

SIREN

SIREN • THE EARLY YEARS

THE EARLY YEARS

by Ed Aborn

# Foreword

I'm sorry.

I had to get that out of the way. If you're about to dive into this material, the only thing I can promise is that you won't get the time back to do more productive things like grocery shopping or doing your laundry. Hopefully, though, you might find yourself smiling a time or two or, at a minimum, shaking your head and wondering what we were thinking. I believe that my tagline for this e-book sums it up:

***“Some stories just have to be told. This is not one of them.”***

So why, you may ask, did I dig deep into the recesses of my mind to capture this on the electronic page? Good question. Conveniently, I have an answer. I did so because in late 2015 people from literally around the world spontaneously and independently reached out to me to ask about the mythical 80's heavy metal band that was Siren. Okay. To be completely honest there were only three of them, but they were from Germany, Austria, and Russia which constitutes “worldwide” in my opinion. They were all interested in finding out more about this long-defunct musical unit. Even more surprising, was the fact that they were actually fans of the band and had been so for over 30 years.

Naturally, I took it as a sign. It was just too coincidental. Siren was obviously destined to rise from the ashes of obscurity like a fiery phoenix returning to claim its rightful throne atop the volcano of the heavy metal world. Well, maybe something more like a parakeet with singed wings perched on a stack of 30 year-old demo cassettes is more accurate. In any case, I decided that it would be a fun exercise to just jot down some of my memories from that period of time to share with these folks rather than answer the same questions in my email responses to them.

And that's when things got out of hand.

No one was more surprised than myself when the page count kept growing. When it hit page 30 of single-spaced text, I knew that I had a problem. And by “problem” I'm speaking more along the lines of “The first step to overcoming a problem is to admit that you have a problem.” I couldn't stop! The memories kept coming back and my fingers were relentless on the keyboard. And then I dug out my old band memorabilia. The pictures, articles, and other stuff seemed to crawl out of boxes and closets like little zombies begging to be seen again.

By this point, I was too far in to turn back. I reached out to former bandmates and other friends who were part of my years in Siren. Thankfully, they indulged me and waded through my ramblings to provide some clarifications and even some additions. That, by itself, has been one of the best parts of this experience. Looking back together and laughing at these moments from our misspent, heavy metal youths.

During the creation of this little tome, I found myself wondering “Why am I doing this and why is there so much to share?” I had to think on that for a little bit. I eventually came to realize that Siren was a central part of my life from the ages of 16 to 21. At that point, it was a quarter of my entire life – and a very impressionable time as well. Like any team-based activity, these guys were like a family

to me and, with me being the youngest of the group, they were mentors of a fashion. Of course some of them most definitely provided me with concrete examples of how NOT to lead my life, it was still a life lesson nonetheless. I'm very grateful to be able to say that the majority of these folks are still my friends even after three decades have passed.

I'm now in the process of trying to scrape up several of the audio artifacts from the Siren years. I figure it will be good to create a repository of songs and other stuff to accompany this document. It's been an enjoyable exercise as I haven't really listened to any of this stuff for many, many years. I do, however, have to admit that listening back to some of the radio interviews I sound like a huge nerd and speak in a manner which has no discernable origin. You can share my shame in the [Links and Media](#) section of this book.

I realize that what I've captured here will most likely be relevant only to the people who lived it or to those who were around the band during that era. But, if nothing else, it's an insight into what it was like to be in a young, independent band trying to make its mark during the heyday of heavy metal in the mid-1980s. We were just one of thousands of similar bands in garages, basements, and self-storage warehouses around the globe who shared a love for the music and a dream of success.

I hope you enjoy this little jaunt back in time with me. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My email is in the [Links section](#). However, as I said before, this book has no guarantee of satisfaction so don't write to me asking for the two hours of your life back.

Ed Aborn – February, 2016

# Table of Contents

1	Welcome.....	4
2	The Very Beginning.....	4
3	Ch, Ch, Ch, Changes.....	7
4	Rebirth.....	13
5	Metro Mercenary.....	14
6	Back to Brandon.....	17
7	Iron Coffins.....	19
8	More Ch, Ch, Ch, Changes.....	23
9	Dead of Night.....	27
10	Things Start to Blow Up for Us.....	35
11	The Last Betrayal.....	37
12	Afterword.....	41
13	Photo Gallery aka More Things You Can't Un-see.....	44
14	Links and Media.....	63



# The Early Years: 1980 - 1986

by Ed Aborn

## 1 Welcome

Hello. My name is Ed Aborn and I was the drummer for the heavy metal band Siren from Brandon, FL (USA) from 1981 until 1986. If you're reading this, you either have some interest in this relatively unknown band from 30 years ago or you're just very bored and looking for anything to read. I'll assume that you actually have some interest, but I make no guarantees that what I am about to unleash from my fingertips will be captivating, amusing, or even remotely interesting. I will, however, guarantee that everything I write is 100% factual as I recall it, without bias or historical revisionism. I've reached out to friends and former bandmates, where possible, to bolster my memory on some things, but three decades have passed, so there is a certain amount of fuzziness. Siren was a major part of my younger years and I hold those days and memories in my heart with much fondness. I'll probably write more than is warranted, include details that have no bearing, and wander off on tangents here and there. Consider yourself forewarned, grab a drink, find a comfortable chair and settle in for a journey down Metal Memory Lane.

## 2 The Very Beginning

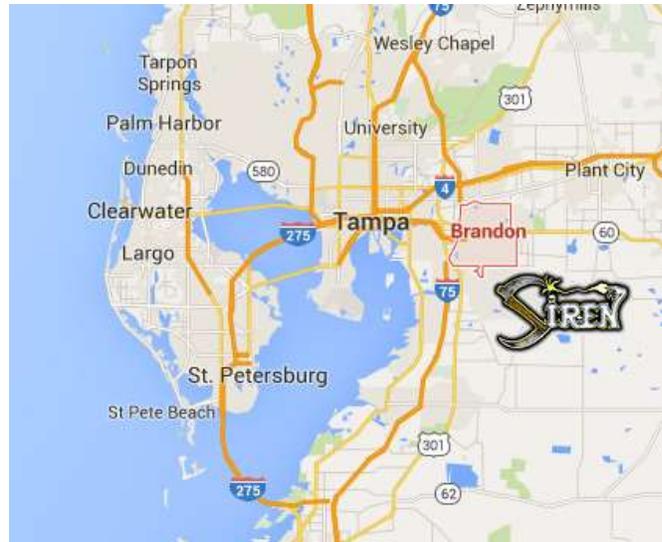
Let's step into the magical Time Machine and travel back to the year 1980. I was just 15 years old and in my first band which was named Metal Gods. As you can see, we had no problem selecting a name that didn't understate our planned greatness. I had received my first drum set as a Christmas present when I was 13 years old. It was a modest set for sure. The brand name was Zim Gar. Don't worry if you've never heard of it before. I sure hadn't and I don't think anyone at that time – or since – ever had either. But, to the 13 year old Eddie Aborn, I felt like Peter Criss as I sat behind them playing along with my KISS records to learn the craft.



15 year-old me with my Zim Gar drums

After about a year of learning to play along with records at home, a few friends and I decided to combine our limited skills and form the aforementioned Metal Gods. One of these friends was Frank Marsh who was a very charismatic and talented singer even at a young age. Our new band would practice in the spare rooms of our houses as time and parents permitted. We had a few originals and would also play some covers from bands such as Judas Priest, and UFO. Not that the end result sounded much like the original versions, but we were still rocking if only mostly in our minds. Eventually Metal Gods ended up with a regular practice space in a shed behind our guitarist Lamar’s house. This brings me to tangent Number 1 – Brandon, Florida.

I moved to Brandon when I was seven years old. It was a small community that was about 20 miles southeast of Tampa on the west coast of Florida. When most people think “Florida,” they see visions of beautiful beaches, palm trees, and ocean waves. While it is true that we have all of these things in the state, Brandon was more about cow pastures, orange groves, and some more cow pastures. Don’t get me wrong, it was a fantastic place to live and grow up. It was just more bucolic than beachy. As the 80’s progressed and the fires of heavy metal grew around the world, Brandon (and central Florida), for some reason, became a real Ground Zero for some great metal. We were like one big, semi-competitive family. By the early to mid-80’s bands like Siren, Nasty Savage, Savatage, Death, Obituary, Vengeance Inc., Iced Earth and many, many others called the Tampa area home. Studios like Morrisound Recording in Tampa became the go-to place to make your mark when finances permitted. It was truly an amazing time with incredible energy and talent. Tangent over.



*Brandon - The Metal Capital of Florida*



*Original bass player Mike Martinez*

Back to the back yard. It was Brandon’s wide open spaces that allowed us to practice in Lamar’s back yard without fear of noise complaints from neighbors, etc. Most of 1980 was spent jamming in that back yard or just hanging out and bullshitting about our teenage worlds. As Lamar’s dad was a cop and Lamar himself has spent the past 20+ years as a Sheriff’s deputy, I won’t go into any details about that “hanging out” as not to incriminate anyone.

As much fun as we were having with Metal Gods, Lamar’s cousin, Mike Martinez, was the bass player for a band whose members were all about five years older than we were. This fact alone made them big time in our eyes. They could play

songs like “Rock Bottom” by UFO or “Hell Bent for Leather” by Judas Priest and actually be recognizable! Coincidentally, cousin Mike’s house was pretty much right behind Lamar’s house. So we would often watch and listen to them practice and be inspired. This band was the very first incarnation of Siren.

Here is the very first line up of Siren in that 1981 backyard:

- Rob Phillips – Guitar
- Hal Dunn – Guitar
- Mike Martinez – Bass
- Andy Flowers – Drums

Siren was originally formed in 1980. Rob had been learning some of those tunes from the metal giants and had asked Hal and Mike if they’d like to form a band. It was Rob who came up with the name “Siren” being a fan of Greek mythology and he also liked that it had multiple meanings.

It was some time in the early half of 1981 that both bands were practicing at the same time and Siren’s drummer hadn’t shown up so they asked me if I’d like to join them to for some songs. It was like being called up from the minor leagues to the big leagues. I was a little



*Original guitarist Hal Dunn in 1982*

intimidated, but it was exciting and I literally jumped the fence from one band to another that day.

These guys had all graduated from high school already which, in my mind, made them near professional musicians. I was familiar with several of their songs already so we ran through some songs like “Shoot Shoot” and “Rock Bottom” by UFO, “Ain’t Talking Bout Love” by Van Halen and some others. It was very cool. What was even better was that my friend and singer, Frank, had also made the trip with me becoming the band’s first official singer.

Hal Dunn reminded me that they actually did audition another singer who was also very good, Jimbo Marra, who later sang for the metal band Powersurge, but Frank showed up the very next day with a full P.A. system. As anyone who has been in a young band knows, a singer with his own P.A. will always trump one without. Plus, Frank was actually talented so it was an

easy decision. By the spring of 1981, I was the new drummer and Frank was the first singer.

Things were pretty uneventful in the beginning. We practiced together as much as possible and played the occasional house or field party. One of our earliest gigs was a house party in town that



*Singer Frank Marsh*

was very early in our history together. Because of this we played the same five or six songs over three sets if I remember correctly. And, of course, there were some extended jams a la “Jazz Odyssey” by Spinal Tap for filler.

Our first step towards more professionalism was to rent a space in a self-storage warehouse complex. The complex was in the middle of Brandon and it was affordable. We practiced in the evenings so there wasn’t much trouble with the police or nearby businesses, although I think we eventually did contribute to their “No Bands Whatsoever” policy somewhere down the line. I do have to admit that it was pretty loud. Two guitarists, a bass player, drums, and a singer screaming over a full P.A. system is hardly inconspicuous. Oh, and naturally we had decked the space out with a drum riser, some lights, posters, and the occasional pyrotechnics. I had also upgraded to a nice set of deep blue Tama drums at that point. So long Zim Gar!



*In the first warehouse, 1981. Hal, Rob, me, Mike*

### 3 Ch, Ch, Ch, Changes



*The band's first rental house on Melanie Lane*

As 1982 dawned, the band had rented a house; the living room of which then became the de facto practice space. The first of several lineup changes also took place. The first of these changes was the departure of bassist Mike Martinez who was replaced by Del Webber. Del and guitarist Rob Phillips actually lived in the house along with a certifiably insane roommate named Bill. To tell the truth, Del wasn’t all that stable either. However, whereas Bill came by his insanity naturally, Del’s was more of an acquired condition from years of substance abuse.

The next big change that year was when singer Frank Marsh decided to join the Navy. It seemed like he was at the band house rehearsing one day and on a ship in Hawaii the next. He never stopped singing, though, and along with some of his Navy buddies, spread some metal classics around the world. Unfortunately, this left Siren with a glaring hole in the vocals department. Enter Doug Lee. I believe that Doug was a friend of guitarist Rob Phillips from high school. Most conveniently Doug was also a big metal fan and came equipped with a full P.A. as well. Problem solved.

At this point in time, the Siren’s musical repertoire was greatly expanded and included a lot of Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Accept, UFO, Scorpions, and the occasional Angelwitch, old Def Leppard and other young bands at the time. We also started to work on some originals like “Metro Mercenary.” I remember writing the lyrics to Metro in my high school Social Studies class. Siren was beginning to find its voice which was a combination of those now classic and legendary influences whose music we covered.



*Rob at a rehearsal some time in 1982*

It was in the spring of this year that I also made the difficult decision to exit the band. It wasn’t because of any conflicts within the band, or even the stereotypical “musical differences.” The reason I chose to leave the band was because I just didn’t have the ability to devote the time that the band required. Or I guess a better way to put it was that I couldn’t be available to perform during the times of day (or night) that the band required. I was just 17 and coming up to my last year in high school while the rest of the guys were already 21 or 22 and out of school. As we got more serious about the band and performing around the area, Siren needed someone who could play the local rock clubs until two or three in the morning – or later – sometimes several days a week. So I

decided to step aside and not hold them back. I still hung around at the band’s house almost every day but it was as a friend instead of a performer.

Brian Law, a friend of Doug’s was eventually recruited to take my place. Although Brian was a single bass drummer, we weren’t doing a lot of material that required double bass drumming at that time. With that line up of the band, Siren played at various clubs, parties, and bottle clubs throughout the summer of 1982.

As 1982 transitioned into 1983, the band moved to a different rental house that was only a mile or so from the first one. This house eventually became more like a club than a house and rehearsal space. I actually ran lights at the house for the band’s rehearsals. Actual stage lighting! Doug Lee, Rob Phillips, and crazy Bill lived in the house along with Craig Miller who also doubled as the in-house sound engineer for the band’s near nightly shows. Craig was also very artistic and created some cool flyers for the band. All kinds of people streamed in



*Craig Miller running sound at the party house.*

and out of that house during that year. Needless to say there were several crazy, fun, frightening, and unexplainable times there.

During this time there were, of course, more lineup changes. I don't recall the exact timing or specifics of some of these changes, but I'll give it a shot. In fact, after a disastrous, week-long gig at an after-hours club, the band actually broke up for a while. Here is a recollection of that insane week as experienced by Rob Phillips:

**Rob Phillips:**

*The Upstairs/Downstairs Club was an after-hours bottle club. The club would open around 3 am when the other clubs would close. Since it was illegal to serve alcohol after 3 am, people would bring their own bottles of liquor and pay to get in. This club was a total shit hole to begin with. It turned out to be one of the craziest and worst weeks in my life to that point. Here's a rundown of the highlights (or lowlights).*

**Night One**

*The first night someone fired three shots into a wall near where I was standing. As soon as I heard the gunfire, I hit the floor. When I got up I could see the bullet holes. I don't think they were shooting at the band, but that should've been our cue to pack it up and go as UFO sang.*

**Night Two**

*The second night we were playing the song "Number of the Beast" by Iron Maiden and our mixing board literally blew up. There was an electrical short and the next thing I knew, it was going up in smoke and flames. Still we didn't have the sense to quit the gig.*

**Night Three**

*I really should have cut my losses before this point, but we returned the next night anyway. This night would really amp up the crazy. I was sitting at a table with a couple guys between our sets and this girl who looked like a skanky version of the actress Ally Sheedy sat down with us. First thing she says is "Can I ask you a question?" I said "Sure." "Can I give you a blow job?" was her reply. I couldn't believe what I heard. There was no way that was going down (pun intended). I said "I appreciate the offer, but no thanks." She got up and left the table. An hour or so later, after the next set, I'm sitting at the table again and she walks over and just punches me in the throat! I wouldn't hit a woman, but she was pushing that policy to the limit. While I was still recovering from the punch, the two bouncers came over, picked her up off the ground and carted her off. They took her to the door and just launched her down the stairs. I thought to myself, "Damn! That was fucked up!" But this night wasn't over.*

*We finished around 6 am and I was standing outside the club when this really shady dude slides up to me and asks me how it's going. I answered "It's been a rough week" and he says "Yeah, I know what you mean. I just got out of prison." I asked*

why and, matter-of-factly, he says “Murder.” I was a little stunned but I said “Well, it must have been a good reason.” He says “Nope.” I was already getting a bad vibe from this guy and then I start thinking that maybe he was with throat-punching, stair-sailing Ally Sheedy from earlier. Then he pulls out this knife with what had to have been an eight-inch blade and points it towards my stomach. At that point, I was exhausted, wired and this was too much. I decided to play the crazy card. “You wanna kill me?!” I shouted at him. “Fuckin’ go ahead and do it! Do it!” This confused him I think. He says “You crazy or something, man?” I just kept the foot on the accelerator and shouted “Do it you, asshole! I’m done with this shit and, if you’re not going to kill me then I’m done talking to you!” And I turned around and headed to the van. I was waiting to feel the knife in my back but, thankfully, it didn’t happen. Sometimes you’ve just got to out-crazy the crazy people that come into your life. There’s a free life lesson from your Uncle Robbie.

#### Night Four

At this point you’re probably wondering why the hell we came back the following night. I can answer that very easily for you. \$100. That’s how much I was making for the week. I had \$8 in my wallet which puts some perspective on things. The gig that night was, surprisingly, uneventful. The Crazy Train didn’t leave the station until after we left the club. During the show, a girl comes up to me and says “I really like your singer.” She then pulled out a huge bag of Quaaludes, called Lemons, and says “I’ll give you some if you hook me up with him.” I was happy to oblige. By 8 am we were all piled into the van and heading to Denny’s for breakfast. Doug was so fucked up that he was virtually passed out at this point. So we’re sitting at Denny’s and the table next to us is getting really loud and crazy. For some reason they’re also dumping salads on each other. I told them they’d better bring it down or the cops were going to show up. Sure enough, around 10 minutes later the cops walk in. But instead of heading to the salad tossers, they come to our table. Doug is passed out so they ask me to join them by the door. I go along thinking that they need a statement from a witness about the other table or something. They ask for my ID, which I give them, and then the next thing I know they’re pushing me up against the wall. I was like “What the fuck?” The restaurant manager is across the room pointing at me and talking to another cop. After about 30 minutes they released me and told me I was banned from that Denny’s for life. They gave me my wallet back and it was empty! Not only did I not get my hamburger, someone had lifted the only \$8 I had to my name!

But it didn’t end there. Finally, we all piled into the van and left. The girl stalking Doug asked if we would drop him off at her house. I said “Sure, for the ludes.” She agreed and the next thing we know we’re pouring Doug out of the van onto the sidewalk in front of her place. He semi-wakes up and mumbled “Where are we?” to which we answered “It doesn’t matter. Have fun” and we took off laughing. Later on we ran into that girl again and she complained that Doug just slept all day.

#### Night Five

No, the week from hell isn't done yet. After this, the last night of the week-long gig, we were heading back to Brandon from the club in Tampa. Doug was driving and it was around 7:30 am. I was in the back seat with a couple of the guys and was drifting in and out of sleep. One time I woke up a bit, looked around and saw everyone sleeping – including Doug who was driving! I shouted “Fuckin’ wake up man!” and he came to again. This happened probably two more times before I was awakened by the instant stop of our car running into another car stopped at a red light. We all woke up instantly, actually. In typical Doug form, he gets out and starts yelling at the guy we ran into. Thankfully, no one was hurt and there wasn't much damage. That would pretty much be the last of Siren for a while.

After the smoke had settled (literally and figuratively) from the week at the club, the band had broken up. Technically, guitarist Hal had been fired before the bottle club gig because his day job made it impossible to do both. Before too long, though, the band re-assembled and Hal was asked to come back. Del Webber, however, didn't receive that invitation. Instead, original Siren bassist Mike Martinez returned to the fold. Seemingly as soon as he had arrived, drummer Brian was also out of the picture and Mike Furney stepped in to replace him. I do remember watching this lineup playing at the band house during this time. They also played the clubs and other occasional gigs in the area.



Show flyer featuring stand in member, Dennis on the left. (See description below.)

The show flyer above has some interesting things to note. First, I created the flyer for the band using my aforementioned Commodore Vic 20 and a prehistoric dot matrix printer. As you might have guessed, we were huge fans of German metal titans, Accept, and there are at least three references

to the song “Fast as a Shark” on this flyer. Not only that, but the “elaborate stage show” mentioned in the flier was actually the replica drum riser and ramps that we had built. These stage pieces were, in essence, just like Accept’s stage on a smaller (and cheaper). The person on the left in this picture was a friend of the band who acted as a stand-in during a photo session where the band was between bass players. By the time of the show advertised here, founding bass player Mike Martinez was back in the band, though. Dennis had fairly light blonde hair whereas Mike had dark, curly hair. So I did a little work on the pic of Dennis with a Sharpie. Left to right are Dennis (aka Fake Mike), Hal, Doug, Rob, and the new drummer, Mike Furney. The “Stagecoach Metal Junction” where this show was held was in reality named the “Stagecoach Country Junction,” but it was one of the very few venues in town so we took it over. One last tidbit about this show was that the gig occurred the same day as Rob’s brother had gotten married. The reception had started at 2 pm as did the partying and Rob was passed out in his car outside of the venue right up until show time. He was still wearing his tuxedo and, for the most part, that ended up being his stage attire. Curt Smith, a guitarist with another local band, Vengeance Inc., ended up filling in for Rob by the second set as Rob was barely aware of where he was on the planet at that time. Years down the line Rob would eventually sell his treasured white, Gibson Flying V to Curt who he respected as a good guy and great guitarist.



*Craig, Linda (Rob's girlfriend), and Rob at the party house*

Around this time, the band moved out (e.g. were kicked out) of the party house and the guys dispersed around the area. Most memorably, guitarists Rob and Hal moved into a mobile home that was adjacent to some cow pastures. It was at this time that Rob wrote the music for what would become the song “Terrible Swift Sword.” I’m pretty sure that Doug was responsible for the American Civil War-themed lyrics on that one. Also at this time, Rob wrote the entire song “Over the Rainbow” - both music and lyrics. One thing that was unique about the song, guitar-wise, was that it used the technique of hammer-ons throughout the song as a sort of rhythm guitar. It was a

different application for sure. The lyrics for the song were inspired by the movie version of “The Wizard of Oz.” I’m pretty sure that Rob wrote the lyrics after visiting the cow pasture next door for some mushrooms and then watched the movie while enjoying his ride. In any case, it certainly made for a different experience musically.

By June of 1983 I had just graduated high school and was preparing to leave for college at Florida State University in Tallahassee which was about a five hour drive from Brandon. In other words, I wasn’t going to be home much. I was still friends with all of the guys and was excited to begin the next chapter of my own life. When I left for college in August, I had no idea that my involvement in the band was far from over.

## 4 Rebirth

While I was away at school I kept in touch with my friends from the band. This was accomplished by actual letters on paper and the occasional phone call. You have to remember that this was during a

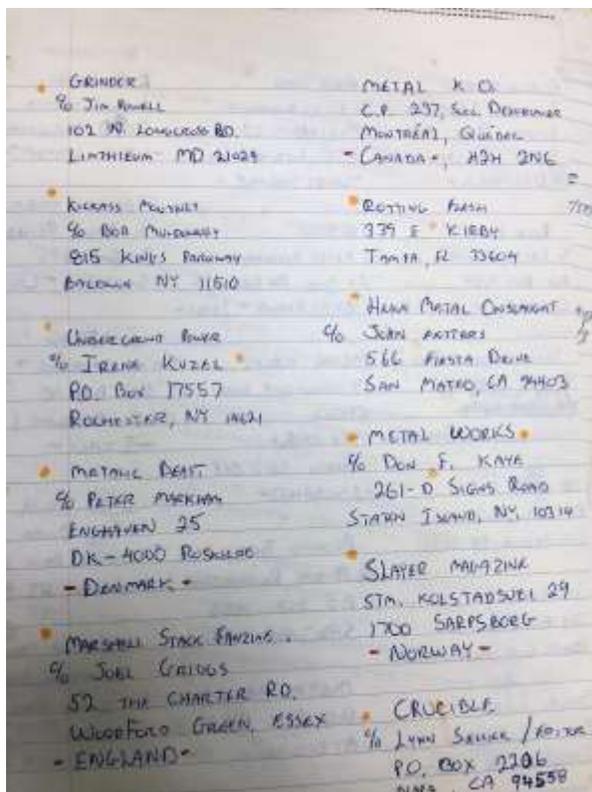


*Young Ed at Florida State University*

time when long distance phone calls were expensive. It was during my first year at FSU that I got the news that Siren had broken up completely. I don't recall what eventually led to the break up. It was definitely a hand-to-mouth existence for some of those guys at that time. I remember Rob Phillips telling me about how he was collecting bottles on the side of the road to exchange for money at the local convenience store. Of course he then had to make the choice between cigarettes or bread. But Rob was one of the most single-minded and determined people I've ever met. He held on to that goal of being a rock star with both hands and didn't let go even though it meant sacrificing a lot of creature comforts. Which brings us to tangent number two in my story – Rob Phillips 20 years later.

I reconnected with Rob around 2002. I hadn't seen or spoken to him in around 17 years at that point. During that time he had been busy to say the least. After leaving Siren around 1987, he founded his own commercial fire protection company in South Florida and had built it up into a multi-million dollar enterprise. He had also married and had a teenage daughter by that point. I remember visiting with him at his estate-like home in Coral Springs and being amazed at what he had accomplished. I had just gotten into home recording myself a couple of years earlier and had shown him what could be done with computers and a handful of recording gear. While I was visiting with him we went out and he bought everything he needed to start recording at his home. He hadn't done anything musically in the years since leaving the band, but the small fire was still there and it grew quickly. Within a year he had also purchased a vintage white, Gibson Flying V like the one he used to play and also built out a full-fledged studio at his corporate headquarters. Rob actually decided that he enjoyed singing more than playing guitar as the next few years passed. With some local musician friends, he formed and fronted a band and even recorded a couple of albums. The band's name? Why Siren of course. He had legally obtained the rights to the name. It was cool to see him excited about music again. Tangent over.

So it's now the end of 1983 and I'm home on Christmas break from college. Siren at that point was a non-entity. Hal Dunn, Mike Martinez, and Mike Furney had remained in touch and would eventually form the heavy metal glam band Atomic Opera over the next year with guitar virtuoso Todd Grubbs. While on that break, I was hanging out with Doug Lee and remarked that we should get Rob and record a two song, 7" single over the summer. My inspiration actually came from seeing how well my friends in another band, Nasty Savage, were doing with their music.



A page from the actual list given to me by Ronnie

For those unfamiliar with Nasty Savage, they were another Brandon band who were very much ahead of their time musically. They were heavy, progressive, musically skilled and great showmen. But it was their front man, Nasty Ronnie, who really put them over the top. Not only was he a performer who left it all on the stage, he was (and is) a natural born promoter and entrepreneur. It was at this time that the phenomenon of fanzines were just taking hold. In that age before the Internet, fanzines were small, low budget magazines that were created and distributed by dedicated heavy metal fans. These fanzines spread like wildfire around the globe and helped to launch many of today's metal titans such as Metallica and others. Ronnie had been actively promoting Nasty Savage to the fanzines around the world and had garnered a lot of good press for themselves. Eventually it led to their signing and recording albums for the young Metal Blade Records. Ronnie told me all about the world of fanzines and said he would share his contact list with me which was very cool of him.

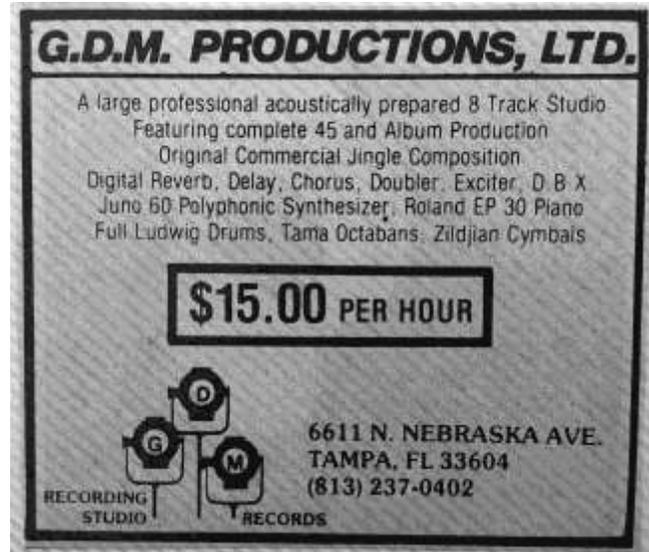
Doug agreed that the idea of creating and promoting a Siren single sounded cool. So we set our sights to record during the summer of 1984 and we would see where things went after that. We discussed the project with Rob Phillips and he was also on-board. We recruited Ben Parrish, a friend of Rob's, to play bass on the two songs. We selected the songs "Metro Mercenary" and "Terrible Swift Sword" to be the debut release. We felt that they were solid entries that reflected the main direction of the band musically.

I had sold my drum set to buy a Commodore 64 personal computer (Commodore represent!) so I was without a kit. I ended up borrowing a small kit from a friend of mine so I could work on the songs with the guys before we went into the studio. Not that I was spoiled or anything, but this borrowed drum set made my Zim Gar kit look like Neal Peart's rig. But, as the saying goes, "beggars can't be choosers," so I made do. As I returned from school for the summer in 1984, we hit the ground running. Siren was reborn and about to dive into the world of recording for the first time.

## 5 Metro Mercenary

Upon my return to Brandon, the four of us set up in the living room of my house and started to work on the two songs for the single. Needless to say, it was rough, but it was raw and true. It was also very exciting to think that, at the end of the summer, we would have a Siren record in our hands and a list of contacts around the globe with which to share our music and seek our fortune.

Unlike today, where I have a recording studio in my home with virtually unlimited tracks, thousands of sounds, plug-ins that can recreate virtually any amplifier, and a full orchestra at my fingertips, the state-of-the-art in recording in 1984 was much different. It was also fairly expensive for those of us independent bands. Beyond that reality, though, was the fact that we were in no position to be able to use state-of-the-art anything at that point. Our budget (or lack thereof) actually led us to a very modest studio named G.D.M. Productions, Ltd. that was located in a small strip center in Tampa. Coincidentally it was not too far from Morrisound Recording which actually was state-of-the-art. G.D.M. really did put the “limited” in Ltd. It was significantly less equipped than a top-of-the-line facility, but its owner, Gary De Michelle (the GDM in the name) was a great guy who made up in enthusiasm what his facility may have lacked in gear.



*An ad from local music magazine for G.D.M.*



*Rob and Gary De Michelle at GDM during the "Metro" sessions.*

Thankfully, Gary was a drummer himself and had a pretty nice kit at the studio which was already mic'd up. We began recording in June of 1984. I think we did a total of two or three sessions over the course of a week or two for recording and mixing. The heart of the studio was an eight track, reel-to-reel recording deck. For those of you who are unfamiliar, this basically meant that we had a total of only eight tracks on which to capture our sonic magic. The drums were recorded first using six tracks and then those were bounced down to two tracks. This left those six tracks for

everything else such as the guitars, bass, and vocals.

I remember that Keith Kollins, the bass player for the band Savatage, came to the studio once or twice while we were there. I don't recall exactly why that was. I think Doug may have asked him to co-produce or something, but I don't think anything came of that.

We also recorded an early version of the Siren song “Over the Rainbow” during these first sessions. I found a copy of this demo version and it is included in the [Links and Media section](#). It wasn't until our next demo recordings that the song was re-recorded and released, though.

All in all, the recording went fairly smoothly. Listening back to these songs they are definitely raw and flawed on occasion, but for the time, they weren't too bad. We finished up the songs and sent them off to be mastered and pressed. We had some time before the records would be ready so we booked a band photo shoot at a local studio. The resulting promo shots definitely fall into the "What was I thinking?" category when I look at them now. I'm mainly talking about myself. Look at those sunglasses and that cop/porn star mustache! And why didn't I take off my watch? So many poor choices, so little time.



Early (and embarrassing) promo shot. L to R - Ed Aborn, Ben Parrish, Rob Phillips, Doug Lee



The finished product, our first single.

I think it took about a month or so before we got the discs back from the manufacturer. For some reason we opted not to have a regular, paper sleeve printed for the packaging. Instead we had a folded insert printed locally and we placed those inside a clear plastic sheath along with each record in a paper sleeve. The package design was pretty simple. This was during a time where we had to have all

of the text created on a typesetting machine. We were still half a decade away from the desktop publishing revolution. The front of the single was the Siren logo which was designed by the brother of Nasty Savage drummer Curtis Beeson. In fact, if you look closely, you might notice that the Siren and Nasty Savage logos are similar stylistically. And now you know why!



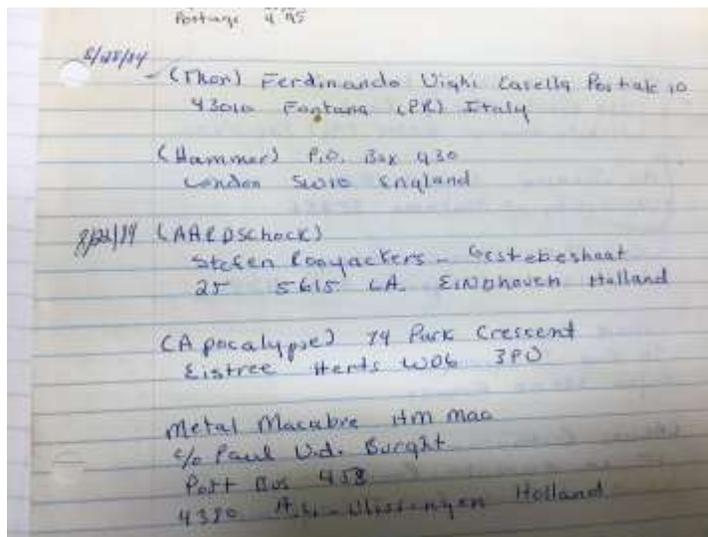
The back side of the "Metro Mercenary" single.

The records arrived in early August and I remember sitting in Doug's living room as we set up an assembly line to put together and sign some of those 1,000 singles. I would be heading back up to school in a few weeks and I had already met with Nasty Ronnie and received his list of fanzines, magazines, and some sage advice. It would be up to me to set the promotional gears in motion from the rental house I would be sharing with some school friends from the previous year. So, by the end of August, I was driving back up to Tallahassee with several hundred brand new records, semi-embarrassing promo shots, a list of media outlets from around the globe, and limitless, young hope and enthusiasm.

## 6 Back to Brandon

My new home in Tallahassee was a rental house located on the outskirts of the university campus that I shared with four friends from the previous year at FSU. As soon as I was settled into this crowded, little abode, I went about the work of sending the Siren promo packages to the four corners of the globe. Each package contained a copy of the single, a promo photo, and a brief bio of the band and its members. I don't remember how many I sent exactly, but Ronnie's list did contain at least 50 or more fanzines, radio stations, and magazines.

As these packages found their destinations, a strange thing happened. We actually started to get some coverage! And, for the most part, the response to the music itself was positive. The weeks turned into months and more and more responses started to come in. Then, along with the letters, I started to receive copies of the actual fanzines and magazines featuring reviews and stories about the band and our music. Keep in mind that this was way before the Internet, and we're now



My working list of mailings with dates each were sent.



A fanzine from the era featuring Siren on the cover

so former Siren guitarist, Hal Dunn, shared the apartment instead. Also, Craig – who used to run sound at the band’s house – moved in with Hal and me. By this time, Hal was in full swing with his new band, Atomic Opera. Looking back on things now, those were some fun times. We all got along well and enjoyed the friendly competition of each having our own bands.

Bass player Ben Parrish who had recorded the single with Siren wasn’t really into playing live or being in a band full-time. So the bass slot was filled by a friend of Doug’s named Ed Hauser. Ed was a top-notch player and also a good vocalist. After jamming together for a while, we decided to set a goal of recording our next demo. Cassette demos were the norm at that time and were much less expensive than producing singles or full albums on vinyl. We opted to go with four songs that we felt were good representatives of our style.

jaded by the fact that we can communicate instantly with people around the world. Back then, it was a big deal to receive a letter from Poland, a fanzine in Germany, or be featured in a magazine from the UK.

The end of 1984 was approaching as was the end of the fall semester for me at college. As my promotional efforts were gaining traction, I was getting more and more excited about where things might lead. However, I also realized that being several hundred miles away from the rest of the band wasn’t an ideal situation. After much consideration, I decided to transfer from Florida State to the University of South Florida which is in Tampa. This would allow me to continue my education, but I’d be back in the local area where the band could work as a unit regularly. So, in January of 1985, I moved back to the Tampa area.

Initially our singer, Doug, and I rented an apartment that was a handful of miles from the University of South Florida (USF) campus. Due to some personal circumstances, he was unable to continue living there for very long,



New bass player Ed Hauser (aka Ed Amyx)

Guitarist Rob Phillips had always been sort of an amateur historian and had a fascination with World War II. He wasn't a fan of the Nazis per se, but he had always felt a connection to the country of Germany which at this time was still divided into East and West. He loved reading about the battles and strategies employed during the big war. We actually used to spend a lot of time playing the game "Risk" which offered a chance for world domination on a small scale. One topic in particular about the war had always fascinated Rob, and that was the role of the German U-boats. He had always wanted to write a song about the experience of being a sailor in what was then a hellish environment, encased in steel, thousands of feet underwater. So, the title song of our next demo was set. "Iron Coffins" would be the next step in Siren's journey.

## 7 Iron Coffins

We started working on the new demo in the winter of 1984. With Rob's consultation and inspiration, I wrote the lyrics for "Iron Coffins" first. I always enjoyed working with Rob musically and he was always very complimentary about my lyric writing. We were both pleased about how the song was shaping up.

Next up was "Shadow of a Future Past" which began with an acoustic guitar riff that Doug Lee had been working with for a while. It's funny how we can often remember some obscure moments in our lives decades later, but we can't remember where we parked our car when we go grocery shopping. I distinctly remember writing the lyrics for "Shadow of a Future Past" sitting at the dining room table of the apartment that I shared with Hal and Craig. I've always enjoyed enigmatic lyrics. This was at the height of the Cold War and this song is basically a retelling of mankind's penchant for killing each other with newer and more awful technologies. Not that this song, or anything else I've ever written for that matter, are works of art, but the 20 year old Ed Aborn was at least trying to say something helpful to the world through metal.



*My new kit all mic'd up to record "Iron Coffins" at GDM*

"Before the Storm" was also written at that kitchen table. This song was probably one of the heaviest and fastest that we'd done up to that point and I wanted the lyrics to also be powerful. I was trying to convey the frustration and resulting anger of those people who were trapped in countries, lives, or any situation where they felt helpless and/or controlled. By early 1985 I had purchased my first double bass drum kit. As a huge Accept fan, I'd always loved songs like "Breaker" and "Fast as a Shark," so I was itching to get my feet into a fast-driving, double bass-fueled song. Unfortunately, despite the fact that

the song has double bass drumming throughout, it's not very evident in the finished product of the demo. More on that later.

The last song on the “Iron Coffins” cassette was the re-recorded “Over the Rainbow” that I mentioned previously. The hammer-ons were flying along with the monkey men with batwings.

As it says in “Over the Rainbow” there’s no place like home. So, to record the demo, we returned to GDM where we had recorded the single the previous year. I think we were in the studio in February of 1985 for this new effort. Instead of using the studio’s in-house kit, I brought my own this time which was very cool. Unfortunately, though, as I alluded to earlier, the studio owner/engineer Gary wasn’t a big metal fan so he wasn’t accustomed to mixing a song that relied on a double bass beat. Each bass drum was mic’d separately



*Me punishing my new kit during the "Iron Coffins" sessions*

but, unfortunately, he wasn’t familiar with the techniques necessary to balance and compress the two and make them sound consistent. Because of this, the song has never sounded right to me. One foot dominates and it sounds like I’m just playing a simple beat. As I mentioned before, since we only had eight tracks to work with in total, the drums had to be mixed down to just two. I wasn’t at the studio when that bounce took place so there was nothing I could do after-the-fact.

Ed Hauser did a great job with the bass and backing vocals throughout the demo. He was a cool dude who always made playing look easy. He also had a great sense of humor and still does actually. One memorable thing I remember about Ed was that my first ever viewing of “This is Spinal Tap” was over at his house back in the nascent days of VHS and the video boom.

Overall, the recording of the four songs for the demo went pretty smoothly and quickly. The quick part was more out of necessity than efficiency actually. This was back when we were paying by the hour to be in that small studio. Plus we had to buy the eight track recording and two track master tapes for the project. Even though GDM’s rate was a mere \$15 an hour, I’m not sure that anyone in the band had a job at that point. While that rate a fraction of what was being charged down the street at Morrisound, it was still a lot of money for us to scrape up between us. Thankfully, the songs were pretty well-rehearsed by the time we walked in the door.

Here are a couple of other things I remember about those sessions. I remember Rob coaching Doug on the German language, “eins, zwei, drei,” torpedo firing commands of the sub commander in “Iron Coffins.” The sonar pings at the beginning of that song and the wind sounds on the intro to “Over the Rainbow” were both done using a Juno synthesizer that was in the studio. I had a lot of fun poking around with the sounds on that thing.

At the time there were a couple of places in town that were doing cassette duplication. So, once the songs had been completed, we brought over our masters for copying. Thankfully, the turnaround time would be much quicker and less expensive than the vinyl singles had been. While the cassettes

were being duplicated we arranged for a photo shoot to promote the new recordings. As luck would have it, there was an actual, retired U.S. Navy submarine, the USS Requin, docked on the Hillsborough River that runs through downtown Tampa. We figured that a submarine was a submarine, so this one would be a fine stand-in for a German U-boat. So we trekked to downtown one late February afternoon dressed in leather and studs and bought our tickets as tourists on the fine maritime vessel.

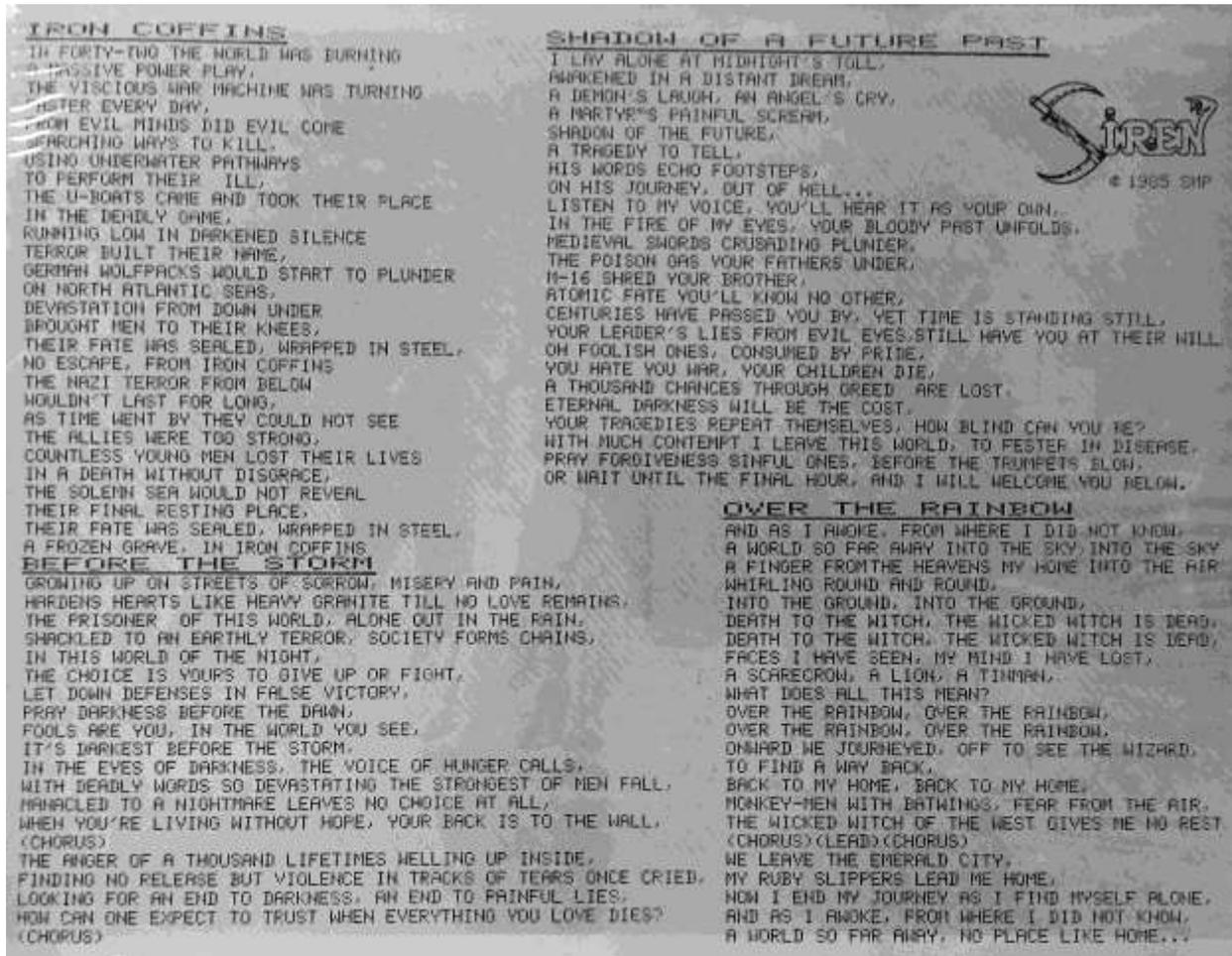
There was a parking garage across from where the submarine was moored and our photographer had taken up his place on one of the floors of the garage where he could get a decent shot of us. All-in-all, the photo that we finally chose from that day isn't too bad. Doug looked suitably menacing. My hair (yes, I did used to have some) and beard (still got that) looked good. I think I was wearing parachute pants, but thankfully the picture was in black and white so the world was spared from seeing the original blue color. Bass player Ed looked good and struck a Napoleon-like pose. I still give Rob a hard time, though, about the fact that he chose to wear a black Members Only jacket and a striped ascot that he had worn to his brother's recent wedding. Capping off his look were Capezio dance shoes. Somehow, it all worked for him, though.



*Me, Doug, Ed, and Rob on the front of the sub for the "Iron Coffins" promo flyer*

As part of the promotional packages that we sent out with the cassettes, we created a two-sided flyer that had the 8x10 submarine photo on one side, and the lyrics to all of the songs on the opposite side. I can't help but smile when I look at this flyer because it totally dates the computing

technology of the time. I had printed those lyrics on my 9-pin dot matrix printer that was connected to my Commodore 64. Yes, I had upgraded my computer as well as my drums. Now that I think about it, computers and drums have both been a big part of my life since I was a teenager. I still love playing the drums, but I've been an Information Technology professional as a career for the past almost 30 years now. So computers allow me to pay for my music habit as well as the necessities of life. And computers now also allow me to have that recording studio in my house that I could have never imagined in 1985.



The back side of the "Iron Coffins" promo flyer in all of its dot matrix splendor



The "Iron Coffins" cassette j-card insert

Speaking of technological advancements, I also remember Doug and I went to a local typesetter to have the text for the cassette j-card insert created for us. If you wanted nice looking text back in the day, you had to go to a professional shop. The cover of the "Iron Coffins" demo was an old photo of an actual German submarine with the Siren logo pasted in on the upper right. I don't remember where we got this photo of the German sub, but if I had to make a bet, I'd say that there is probably a history book from the old Brandon Library with a page missing.

Now that I was back living in the area, Doug and I really doubled down on the promotional activities together. He lived with his parents and their house became our

marketing office. He and I spent countless hours there putting packages together, answering letters, and doing thing like remote radio interviews where the host would send us the questions and we would record our answers on cassette and send it back. You can listen to one from Holland in the [Links and Media section](#). Things were really starting to gain traction and we were getting some great coverage in magazines and other outlets. It was a fun time and things seemed to be going very well. Of course, just when things are rolling along smoothly, along come the lineup changes.

## 8 More Ch, Ch, Ch, Changes

Somewhere around the late summer of 1985 some things went down that I don't really remember the exact details of to be honest. The net result, though, was that founding guitarist Rob Phillips was asked to leave the band. This is kind of a sore spot with me, actually. I don't remember the specific reason why he was let go, but I think it was something along the lines of stuff going on in his personal life that wasn't allowing him to fulfil his commitment to the band as much as was required in the rest of the band's opinion. That's what I think it was anyway. But here's the part that really burned me. Doug and I were the two, primary drivers of the band. Although I was in college, promoting the band was essentially my full-time job.

Doug, Ed Hauser, and I had met to discuss the situation that was going on regarding Rob. Letting him go from the band was a very difficult decision for us to make – especially in light of the fact he was the only truly original member. But things had gotten to the point where it had to be done. So, after the three of us had met about this, it was decided that I would be the one to break the news to Rob. It was one of the least pleasant things I would ever have to do in my life up to that point because he was a friend and a mentor to me.

Within a few days of the band meeting, I called Rob and asked him to come over to the apartment so we could talk. I don't remember the specifics of the conversation, but I do recall that I had really tried to think things through in advance and lay out the reasons behind the band's decision in a way that he would hopefully understand. Unfortunately, understanding the logic behind the decision wasn't something he was interested in trying out that afternoon. It was a big blow to him and I can understand why it was so hard for him. To say he was upset would be to understate it a bit. I'm not a person who is prone to fighting, but he was livid. I knew the conversation wasn't going to end up with a handshake, but I was beginning to wonder if it was going to end with some fists flying. Thankfully, although he was enraged, it didn't get physical between us. It did, however, strike quite a blow to our friendship for several years. While that was a source of disappointment for me, that's not what made me mad about the situation. It's what happened immediately after our conversation.

As soon as he had stormed out of my apartment, Rob went to see Doug. Instead of having my back and reinforcing with Rob that this had been a band decision, Doug acted surprised that I had kicked Rob out of the band and said that it was just something we had talked about as a possibility. So Doug completely threw me under the bus on this. I found out about this when Rob called me the next day and told me what Doug had said. Needless to say, it was a double blow for me. Not only did I have to hurt one of my friends by ejecting him from his own band, but I then was stabbed in the back by the



Eddie "Faxon" Kotz in the Siren warehouse

friend who I had trusted and with whom I was equal partners in the band. It took a while for the dust to settle on that one. Unfortunately, the knife in my back would not be the last one with Doug's fingerprints on the handle.

Soon after the situation with Rob had occurred, we got going again and began looking for a new guitarist. As fate would have it, he would turn out to be right next door. Well, he would be a couple of warehouse spaces away in any case. A tall, slender, black-haired, teenage Eddie Kotz would be the next to enter the Siren fold. I reached out to Eddie, who has since resided in Los Angeles for several years, about his recollection of how he came to join the band. Here is his reply:

**Eddie Kotz:**

*"Ha! I remember it quite well actually. I was in a band called Sircor and the bass player and I (Mario?) used to jam with a friend of ours in his rehearsal space, which was next door to Siren's. (It was close to the club named Mark Twain's and we would hang there post-bar time). Anyway, one night we're rehearsing at the warehouse, fucked up and jamming, having a blast, when Doug Lee looks in a starts watching.*

*Doug asked if he could sing a song with us? I asked if he knew "I Don't Know" by Ozzy, and that was that. Apparently you guys were in the process of firing Rob(?)... I just know he HATED Rob. He was with Caveman (Kevin?), we hung out for a while and then he showed me his Siren briefcase. I was sold. He gave me the single, the Iron Coffins tape, and I learned it all the next day. I then met with you and Ed Hauser and we all clicked right away. My style was much looser than Rob's and I got the impression you guys likes it. So you guys offered me the gig, with the stipulation that I had to change my name since there was already two (and a half) Ed's in the band.*

*Some Six Degrees of Separation trivia...*

*Sircor was, in addition to me and Mario, Mike Browning on drums and Kenny Bamber on vox. It turned out that Mike joined Sircor solely with the intention of stealing our singer Kenny (who sounded like King Diamond) for his other band. His other band was Morbid Angel. Our bands actually ended up kinda becoming friendly, and the first Morbid Angel demos are recorded with Kenny doing the vocals for them in there tin room lockout.*

*I had no idea Morbid Angel had gone on to become the Beatles of Death Metal. And those Kenny Bamber tapes hold some element of lore in the Morbid Angel world.*

*So Siren is directly linked to Morbid Angel."*

As Eddie alluded to, a humorous thing to note was that all four of us in the band at this point were named Edward.

- Edward Aborn
- Edward Hauser
- Edward Kotz
- Douglas Edward Lee

I'm sure there's a joke in there somewhere. Because of this, though, the two most recent Eds decided to adopt stage names. Bassist Hauser opted for Amyx and new the young new guitarist became Faxon Kotz. He tells me that he thinks he may have had a relative with the name, but he does remember picking the name out of a baby book. A little Googling just now and apparently it's a German name meaning "long haired." In retrospect that was quite appropriate. At the time, though, we were informed by some German contacts that the name was very similar to a slang curse word which was pretty funny.

Despite the nom de plume, he remained just Eddie to me. I think he was only 18 when he joined the band which made him the youngster even though I was only a few years older than he was. We always got along very well. I think this was because we were very similar in terms of interests, intellect, and sense of humor. We also worked together creatively very well. Even though it would only last for about a year, our musical collaboration was going to be hitting what I consider to be the pinnacle of Siren's creative potential.



*A slimmer (and hairier) me at the shady warehouse space*

As Eddie mentioned, Siren was, at this point, rehearsing in a warehouse space near the Tampa International Airport. Unlike the clean, well-lit self-storage of suburban Brandon from a few years prior, this place was dingy, industrial, and fairly suspect on every level. I remember that it was possible to climb up to the top of the space and walk across the rafters across the tops of the other spaces in the unit. “Nothing but the best” was apparently not our motto at the time. Thankfully, we were never burglarized (or mugged for that matter), but it was definitely safe to keep your head on a swivel in that joint!

Around that time we also had a second guitarist join the band for a very brief time. His name was Scott Wallace and I think he was a friend of Faxon’s. He was actually a really good player. Fax would say that Scott’s style was classic and his own was trashic. That pretty much summed it up. Although Scott was a skilled guitarist, Faxon had a rawness in his playing that epitomized rock ‘n roll. He was also a natural on stage. It was no surprise to me that Faxon would eventually leave Tampa and move to Hollywood, California in 1987 at the height of the Sunset Strip heyday of metal. He fit right in. Scott Wallace, on the other hand, lasted only about a month in Siren. Ironically, though, there is only one live performance of the band recorded on video during that time and it was a gig with Scott. Maybe I’ll post the video sometime even though the audio is pretty horrible. If nothing else, you can watch Scott have a temper tantrum on stage at one point.



*Short-timer Scott Wallace (pre-tantrum)*

As 1985 wound to a close, there was one more change that took place. Bass player Ed Hauser exited the band due to issues in his personal life. As I've said before, Ed was and is a great guy, but he had a pretty freaky deaky personal life with his wife (and others) at the time. Eventually the freakiness must have taken control because he couldn't continue with the band. Gregg Culbertson, a friend of Faxon's with whom he used to hang out at the bars after hours would join the band to become the new bass player.

While Hauser had been a really good player, Gregg completely blew me away with his abilities. As we began to rehearse together, we began to share a single brain it seemed. He had a true gift for locking into a groove with me as a drummer and knew how to tastefully play in a way that brought new dimensions to the songs without overplaying. The lineup was now in place for Siren to record its best materials to date. We set our sights on the next recording project which would become the "Dead of Night" cassette demo.



*New bass player Gregg*

## 9 Dead of Night

Our rehearsal space changed, once again, after the addition of Gregg as the bass player. We now called the garage of Doug's house (aka his parents' house) home. Doug's parents were two of the sweetest folks I'd ever known. To say that Doug put them through some difficult times through the years would be understating things a bit. But there was no question about how much they loved



*The garage at the Lee house where the magic happened*

their son, and they graciously put up with us making a lot of noise in their house at least three or four nights each week. As the weeks turned into months, the musical engine of Siren – Faxon, Gregg, and I – quickly became a very cohesive unit. Gregg had a style unlike any bass player I had worked with previously. He had a natural feel for the pocket of the song and was incredibly tasteful with his playing. When I listen back to the songs on the "Dead of Night" demo, it still amazes me how much he is actually playing, but it doesn't overpower the song. He manages to hold down the foundation of the tune but also give it subtle flourishes. That's a rare skill in my opinion.

Besides becoming a tight musical group, Gregg, Faxon and I became very good friends as well. When I think back about these guys, it always makes me smile. Gregg always seemed to be laughing or joking about something and had a great sense of humor. If I remember correctly, he was also a fairly

stereotypical 80's musician who, because of his good looks, being a member of a band, and being broke most of the time, relied on the kindness of females – mostly strippers - to provide housing, food, and the occasional pair of leather pants. Faxon also lived like someone who might have been



*The man, the myth, the legend - Faxon*

interviewed in “The Decline of Western Civilization Part Two: The Metal Years” documentary from the late 80's. In fact, he actually took it to the next level. Not only did he live with his stripper girlfriend, but they had two roommates who were also members of the trade. “Living the dream” as they say. Not that there's anything wrong with strippers, mind you. Without them, I don't think metal as we know it would exist. And bands like Mötley Crüe and Poison would have died of malnutrition on the Sunset Strip by 1985. Yes, strippers and other generous females who take care of wayward musicians are the unspoken heroes of the rock world.

Looking back, I have good memories of the time spent in that garage working with the guys. We really went at things with a professional attitude. Unlike some of the earlier years with Siren, there were no lights, no drum risers, and no fog machines. There were no groups of hangers-on lying about the place for entertainment or lack of somewhere else to be. There was no partying or scores of empty beer bottles

laying around. It was like going to the office. We worked on the songs with a clear focus. Speaking of beer, though, that bring something to mind. Now boarding – Tangent Number Three.

It goes without saying that rock 'n roll or metal bands and partying usually go hand-in-hand. Some bands rise to fame and fortune despite their legendary habits (e.g. the recently mentioned Mötley Crüe) but most bands seem to want the party to start before the success and monetary payback has been secured. I guess that makes sense to a degree because partying like a rock star - for a brief time anyway - can be had by anyone with a little extra cash to spend. For the most part, though, fame can't be purchased so easily. It can definitely be bought, but it takes a lot of money and usually a last name like “Hilton.” To say that untold numbers have bands have disintegrated before take-off due to drugs and alcohol would be a pretty sure bet. I was never really lured by either of these things, personally.

While the other guys did enjoy drinking and, on occasion, something a little less than legal, it was never my thing. When I first joined Siren I was only 16, so I was too young to drink legally. Meanwhile, the other guys were all 21 and had been partying for years. Of course there was always beer or other

things around at the band’s house or other rehearsal spaces, but it just never called to me. They would always offer, and they respected my choices when I declined. So I guess I was a little different in that respect. It wasn’t about partying, or women, or even potential fame for me. I guess I just loved the music and the creative process. I still do, which is why I make music all these years later. I do have to say, though, that being the only sober one around at times definitely led to some interesting experiences. As they say, there are just some things you can’t un-see! Let’s get back to the garage.



*Hard at work on the business of the band. Except for me. I'm just eye candy.*

So the four of us were now hard at work on the new demo. We were very energized by the prospects of possibly landing some sort of deal since we were getting such great feedback from around the world. Musically, this would be strongest material from Siren to date because of the chemistry between the members. Despite the earlier situation with the handling of Rob’s exit from the band, Doug and I were working

closer than ever before on the promotion of the band. Together we were building a network of contacts, sending out press kits and demos, answering fan and media mail, and doing everything possible to get the word out about Siren. We were sure that the new songs that were being written would be the ticket to that elusive destination known as the “record deal.” As it turns out, we were right about this, but only half of us would reach that destination. More on that later.

The title track of the demo, “Dead of Night,” is one of my favorite songs that we created. It’s very raw and heavy and embodies the unencumbered energy of our younger selves. It’s also different than any other song we had done from a rhythm perspective in that the primary beat relied on lots of some off-time snare work and double bass footwork that was actually quite complex for the time period. Not that I was a drumming virtuoso by any means, but this demo was definitely me at the peak of my playing at the time having been rehearsing so regularly for so long. There’s one thing that always pokes me in the ear with this song, though. At the very, very end of the song I miss a snare hit and hit the rim of the snare. Back then, it was difficult, or impossible, to fix such mistakes easily so we just left it considering how minor it was. But I always hear it!

I wrote the lyrics to “Dead of Night” as well. The inspiration was the tendency at the time for people who were committing crimes to blame media for their behavior. Heavy metal music was a big time scapegoat for this practice at the time and everyone was blaming Priest, Ozzy, Maiden, or anyone

else with deep pockets for murders, suicides, tipping over vending machines, etc. So this song was a first person tale similar to Iron Maiden’s “Killers” except this guy says:

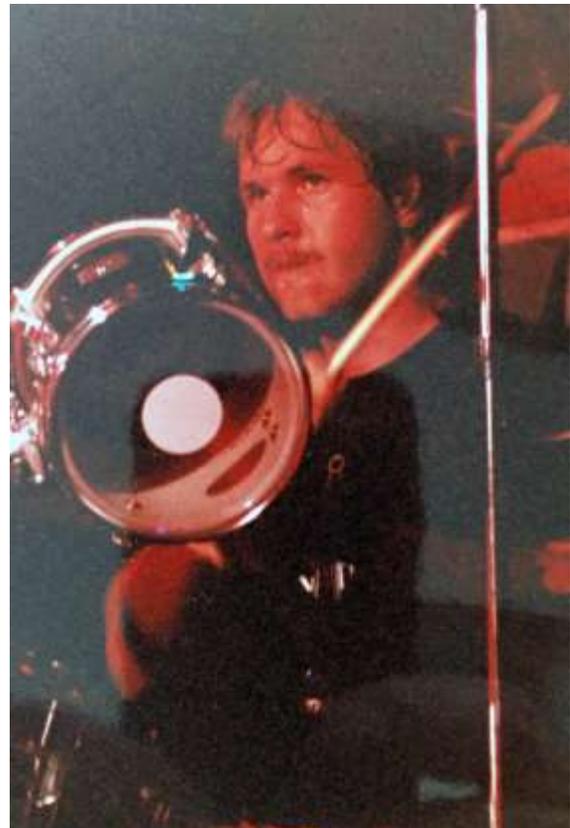
*“And if they finally catch me, I know just what I’ll say  
I’ll blame it on TV I watch and the records that I play  
I know just what I’m doing, and I know that it is wrong  
But in the night it feels so right my terror will go on”*

I love Gregg’s bass work on this song, too. I mean just listen to it! Of the four of us in the band, I think that he was the most gifted musically.

“Black Death” is another solid track on the demo. Doug wrote the lyrics to this one and Faxon the music. I always had fun playing this song. There was a lot of straightforward double bass work on it, but also a lot of toms which really locked into what Faxon was playing on the guitar. It had a feel that was not unlike the song “S.A.T.O” by Ozzy and Gregg’s bass playing was once again stellar. The bridge of the song includes a synthesizer that was a little heavy-handed in my opinion, but the idea was in the right place. Listening to it now I think it was an example of the promise that the band had if the group might have had more resources and better production.

The third cut on the demo was “So Far to Go” which I had written after being moved by some of the fan letters that we had received from people who were behind the Iron Curtain at the time. The Berlin Wall was still in place and it’s easy for us now to forget that a large group of the world’s population was living a prison-like existence in many Communist countries. I had heard stories of people trying to escape from Soviet-controlled East Berlin into the freedom of West Berlin. Many of these people were literally shot and killed while running across the no-man’s land between the two halves of the city. “So Far to Go” is written from the perspective of a man who is making that run with the Soviet guard towers behind him and freedom in front of him. He knows that those guards can only go so far and he is willing to risk his life to make it the other side. I also used some American iconography like the Statue of Liberty as his inspiration.

Musically, “So Far To Go” is another strong song and I always loved the melodic nature of it as a whole. Once again, there’s a healthy amount of double bass playing. Maybe someone should have told me to lay off one of my feet for a little bit! This song really demonstrates how tight Gregg and I were musically. I really keyed off of a lot of his bass lines and he



*Chances are I'm playing a double bass beat*

knew exactly how to accent the key points in the song. For those of you keeping score at home, that's me singing the harmonies on some of the melody lines. I use the term "singing" loosely here, but it is me nonetheless. The ending of the song fades out into a nice acoustic version of the main theme which was something we hadn't done previously.

Even though it is the last song on the demo, "Slice of Hate" was actually the first song written out of the four. The original lyrics for the song were penned by Craig Miller, my former flat mate and party house sound engineer. The idea had been around for quite a while and the tag line of "Come on in we've set your plate, another fuckin' slice of hate!" had been a favorite of Doug's since its inception. It was a feel good kind of song about a guy with an incredibly bitchy live-in girlfriend who fantasizes about different, violent ways that he could off her. Now that I think about it, it may have been inspired by a girlfriend that lived with a band member at the party house, but I can't confirm that.



*A sweaty me at Skybound Recording during "Slice of Hate" takes*

What I remember most about "Slice of Hate" was actually the recording process. We decided to record the new demo at a small studio named Skybound Recording Studios in a town named Port Richey which is about an hour or so north of Brandon. We began recording in late November of 1985 and finished up in January of 1986. To be honest, I'm not sure what took so long as we had recorded the drums, bass, and rhythm guitar in a single night. That's why I remember "Slice of Hate" so vividly in fact. It's pretty much a non-stop

double bass burner. This was back during a time when editing a song could be very difficult and usually involved actually cutting the tape physically. So, it was best to get a whole, uninterrupted pass to use as the foundation of the song. Well, because of some technical difficulties with the gear, and the occasional musician malfunction, it took around 10 tries to get "Slice" laid down successfully. On the final version, you can still hear the occasional rim hit or stick click, but it's real if nothing else. I think we began recording around 9 pm and finally got the take around 1 am. I was worn out by that time but I still had to do the rest of the tracks. Thankfully, being 20 years old and enjoying the adrenaline from being in the studio recording, I was able to get the job done.

The middle section of "Slice of Hate" features a sound effect which is also something we'd never done before. Incorporating this into the song wasn't as simple as just searching up "big explosion" on Google and then selecting an audio clip from the hundreds available. This was 20 years before that would be a possibility. No, the explosion sound effect on that song actually came off of an archaic (even for that time) reel-to-reel tape recording of sound effects that I had at my house. It was something like they'd use for old TV shows or the like. I had to bounce it off of my old AKAI reel-to-

reel player onto a cassette and then they laid that onto a track in the song at the studio. If you'll listen, it's actually used three times in a row. That's old school for you, baby!

That break section of the song was supposed to be a mini audio drama where the downtrodden man is fed up with his belittling girlfriend so he turns on the gas to the stove and leaves her cigarettes and lighter nearby. Then he leaves the house to run an errand. She lights up a cigarette and the house blows up. You then hear the man chuckle and say "It's cheaper than bullets" and the lead guitar break kicks in. Looking back, how did we figure that blowing up his house would be cheaper than bullets? Masters of the dramatic theatrical arts we weren't. The woman's voice in that middle section is the girlfriend of the studio owner at the time. Speaking honestly, it's not one of the more convincing acting performances I've ever heard. The very end of the song features Doug dropping an inside joke about coming over for some spaghetti and then channeling his inner Elvis. We just figured it fit since the song was always tongue-in-cheek anyway. I guess we were kind of like Helloween in that regard only a few years earlier and much less talented!



*Gregg and Eddie during the "Dead of Night" sessions*



*Eddie gathering his thoughts at Skybound*

I think the delay between recording and finishing things up had something to do with mixing. I seemed to remember Doug making several trips back up to Port Richey for tweaks to the mixes. This was a small studio and, even though automation had started to make its way into the recording studio, Skybound was nowhere near the level of studio that could afford such technology. While it was a step up from GDM Productions, it was just that – a step. We didn't climb the whole flight of stairs where you might find a studio like Morrisound. One interesting thing that Skybound did have, equipment-wise, was a genuine plate reverb. For those unfamiliar, these old plate reverbs were huge pieces of metal hung inside a

closet-like structure. When you wanted to apply reverb to an instrument or anything that had been recorded, there was a speaker in that closet that you could direct the recorded sound to and it would

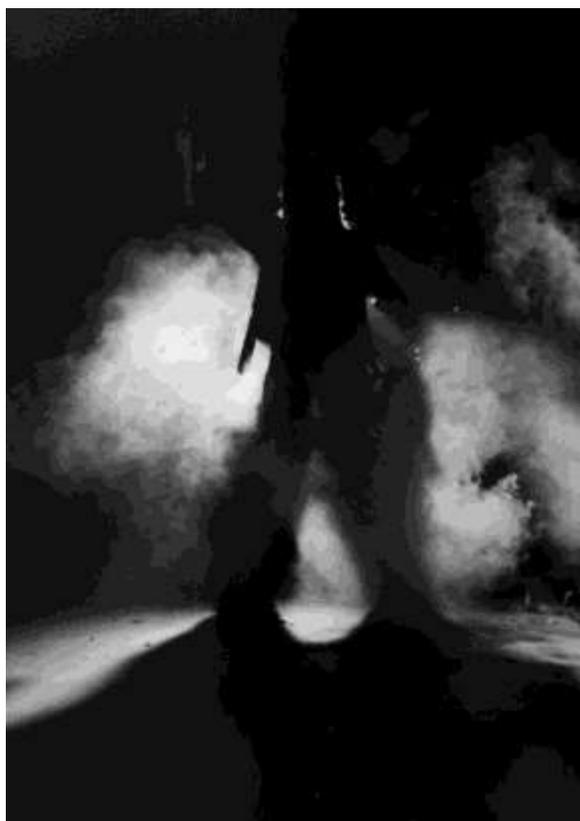
reverberate (hence the name) the big metal plate. You could then mix in the resulting sounds back into the track to give it some space. Plate reverbs have a unique sound. In fact, there is a door slamming sound in the “Slice of Hate” interlude that prominently features that reverb. I think that was done by actually closing the door to the reverb closet itself. It’s amazing how technology has changed.

Eventually, the mixes were completed and we sent the masters off to be duplicated. Once again, we had to begin working up the artwork for the cover and insert for the cassette. As it had always been, we had no budget so we had to get creative and really push the boundaries of do-it-yourself design. Surprisingly, not only did we manage to pull it off. What we created was, in my humble opinion, one of the coolest covers in independent, heavy metal demo cassette history. But the best part isn’t the end result, it is the story behind the making of those images.

The concept for the cover of the new demo was to bring to life the main character from the “Dead of Night” track in some format. Ultimately we decided to have the photo be done in a backlit style that silhouetted the character and he would be holding a real-world version of the double scythe that formed the “S” in the Siren logo. Normally this would be the point at which a label would engage a professional photographer and/or agency to bring this vision to life. But, as we all know, the reality for a struggling, independent metal band in the mid-80’s was far from normal in most ways, so why would this be any different?

Creating the double scythe was actually not too difficult, and it turned out looking pretty cool I think. It was a total safety hazard, but it was cool nonetheless. Building that prop pretty much used up our nonexistent budget so the rest was going to have to be free or cheap. We had some old Par-56 stage lights from back in the party house days, so that would provide the backlighting for the character on the cover and the old fog machine would give us the requisite ambience. Professional photographer? If only! We all had index fingers which were capable of pressing the shutter button so that was covered and our camera had a timer if we wanted a group shot. All that was left was to scout a location and get it done.

Our guitarist Eddie (aka Faxon) was attending a hair styling school at the time and no, he wasn’t gay (that I was aware of anyway). He’s had a quite eclectic career path over the years now that I think about it. The folks at the hair college graciously allowed us to use their facility as a base for our night time photo shoot. The school was in a retail shopping center that had a sort of walkway between



*An outtake from the cover photo shoot before we realized we'd also need some front lighting on the double scythe*

buildings that would serve nicely as an alley way for our photos. We arrived at the school on the night of the shoot sometime in early January, 1986. When most people think of Florida, they think of the sun, palm trees, and warm temperatures. Well, a little secret of the Sunshine State is that it does occasionally get down below freezing. As fate would have it, this January night would be one of those infrequent times. I had borrowed my apartment mate, and former Siren guitarist, Hal's yellow and black striped spandex pants for the evening. As we stood outside in that 20-something degree night air I have never felt less manly. I couldn't find my manhood for a week!

So we had arrived at the hair school and begun to primp and perfect our hair and wardrobes. Oh hair, how I remember and miss you (tips a little beer onto the ground for his departed homie). We had a little fun in the salon and took some pics on the timer. Then, we ventured out into the cold to get the real job done. All-in-all I think things went pretty smoothly if memory serves. I remember sitting on the ground behind Doug, aiming the spotlight on his back as he held the double scythe aloft. At least the light provided a little warmth for me. After we were convinced that we captured a good cover image, we took turns shooting our individual shots. This was back in the pre-historic times before digital photography so we would have to wait until the next day or so to find out if it had worked.



*Your humble author. Don't judge!*



*The final result of the "Dead of Night" j-card cassette insert*

Thankfully, our limited photographic skills did turn out pretty well after we got the prints back, so we moved on to having the type created for the j-card while the cassettes were being duplicated. By the end of January, everything was in place and we began to send the new demos and press kits to our contacts from around the world.

## 10 Things Start to Blow Up for Us

In the middle of the recording, photo, and promotion activities, we did manage to squeeze in a live gig every now and then. Most were fairly uneventful, but there was one notable exception to this. There used to be a club in Brandon named Sidestreets that was popular with a lot of local bands since they allowed teenagers into the venue. We had set up a show there and invited another young band to open for us. This band featured a pair of brothers that, coincidentally, lived only a few doors down from Doug's house on the same street where we rehearsed. They were cool enough guys so, in the spirit of Brandon metal, we asked if they'd like to be on the bill and they agreed. At the time they were calling themselves Executioner and were only around 16 or 17 years old I think.

Come the night of the show, I remember watching Executioner perform their set and thinking to myself "I can't understand a word this kid is singing. It just sounds like growling. I don't think they've got a good shot at making it if this is what they're going to be doing." Well, as it turns out, not only did they make it, they're still making it 30 years later. John and Donald Tardy would change the name of their band to Obituary and go on to make death metal history. So much for my metal prognostication skills. Good for them!

But I digress. Having pre-famous metal legends open for us isn't why I remember that show so vividly. A short time prior to this gig, we had somehow met a guy named Greg who wanted to get into stage/theater production. I think he was someone that Faxon had run across in his wayward travels. This Greg (not to be confused with our bass player Gregg – note the extra "g") really liked to think big and would regale us with tales of how cool he could make our show on a visual effects level. So we decided to give him free reign for the Sidestreets gig and we would gauge things from there going forward.

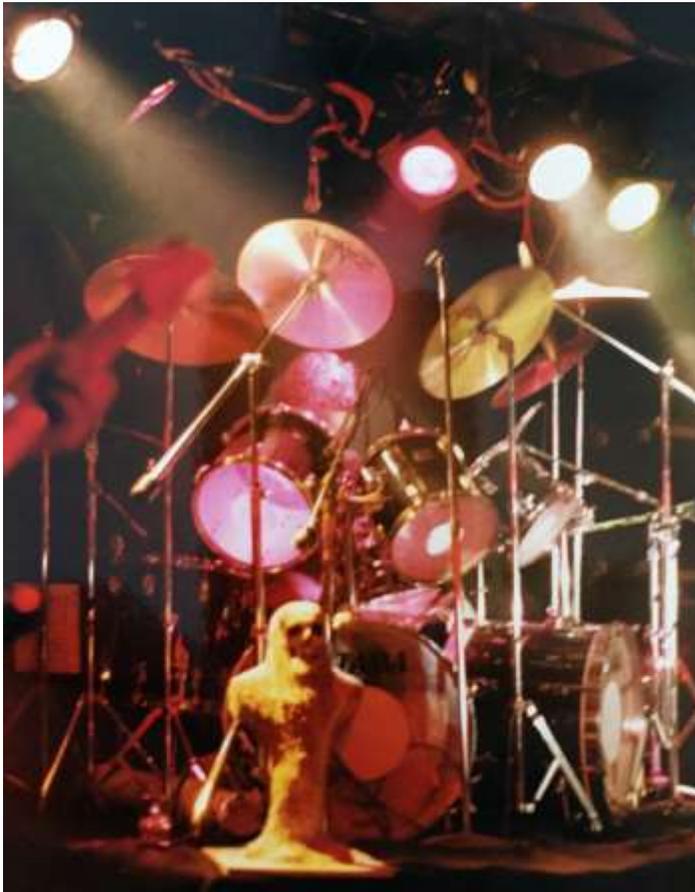
That night he had brought with him some cool, Dio-esque stage props and did a pretty decent job of adding a little flair to our usually standard stage. Beyond the flair though, he was most excited about adding some flash, as well. By "flash" I mean that he had brought some homemade flash pots akin to what you might have seen at a vintage KISS show. You know the type. When they're ignited, they produce a bright column of white flame for a second or two and then they're out. Well, that wasn't quite good enough for Greg with one "g." He wanted to really sell the effect by also using something called a concussion mortar. You see, the flash pots don't really make a



*Doug and Faxon bringing the metal*

sound other than a kind of hiss. The concussion mortars are the things that make the bomb-like explosion sounds that always catch you by surprise at big concerts. Unlike an arena, however, Sidetreeets was a club in a suburban strip mall. The ceilings were only about 12 feet high and it was a drop ceiling with those big, square tiles at that. As such, mono “g” Greg ensured us that he was only going to use a little of the magical concussion mixture. Naturally we trusted him as he was a professional – he told us so himself.

If you recall, the song “Slice of Hate” had an interlude that featured an explosion where a guy blew up his house with his nagging girlfriend in it. We figured this would be the perfect spot to trigger our faux explosion to the best theatrical effect, so we coordinated with Greg about his cue in that part of the song. The song was positioned near the end of the set and everything had gone smoothly up until that point. The stage itself was only about two feet in height, the crowd was in a good mood and thrashing nicely at the front of the stage. My pulse quickened a little as we entered the interlude within “Slice” since I knew the special FX bits were nearing their cue. At last the moment arrived and Doug spoke the magic words, “Where did I put my fuckin’ lighter?” I stopped right on cue and steeled myself for the flash. Within an instant we were all transported into the opening scenes from the yet-to-be-made movie, “Saving Private Ryan.”



*Has anyone seen my hearing?*

playing their instruments but kind of wandering around looking a little dazed and I still couldn’t hear what they were playing. I just kept hitting the skins like a robot hoping to hear when Doug came

What we found out later was that uni “g” Greg had not only NOT cut back on the explosives, but that he had doubled them! He had used enough concussion powder to shock a stadium audience. When that massive sound hit, it was like being heart punched by the fiery fist of Satan. Everything became a blur. I distinctly remember seeing the entire crowd at the front of the stage instantly transported backwards by about four feet as a single unit. I was completely stunned but somehow went into autopilot and hit the count off to jump back into the song and lead break. I remember mindlessly playing that fast, double bass beat only vaguely aware of the sounds I was making or the rest of the band. In fact, in that instant, everything sounded different. I attributed this to just my own temporary hearing loss, but as the cobwebs wore off, more details were being processed by my brain. I could see that people were putting out a small fire stage right by one of the flash pots. Faxon and Gregg seemed to be

back in with the last verse. I think that he did try to pick up again, but I couldn't hear him so I just started to land the plane by switching into the last verse.

Needless to say the show ended after that. I remember walking out from behind the kit afterwards and seeing that the drop ceiling tiles were missing and/or scattered about the place. There were also some burned tiles above where the flash pots had been. The P.A. system was destroyed having had the large speaker cones blown out by the force of the air compression caused by the concussion mortar. The same was true of several bass guitar and guitar cabinet speakers. It was like a war zone. Thankfully, by the grace of God, no one was really hurt in all of that stupidity. Well, there is one exception. I remember packing up my kit afterwards and noticing Doug bending over near the front of the stage. Before I realized what he was doing, the powder in an unused flash pot had ignited and a column of white flame and smoke flew upwards. Doug fell backwards and I could hear a bunch of people gasp simultaneously. A few people scooped him up and whisked him towards the bathrooms. He experienced some second degree burns on his hand and most of his bangs had been singed off, but other than that, he somehow escaped significant injury. I remember seeing his Bic lighter with the outline of his fingers silhouetted in black on the surface. To tell the truth, it still makes me laugh a little to this day. I guess he found his fuckin' lighter!

## 11 The Last Betrayal

Up until this point in the story, and as I'm sure you can tell, I have a lot of memories and much to say about my years in Siren. Strangely, it is at this point, the point of my departure from the band, when the details and memories start to run short for me. Perhaps it is because I was busy with school and my personal life, or perhaps it is because of the general ugliness of the circumstances as a whole. Whatever the reason, I just don't recall much of the details. I do, however, remember full well the broader strokes of what went on in mid-1986.

Before I swim into these waters, let me say – with complete honesty – that I harbor no ill will towards anyone who might have been involved at the time. 30 years have since passed and the sting of any knives have long dissipated over these decades. To varying degrees I am still friends with virtually everyone who has been a part of this tale. In fact, I'm still close friends with several of them. That being said, I'm going to lay down some unvarnished truth now which was my truth, as I lived it. Your mileage may vary, but this was my experience.

Doug Lee was a young man of extreme degrees. He could be funny, kind, charismatic,



*Doug recording "Black Death" at Skybound*

and charming. And he could also be cold, cruel, egomaniacal, and ruthless. While we, as humans, may all have these elements within us, they are usually tempered and balanced. Unfortunately, for Doug, the negative aspects of his personality often led to situations that affected his relationships with others around him. In layman's terms, a lot of people thought of Doug as a straight up asshole. But I wasn't one of them.

I spent a lot of time working closely with Doug on Siren. We were genuinely a team and we shared an enthusiasm and drive to make the most out of the band. I knew that a lot of people didn't think highly of him, but that really wasn't my business. I've always been a peacemaker type of personality. I'm not aggressive or belligerent by nature, so a lot of people in our circle of friends dealt with me instead of dealing with Doug. Occasionally, even with me, Doug would get angry or throw a temper tantrum, but I would just shake my head and walk away knowing that he would eventually start thinking and acting logically again. There may have been physiological reasons for the bi-polar nature of his personality. I remember that he had been involved in an accident a few years before I met him that involved a serious head injury. But that's just speculation on my part. Regardless, the bottom line was that Doug could be a very difficult person to get along with.

Somewhere around the spring of 1986, my tolerance had worn thin. I was also tired of trying to be the peacemaker and keep the band together every time Doug would go off on a tirade and piss someone off. Faxon's tolerance for Doug's bullshit was significantly lower than my own, and I had pleaded with him to stay in the band on more than one occasion. Finally, though, the end of the road had come. Not only could I not talk Eddie back into the band, I couldn't talk myself into staying in the band. Faxon and I left Siren at the same time.

Doug had been getting very controlling over the activities of the group and, as I later found out, had been hiding some of the business dealings from me. He came to act and believe that HE was Siren and that everything that had been accomplished was because of him. In some ways a band is like a marriage, I suppose. When one partner is difficult to deal with for a long time, the other partner just loses the will to keep fighting for the relationship. That's where I was – tired. I was a full-time college student, had a girlfriend who moved across the country to join me at USF the year before, and Doug was just making the band experience as-a-whole unenjoyable. I was respectful and told him of my decision. He was actually very nonchalant when I told him and didn't really say much in response. After the fact I came to understand that, behind his silence, he was already relishing his "revenge."

I didn't really have any communications with Doug until a couple months later when a mutual friend told me that he, and Siren, were in Germany recording an album. I was quite surprised to hear this given the fact that only a short time had transpired. Although we were working closely together right up until my exit from the band, there weren't any offers on the table that I was aware of. And there's the key phrase, "that I was aware of." It turns out that Doug had been hiding the negotiations with the German label from me and the rest of the band for a long time. He wanted to be the puppet master. When I informed him that I was going to leave the group, instead of bringing the news of our finally having reached our goal to light in an effort to mend some fences, he didn't say a word about it. Instead, he saw it as a means by which to get back at me for my decision to leave. He would punish me by not letting me be a part of the album. We had earned it together through years of work, but he would keep it for himself. If nothing else, Doug had a penchant for vindictiveness.

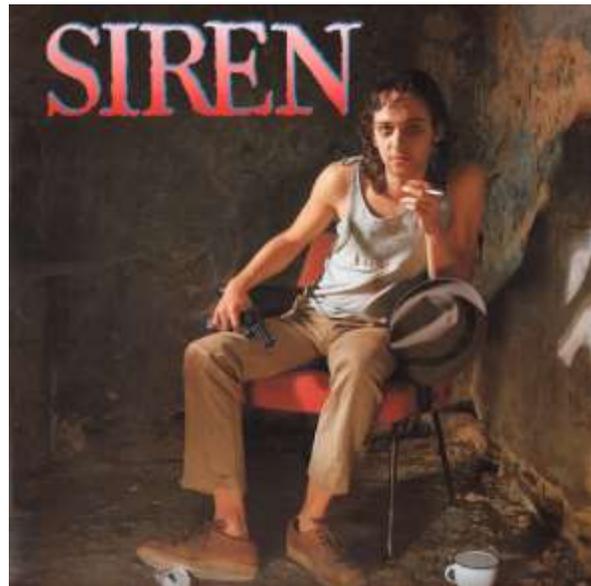


*In Germany during the recording of “No Place Like Home.” L to R: Brian, Doug, Gregg, and Rob*

When I first found out about the album in progress, I was a bit hurt. Not so much by the fact that I didn’t get to be a part of the process, but by having been lied to in regards to something that I cared so much about. I came to find out that as soon as Faxon and I had left the band, Doug called original guitarist Rob Phillips and brief drummer Brian Law to ask them if they wanted to record the album with him. I don’t blame Rob or Brian for taking the opportunity. It was a chance to record an album in a distant country. I’ve since spoken with Rob about this time period and the experience of making the album. I’ll leave the full story for him to explain, but I can tell you that the overall experience was no holiday. And Doug being Doug, he didn’t even tell the label that 50% of the band had been replaced. Rob wasn’t familiar with Faxon’s songs or style, and Brian was a single bass drummer! It took the record company guys a week to stop calling them by our names. By the time they realized that Doug had tricked them, it was too late so they just went forward with the album anyway.

Just to put a fine point on just how spiteful Doug could be, even though I wrote the lyrics for three of the ten songs that appeared on this album, not once does my name appear anywhere in the credits. In fact, my name isn’t even in the Thanks section. I’m sure that gave him some satisfaction at the time.

Being in the same small town, and having many of the same friends, our paths would eventually cross again as time passed. Bass player Gregg and I actually ended up living in the same apartment complex in 1987 and remained friendly. Even then, I didn’t really hold any bad feelings for Doug. I knew it was just how he was. If he had screwed me out of a bunch of money, or if the band had blown up (metaphorically, not physically like we once did) and become famous, maybe I’d have felt differently. But he didn’t and they didn’t, so it was water under the proverbial bridge as far as I was concerned. I knew I could never trust him, nor would I ever work with him again, but I had no problem maintaining an arm’s length friendship.



*Their finished product*

I spoke with Rob recently about his experience with the first album. As I mentioned, I wasn't involved so I had no idea what went on. Here's a few memories about the recording of the first Siren album "No Place Like Home" from Rob:

**Rob Phillips:**

*Doug called me up in '86 and asked me if I wanted to be involved with the album. I asked him why you weren't playing the drums and he told me that "Ed didn't want to be involved." I had no idea what had gone down with you and Faxon other than what he told me. Apparently he'd been hiding the details of this deal from you for a very long time.*

*When we got to Germany, the people from the record company were all very nice. I'm still friends with some of them actually. It was strange, though, because even though they were German, they had high English accents and spoke English perfectly. They kept calling Brian "Ed" and me "Faxon" until Doug told them about the changes. They weren't pleased.*

*It seemed like, as soon as we arrived, there were three semi-slutty chicks wearing Siren t-shirts at the studio. Doug, Gregg, and Brian were mostly interested in getting laid during the trip, but I was focused on the music.*

*The studio itself was nice. It was in a rustic farmhouse in the German countryside. It reminded me of where Led Zeppelin would have recorded back in the day. We slept in a loft that was in a former barn. This loft had to have been 30 feet in the air and I'm surprised none of us rolled out and died in our sleep. I remember being given the tour of the place and, when we got to the kitchen, they opened the fridge and it was just packed with orange juice. They said, "We did our research, and you're from Florida, so you must like orange juice." They also gave us cases of beer every day and they were surprised at how much those guys could drink.*

*Once the recording began we did some demos of new songs that had been written for the album. They didn't like those songs and wanted us to write a bunch of new ones. This wasn't practical in the four weeks or so we were going to be there, so we started to record some of the older songs and a few newer ones. From the beginning, I was disappointed with Brian's playing. Besides not being able to do double bass, he also couldn't play to a click track which made my job more difficult. Eventually a pattern emerged where I was in the studio for 14 hours a day and the other guys were mostly out getting drunk and/or laid. It was really frustrating. Doug was supposedly sick and unable to sing for a good amount of the time. I was recording guitar leads literally up until 2 hours before my plane left to come back to the States. I was very rushed and disappointed with the finished product.*

*Doug stayed behind for another 6 weeks. I think he was also having trouble writing some of the lyrics to the new songs. He ended up re-recording a bunch of stuff and remixing the album. Then he blamed me for the crappy results, of course.*

*Overall I can't say I really enjoyed it which is unfortunate. It should have been a good time with good memories but, after pursuing that dream for so long, it was disappointing to not have the other guys take it as seriously.*

## 12 Afterword

So, that’s how it’s been over these past decades. It’s now early 2016 and I’ve run into Doug here and there, said hello and chatted for a bit. The last time I saw him was probably around 2009 and I had taken my then 11 year-old daughter to a KISS concert here in Tampa. I recognized Doug as we wandered around the arena’s food court and called him out. We caught up for a bit and then went our separate ways once again. He was actually working the event, running a spotlight as part of the local crew. In 2014 I heard from a mutual friend that he’d been having some serious health problems including cancer. I haven’t heard anything since, but I hope he’s doing alright.



*Me and Rob in 2012*

As I mentioned before, Rob Phillips went on to be a successful business owner and re-emerged as a musician where he picked up the Siren banner once again.

Hal Dunn was my apartment mate for several years and has remained a good friend. He actually went back to college in the late 80’s and we graduated at the same time. We even worked for the same IT company together after



*Hal Dunn*

that. He’s recently picked up the guitar again and I hope he gets excited about playing again.



*Gregg Culbertson*

My contact with Gregg Culbertson has been a little sporadic, but he provided me with the biggest surprise out of all past Siren alumni. In the years after the band, he attended college, graduated, and spent several years as a high school English teacher before retiring to work with a hydroponics company.

Another semi-alumni, party house sound man and “Slice of Hate” author Craig Miller, went on to work in the field of multimedia and eventually started his own, successful interactive media and advertising agency. If you need some high end media development or placement,

contact [Full Throttle Intermedia](#) in Tampa. (You’re welcome, Craig.)



*Craig Miller*



Frank Marsh

Original Siren singer Frank Marsh has been my friend since I was 10 years old and we continue to be friends to this day. After his years traveling the world with the Navy, he returned to the Tampa area and continued to pursue music. He was even in a band with Faxon and Hal for a while along with a couple of friends who he had made while in Hawaii. After spending years as an electrician and truck driver, Frank has worked for a nuclear pharmacy for the past several years.

Guitarist Eddie “Faxon” Kotz moved to Los Angeles in 1987 where he eventually lived his dream of playing in the Great Western Forum. Unfortunately (for this story, anyway...) beer

league ice hockey was all he was playing there. After arriving in LA, Eddie left music entirely to pursue a darker and seedier life path... commercial photography. Like myself and Hal, the world of tech had always been a draw for him, and as photography went digital so did his career, and he has since been producing digital and social media for the sports and entertainment industry where he’s worked for everyone from Barbara Streisand to the Los Angeles Kings. He’s had a chance to work with some of his heroes (“... I re-touched some old KISS photos for Paul Stanley and he kept calling me Allen... and I once split a carne asada burrito with the great Steve Morse...”) and continues to make noise that can be sometimes heard at [EkoChamber on SoundCloud!](#)



Eddie "Faxon" Kotz

Lastly, what have I been up to over these past 30 years? Hmm... It’s hard to put these past few decades in a nutshell. Mainly I’ve been raising my two, amazing daughters who are now 13 and 17. They’re my world. Since college I’ve worked in IT for a couple of tech companies. I’ve spent the past 15 years as a software designer for a large aerospace organization which I really enjoy. Since 2000 I’ve been an avid home recording enthusiast and have a studio here at my house. Because of the limited availability of some of my guitarist friends, I started to play the guitar and some keyboards a handful of years ago. Most recently, I am proud to say that my girlfriend and musical partner Jen and I just released our debut album under the band name of Intersonic Cyber Symphony. Musically it’s kind of like Trans-Siberian Orchestra only without the army of talented musicians and singers. The album is titled “Trials to Triumphs” and you can buy it at all of the usual locations or stream it via your favorite service. Here’s a [direct link to check it out](#), too.



Ed "Me" Aborn



*Wolf and me at Gods of Metal in Italy*

In what was definitely an unexpected turn of events, I became very close friends with legendary Accept guitarist Wolf Hoffmann and his amazing wife/legendary manager Gaby along the way. They are like family to me. I remember the pictures of Wolf from Kerrang! Magazine that hung on the walls of the Siren party house. Sometimes, when I sit and watch him play, I have to remind myself that this is THE man in front of me. Both Wolf and Gaby are incredibly nice folks and I'm also proud to say that I played a role in the resurgence of Accept in 2010 by providing a connection to my friend, heavyweight metal producer Andy Sneap. The 17 year old Ed Aborn would have never believed you if you'd have told him how things would turn out all these years later.

I can't believe how much I've written here. If you've read this far you have both my respect and my sympathy. As I said in the beginning, sometimes a story just has to be told. The story of the early years of Siren is not one of those stories but I've written it anyway. It's been like riding a bike with two flats down Memory Lane, but it's been a pleasure to dig deep and recall that brief period of time so many years ago.

I suppose we all have moments in our lives that we hang on to. I wouldn't call the Siren years my "glory days," though, because I've had many fantastic years since. I just tend to be someone who focuses on the positives in life. That being said, the years I spent playing drums, having fun, and losing my hearing in Siren will remain locked safely forever in the touring case of my heart.

Thanks to Hal Dunn, Eddie Kotz, Rob Phillips, and Craig Miller for reviewing this long-winded tale and for helping to clarify my memory and add some extras. Thanks to you all for joining me on the ride.

Ed Aborn - February, 2016

## 13 Photo Gallery aka More Things You Can't Un-see

The following are some photos and images from the early Siren years (not necessarily in chronological order. Enjoy!



*The only Metal Gods pics I have and they're on a contact sheet. The upper left is guitarist Lamar leaning over the back of my first car. That's me playing Lamar's Flying V in the lower right corner for some reason. 1980*



A few more pics of Metal Gods practicing in Lamar's back yard. Soon I would literally jump the fence to join Siren.



A rare promo photo from the Melanie Lane house line up. L to R - Hal Dunn, Del Webber, Brian Law, Doug Lee, Rob Phillips. 1982



Photo from the party house including some of the lights that I used to run during practices.



What living room is complete without a full P.A. system? 1983



Rob and me at the first warehouse in 1981



Doug at a club show, 1982



L to R - Hal Dunn, Mike Martinez, Doug Lee



Mike, Doug, Rob, 1982



Siren played many club shows, and after hours shows like this in 1982 and 1983



*Ben Parrish at G.D.M. Productions, 1984*



*Me at G.D.M. recording "Iron Coffins" in 1985*



*Rob recording "Over the Rainbow" in 1984*



*Doug singing "Terrible Swift Sword" for the single*



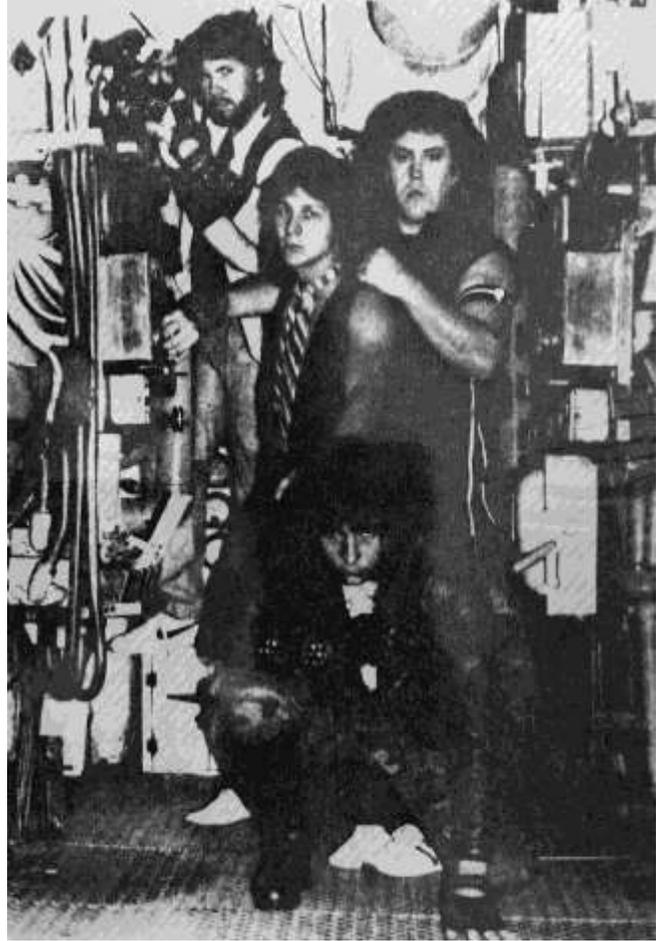
*Another piece of phototographic magic from the single promo session in 1984*



*Rob rehearsing for the "Metro Mercenary" sessions in 1984*



Alternate pic from inside the submarine during the "Iron Coffins" photo shoot



Another alternate shot from the 1985 submarine photo session. Me, Rob, Ed Hauser, Doug



A photo of me from a gig. Drummers always get short-changed when it comes to photos I think. Yes, I do have a perm. Thanks for asking. 1985



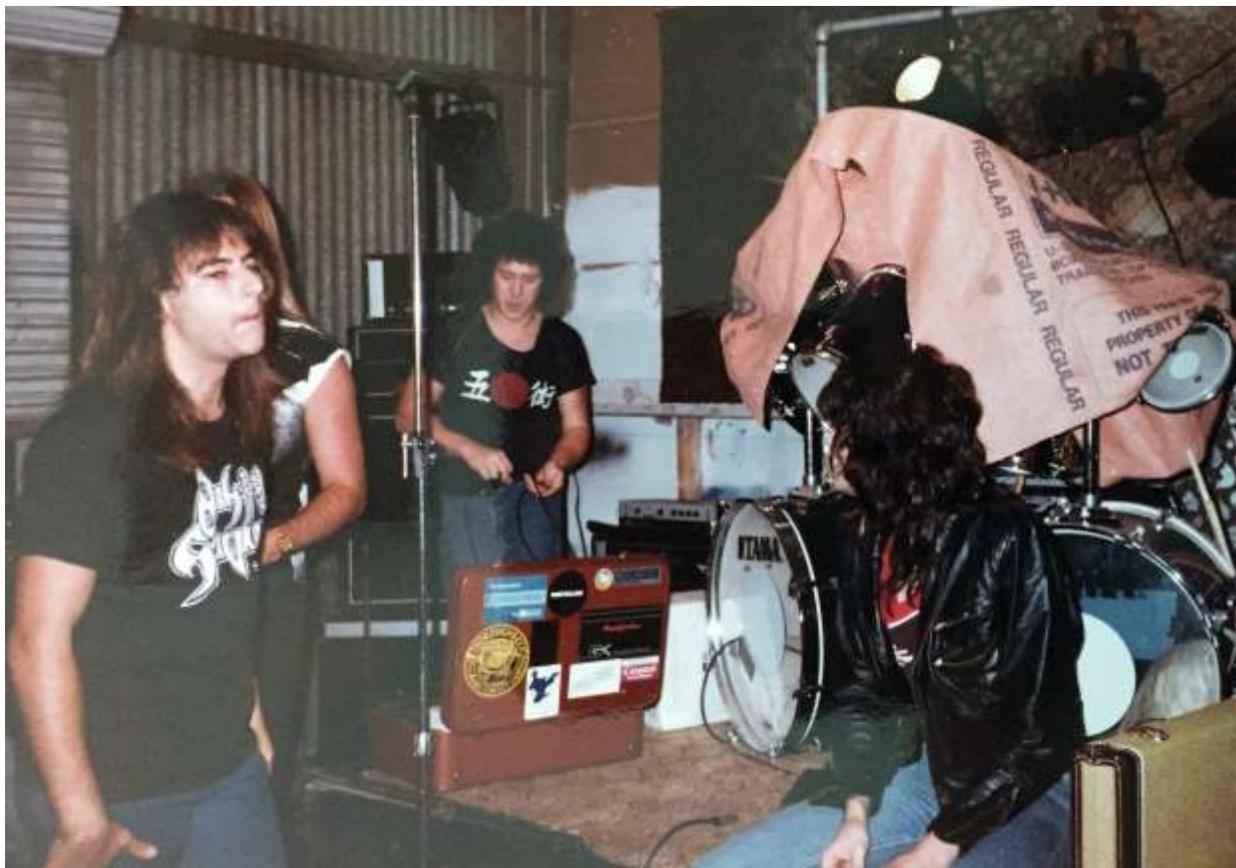
Doug "Dead" Lee at a 1985 gig



Ed Amyx (Hauser) and Doug. Funny story. Ed forgot that he was wearing that spiked arm band and wiped the sweat off of his head during the show. He quickly remembered about the spikes!



L to R - Scott Wallace (only gig he played in the band) Ed Amyx, me, Doug Lee



*At the airport warehouse in 1985. Notice that Doug is sporting a Nasty Savage t-shirt.*



*Ed Hauser at rehearsal. Don't let the run-down look of the place fool you, it really was that shitty.*



Yes, this really happened. Prior to the "Dead of Night" photo session, 1985



Self-shot "Dead of Night" promo. Faxon, me, Gregg, Doug



Unused pic from the session. Trying to look serious and failing. At least Gregg and I were failing. The lion was from The Proud Lion pub that was next door to where we were shooting late at night.



It only gets worse in color



At the hair school literally in the dead of night.



*Eddie taking a break at Skybound, 1985*



*Gregg locked himself out of his car at the motel so a little early morning breaking and entering was in order*



*We stayed in a motel for the first couple of days during the "Dead of Night" recording. I have to say that, of the two of us, I'm much easier on the eyes in the morning.*



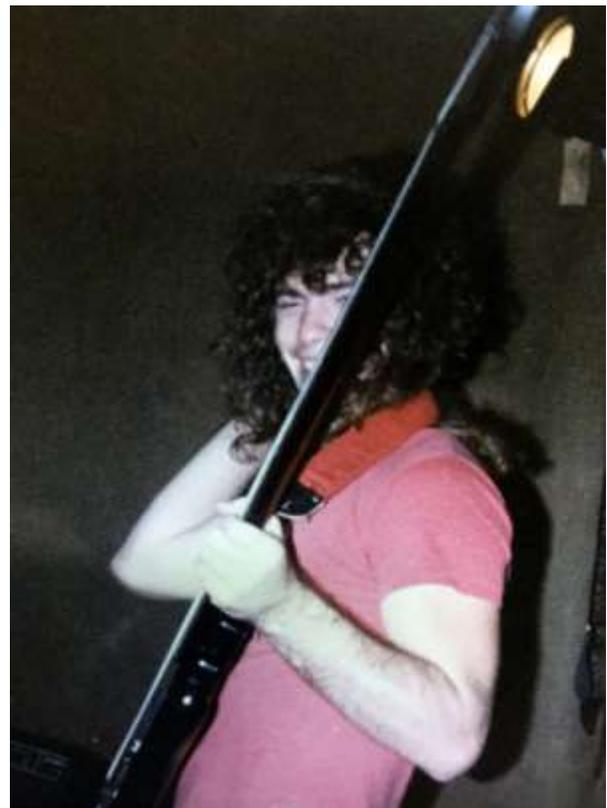
The studio control room at Skybound Recording (for what it was) where “Dead of Night” was recorded in 1985



Faxon power napping while recording



On the road with Eddie. Getting ready for his after-hours job with The Chippendale Dancers



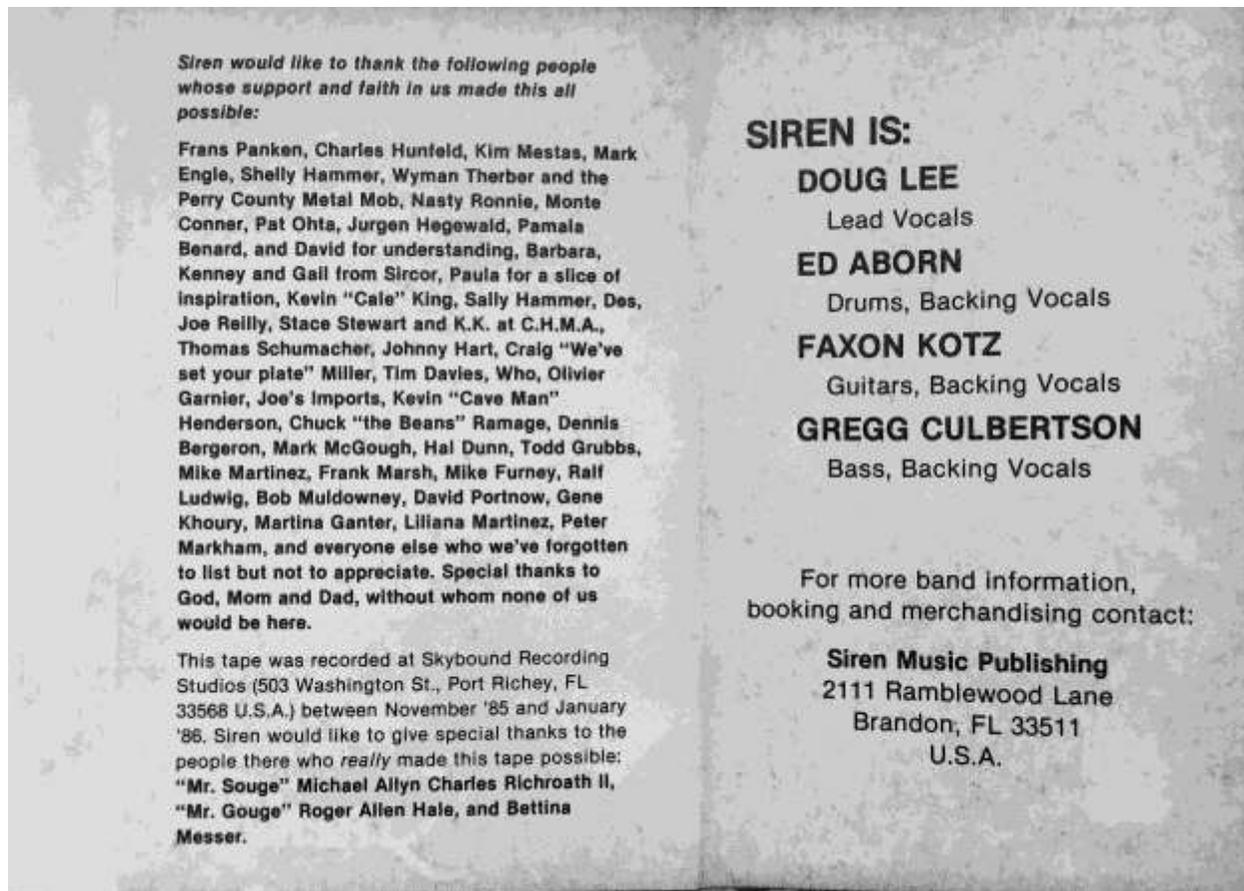
Like I said, Gregg was almost always a happy dude. Recording "Dead of Night", 1985



The front of the promotional flyer for “Dead of Night”



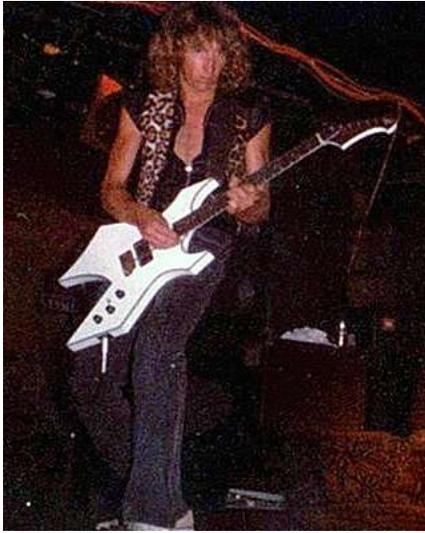
The back of the promotional flyer for “Dead of Night” with the full lyrics



Inside of the "Dead of Night" cassette



The finished cassette. Nice of the duplication company to advertise their business on it!



Hal Dunn - 1982



Hal, Doug, and Mike Martinez at a club gig, 1982



Yours truly at a gig of unknown location. Probably sometime in 1985.

Enclosed is background information, a photograph, and a promotional 7 inch 45 from the group SIREN. We are currently handling all promotion ourselves and would vastly appreciate any coverage you could possibly give us. Being on our own label, all record sales depend on word of mouth and any coverage we receive from magazines and newsletters. This makes your help invaluable. We would be happy to send you more information, photos, or answer any questions you may have. We would also appreciate a copy of any issue you may include us in because some magazines aren't available in our area. If needed, send a bill for the issue in care of SIREN Music Publishing at the given address.

Write to: SIREN 2111 Ramblewood Ln. Brandon, FL.  
33511

Or call: 813-689-1432

Thank you for any help you can give us. We look forward to your response and hope you like the record. In any case, let us know what you think.

*The letter that went out with all of the "Metro Mercenary" promotional packages*



1983 flyer for a gig at the Sit 'n Bull Pub which was a regular venue for local metal like Savatage, Nasty Savage, and Siren. This flyer was designed by guitarist Hal Dunn.



Local flyer announcing the debut single, 1984

## 14 Links and Media

I've combed through the archives and have put together the companion media pieces for this e-book. The links are provided below for your listening pleasure. If you have any questions or would like more information (if that's even possible), my email address is [Ed@Aborn.net](mailto:Ed@Aborn.net).

**“Dead of Night”** demo (1986) audio and photo montage videos:

- Dead of Night - <https://youtu.be/fMI7yMZqq6U>
- Black Death - <https://youtu.be/K-DXJYbXx3w>
- So Far to Go - <https://youtu.be/OGSoHdw8QyA>
- Slice of Hate – [https://youtu.be/\\_w2yUHVD100](https://youtu.be/_w2yUHVD100)

**“Iron Coffins”** demo (1985) audio and photo montage videos:

- Iron Coffins – <https://youtu.be/9pg1bEGRcrQ>
- Shadow of a Future Past – [https://youtu.be/NJXwuo4yw\\_o](https://youtu.be/NJXwuo4yw_o)
- Before the Storm – [https://youtu.be/vCKx\\_AsXeU4](https://youtu.be/vCKx_AsXeU4)
- Over the Rainbow – <https://youtu.be/LydmY7dMDxk>

**“Metro Mercenary”** 7 inch single (1984) audio and photo montage videos:

- Metro Mercenary – <https://youtu.be/AdiyoxgqqA4>
- Terrible Swift Sword – <https://youtu.be/Julegs-uAQo>
- Over the Rainbow (unreleased demo) - <https://youtu.be/8VBKagTGeLE>

**Unreleased Practice Recordings** These are never-before-heard recordings of songs we were working on after the “Dead of Night” demo in 1986. These are some of what might have appeared on the first album. They were recorded on a boom box cassette player so excuse the audio quality:

- Jimmy Bondage – <https://youtu.be/Q7xlllqKklU>
- Dover – <https://youtu.be/93-aWwdLDHE>
- Untitled Song 1 – [https://youtu.be/Sg\\_XTzyiQiE](https://youtu.be/Sg_XTzyiQiE)
- Untitled Song 2 – <https://youtu.be/PDmQtE6gRNk>
- Untitled Song 3 – <https://youtu.be/GPtEKd-Vlbs>
- Untitled Song 4 – <https://youtu.be/KsuDNOzpdG4>

**Holland Radio Interview, 1985** – This is an interview we did with a Dutch radio station in 1985 while we were still working on the songs for “Dead of Night.” It’s embarrassing, but for the sake of completeness, I offer it for your listening amusement:

- Siren Radio Interview (Holland, 1985) - <https://youtu.be/S8iJvlwYyyQ>

**Intersonic Cyber Symphony** - This is my current musical endeavor with my girlfriend and musical partner, Jen. It is orchestral rock that is mostly instrumental but does feature some vocals.

- <https://soundcloud.com/intersonic-cyber-symphony/sets/trials-to-triumphs-album>
- Also available on all major streaming platforms and CD

