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## Survivor survives switch, opening for REO Saturday

By LINDA R. THORNTON  
Herald Music Writer

Before Memphis singer Jimi Jamison auditioned for pop/rock group Survivor, he didn't really know anything about the Chicago-based band, except that it had a big hit in 1982 with *Eye of the Tiger*, the theme from *Rocky III*. But his former band, Cobra, had

**Linda Thornton**  
Music



recently broken up, and Jamison was getting tired of singing commercial jingles. So he went out and bought Survivor's four albums, flew to Chicago to audition along with several other hopefuls, went home and tried not to get his hopes up.

"I was feeling a little nervous because Survivor had been pretty successful. I never really expected to get the gig. But I thought what the heck, I'd done the best I could, and if they liked it, OK. If not, it was back to doing commercials in Memphis," said Jamison, 30.

Spoken like a real trouper, especially since Survivor had hit No. 1 on the pop charts and won the 1982 Grammy Award for Best Vocal Performance with *Eye of the Tiger* — and the position he had auditioned for was that of lead vocalist, replacing David Bickler, whose distinctive straining tenor was the main vocal on that platinum-selling single.

But there was something about Jamison's voice, softly Southern when he speaks, and earnestly crooning when he sings, that impressed Survivor members Jim Peterik, Frankie Sullivan, Stephen Ellis and Marc Droubay — or maybe it was his rugged dark good looks that seemed perfect for fronting a band on tour.

Either way, Jamison got the job — just in time to join Survivor in recording its next album, *Vital Signs* (released in August), and to front its current U.S. tour with Zebra and headliner REO Speedwagon. The tour comes to the Hollywood Sportatorium for one show Saturday.

With the addition of Jamison's vocals, Survivor has attained a richer, easier sound. While the band's previous and most successful singles have both been anthems — *Eye of the Tiger* and *The Moment of Truth*, from the film *The Karate Kid* — *I Can't Hold Back*, the first hit single from *Vital Signs*, is a distinctively different upbeat, romantic love song.

And though Jamison formerly sang with Cobra, which was a heavy metal band, he says, "I love those love songs. They're a lot more melodic [than metal]; the songs have a lot more feeling. When I'm singing them, I get this chill up my spine."

But the man can still rock 'n' roll. Says Survivor founding member Jim Peterik of Jamison: "Offstage you wonder if the guy's got a pulse, but onstage he turns into a wild man."

"They call me Jekyll and Hyde," says Jamison with a laugh.

Survivor's 40-minute show will follow an opening set by Zebra, the rock trio that started out as a Led Zeppelin copy band in New Orleans and Long Island, before signing to Atlantic Records in 1983 and releasing their first album, *Zebra*, which featured the single *Who's Behind the Door*. Zebra, led by Robert Plant sound-alike Randy Jackson, has found more success with its first Top 20 rock single, *Bears*, from the band's latest LP, *No Tellin' Lies*.

The tour's headline act, REO Speedwagon, is back on the charts with another Top Ten rock hit, *I Do' Wanna Know*, from the album *Wheels are Turning*. Like Survivor, REO was formed in Illinois. The band recorded nine albums in the 1970s before hitting No. 1 on the charts with the single *Keep On Loving You*, followed in 1981 and '82 with the Top Ten hits *Take It On The Run* and *Keep the Fire Burning*.

**REO SPEEDWAGON, ZEBRA, SURVIVOR: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Hollywood Sportatorium, 1661 W. Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; \$14.75, plus \$1 service fee if purchased from B&B.**

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