

A passion sparked by a steel guitar: Interview with Texas Lightning's guitarist / Great concert in Zell am See on 29th March

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'The band is in an excellent mood' - when talking to Jon Flemming Olsen, the guitarist of Texas Lightning, you can almost touch his high spirits. And a glance at the recent history of the German country band actually shows no reason at all for moping. After all, their first album, 'Meanwhile, back at the Ranch', has repeatedly been awarded gold since its release in the summer of 2005. The single 'No, no never', which the group presented at the Eurovision Song Contest 2006, even got platinum. A whole range of international music awards, the honorary citizenship of Texas, and sold-out concert halls up and down the country clearly prove the band's success.

Not half bad for a group that only just formed less than two years ago. 'That's not quite true', says Olsen. 'The band has already existed for about ten years.' The man whom his friends and colleagues simply call 'The Flame' founded the group between 1996 and 1997. 'At the beginning the whole thing was meant to be something like an after-work fun band', Olsen tells us. The first public performances in and around Hamburg followed in the year 2000. There were some other players in the band at that time and its name was 'Texas Lightning & The Rodeo Rockets'.

Why did it have to be country music? When answering this question Jonny Olsen's voice has an enthusiastic undertone to it: 'Certain elements of country and Western have always fascinated me.' Hearing him call the music of the American rural population an 'incredibly wide field', you cannot help seeing the wide expanses of the Great Plains in your mind's eye. In his view, their music is very varied 'with atmospheric changes' - from quick hillbilly numbers to Western ballads full of feeling. Consequently, Olsen and his colleagues really enjoy putting their interpretations of country music on stage.

As time went by, some of the old colleagues left the band. With their departure, the 'Rodeo Rockets' part was dropped from the name. Since the end of the year 2004 the band has been on its way to the top in its present 'constellation' - with Oli Dittrich at the drums and the charming Australian singer 'Miss Jane Comerford'. The former 'fun project' is fascinating its fans all over the world now. 'The four cowboys and the lady' even get ardent fan mail from the mother country of their music. And this love is reciprocated: 'It is our greatest dream to play in Texas one day', says 'The Flame'. Whether their schedule will ever run to that is still in the lap of the gods. Their tour calendar is already full and they are also working on a new song for their next album at the moment which they expect to publish 'sometime this year'.

The next stop on their long 'concert trek' is the 'Sun, Snow & Party' event in Zell am See. For a whole day the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See-Kaprun' is going to be turned into the 'largest open-air saloon' in Austria. The band has

packed something very special for their concert there. 'A big saddlebag full of songs and some long underwear, because it might be quite cold there', says 'The Flame' laughingly. But he promises his audience to heat up their mood. He intends to spark the spirits of the country fans with the sounds of his steel guitar. The members of the band are hoping to dive into the wellness oases of Zell am See and Kaprun after their performance. After all, this is one of the most popular holiday regions in Europe. And even the hardest cowboy sometimes needs a few quiet moments...

You can find more information on the concert of Texas Lightning and about the 'Sun, Snow and Party Week' in the 'Europa-Sportregion' online at www.europasportregion.info.

General Information:

With its 14,000 beds and two million overnight stays a year, the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See-Kaprun' is one of the most important holiday regions in Austria. More than 40 activities like rafting, golf, and walking are offered during the summer months. In the cold season of the year rides in horse-drawn sleighs or snowshoe walks provide a welcome change. 56 chair lifts and cable cars take skiers to thick powder snow on 132 kilometres of pistes - snowboarders find an ideal terrain at the Snowpark on the glacier plateau of Kitzsteinhorn, 2,600 metres above sea-level. Here, skiing and snowboarding is possible even in summer. Moreover, the renowned German publishing house of 'Falk Verlag' has named Zell am See and Kaprun as the most family-friendly holiday region in Europe.

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