left or you must fancy a t-shirt with little holes in it....”

How did you get in touch with Stanley Sanders (ex-HAMMER)? And why did your other guitarist Henny van Santen leave the band?

“Henny didn’t enjoy playing with the band anymore and left. We knew Stan from HAMMER, when they played a couple of times with us. It’s kind of funny, because Stanley was HAMMER’s bass player and he became our guitarist. When he came to our rehearsal space for the first time, we were like ‘should this be it or how about it?’ But since we always played for fun, everything went smoothly. Before Stan joined us, we tried to work things out with Jan Palthe – known from T-BONE in the eighties and now in DIRTY WHITE BOYS – but he arrived one hour late in the first week. In the second week he came in time, but he was infected by alcohol, so to speak! He started bragging on, that we would be playing in Rockpalast (Germany) soon and he’d arrange it for us. We decided that it would be better to sack him, because we had no future whatsoever with this man. We’d played together for so many years with GILGAMESJ already and he seemed to know exactly how to take care of our business. That’s not the way it works.”

After “Take One” things became a bit more quiet for GILGAMESJ, until you return on the compilation “Metal In Rocks 1” in 1988. What did you do in the years in between?

“As far as playing concerns, we never stopped! And that was our main goal. When “Metal In Rocks 1” came out, our gigs diminished slowly. Then, the death metal scene became very popular and pushed the melodic rock aside. For GILGAMESJ it became very hard to get booked and play any live shows.”

On “Metal In Rocks 1”, we hear “This World” and “Into The Fire”. Striking is that both songs were written by Stanley Sanders. Or is this just a coincidence?

“These songs were never written by Stan. We did this to avoid trouble with the Buma/Stemra (Note: they provide the licenses for songwriters). This way we didn’t have to register ourselves, which would have costed us a fortune. It was mainly a bureaucratic decision to do it this way.“

Who were the people behind your management Backline at that time?

“That’s me!”

When I look back at all the answers you have given me so far, my conclusion must be that you’ve been a very important part of GILGAMESJ.

“Sideways, I did a lot of different things for the band – yes. Musically, I wasn’t that important, I think. I only started to sing when the guys had written some music. Of course, I also had something to say about it. At first we even had a manager. His name is Joop van Genderen. He’s also a good friend of ours. He owned the ‘Trademark’ management – something I took over from him after some time.”

What did you think of the fact that GILGAMESJ (which existed for a long time then already) was standing between all these young, new bands who just started out, like GARLAND, MESSINA, GERMAINE and PANDEMONIUM?

“We never thought of it that way. There are bands that exist only for two weeks and already show a lot of potential. I’ve never had any problems with that at all. However what did happen is, that we’ve had bands supporting us from which we couldn’t tell what they were playing. Even worse: the audience seemed to go insane by liking it and when we played a good set, nobody reacted. That’s really frustrating!!”

Did you contribute to more compilation albums? I can remember that there was one called "Rave On Hits Hard", on which you played one song ("Daybreak").

"Yeah, that's right. We did appear on that Rave On sampler. Actually, when we existed just a few months, we also contributed to the "Symposium" compilation album (GILGAMESJ, KASSA, ALPHA and CIRKEL). It only came out locally, but I don't play it for anyone else. I only play it to get rid of the bugs in my house during the summer months (laughs)." (Note: I heard these songs recently, Frank and I can only say that they sound very different. But you were a starting band at that point, so there's nothing to be ashamed of).

There were rumours that you would tour with the bands, that appear on "Metal In Rocks part 1". What happened to this and did you get to play at all?

"There have been some gigs. Two or three bands played per evening in their region. We played in Tilburg, Heesch and I think somewhere in the Northern part of Holland. I thought it was a very nice album and it contained some good bands, especially PANDEMONIUM and MESSINA were my favourites."

Then there's another period of silence, until you suddenly appear "Harder Than A Millstone" with the songs "Victims", "Lightning Strikes", "Unknown Passenger" and "Carry On". What did you guys do in between?

"We played a few gigs, but not as much as we used to do. Before, we played three or four times a months and that was reduced to once or twice a month. But we still had a lot of fun during our rehearsals. Just having fun and being yourself was our motto. Some people go and watch soccer in the weekends, while we played music to enjoy ourselves... "

How did you get on this compilation CD?

"I really can't tell you. I think that somebody saw us play live or perhaps one of the other bands from the compilation recommended us. I think it was ETERNAL FLAME, who told the initiator about us. As a reasonable well-known live band in the scene, our reputation has always been that we wanted to take part in almost everything. That makes things easy, you see."

You dedicated "Carry On" to your deceased father. Isn't it difficult to write such a personal song and to play it live regularly?

"No, not really. At least you play it very convincing every time. My father was always my big example, despite that he never played any music. He was my biggest influence. The song that I wrote was more like 'a tribute to the man'."

Didn't you have the wish to release a full length GILGAMESJ album at that time? After all, you had enough songs to fill a triple album.

"Yes and no. We didn't feel like it. You got to have a very steady financial foundation to bring out something independently. We thought of it this way: If you want to release something, then you have to do it good. But we just didn't have that possibility."

And you never had the idea to stick your heads together and just go for it?

"As a matter of fact, I discussed it with Gerrie den Hartog the other day. It would be very nice for yourself and your family to do something like that. Make an overview of our work from 1975 until now. Put all the recordings on CD, if necessary re-record them with the old band members to get a much better sound. Gerrie liked the idea a lot, but I think that all the other members of the band must like the idea. There are really no commercial thoughts behind such a release."

Why did you call in the help of keyboard player André Booy on “Harder Than A Millstone”? How did you meet up and did he have any band experience?

“Actually, I don’t know if he had played in any other bands. Stanley introduced him to us. He had heard about him and was told that besides singing, he could play some nice keyboards. I was really glad to hear that, because after all I am a singer and not a keyboard player. And I thought “finally someone, who can take over the keyboards and we can always use a good second voice.”. André Booy joined us accidentally in the period when we recorded these songs for the “Millstone” sampler, but he never played a single note on it. We gave him the credits, but I played all the keyboard parts and I sang everything. He didn’t come as far as playing a few notes in our rehearsal room, and then we simply told him to get lost. He didn’t listen to a single thing we said and every time we had to explain things over and over again. That doesn’t work. It’s been a good lesson for us, too. I believe that he has done some things with Toine van der Linden (ex-HOT LEGS) after that. And I kept hearing, what a brilliant singer he was. It really didn’t show, when he played with us.”

What about the video clips you recorded in this youth club in Leerdam, The Jungle? What was the whole idea behind it?

“At first we got a phonecall from someone, who was starting a video company. He wanted to shoot some promotional material for it and needed the help of a band to try things out. He asked us, if we were interested. We thought it was a good idea and it’s always a nice memory afterwards, so we said ‘yes’. We spend a whole day recording the videos. It’s an odd situation when you’ve never done any playbacking, but there was no possibility of playing live. It would have costed too much money.”

What did you think of the actual result?

“Well, I believe that everybody was a bit shocked to see and hear themselves back. But aside from that, we think it turned out just fine.”

Frank, you also started playing the keyboards later on. Why this sudden interest for the instrument?

“Like I mentioned before, I like to play the keyboards, but that really isn’t the issue here. A singer needs to be in front of the stage. He has to entertain the audience and that kind of things. It was like a necessary evil to me. At a certain moment I took over the keyboard parts of Anton van der Ham (at that time, they called it ‘strings’ instead of keyboards), because he was leaving. The strings belonged to the band, so somebody had to play them. I remember, that is very rather difficult for me to play that thing and at the same time sing my lines. We actually never really searched for a permanent keyboardplayer (like André Booy), because we fitted so well together. And it’s very difficult to find someone, who has the same ‘vibes’ like the rest of us.”

Your live gigs in the nineties were still very professional. Mixing your own material with cover songs like “Voyager” (GAMMA), “Highway 6” (KINGDOM COME) and “Smoke On The Water” (DEEP PURPLE), it has always been a pleasure watching you. Why did you continue to play covers, while there were so many original songs to choose from?

“We always thought that “Voyager” was a worldly song! As a lot of people don’t know it, we could easily add it to our set without being labelled as a coverband right away. As far as the KINGDOM COME song goes, that’s the same story, with the exception that this band is a bit more well-known than GAMMA. DEEP PURPLE’s “Smoke On The Water” – that’s a song everybody knows. And if you want to get some response from the audience, then you

definitely have to play it! Everybody sings the words to this.... In the very beginning, we even played RUSH songs, like ‘Temple Of Syrinx’ and old SCORPIONS songs.”

Humour also played a big part during your live gigs. You liked to fool around with toy guitars next to the keyboards. Do we have to take that seriously or see it as some kind of gimmick?
“That guitar toy was more or less meant as parody to all the bands on MTV in the eighties. Almost every guitar player had to swing his guitar around his neck and that kind of tour de force. I thought what they can do, I can do better!”

At the end of a very long career you still hadn’t released a full length LP or CD. Isn’t that a little bit frustrating?

“Not at all. I would have liked to have a GILGAMESJ CD in my CD rack with everything up and on it. Then I never have to search for anything again. But I never felt badly (or physically) hurt that we didn’t do it.”

You never wanted to become really famous with GILGAMESJ. Despite of that, did you achieve the goal you had in mind? And what was that goal?

“We had reached our goal already very easily by playing music and having fun! We enjoyed ourselves from our very first gig on and I think it showed. Of course one club isn’t the other but it didn’t stop us from having fun on stage.”

Do you still remember any memorable gigs?

“Well, Deurne was a whole lot of fun. We played there twice or three times. One time was together with HELLOISE. We supported them, but when the evening moved forward, it was the other way around. Or a small town like Bergeijk, where we were number one in their popularity list, together with VANDENBERG. Things happened there, you had never witnessed before. We were pulled off the stage on our trouser legs. That’s a very strange experience!”

Did you support any important bands from abroad?

“We supported PAT TRAVERS during our farewell tour in Holland. I can tell you a great story, when we had to play in Paradiso, Amsterdam with PAT. We finished our set and a few people came to meet us afterwards. They said: “Hey, your band is so cool. Where do you guys come from?” Obviously, they thought we were a newly discovered band – One that had already started their farewell tour – ha! Then PAT TRAVERS climbed the stage and during the first song, he blew up both his amplifiers. So Mr. TRAVERS had to play on the backline of GILGAMESJ! That was really funny. I’ve met him that evening and he was a kind and very quiet man. Altogether, we played about three or four nights with him. I only think he should check his hearing because he plays very loud. Unbelievable!”

The last GILGAMESJ gig took place in your hometown Leerdam and was also some sort of a reunion gig at the same time. What was it like being on stage as GILGAMESJ for the very last time?

“It was a rather strange feeling, I can tell you that. Especially during the last song something gets through you, because we shared so much together throughout the years. Good things and bad things too, but that’s a part of it all and makes it all so pleasant. The idea to quit with GILGAMESJ was there for a much longer time already. The candle had burned out, so to speak. The gigs made us feel alive again, but these things actually showed at the rehearsals more and more. If you can only write three songs in one year, then there’s really something wrong.”

Don't you think it was a shame that Aardschok (the leading hardrock magazine in Holland) didn't send one of his reporters to witness this very last gig, after twenty years of devoted touring in the Dutch club scene? You did send an invitation, didn't you? [Writer's note: I was so mad, that I wrote a letter of complaint to the editor of Aardschok saying it wasn't very polite that they didn't show up that night. Of course they didn't reply to this letter or pay any attention to it!]

“We thought it was a pity, but on the other hand didn't give it a moment's thought. It was all over for the band. We have had a wonderful evening – one that almost gets you thinking of “Okay guys, let's start again tomorrow!” “

Did you share the stage with any other big names, besides PAT TRAVERS?

“HERMAN BROOD, THE BINTANGS, VAN DALE, HELLOISE, etc.etc.”

After GILGAMESJ, you played in 147. For how long did you exist and who else was in it?

“147 consisted of Ed Sterk, Rene Sterk, Gerrie den Hartog, Jan Willem de Haan and myself. I think we were together for three years. We even played at a biker festival in Germany. It was more like a band that occasionally got together and like GILGAMESJ, we only played for fun.”

How did you come up with the name 147?

“ ‘The Sterk brothers’ have a studio in Oosterwijk (a small town near Leerdam), which is called Studio 147. This explains everything.”

You also worked as a booking agent/programmer/disc jockey in The Jungle in Leerdam. Why did you quit this job?

“I always enjoyed working there, especially in the beginning. I made a lot of friends, also from the music scene, and we booked some really good bands. At a certain point I had to take a course ‘How to deal with aggressive behaviour’. I did this of course, but all the fun was gone. I've always been someone, who did things for fun. It was clear to me, that there's such criminal behaviour in Leerdam and you're not sure about your life anymore. Not funny and I didn't want to go through with it...”

Which bands did you bring to Leerdam to play in The Jungle?

“Let me see. There was TAMAS SZEKERES, Peter Wolf and THE J GEILS BAND, SNOWY WHITE (a very kind man, I even went to Switzerland with him), RIVERDOGS, JESSE GUITAR TAYLOR, BACKBONE SLIDE and we had a very good DOORS tribute band, which got some great response.”

You even auditioned for PICTURE, after GILGAMESJ. How did this work out and why did you never really collaborate here?

“I got in touch with Jan Bechtum, their guitarist, over the phone and that was it. The biggest bottleneck here was the long distance between us.”

Are all the other bandmembers still doing something into the music scene? I understand that most part of GILGAMESJ is playing in the bluesrock band JP BLUES GANG. Wouldn't you like to be their singer instead of their current singer Henk Smids and then play together as the JP BLUES GANG for fun?

“I think Gerrie den Hartog and Stanley play (or played) in some kind of cover band together with Toine van der Linden (ex-HOT LEGS) and Robert Soeterbroek. That's all I know. I really don't see myself as a blues singer. I am not a blues singer. Either you have the blues or

you don't. And I don't have it in me. There's no fun in playing the blues. And I don't like these depressive lyrics... That's not me."

Does this mean the definite end of GILGAMESJ or do you think you might do something together in the near future (a possible GILGAMESJ reunion, perhaps?)?

"The chance is always there, I guess. But we don't have any plans in that direction yet. Besides, I am playing with half of the GILGAMESJ line-up live again, so.... We do it under different circumstances and under a different name (ZIXTH ZENSE). The music we're playing now is a bit easier to comprehend."

If people would ask you for a reunion gig, would you do it?

"I guess so. I think it would be great and I'm sure the other guys feel the same way. But everything should be perfectly arranged then."

Wouldn't it be nice to bring out an (independent) compilation CD with old demos, live recordings, unreleased tracks and as a bonus the three video clips as a CD Rom part. Maybe you could even add some photo material to it. The fans would go out of their mind of such thing and it would be an enrichment for the music history. And I am very serious here!

"Actually, you don't realize that you still have so many fans out there! I feel very honoured. Of course it would be a great idea to do something like that, but what should I do? It would cost a lot of money and I don't have the time for it either. Look, if there would be someone who said to me "Hey Frank, that sounds like a nice thing to do. I could make it happen for you and put everything on CD, etc.etc." I would probably say: "OK fine, go ahead and do it! I don't need any money for it!"

How do you feel about an interview like this, that covered a very important part of your life?

"Now you get to realize what you've done over the years. You see questions that make you say: "Damn, that's true, I also did this and that. It's really nice."

Do you have any other hobbies other than music?

"Yes, since one year my little son is my biggest hobby. I've always said that I didn't want any children, but when you have one of your own, you don't want anything else. It's the best thing that ever happened to me."

What are your future plans?

"I want to play with my new band ZIXTH ZENSE again on a regular basis. And like in the GILGAMESJ days, I want to have fun in doing the things I'd like to do. We'll see what happens. The band consists of Willem Prinsen (drums), Sylvester van Leeuwen (guitar), Rogier de Vaal (keyboards), Gerrie den Hartog (guitar; ex-GILGAMESJ), Jan Vos (bass; ex-GILGAMESJ) and Frank van Stijn (vocals; also ex-GILGAMESJ). We play in the same style as GILGAMESJ did, by the way. We also play a GILGAMESJ song, called "Lost In Paradise". But the band itself doesn't have anything to do with GILGAMESJ."

Did you never think of putting something about GILGAMESJ on the internet, like a home page?

"When GILGAMESJ existed there was no such thing as the internet and now I just don't know. (Any suggestions????)."

Would you like to add something here, that you think shouldn't be 'unmentioned'?

"I don't think so. We have played together for twenty years and we had a great time. We quit because the fun was over."

Any messages for the readers of Snakepit?

"Keep rockin'....."

****My thanks goes out to Bert van Haarlem (for the audio stuff and merchandise material) and to Frank van Stijn for his time and doing the interview. Good luck with ZIXTH ZENSE, my friend!!!!***

Interview by: Toine van Poorten

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