From out of nowhere comes a rather nifty fresh album from Lion Music recording artist Milan Polak. Milan for many years has fabricated a niche for him- self within guitar circles. Now with a new album about to be unleashed called ‘Straight’ Milan takes hold of not just the guitar but also vocals. allowing his music to respite outside the scope of instrument al music.  

In turn Milan has made a beautiful hard rock album. songs like ‘I Don’t Care’ and ‘Difference’, both showcase a classic rock edge with a little soul n’ funk added - think Glenn Hughes and Robin Trower, whereas the awesome ‘The Glowing Of A Cigarette’ has a smouldering blues rock feel equivalent to Thunder and Y&T – I love this song to bits. Coupled with a solid production and slots fea tur ing celebrated bassist Randy Coven and drummer John Macaluso. ‘Straight’ has become adored by yours truly. so I caught up with Milan to find out what inspired him to make a vocal led album.

Your new album ‘Straight’ is excellent. Can you tell me what inspired you to make this one a vocal based album? 

Thank you very much. Well, after a few instru mental albums and being known as more of a “guitar hero” I started to realise that instrumental guitar music only offers you limited possibilities both in expressing yourself and reaching a wider audience. So I decided to take a step into another direction. I have always preferred “real” songs and looking at my biography people can see that I have always worked with singers and/or bands. This may be surprising to some but my instrumental albums have always been a bypass product of my musical being.

I’ve always been impressed with your playing, but vocally this record is going to open new doors for you. I was blown away with your voice which has a smouldering flavour akin to Danny Bowes of Thunder, Y&T’s Dave Meniketti & David Coverdale. How long have you actually been singing, and who inspires you vocally?

Wow, that’s a big call but thank you. Especially Coverdale is one of the best singers ever and I would never even dare to try to copy him. I like a lot of singers, there are so many great ones out there: Joe Lynn Turn er, Kip Winger, Stevie Wonder, Jorn Lande, Ray Gillen, Steve Over land, Jeff Scott Soto. Steve Perry ... man I could go on and on.

In my opinion I have nothing on all these guys. so I just try to do my own thing. This is something I have learned from all these years being a guitarist. It may be difficult to play a Van lick but it is even more difficult to play your own lick. Having your own per sonality and being yourself is just so much more imp ortant. So I basically respect and admire these guys but I try to do my own thing. I have sung all my life ever since I was a little kid and I have always sung backing vocals in different bands. A lot of times af ter a show people would come up to me asking why I did not want to be the lead singer and I always had the same reply, ‘I’m a guitarist not a singer.’ Well, after years of trying to find a good singer in vain, I changed my attitude and decided to give it a shot.

Did you write/compose all the tracks? I basically wrote all the songs except for two tracks where I incorporated a music idea that origi nally came from a co-operation with someone else. All my lyrics are true stories, sort of like my diary/ journal.

Do you feel more freedom writing vocal songs than instrumental music?

Yes, definitely. Expressing yourself through an instrument is great and so is singing and writing lyrics. So I feel like I have the best of both worlds. It’s great!

The production sound is very good. Where did you record ‘Straight’ and how long did it take?

Thank you. I paid the whole production out of my own pocket: the musicians, the studios, the travel, the engineers, etc. It was a long, hard road full of joy and great experiences but also full of blood, sweat & tears at certain times. And it is amazing how many rats and psychopaths come creeping out of their holes once the CD was about to be released - people claiming that I stole the songs from them. people trying to get a piece of the pie. psychopath hairdressers. photographers that deleted all the pic tures shot in a one day session as well as all the technical hassles that just occur in a production like that.

The CD was basically recorded in two studios. I recorded the basic tracks in NY and half of the record vocals in different bands. A lot of times after a show people would come up to me asking why I did not want to be the lead singer and I always had the same reply, ‘I’m a guitarist not a singer.’ Well, after years of trying to find a good singer in vain, I changed my attitude and decided to give it a shot.

You have toured with Todd Duane in Vienna, do you still teach?

You rarely ever. On one hand it’s a question of time but also the attitude of the new generation of guitarists has changed. I mean everyone’s been said and done. They can download all those instruc tional videos from the internet: they get all the tran scriptions of their favourite records. I still learned the old fashioned way by listening to tapes and re cords for hours trying to figure out what the guitarist did and how he did it. wrecking dozens of tape decks and records. But everything I found out became a part of me because that way you internalise things more. A lot of the guitar kids of today have access to hundreds of thousands of instructional material but therefore do not really appreciate that. It seems also, I tryed teaching at another school in Hamburg, Germany, but a lot of these schools do more bad than good I have experienced.

Reflecting back on your career for a moment, what would you say are your proudest moments?

Hmmm, I don’t know. I don’t think in terms of pride. I am happy with what I have achieved - I have released several CD’s, I have endorsements and I am lucky to be able to make a decent living on my music. For this I am grateful. I feel like ‘Straight’ is the best thing I have done in my life so far and I don’t regret having taken this step at all. For a moment I thought that my die-hard guitar fans might be disappointed but it seems like they all stuck with me. The reviews and feedback from both fans and press have been really good so far and I am very happy about that.

Finally is there anything you would like to say to the fans out there?

Yes, thank you all for your tremendous support and feedback. I really appreciate it. You make this all worthwhile! I hope you like my new release. Keep it straight!

So there you go. ‘Straight’ proves that Milan has vocally and instrumentally the chops to take his ca reer to the next level. This album smokes so make sure you check it out. www.milanpolak.com, www.myspace.com/milanpolak