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ROCK

'ALTER' BOYS

NEW SINGER LEADS EX-CREED MUSICIANS IN BAND WITH AN EDGE

By Kent Kimes
The Sun News

Lady Luck has smiled upon Myles Kennedy, former singer for little-known rock band Mayfield Four, who found himself thrust suddenly on a much bigger stage.

Kennedy, in essence, replaced Creed lead singer Scott Stapp in a new band formed by three-fourths of Creed called Alter Bridge, which was scheduled to perform tonight at the House of Blues. But Thursday afternoon, the show was rescheduled for Nov. 19 because Kennedy was sick, according Wind-Up Records spokesman Brady Brock.

Alter Bridge got off to a fast start as the band's first single, the very Creed-like "Open Your Eyes" from the debut album "One Day Remains," made a splash on VH1 and cracked the Top 10 on the active rock and heritage rock radio charts.

"I'm still reeling," Kennedy said. "It's mind-blowing."

After Stapp announced his decision to record a solo album and Creed crumbled, guitarist Mark Tremonti and drummer Scott Phillips regrouped with exiled Creed bassist Brian Marshall and began searching for a singer for their new project.

Tremonti remembered Kennedy, whose old band had opened for Creed in 1998, and gave him a call.

"A lot of people get wrapped up in their rock star guise," said Kennedy, who traveled from Spokane, Wash., to Orlando to meet with Tremonti, Phillips and Marshall. "Once I got down there, I had no idea what to expect. But they were very laid back and down to earth, lucky for me."

But, the new singer still had to endure a little bit of hazing. As an initiation rite, all four musicians went bungee jumping together down a 300-foot drop.

As Tremonti, Phillips and Marshall were integral in forging the sound that propelled Creed to album sales in excess of 30 million, it's not surprising that many of the songs from "One Day Remains" bear a resemblance to Creed. But there's a slightly harder edge to Alter Bridge's sound, and Kennedy certainly isn't a Stapp clone.

Although he knows that he is viewed by many as Stapp's replacement, Kennedy insists Alter Bridge is a brand-new animal.

"Initially, it was something that crossed my mind," he said. "I knew I was going to be looked at as the new guy. But this is a whole new thing."

Despite Tremonti, Phillips and Marshall's pedigree, there was no guarantee that Alter Bridge would be a success.

"This is such a difficult business. It's a real crapshoot," Kennedy said.

But, the quartet did have some advantages over other start-from-scratch acts.

"They definitely have a built-in following, not only because of the Creed connection, but because of their subject matter, as well," said Sean Ross, vice president of music and programming for Edison Media Research. "They also have a built-in following at Top 40 and Hot Adult Contemporary, although they haven't elected to pursue it yet."

The name Alter Bridge comes from a structure near Tremonti's childhood home, which was a physical divider for kids in the neighborhood. Venturing beyond that bridge meant going into uncharted territory.

Meanwhile, Kennedy also brings another dimension into the fold as he plays guitar and expects to strap it for several songs to bolster the group's live sound and take some of the pressure off of Tremonti.

But he's not about to upstage Tremonti as lead guitarist.

"He's still a shredder," he said.

Alter Bridge

What | *With Crossfade and Submersed*

When | *rescheduled for Nov. 19*

Where | *The House of Blues at Barefoot Landing, U.S. 17 South in North Myrtle Beach*

How much | *\$22.50; tickets for tonight's show will be honored 272-3000*

Contact KENT KIMES at 626-0304 or kkimes@thesunnews.com.

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