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Interview with Strange Days on playing with Robby Krieger



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 *Robby Krieger on stage with Doors tribute band Strange Days December 20, 2013*

Photo by Steve Gaglio

You can probably find a Doors tribute band in any city you go to in America (and European cities as well) but the number of Doors tribute bands that have actually played with a member of The Doors is a rare occurrence. This past December the Los Angeles Doors tribute band Strange Days had to opportunity to have Doors guitarist Robby Krieger sit in with them at The Joint in Los Angeles on December 20, 2013. I recently had a chance to talk with Strange Days

guitarist Robert Carsten about the experience.

How long has Strange Days been together?

Strange Days was in the works as early as 2008 but really was born the day we found singer, Jason Tosta on December 5, 2010. The band was barely together 2 weeks before we had our first show on December 18, 2010. So, Strange Days has been performing together non-stop for the last 3 years.

How did the band get together?

In 2008, Michael Jacobson (keyboard) and I were already seasoned Doors tribute performers. Up to that point, the only Doors tributes we had seen were simply a fully dressed Jim character along with a plain-clothed band behind him. We wanted to do it as a complete band. The Doors were a band, not just Jim Morrison. A Doors tribute should honor the full band, and by doing that, transform the show into a full Doors concert experience. So, that was the vision for Strange Days - a cohesive band that honors each member of the original Doors in look, sound, and spirit. We just needed to find the right Jim.

The drummer at the time posted an ad on Craigslist looking for a temporary singer for rehearsals while the current singer was on hiatus. After listening to several “interesting” vocalists, in walked Jason. By the end of three songs it was obvious that he was the only Jim for this band. Jason complements the band's philosophy perfectly and he took a large hand in pushing the vision to the next level in a way that enhances the authenticity of the shows. Strange Days loves the music and respects the true origins of The Doors as a band with four very special ingredients that come together to create magic.

How did it come together that Strange Days played with Robby?

Strange Days has been lucky enough to play with Robby Krieger not once but twice! I had worked as Ray & Robby's Front of House Sound Engineer a few years earlier. In 2012, I contacted Robby to see if he wanted to come hear the band play. To my surprise, Robby replied by saying he not only wanted to hear the band but wanted to play as well.

On November 2, 2012, Robby came out to The Joint in Los Angeles and joined Strange Days, along with musical guests, drummer Ty Dennis, and legendary bassist, Phil Chen to play “Roadhouse Blues.” After this, he took control of the band for intense renditions of “When the Music's Over,” “LA Woman,” and “Light My Fire.” The night was such a success and so much fun for the band and the audience that a year later we asked Robby to join them on stage again. This time, Robby was in for the long haul and played a smoking 14-song set, ending with what else but... “The End.” This amazing set also included guest appearances by fellow Ray and Robby veterans, the “bass man” himself, Phil Chen, drummer, Ty Dennis, and former Ray and Robby drum tech, Owen Goldman. (The 14 song set included “Break on Through,” “Love Me Two Times,” “People Are Strange,” “Hello, I Love You,” “Peace Frog,” “When the Music's Over,” “Wild Child,” “Five to One,” “The Changeling,” “Been Down So Long,” “Light My Fire,” “L.A. Woman,” “Roadhouse Blues,” and “The End.”...ed)

How was it playing Doors songs with Robby?

I think it goes without saying that it was an incredible evening that no one in the band will ever forget. Not many tribute bands get the opportunity to play alongside one of the legends they pay tribute to. It's a rare rock fantasy that takes what we do, playing someone else's music, and makes it more real, more authentic. Listening to Robby introduce “Love Me Two Times” and tell the audience that it was a song he wrote about soldiers going off to Vietnam and leaving their girls behind added a whole new depth to what up until that point was just a great song. Seeing Robby on stage playing the music that he wrote, that he played as a part of that iconic band,

using the same guitar that he used in 1967, and tearing it up in a way that only Robby Krieger can do it, was nothing short of astounding. It was the time of our lives and we loved every second of it.

You worked with The Doors of the 21st Century was that prior to being in a Doors tribute band? How did that experience inform being in a Doors tribute band?

I worked with Ray & Robby as their F.O.H. Sound Engineer from January 2003 thru 2007. I spent five years touring most of the world and even got to sit in for an ailing Robby Krieger in Barcelona Spain at The Razzmatazz on April 21, 2006. Spending this time surrounded by The Doors music being played by its original members certainly had an impact. Getting to see how these guys played, how they worked, and how they felt the music definitely translated into my ideas of what the ideal Doors tribute band should be. It gave me a rare insight into the inner workings of the Doors' music and its original members. Some of the little nuances of how Strange Days plays the music come directly from those experiences listening to Robby and Ray.

Do you play mostly in Southern California?

Strange Days is a nationally touring tribute band. We play all across the country in a variety of different venues: casinos, clubs, theaters, festivals, corporate events. Our home base is Los Angeles, California.

Thank you Robert and Strange Days!

If you would like more information and upcoming appearances please visit their website at **Strange Days Tribute** or on **Facebook**.

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