

HM

THE HAIR

LOVE & DEATH

February 2013 • Issue Number 163
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UNHOLY ANGER



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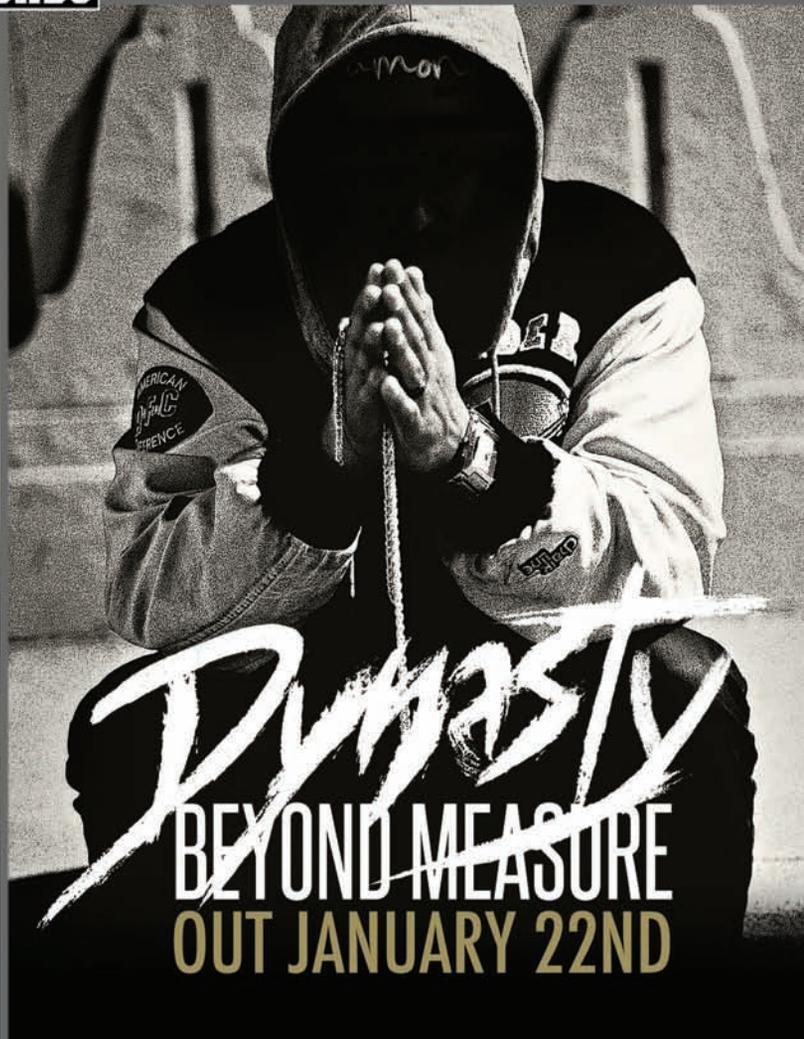


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DESERT HIGH



BY DOUG VAN PELT

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL,
flight testing & TIME TRAVEL?
read it all in the book *Desert High*
HM Editor Doug Van Pelt's first novel

DesertHighBook.com

HM

From the assistant editor

Rob Shameless

THIS MAY OFFEND SOME OF YOU READERS,

...and for that I am sorry. I seem to have that effect on some of you. This might be short and sweet or it could be a soap box moment. We will have to see. It is almost 1 a.m.. My wife and daughter are sleeping and I just got done listening to Dynasty's new record *Beyond Measure*. As I type this I am listening to First Blood's new cover record. It's a great record with some solid covers of Hatebreed, Sick of It All, Earth Crisis, Cro-Mags, Madball, Suicidal Tendencies, All Out War – all bands that I listened to and loved in high school and still do to this day. I know some of you may talk smack about listening to secular music. I am going to say this. It is okay to jam out to these bands and others. I know some of you fast from listening to secular and that is cool. I am not knocking you for doing that. What I am knocking is Christians knocking secular bands. Or not supporting a Christian band because one member wore a Pantera shirt on stage. Every Christian band is influenced by secular bands. You cannot tell me that the Christian thrash metal bands of the '90s did not listen to Slayer, Anthrax or '80s Metallica. Did you know that Focused covered a straight-edge band from Cali called Chain of Strength? They did not believe in Christ. You may say "Shameless, this is all old news. I am a Christian and I listen to secular music." Well, I am glad we might see eye to eye on this, then. I wanted to write this 'cuz Hundredth is touring with Rotting Out – a hardcore band from LA opening the tour package. I guess they have some satanic stuff on their merch. This guy said he was going to show up late, because he did not want to listen to grown men complain in their lyrics. On top of that they have some pentagrams or a goat head on their merch. Just to let you know, any hardcore metal band – secular or Christian – are going to be grown men complaining about something. You have the right to not listen to that band, but you should still go and show some support. You don't have to buy their merch or records. You should be like Christ and hang out with these guys. I know that is what He did back in the day. He hung out with the lowest of the low – the ones that the Pharisees looked down on. It is cool that you want to be a Pharisee, but I want to be a follower of the Way. He did not talk smack about these kinda people. These bands go out on tour with these guys and make friends. Some members find Christ for the fact that one guy in a band full of guys that loves Jesus just sat and listened to this guy's parental or girlfriend problems at home. It may have been how he was at the end of his rope and all his band wants to do is smoke weed and get drunk (rather) than to listen to how he is depressed and wants to kill himself. I bet any member in a "big" band could tell you some great stories like these. If you are in a "Christian band" that are just being real dudes or dudettes that love Black Flag, Minor Threat and Type O Negative and you have some stories of ministering to a band, email me. rob@hmmag.com. I want Christians to see that we don't have to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. Our options need to stop being the forefront of some Westboro Baptist style agenda. You are not getting anyone led to salvation – you are just pushing them away from the Truth. It is okay to listen to bands that do not do have JPM (Jesus per minute). Just Be Real.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

OVERCOME	<i>No Reserves. No...</i>	Spirit-filled hxc (Chris Gatto's head is spinning).
DYNASTY	<i>Beyond Measure</i>	These young guns now heavy hitters in LA hardcore.
OVERCOME	<i>No Reserves. No...</i>	This pioneer of late '90s metalcore still paving the way.
ANTESTOR	<i>Omen</i>	Return of the black metal monster.
RIVERA BOMIMA	<i>(all 3 CDs)</i>	In celebration of the new album release.
BOB DYLAN	<i>Saved</i>	Played it once. Banished it back to the shelf.
RESURRECTION BAND	<i>Colours</i>	Must be heard on vinyl.
ROBERT RANDOLPH	<i>The Slide Brothers</i>	Relaxing, confident. RR&TFB never disappoints.

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Letters to the Editor

HM



MATISYAHU SAYS

Is it just me? But I can't find the question. You know, THE Question? "What do you think of Jesus' claim to be the only way to Heaven?" And it's so short, wish more questions were asked. And is it just me, but the online mag is so hard to read even zoomed in. It's still not big enough.

—Jim Fountain, via email

Ed – I appreciate that you noticed. This is an interview I've been wanting to do myself for some time now, but when a freelance writer dropped it in our lap last month, my response was, "Heck yeah, I want to run this." That's why the questions might be "different." I'm sorry to hear about your frustration about zooming in and reading the online version. We'll see if we can improve that down the road.

HEAVEN'S METAL PODCAST

How do I get to the latest or recent Heaven's Metal Fanzine podcasts?

—Coach BRJ, via email

Ed – <http://sanctusgladius.com/hmp> Keven Crothers, who hosts the podcasts, says, "That link will take them directly the podcast homepage."

RODLAVER

Dear HM magazine,

I wanted to ask you about a fav group of mine. rodlaver. Any idea where all those boys ended up? I can find only one Wikipedia reference and that's it. Loved their sound! It matched my internal soundtrack. Peace, Tony from TheFamilySideShow.com

—Tony Bilbrey, via email

Ed – Hi Tony. I haven't heard a thing from any of those guys in years. I'll put some feelers out and see what we can come up with. Stay tuned.

YOUNGSIDE SALE

Happy New Year Doug! You cost me a lot of bucks... I went to Youngside's record sale, and spent a bundle. Was impressed with HB's *Jesus Metal Explosion* and Fruhstuck's *Quiet*. Of course, didn't like everything, but that's to be expected. Too bad that the Christmas album is a download only. Some of us oldtimers still like hard copy over downloads.

It felt weird this year sending out Christmas cards without a ton of personal advertising for Cornerstone. Wishing you the best for 2013. Godspeed!

—Phil Troop, via email

Ed – Glad you found some good music at the sale. I have loved working with Youngside all these years. They're special people over there.

MUSICIANSCONTACT.COM POST

This article is SOTRUE! I moved here from Nashville, TN about 5 years ago, and I can't believe how HARD it has been to land good paying gigs for me or my bands...There are so many bands out there, willing to play for FREE, and so many club owners eating it up and begging for more (more people at their venue, provided by the band!) It's ridiculous! I think bands need to REFUSE to play for free, as well as what this article states: educate these owners about the unfairness of expecting bands to fill their venue... Thanks for writing!

—Debbie Goodman, via website

Ed – Agreed. Thanks for commencing on the News post at hmmag.com. The Comments field are there just for this type of edifying discussion. Here's hoping for improvement in the live music scene in 2013...

WILL YOU TELL US WHEN IT'S OVER?

Last year I managed to miss quite a few issues of HM just by getting too busy. (First time I've done that in twenty years...) I ended up subscribing again on 12/10/12, but I never heard anything from you. I don't know if I overlooked the e-mail or I just got overlooked (by you). Please let me know. I don't recall getting a reminder about re-subscribing when my last sub expired. That would be helpful for those like me, who tend to forget if not reminded.

—Tom Geswein, via email

Ed – Hey Tom. There's a few things that are lacking with our current online/digital subscription service. One is that there's a useless field on the login page that asks for a coupon/token, which we don't use. That's confusing. Another is I don't have the capacity to email all the subscribers at once. I'd like to build that database up somehow, but unless I pay a big fee to our virtual "printer," I have to go outside the system to do that. Thirdly, there is no renewal notice system in place, so the subscriber finds out their sub just expired when they try to log in one day and they can't. I'd fix these things if I could, but will keep my eyes open for any other solutions.

FEBRUARY 2013
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SCRIPTURE "It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in man."
(Psalm 118:8)

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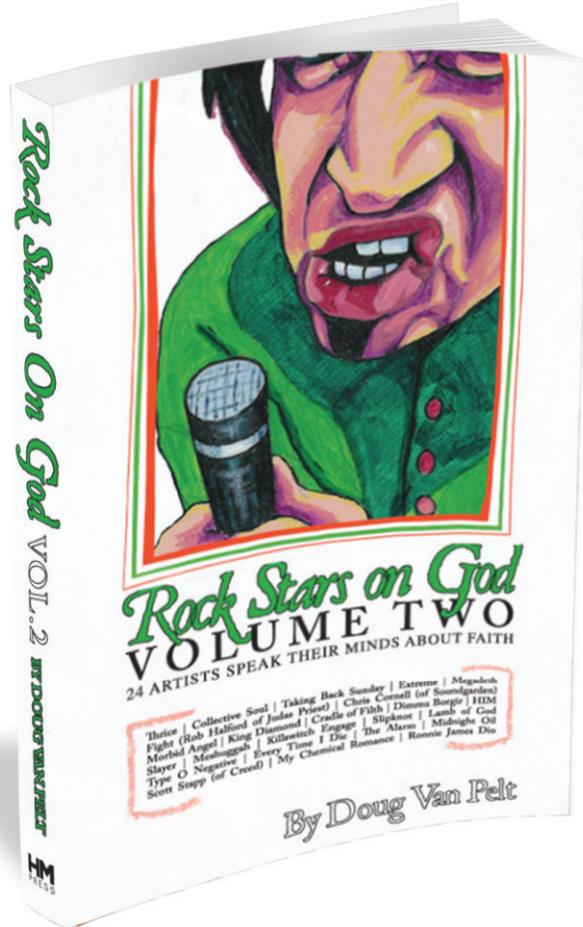
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ENERGY

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Q: What do you think of Jesus Christ?

A: "Wow, you caught me off guard on that one.

You know, growing up as a Christian, I believe in Him as my Savior."

–Ed Roland, Collective Soul (pg. 87)

Volume 2 of the popular *Rock Stars on God* series. This collection of 25 interviews from the pages of HM Magazine features:

Thrice, Collective Soul, Taking Back Sunday, Extreme, Megadeth, Fight (Rob Halford, Judas Priest), Chris Cornell (Soundgarden), Morbid Angel, King Diamond, Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir, HIM, Slayer, Meshuggah, Killswitch Engage, Slipknot, Lamb of God, Type O Negative, Every Time I Die, The Alarm, Midnight Oil, Scott Stapp (Creed), My Chemical Romance, Ronnie James Dio.

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AS A LONGTIME **OVERCOME** FAN IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT I WAS THE HAPPIEST PERSON IN THE ROOM WHEN I FOUND OUT I WAS GOING INTERVIEW THEM. THEIR LATEST RELEASE ON FACEDOWN RECORDS, TITLED: *NO RESERVES. NO RETREATS. NO REGRETS.* IS A NOD TO HARDCORE OF DAYS GONE BY AND A HOPEFUL GLANCE FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE. MUCH TALK ABOUT THE "NEW" OVERCOME AND THE "OLD" OVERCOME HAS BEEN SWIRLING AROUND THE METAL MILL, BUT AFTER SPEAKING WITH GUITARIST JASON STINSON IT BECAME CLEAR THAT OVERCOME IS REALLY AN IDEAL – LIKE A SUPERHERO THAT CAN CHANGE FORM OR ADAPT TO ITS SURROUNDINGS YET PRESERVE ITS TRUE IDENTITY. OVERCOME WILL BE IN 2013 AS IT HAS BEEN SINCE ITS FORMATION: A LEGACY WITH A VOICE. SO WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO SAY?



Collette: Hi, Jason. I guess first of all I would like to know about this new record. It feels different than the hallmark Overcome sound or even, more recently, from *The Great Campaign of Sabotage*. Was the evolution purposeful or due to line-up changes?

Jason: Well, basically in the past I did about 90% or more of all the songwriting. I would put the songs together and everyone would learn and play them. That was, pretty much, always true – even on the last album, but the new album with Thomas Washington was fun to write, because we have a similar approach to music. Thomas brought new ideas to the table as well as Steve Cosand (guitar). We had some ideas and we went with that and said, “Let’s do something that’s different,” but still pulled some old elements of Overcome into the new stuff for continuity. It was a great process.

What are you looking to accomplish with this record, something personal or spiritual?

I think with any record that you do it’s always an artistic venture. Any time you are writing music there are certain feelings behind it. I only wrote the lyrics to one song and to the title track. Essentially, we really just wrote it because we love to play music and we had an opportunity to do so and this is what came out.

What moved you to write the title track?

That song has a lot of meaning. If you Google the term: *No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets.*, you will get a big story about a missionary that basically was a rich man who went to Yale. He was successful, but really had a heart for the lost, so he used his wealth to go and serve other people. Long story short, he ended up dying, but in his Bible he had written that phrase. It’s a really cool and inspiring story about what we do for God every day. With God there is no ceiling, because everything has meaning and gives glory to God. As believers that should be our ultimate goal and that would be the theme of this album if, in fact, there had to be one.

Will you be touring anytime in 2013?

Well, most of the guys are married, so we don’t have any plans for touring at all. It would be impossible at this time in our lives, because the reality is is that we have other people to care for besides ourselves. We would love to hit the road and it’s not from a lack of desire that we aren’t. So, we will continue to play locally and will be playing Facedown Fest this year as well. So far those are our biggest touring plans for this year.

Your new guitar player moved from Arizona to another state. Will he be on the next album or is he leaving the band?

He just moved. It has nothing do with leaving the band or anything like that. We are not playing every other weekend or hitting the road or anything, so we do not have a demanding situation where the commitment is so overwhelming that he needed to stay in Arizona to stay in the band. We don’t know what will happen or if there will be a next record. We are all just here and playing music because we love it.

The cover art is great, who did the artwork?

Dave Quiggle. The concept I had was a martyr-type image and that is what Dave and I talked about. I was thinking about being in the clutches of death and what would be the last thing a person could hold onto while in the throes of death. Well, your hand could hold on to the cross. It just looked like someone’s last grip and I knew it was the right image. He really did an awesome job.

All the tracks were recorded in two days?

It was about three days. The third day we tracked for about four or five hours, but the bulk of it was all done in two days, because we all have other commitments, as I mentioned, and had to get back home. If we recorded locally we would have been able to stretch it out, but we were in California and had no choice but to go in there and hammer it out. It’s funny, because no

one really does that anymore but that’s all anyone ever did back in the day – just go in there and get the tracks out. We all have different strengths, so we were all able to get in there and contribute, have fun and get the record done. It was a total collaborative effort.

Do you think the “classic” Overcome fans and the “new” Overcome fans will both embrace the new record?

That’s funny that you would say that about the old fans and the new fans. We just read a review of our record and the guy said he never heard of the band before and I think that’s just a testament to how many bands there are out there. The scene is saturated with bands now. Back in the day you could count the hardcore bands on two hands and now the emphasis is on production and sound rather than lyrical value. To me hardcore was always about spreading a belief system and having your voice heard; having something to say. Now the reviews all talk about guitar squeals, etc. and have nothing to do with what is being said or what the bands hearts are about. That just bothers me. I would love to see that come back – people listening to records and discovering the heart of the messenger and what they are trying to say and what they are trying to do musically. I guess that’s it.

AND THAT’S MORE THAN ENOUGH. OLD, NEW OR INDIFFERENT, DON’T JUST HEAR THE NEW ALBUM – LISTEN TO IT.

✕

BY COLLETTE WYCOFF

The Ember Days

A TRULY INTROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW

BY JASON BELCHER

OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE DONE QUITE A FEW INTERVIEWS, BUT NONE LIKE THIS. ROB APPROACHED ME INTERVIEWING ONE OF OUR BAND MEMBERS. I THINK IT HAS BEEN A REALLY FUN EXPERIENCE. I THINK YOU WILL GET MORE INSIGHT INTO JANELL OUR SINGER AND MY WIFE. SHE IS OFTEN QUITE A QUIET PERSON, BUT BELOW SHE SHARES HER STRUGGLES AND STORY. I HOPE YOU FIND IT ENCOURAGING. IT GIVES CONTEXT TO THE NEW ALBUM, WHICH WILL BE RELEASED JANUARY 29TH.

Jason: So how has it been becoming a mother?

Janell: Becoming a mother has been the biggest life-changing experience with so many highs and lows. I found the transition rather abrupt and difficult, but now that I am used to the crazy life shift I am really loving it. The love you have for your little one and the joy they bring to you far outweighs the challenges.

How is touring with a baby?

It is so awesome that I can play music and travel and have my baby there with me. Touring with a baby is not easy, but it gets pretty mundane at home and while it's easier in many ways just staying home with the baby; I like to go on the occasional tour (smiles). I think Judah likes it, too. He's a very, very social baby. He just loves people.

So you found out about Lupus on tour?

I began to experience symptoms of Lupus right after I got pregnant while on tour. I thought at first I was having strange pregnancy pains, but the symptoms got

worse and worse and I ended up seeing a rheumatologist, who diagnosed me with Lupus. We had to cancel our October tour because of my health. I spent a month pretty debilitated. The pain and weakness was all throughout my body, affecting my joints and muscles. It was the most pain I've ever been in. Jason had a full-time job looking after me. I was in a wheel chair and unable to do most things. It was pretty rough and it took a toll not only on my body but my spirit. It was so hard to have joy. I struggled with depression. I felt very alone and far from comfort.

How has Lupus affected your life?

The battle with doctors and opinions was a tough one. I ended up getting put on drugs that have enabled me to function normally. I will never forget the day I was given the meds and told that I would be feeling much better; it was also the day I found out I was having a boy. DOUBLE STOKED! I was the happiest person in the world the week I was able to start walking and living life normal again!

How has going through this illness affected your perspective with God?

The rest of my pregnancy was pretty good. My painkillers worked, but I must say it definitely has been challenging dealing with the side effects. After I had Judah I had to go on a pretty high dose and that – combined with crazy after pregnancy hormones – was so awful! I had crazy mood swings and restlessness like I've never experienced.

What has helped you get through this?

I've maintained hope that this is only temporary, but have also settled into the fact that it's not going away as quickly as I hoped. I am currently trying to get off the drugs by taking a more holistic approach and changing my diet drastically. I JUST MISS PIZZA! I have seen improvement, but it is a process.

My view of God is the same. I see how this experience has been so good for me. Character and compassion I would never have had if I didn't go through this. I've come to the conclusion that the world is sad and



painful, but God is good and my hope is in Him. My husband and my community have helped me get through this. I have kept hope and trust in God's plan for my life and that gets me through.

What has the songwriting process for *More Than You Think* been like?

The songwriting process was a bit of everything. I found some rather difficult to write. I was very honest with where I was at. I remember feeling so terrible on so many of those days that I set aside to write music. In the end the difficulty only made those songs cut a bit deeper. There were some songs that we all wrote together as a band and that was kind of a first. It's so cool to all have a piece of the same song. It was exciting being able to all share that.

What are the songs about?

The songs are about various things: unity, God, life, loss, love, pain, grace. We have it all on this record – from prayers to praise and just plain venting.

What was it like working with Paul and Ed?

I loved working with Paul and Ed. Both have a very different approach, but both geniuses in their own way. The hangs were good, too. Lots of laughs and that's important!

What was your favorite song to sing on the record and why?

My favorite song to sing was probably "Make It All Right." The song is a vent and a prayer. It takes me back to some dark times in my life. I just love being able to express the feelings in me by belting out a chorus. I love how honest this song is. I also love singing a bit lower in my register than I normally do in the verses.

Is there anything special about this record for you?

This record is special, because it's taken so long to get here and we've gone through so much leading up to it and all that is reflected in this record. It's also special, because we have finally been able to make a record with the current line up that has been The Ember Days for three years. So, it's a first in some ways.

Why do you do The Ember Days?

I do what I do, because I feel it is my calling. God has given me a voice and a passion to create and write music and I feel it is my way to love him and inspire others to do the same.

Why are you part of C&L?

It has been good to give away what has been freely given to me. Come and Live has provided a way to bless more people, while standing alongside others with a similar vision. The community and brotherhood we have found with being apart of Come and Live is priceless.

What have you been listening to?

Lately I haven't been listening to too much new stuff. Over the last year a couple of artists I has discovered and have found rather inspiring would be Sucre and Kimbra. I love the great vocals and their creativity.





DYNASTY

has been one of my favorite bands that Jason Dunn of Facedown has signed. He always knows how to pick good hardcore bands. Figure Four, Anchor, xDisciple AD, Seventh Star, Point Of Recognition, Take It Back, Call To Preserve and – last but not least – Comeback Kid. These days it seems you cannot find that many hardcore bands that are made up of solid godly men. Dynasty is one of the real-est bands I have ever had the chance to know and become friends with. I interviewed them a few years ago when they signed to Strike First. Now they are playing with the big boys. Headlining night one of last year's Facedown Fest and they are direct support to Gideon on night one this year. Terror claims that *they* are the keepers of the faith, but Dynasty are the *true* keepers of the faith and the leaders of the Spirit-filled hardcore scene strong in L.A.. Thanks to internet technology Ruben and Joel joined me on Google Drive to have an in-person and in-depth interview on their new record, upcoming shows, life outside the band and married life.

Since that last time I talked to you guys, you were just some young guns on Strike First. Now you sitting at the big boy's table at Facedown. When did you guys find out you were moving up?

Joel: Sometime mid-2012.

Ruben: We love Jason and the friendship is mutual, so he hooked it up. If I remember correctly we were talking in March and April and then we signed the contract the last week of April.

I read an interview with Joel about *Beyond Measure*. It seems like you guys are covering some heavy subjects. What are a few topics you are stoked to expose to people?

Joel: Well, I believe we're coming into an age

of deception and we're starting to see biblical prophecy come to pass. I wanted to portray that through "Omni-Death." There's some subjects like suicide, bitterness, depression and other struggles that I wrote about that you'll see and I just wanted to give God the glory for snatching me from these things.

Jason hooked you guys up with Andrew from Winds of Plague to record this album. I read you guys would get off work and go hammer this record out. How was that process mentally and physically on you and the guys?

Ruben: Actually, we were in the process of recording a demo with Andrew before we had a set deal with Facedown. I think we had a couple songs tracked by the time we got the

deal. It was a heck of a lot more demanding than the last album – both mentally and physically for the reason being we had to work around Andrew's busy schedule with WOP and, on top of that, three of us have full-time jobs and the other two dudes were in school and we had three incomplete songs we had to finish writing, so we could track them (laughs). Ivan and Nick actually spent the night a couple of times, but we got it done and it was well worth it.

Joel: Andrew's been a longtime friend, so it was a way smoother process than the last album. What jacked us up was our individual schedules.

BY ROB SHAMELESS

There are a handful of legends doing guest vocalists on this album. How did you guys pick who was going to be on it and how hard was it to get some of the older guys on board?

Ruben: Well, during the recording process we threw out some names that we were interested in getting on the album. From that point we sent out a few text messages and emails and then played the waiting game. For the most part all the dudes were easy to get ahold of. Tommy and Jesse confirmed first. Then Joel talked to Martin in person and got his confirmation, shortly after that Roger got back to us with a yes. The tough one was Inspectah Deck. It was more his agent. It was pretty intimidating. The mainstream music industry is a whole different ballgame when it comes to collaborations. You have to deal with a lot more terms to be met. Nonetheless, they were cool dudes. We all understand that business is business.

Joel: Well, my mind was rolling and I've always wanted to get Martin (Terror/Donnybrook) on a track. That was a no-brainer. I tried to get Rza, but he was mad busy with his movie coming out. Inspectah was next and was available. He knocked the song out in 30 minutes. Same with Roger (Agnostic Front). He blessed us with his vocals while in NY. He knocked it out quick style. Jessie's (Stick To Your Guns) an old homie and he was in on it. Tommy (Sleeping Giant), of course an influence to Dynasty, had to get on it.

Didn't you guys have a sound byte on the last record with someone from The Wu Tang Clan?

Ruben: Yeah we did, Joel and I went to go see GZA perform *Liquid Swords* and, after the show, on our way to the car we ran into Killah Priest and he gave us a shout out for the *Truer Living* album.

With 3/5's of you guys married and having full-time jobs to support a family, are we going to see you guys do any touring to support this record?

Ruben: We are definitely trying to get two long tours and scattered mini tours and festivals throughout the year. We should be announcing one pretty soon, and that will take place mid-March-April. We will be back just in time for Facedown Fest.

Joel: Yeah. We'll be touring a bit more (than) the last album. Yo, Europe/Asia/Australia – if you read this, book us!

I know skateboarding is a big part of the 'Nasty crew's lifestyle. If you guys could skate with any pro, who would it be?

Joel: Theotis Beasley, Lance Mountain, Koston, Paul Rodriguez, PJ Ladd, Raven Tershy, Sean Malto, Hosoi, Daewon, Guy Mariano.

What skater would you hope to use a track off of *Beyond Measure*? What track would you hope they would use?

Joel: Raven Tershy! "Get Live!" I actually want to do a "Trunk Boys" & dynasty collab!

Joel said in his latest interview that he wants to cover *Suicidal Tendencies*. Would you guys cover "Possessed Skate" or something else?

Ruben: Joel and I would always talk about covering "Possessed to Skate" with a similar music video. We almost recorded "No Sleep til Brooklyn," because we were in the studio when we heard that MCA had passed away. You never know, we might just do a cover album.

First Blood just put out a cover album for free that is really good. If you did one, who would be on it? Would you put it out for free like First Blood or make it a real physical record?

Ruben: Dang, so many songs I would love to cover: some Final Word, RJ, Santigold, Beastie, United, Soulfly, Pantera and so many more to list. Man, I can go on forever. It would definately be free, my dude.

***Beyond Measure* is getting the vinyl treatment. I know Jason has been putting almost every new record out on wax. As a hardcore band, how important is it to have this record on a classic format?**

Joel: For a hardcore band it's standard! We're so blessed to have the album on vinyl.

Ruben: We only found out about two months ago that the album was going to be on vinyl (laughs).

What is a fun fact about you or guys in the band that no one knows?

Ruben: Joel films for The Berrics and farts on command; Marcel used to listen to the band Orgy (laughs); I DJ for fun and I listen to a lot of indie, hip hop and trap music; Joel, Marcel and I are the only OG members of the band. Ivan lives in the hood and Nick was a band geek.

Joel: I film weddings & skateboarding. None of us have tattoos; we weren't always a Christian band; Ruben and I used to own a skateshop; we've had 6 drummers, Nick's the youngest; we share members with Dangerous Minds, Electric Light Orchestra is the best band; we skate The Berrics; Marcel will beat everyone in N64 Smash Bros; he's also a pastor; and we love Cut Copy!

You have really busy big week this week. *Beyond Measure* listening/release party and show. Then you have your first wedding anniversary. How are you preparing for all this?

Ruben: I'm just not letting myself get overwhelmed to the point of me getting burned out. Planning ahead helps out and avoiding any procrastination is the best way to prepare. My wife actually helps me think straight when I have a lot on my plate. She is definitely my biggest supporter. Even though our anniversary is right in the middle of this, it's not a problem. I have our place booked and am ready for some nice R&R. The married life is the best life! That's real talk, Fam.

A lot of married guys make some smooth jam mix tapes/CDs for their anniversary. What jams would you put on your mixtape?

Ruben: Man, I am the king of mix tapes. I listen to a lot of R&B, Keith Sweat, R. Kelly, Genuine, Sade, Jagged Edge, Boys II Men, 112, Jahiem, H Town, Jodeci. I can go on, but you get the picture. I hope all you dudes out there are taking notes.

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CHANGE SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE AND SO IS TRUE FOR THE BAND **SPOKEN**. FROM A CONSTANTLY-CHANGING LINEUP TO THE ENDLESS HOURS AND MILES SPENT AWAY FROM FAMILY AND THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT. THEIR SEVENTH STUDIO ALBUM *ILLUSION* SERVES AS A “REBOOT” WITH A NEW SOUND, A NEW LINE UP AND A NEW RECORD LABEL. IT ALL SERVES AS A REVITALIZED PLATFORM TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE OF HOPE AND LOVE DEPENDENT UPON THE GOD OF ETERNITY AND A DEVOTION TO THEIR FANS THAT SPOKEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN FOR.





BY JEF CUNNINGHAM

“Spoken will exist until God says stop. We will make the best out of this time..”

As a veteran band Spoken has seen and done it all. What do you have to offer the listening public that you haven't already given?

Oliver Crumpton: This record is an overhaul of this band. We really wanted to reinvent the band and develop it into something that was new and exciting – not only for the fans but for us. I think all of this will be apparent in the record, as well as transfer to our live show. We also made it a point for this record to push our boundaries and release some of the heaviest stuff this band has ever done and also some of the most accessible, while still remaining cohesive.

After being a part of the music game for as long as you have, is there a specific reason that keeps Spoken going? Why do you do what you do?

Matt: We love music. We enjoy writing, recording, and performing music. Playing live is one of the best feelings you can experience with music. The way people react when you play their favorite song, or point them out during your show, is so cool. Meeting some of your favorite bands and maybe even sharing the stage with them is a special moment. But being able to meet the people that like the music you create and talk about life, and how your songs have affected people, is beyond all the other stuff. God has given Spoken this gift, that we have the honor of sharing with the world. God can use anything and everything to show His love and, luckily, He allows us to be a part of that. Spoken will exist until God says stop. Until then, I want to make the best out of this time.

Spoken has seen musical trends come and go, yet you've been able to stay relevant without jumping from trend to trend. How have you managed to do so?

Ryan Pei: We adapt to survive, which a lot of bands who do it as long as this band has, need to do. Staying relevant is about pulling aspects of what's current and incorporating it into what the foundation of the band has always been. In most cases that foundation lies with the singer, and for us it's no different. This record was a combination of staying relevant and reinventing, which made it easy to go into a new direction with a set of all new writers coming into play.

How did this new album come together? What was the writing process like?

Ryan Pei: It was a three-year long process. Basically, we were in a position three to four years ago to decide what direction this band was going to go from here with almost all new members; and everything we are today started with the writing process. It started with Oliver demoing some songs and taking them to our friend and now producer Jasen Rauch, who at the time was playing guitar for Red. After that, Jasen has always been the strong foundation of what the new record is and who we are now. The whole writing and recording process went hand-in-hand for this album. It was such a long process that it allowed us to grow as writers and it gave us the opportunity to step back from the songs for a period of time and revisit any areas we thought could be improved upon. With each song we wanted to focus on what parts needed to shine through – whether it be

ays stop. Until then, I want to

a guitar riff or vocal melody or bass line and make sure everything else complemented it in a way to make it stand out. We wanted to make sure every song was as memorable as the last.

Matt, Spoken is known for being one of the hardest working bands – touring almost non-stop – the ultimate “road dogs.” Why do you tour so hard? How has having a wife and children affected the way you tour?

Matt: Balancing a family is an art form – no matter what kind of career you have. Do I have it figured out? No, but I’ll do whatever is necessary to take care of my family and be obedient to God. It would be impossible to be married, have 2 kids and be on the road non-stop, unless God gave me a saint as a wife. Tiffany is the most supportive person in my life. There’s nobody that believes in me or this band more. A voice of reason, an honest opinion, the most amazing mother to our children. God has put an incredible support system in my life. My family, band members, label, management, friends, fans, a church that I love, people all over the world that pray for me, my family, the band. I’m so lucky, blessed, fortunate – whatever you want to call it. All of these things working together, is what makes my life possible.

Spoken in the past has only worked with Christian-centric labels. Why did you decide to go with a General Market label (E1)?

Ryan Pei: We will always have the Christian market foundation that has kept this band going for so long,

but we were looking for something to push us beyond those areas. We wanted to do something that Spoken has never done before. Nothing is ever a guarantee in this business, but we felt that with the direction of the new sound we had an idea of what we could expect from a Christian label and knew that it wasn’t the right fit, but with a general market label, especially eOne, there would be a much better chance for opportunities that we would never have otherwise.

This new record honestly feels like it’s “rebooting” Spoken for a new audience. And you’ve made more than one “most anticipated” list for records releasing this year. How do you feel about this next chapter for Spoken?

Oliver Crumpton: We’re so excited about starting this chapter in this band’s career. I think there is also a bit of nervousness that goes with it. It’s that anticipation, I guess. It’s kind of surreal at this point for the record to be releasing so soon. It’s been such a long process making this record, so it feels crazy that it’s finally over. I think this is a really exciting time for this band, though. All of the biggest opportunities that we have ever had are coming up and we’re ready to see where this goes.

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20 CELEBRATORY

the art of collaboration

I have to admit that, growing up, KoRn was a pretty big influence of mine. When their self-titled debut dropped in 1994, it was such a refreshing change to heavy music. The heavy guitars, hip-hop influenced beats and a bass player that sounded more like a percussionist than just a bass guitar player. And to that add the monstrous voice of Jonathan Davis and introducing the world to 7-string guitars, Korn brought something new (nu) to a genre of music that desperately needed KoRn's massive "shot in the arm." I was such a fan-boy that at one point I even bought a white Ibanez similar to the one that my favorite guitar player in KoRn used. So, when I got the chance to write this feature on Love & Death (Brian's first band since leaving KoRn in 2005), I jumped at the chance to work on the project and learn more about a man that helped to shape me as a musician.



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LOVE AND DEATH 41



BY JEF CUNNINGHAM

“My favorite thing in life is to experience spiritual things. I’m not talking about going to a church or any ordinary thing like that.”

The first thing you will probably assume when you look at Love & Death is that it’s Brian ‘Head’ Welch’s solo project. And while the former KoRn guitarist is the frontman for the group, Love & Death is a collaborative, cohesive unit where all members have a voice. “It’s a full band deal for me. I’ve been with these guys for four years and it’s the only band I’ve been in since KoRn. We just changed the name from Brian “Head” Welch to Love & Death recently, because I hated Brian “Head” Welch as a project name. Since I released my book in 2007, my managers wanted to brand my name. I eventually got sick of it and came up with the name Love & Death and all the band members agreed on it. Everyone in our band has input, but I think I have the final say in everything. We all agree pretty much on all the music, though.” “All of my band members put a lot into our project as well, so I didn’t want it to be all about me – I wanted it to be about the whole band.” “We recorded it in pieces throughout 2011-2012. Me and our bass player, Valentine, wrote with Jasen (Rauch – RED, Breaking Benjamin) in his studio for a few of them. J.R.’s ideas came through email and Dan Johnson laid down the drums and added his flavor in there to tighten everything up. I put the band together in 2009 with my former manager. I found Valentine and Dan through YouTube auditions. When our former guitarist had to step down, we found 15 year old J.R. on Facebook and here we are.”

The collaboration theme also extended outside of the band on *Between Here & Lost*. “There’s, like, five or six different outside writers on our album. I’ve never done that before. In L.A., you’re in a band and that’s ‘your band,’ and you’re in competition with all the other bands. In Nashville it’s a bunch of musicians/writers that are like, ‘Hey, do you wanna get together to write and see what happens? Cool man!’ Whatever it takes to get the best song. We really enjoyed the process.”

In an example of how the collaborative process worked on the new record, Brian explains how “The Abandoning” came into being: “‘The Abandoning’ was a song that started with a riff from our 17-year-old guitar player, J.R., in early spring of 2012. He emailed me the crazy opening riff and I flipped over it. Then, while we were on tour with P.O.D. in June, J.R. tried to finish the song with one of our friends named Hunter, who was a crew member on the tour. They did the verses, but couldn’t come up with the chorus. After the tour, I went to work on it with our producer and I came up with a melodic chorus. But Jasen, changed the key of my chorus after we wrote the pre-chorus, and the music was all there.”

“One of the biggest changes on this album is that we connected with a great producer. With my first solo album (2008’s *Save Me from Myself*), I wanted to oversee everything myself to see if I could do this type of thing. I think some of it was experimenting and some of it was just pride, but a band really needs someone who can produce an album to make the material the best it can be. That’s what producers are there for, so that was the biggest thing – just bringing Jasen into the fold.”

Describing your own music is often a somewhat perilous task, especially when you’re a person with a certain amount of notoriety or fame. People’s preconceived notions about what you should sound like typically trump what you actually do sound like. I find that Brian’s description of Love & Death’s sound are pretty spot on, though. “It (Love & Death) sounds like beauty and tragedy. It’s dark sounding, yet melodic as well. You can feel despair in some parts and feel love in others. This album is pretty close to everything I love about life and music.”

As a 7-string guitar hero & pioneer he and his former bandmates basically rewrote the sound of heavy music in the mid ‘90s and early 2000s, shaping musical trends that are still felt throughout all of heavy music and modern radio rock. With that, Head’s legacy as an innovative guitarist is very well established, but in Love & Death he’s also taken on the role as the lead vocalist. “I never thought I could sing, but when I quit KoRn, I prayed that I would learn to sing, and after a lot of work, I’m actually doing it. In 2005, I prayed that I’d be able to develop my voice to sing lead vocals. Over the next few years I watched myself grow into an okay singer. I went from not being able to sing and being totally unconfident, to ending up with a decent, confident voice. Pretty cool.”

Lyrical speaking, *Between Here & Lost* covers a lot of emotional ground. Brian speaks about one song in particular that carried significant weight and meaning for him: “I had two old friends from high school pass away this summer. Our song ‘By The Way..’ was inspired by their deaths. It’s a heavy, yet melodic and emotional song about losing loved ones and learning how to move on.” If you were a fan of Brian’s first record, *Save Me From Myself*, there is a noticeable lyrical change in direction. Whereas the first album’s content was more personal and almost a bit “preachy” at times, this new record has a more balanced, broad, almost artistic appeal. “I definitely planned on the lyric shift for this record. My first solo album was more of an experimental project and very personal

I'm talking about actually feeling the God of the afterlife come into your world in a very real and personal way."

to me. This new Love & Death album is way more of a band effort. The other members of Love & Death and our producer are very talented and they all brought some great ideas to the table. I even worked with a few outside writers on lyrics & melodies to give some of the songs a fresh approach."

One point of interest you tend to ponder with Head is how he views his past with KoRn. Is it something he honors and wears proudly or is it something that haunts him and leaves the proverbial bitter taste in his mouth? "It doesn't bother me. I was incredibly fortunate to be a part of something so huge. Over 30 million albums sold is crazy." It's well documented that Brian's split with KoRn wasn't exactly the most positive, but there are rumblings of a possible return to his former band, via *RockRevolt Magazine*, "The KoRn website announce back in November that Brian is playing a few full shows with KoRn in Germany in 2013. There was also a video released by James "Munky" Shaffer stating that the dates were sort of a, "Let's see how it goes and if it goes well there could be a possible rejoining of the band." Getting it straight from the horse's mouth helps to clarify the rumors. "Right now we're all just taking things very slow. The only thing I'm planning to do is hang out with my old friends and show some love to thousands of KoRn fans. We'll see what the future brings. I will say that I think anything is possible at this point, because everyone is doing so good and everything is so positive. I think we'll know more later this year after I play the shows with them. It could be an incredible time. But you never know, maybe I'll get a black eye from Munky, because I mess up a guitar part live," he laughs.

The rest of Love & Death appear to supportive of the possibility. In the aforementioned *Rock Revolt Magazine* article Dan (Johnson – drums) is actually very supportive of this possibility, "I'm all for it. He's never going to not have his own music, so as far as Love & Death goes he's always going to have his own thing like that. If that were to happen he would still do a side project and it would actually call attention to us as a band. I'm totally supportive of it and I think it is great. There are a lot of people that do not know about Love and Death that might hear of us from him playing with KoRn. I am 100% for it."

2013 is going to be a very busy year for Love & Death. With a hectic touring schedule starting off with a club tour supporting Thousand Foot Krutch and more planned throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, the band plans to bring their unique sound and message to the masses. "We'll be

announcing some exciting stuff in a couple of months, so we're asking people to keep checking our sites, sign up for our email newsletter and stay tuned for some cool announcements!

"2013 is going to be the craziest year of my life, I think ... in a good way. I think I can put my personal belongings in storage, because I'm not going to be home at all. And there are many surprises that are coming for me and Love & Death that we are looking forward to sharing!" Shockingly enough, Head doesn't have the most positive outlook on touring, but it's for a very practical reason. "Touring is definitely my least favorite part of the whole music business. The reason is I can't sleep very well in a tour bus or van. I count the minutes until we finally check into a hotel to have a nice clean bed on the days off. Being a father has affected everything in my life drastically. It's the hardest job I've ever loved. Everyone thinks the music business is so glamorous and sometimes it is. But there is nothing glamorous about seeing your loved ones suffer because your life is so crazy busy and always on a constant move. I slowed down my touring dramatically after I left KoRn in 2005 when my daughter was six years old. Now that she is almost 15, I think it's time to go full force like I did back in the day. And that scares me a little bit, because I don't like to tour, but my love for the fans is stronger!

Brian as well as Love & Death's message is pretty much "on point" in every magazine feature, online publication and music blog. So I asked him to talk about something that he never gets to talk about in these type of interviews. "Man, I don't know... That's your job to come up with the clever questions," he laughs. "Well, maybe if you asked me if music was my favorite thing in life, I would say no. It's sometimes a love/hate thing. My favorite thing in life is to experience spiritual things. I'm not talking about going to a church or any ordinary thing like that. I'm talking about actually feeling the God of the afterlife come into your world in a very real and personal way. There's nothing like it. I have those experiences and they happen about once or twice a year. Usually when I least expect it. I wish they happened more often, but they don't."

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What Mark Tremonti Says

WHILE CREED HAS BEEN MERCILESSLY MOCKED IN SCENE CIRCLES, THE ROCK AND GUITAR WORLD HAS KEPT PAYING ATTENTION TO THE MUSIC MADE BY THE GUITARIST THAT LEFT AN INDELIBLE IMPRINT ON ROCK JUST BEFORE AND AFTER THE MILLENNIUM. WHETHER THAT WAS WITH CREED'S FIRST THREE MONSTER-SELLING ALBUMS, HIS POST-CREED BAND ALTER BRIDGE OR HIS NEW SOLO ALBUM, MARK TREMONTI HAS BEEN QUIETLY BEEN PERFECTING HIS TONE AND RATTLING SPEAKER CABINETS. WHILE IT WON'T EARN US ANY SCENE POINTS, IT FELT LIKE A GOOD IDEA TO PICK THE BRAIN OF THIS SIX-STRING SLINGER.



What compelled you to make this solo album?

I am a songwriter and I had a lot of idea, that if I did not do this they would not see the light of day. I had a three-month window while Miles was out touring with Slash, and Scott was touring doing his acoustic solo stuff. So I figured it would be the perfect opportunity.

Nice. Where did these songs come from? I am curious of how many have been around in some form or another for awhile, and how many are fresh from this album's pre-production stage.

All my songs are stored and filed away. When it's time to do a record, I'll keep them together. It does not matter how old they are. Whether it is ten years old or one day old. I just mix and match parts. There is a song on the record that I started writing in eighth grade.

Wow! What would be a practical example that? How tiny of a riff are we talking about or is it a whole phrase?

The third track on the record is called "I Wish You Well." The verse and chorus, like I said, were written back in junior high.

Wow that is pretty dang cool.

You know a couple ideas just stick around for a reason.

That's true. A lot of your lyrics show depth. That goes past the boy-meets-girl / drive-cars-fast mentality. I'm curious why you lean more towards

the spiritual or emotional.

That is only the real way I know how to express myself. It's just life's lessons learned.

Right on. That is good stuff. What do you think of Jesus Christ?

What do I think of Jesus Christ?

Yeah.

I have faith in a god. Though I am not one of those individual people that believe in their god is the right god and everyone else is wrong. I believe in a higher power. I just don't know what that is. I don't believe in that man-made version of that higher power.

Gotcha. I have a follow-up question that kind of hits that subject head on. What do you think of His claim to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by me?"

To be honest, I have not been to church in a very long time. I am a spiritual guy. I am not a very practiced religious guy. I don't follow scriptures that man has made for us to follow God, and Jesus. It is tough for me to answer that.

What are essentials for your gear set up? As well as some of your secrets you are willing to share on how you get your tone.

Well, on this record I used a Mesa Boogie Triple Rectifier along with Cornford RK 100 for the rhythm tones. Then I used the RK 100 for the lead tones as well.

It was a pretty simple approach this time around.

How did it feel for you, for your band Creed to somehow become the punching bag for the elitist indie rock snob and alternative kid?

It's fine. You take the good in with the bad. Some of the biggest bands get all the hatred. When you are all alternative, cool and trendy, sometimes you don't sell many records. So you have to ask yourself what you really want. I think we got the best of both worlds when we started Alter Bridge. We got the success with Creed, but we got beat up a bit. Then with Alter Bridge we got all the praise from the critics, but not a ton of record sales. You gotta be true to your self.

I'm wondering how rewarding it was for Alter Bridge to receive the positive response it has. After being one of rock's biggest sellers in your previous band?

Yeah, man, it was great. I think getting all that success with Creed – though it was never a dream come true because we were never happy – there was a lot of stress and pressure. There was a lot of fighting within the band. On top of that, a lot of critics came after us. We were selling out arenas, but at the same time we were not 100% happy. So when we received the praise from the critics for Alter Bridge it was a very positive thing for us.

Going back to Creed. I remember the popular *Behind the Music* episode. I believe it was Scott Stapp that said your guitar influences were extreme metal. I don't remember specific names, but maybe bands like Napalm Death or Suffocation. I didn't exactly expect to hear those influences in Alter Bridge, though I figured with this solo album they might be rearing their head. Why is it not so obvious, and can you elaborate on how your earlier influences either inform or do not inform your current writing?

Well, what I grew up on were not so extreme as Napalm Death. It was more along the lines of Metallica, Slayer, Testament, Exodus, Anthrax and Megadeth – that kind of speed metal. That's my roots. That's what I brought a little into this record on the rhythm side of things.

Why did Creed get back together, and what were some of the stipulations you and the other guys had about reuniting?

After all that time went by, we realized that we were giving up a good opportunity. Not many bands get to play sold-out arenas, and do all these great things we got to do as Creed. We did not want to waste that opportunity. Both parties were ready to get back together at the same time and we didn't bring up the past. You know, I think that is what helped us the most – was to look forward.

How is the chemistry inside of Creed?

Oh, it's fine. We just finished a very successful tour and had a good time doing it. It's been great.

How is the chemistry for Alter Bridge as well, and what does the future look like for both bands?

It's great. We just have to plan ahead. We have a big year for

Alter Bridge. We are getting together in January to work on our next album. We'll tour the rest of the year with Creed and wherever I find any windows – a month or here or there – I am going to tour my solo stuff.

Right on. I know you have told this story before, but can you tell me how you came across Myles Kennedy? He has a fantastic voice, and I am glad to see him being recognized for his talents.

He was in this band called The Mayfield Four that opened up for us years ago. When it was time for us to find a new singer, he was at the top of the list. I had tried out a couple singers here in Orlando. I sent Myles my demos I had for the first Alter Bridge record. He really dug them and threw down. Then you have the end of it.

What are the most important lessons you have learned thus far in your career?

To stop signing contracts. It always seems to bite you in the butt in one-way or another. I've learned not to be a slave to any given contract. If people want to work with me, it's kind of a handshake deal at this point.

That's cool. What is the biggest surprise you have seen in the music industry thus far this year in 2012?

I think the biggest surprise over the last few years is how powerful the touring market is overseas. When you come back home, you scratch your head wondering why it is not thriving here like it is over there. I would like to see that change.

Do you have any ideas or suggestions on why that is the case?

I think music fans use more print media and now the Internet to get behind their bands. Here in America it has been radio, but radio has been shrinking very quickly over here. So we get our radio back from seventy rock stations to one hundred and twenty where it used to be – or start importing those magazines here into the States.

Now you are talking about something that gets my radar up. I am a magazine that has been around for 27 years, and last October I went out of print. Now I'm online only due to advertising and ad sales backing out.

Right, I hear you. It's rough for everybody right now.

Guess so. Where do you see popular rock music going in the near future?

I think it's the wild wild West. I don't think anybody knows. I think everybody is trying to guess. I see labels doing 360 deals with bands and trying to be all-around management for bands. They can't do what they used to be able to do with bands – seeing they don't have the funds anymore like they used to. It's tough. I think record labels are going to get phased out a bit. Or what they do with bands is going to change dramatically. I think social media is going to be the direct connections between bands and fans.

Yeah, that's interesting. I remember being around in 1995. My magazine was called 'Heavens Metal' and we

were celebrating our ten-year anniversary. The word metal became a weight around our neck. Entire record companies were demolishing their metal division. Record stores were getting rid of their metal section. Radio was dropping their metal playlist. You guys were coming along right about that time. You played more of a classic rock sound that mixed the new styles of grunge and whatnot. When you look back, how do you think you guys survived in a music scene that was flipping upside down every couple days?

I think when we came out. Most of the stuff that was coming out on the radio was very poppy, fun and summer kind of music. You had bands like Marcy's playground, Third Eye Blind and Offspring being the top played band. When we came out, it was very serious. When "My Own Prison" came out, it was a very serious, moody song that stood out from what was out at the time. Then Days of The New came out, and they had the same kinda vibe. I think both of the bands really thrived being the only two bands that had that moodier vibe going on. I think that is why it caught fire at first, and hopefully that's what kept people's attention.

When you go out on your solo tour what can we expect to see on your set list?

I've got my first show booked, and we plan on playing every song on the record. We have got 12 songs on the album. That is pretty much all we have to play. I am sure when we go on tour we will pick up a cover or two. Then turn some songs into jams to make them longer and extend certain sections. Maybe extended guitar solos, or drum solos. Eric, who plays guitar with me, is very good guitar player and can solo really well. So, I might have him do his thing.

Going back to the album. A lot of times when a guitar player does a solo album, it's usually a shred or instrumental album. What made you decide not to go that route?

I just followed my passion, which is writing vocal melodies. That has always been my strength. The guitar playing is about 25% of who I am and the songwriting along with the melody writing is the other 75%. When I had the chance to do this solo record, that is what I really wanted to get out there.

It's kinda cool that you recognize what your strengths are. I wonder how you came about finding out your strengths and obtaining your confidence in your strengths – to see what your strengths and weaknesses are. Not everybody can come away with a good idea. How did that happen for you?

I think it comes when you are young. When I was 11 I bought my first guitar and started writing music, and writing songs. That is what enjoyed doing. Creating sounds on my guitar that sounded good to me. I did not take guitar lessons or learn other people's music. I was not good enough back then to learn other people's music by ear. So, I just created music myself. Then over the years I started learning that the things that I had discovered on guitar had actual names. So, that is how I started learning theory and developed an ear to learn other people's stuff. Mainly I was a songwriter. To this day I am a very insecure guitar player. If someone asked me to play a slow blues jam with B.B. King, I'd be terrified. Though, if someone asked me to write a song I'd be perfectly comfortable. That is my comfort zone.

That's cool. Speaking of B.B. King. When I got married my wife's uncle is a blues player and he has some notoriety here in Austin, Texas. He was doing a solo album back in the '90s, and B.B. King had played with him before. B.B. told him, "Hey, when you get ready to do your solo album give me a call, and I'll come play on it." He told his family kinda under his breath, "Nobody plays on my album." We thought he was crazy for turning down B.B. King.

Yeah, I would not turn down that King – or any of the kings.

“The guitar playing is about 25% of who I am and the songwriting along with the melody writing is the other 75%. When I had the chance to do this solo record, that is what I really wanted to get out there.”

Yeah, me neither. So let's say, God forbid, some act of terrorism took out the electrical grid and somehow we were without electricity for a long time. What would you do with your music, if anything?

I'd play acoustic guitar, man (laughs).

Is there anything else you would like to add or talk about?

No, I think I'm good.

Okay. I sure appreciate your time, and hopefully your solo tour will come to Austin, Texas. I'd love to see it. I think it would be fun.

Yeah, man I had a good time. I hope so, too.

Well I wish you the best man.

Thank you.

✕



GUITAR WORLD | BRAD TOLINKSI

AN INTERVIEW BY DOUG VAN PELT

It's not every day that you get to interview a former boss. Thus was the unique factor that was funny to contemplate when interviewing Brad Tolinski. Back in the early '90s *Guitar World Magazine* (which Brad has edited for 20+ years) experimented with a Christian rock column that they asked me to write (called "Stairway to Heaven"). When I got a press release about the new book that he helped put together (coyly titled *The Best Instruction Book Ever*), I had a good hunch that he'd be an informative and fun interview. I'm pleased to report that it was good on every level. So, without further a-do, check out the raw interview as it happened.

Hey Brad, how you doing?

Hey Doug.

How's life in magazine publishing world?

I appreciate the coverage in your magazine.

Sure. Yeah. Glad to see your book. *The Best Instruction Book Ever*.

Yeah, I got a couple of them. My Jimmy Page book is out this week as well.

Good deal. I'm gonna ask you about Jimmy a little bit later.

Mmm-hmm.

How did you conceive of, and why, *The Best Instruction Book Ever*?

(he chuckles before answering) Well, you know, actually, we didn't really think of doing it until Time Home Entertainment asked us to (laughs); and it might seem that it's weird that – in our many years of being in the business – we haven't really done anything like this, a beginner's guide. And part of the reason is it's really, really hard to do. I think even the big guitar publishing houses like Hal Leonard and Alfred – you know, they try to reinvent the guitar book every couple of years and have a hard time doing it. But we took it as a challenge and I think we did a really good job. You know, essentially the goal of the book is to get people to learn the basics of guitar and to understand how tab works so that they can go off on their own and successfully start playing. I think our goal is a little different sometimes than the ones of the traditional publishing houses.

How would you crystalize or encapsulate the traditional goal?

Well, I think that those guys are always a little torn between whether they should teach standard notation or whether they should teach tablature; and we just decided to pretty much take standard notation off the shelf, because I think that's a completely different skill and usually one that's better left to having a teacher as opposed to learning from a book and just

decided we were going to teach people via the tab method. And I think the other advantage that we have is that we have some of the best designers, I think. The people that design *Guitar World* are an incredibly talented design staff and a lot of those other beginners books just looked sorta hokey and corny and almost make you embarrassed to be seen with it or to pick it up, and we just wanted to make a really great looking sort of nice commercially-accessible book that you wouldn't mind having with you for the couple months that it takes to learn how to play the guitar.

What are some trends you've seen in guitar playing throughout the years and contrast those changes with the constants that remain and probably will remain?

Well, I think the biggest change is the skill level of players. Because of the guitar magazines, whether it be *Guitar World* or, you know, back in the day, *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* or *Guitar One*, and the DVD's and tab books are available. You just see young kids with astonishing technique. You know, things that maybe 15 years ago you would have thought were impossible to do, like every kid in an emo band can play at the level of an Yngwie Malmsteen or Eddie Van Halen and, in terms of sure technique ... I mean, that's the biggest thing. It always surprises me when people say, "They don't make guitar players like they used to." I'm always thinking, "Oh my God, they've built superhuman robots!" (laughs)

I think the things that do stay the same, is that there are a handful of classics, that if you're a rock player, everybody starts out on, everybody loves to learn, always sounds great on guitar. You know, "Back in Black" by AC/DC or "Stairway to Heaven" by Led Zeppelin or any number of those great classic rock songs. Everybody's sort of – no matter what age – still pleased to learn how to play those and learn how to play them well.

I've got some fun questions, too, to make the interview kind of fun.

How many guitarists does it take to screw in a light bulb?

I've heard many answers to this but (laughs), you give me yours.

Well, I'm expecting you to come up with something new and different, since I'm sure you've heard them all.

Well, you know the classic is it takes six guitar players. One to do it and five to say, "I could have done that."

You are a guitar player yourself. How have you avoided the trap of either being arrogant and prideful when around the guitar players you're interviewing, as well as avoiding being a fan boy?

You know, that's a really good question. I think I'm not arrogant or prideful,



because I'm an "okay" player and a lot of these guys can actually play circles around me. The other side of it is perhaps more interesting. I'm not so much of a fan boy. I sort of get how it's done. I'm always just really just interested as a musician and how other people think and how they do it. I mean, I'm not ... you keep from being a fan boy, because I don't worship these guys, but I'm interested as a human being in how they're creating it. I'm always interested in creative individuals. I'll give you a really terrible but sort of funny example. About the only reality show that I really watch is *Project Runway*. I've got a 15-year-old daughter and I watch it with her, and I'm always fascinated, because it's a reality show about people actually making something. In that case it's clothes, but they really sort of follow their creative process and the way they're thinking about it. And I think that, when I do an interview, that's how I approach it. Two people exchanging ideas about creativity.

On Extreme's last album tour, *Saudades de Rock*, Nuno Bettencourt asked the people in the audience in a cheerful voice, "How many Guitar Heroes do we have out there?" And enthusiastic gamers joyfully raised their hands. Then Bettencourt snapped at them with a comment like, "Well, learn to play a real guitar!" How prevalent do you think this kind of resentment is towards guitar gaming from actual guitar players? Where does it come from and why do they feel this way?

Well, I think maybe where Nuno is coming from is that, you know, learning how to play *Guitar Hero* is fun – and I actually do feel like it's constructive, because it does teach people rhythm, 'cause you have to click those little buttons right in time with the music, which is an essential part of playing almost any instrument. So, you definitely learn something, but I think what he might have been getting at is, you know, telling people that it is no substitute and you aren't gonna get the same joy as doing something truly creative. And I also think that ... I mean, I get great personal satisfaction out of the sort of tactile and creating my own individual sound and, while I don't necessarily agree with Nuno berating someone from playing the game – I don't think that's a great thing – but I think what more might be on his mind or on any guitar player's mind, is that you might think that that's guitar playing, but you really won't get the same sort of joy as from playing a real instrument and creating your own sound.

It's been rumored that Yngwie Malmsteen is a prideful guitar player. True or false and why? Or any other comments you want to throw at that?

Well, Yngwie is certainly proud of his accomplishments as a guitar player and I think he should be. I mean, you know, he's unbelievable at what he does. He is a great player and I think he has gotten, as you would say, prideful ... I think it's almost him being self-defensive, because a lot of people have criticized him as being, you know, a one-dimensional player. Or in the '90s people sort of made fun of him for his technical expertise. So, I think he overcompensates, you know, by sort of talking up his own ability. But I would have to say I've talked with Yngwie several times in the last four or five years and I believe he's a different person than he was in his wild youth and has not quite the same arrogance and has taken on sort of broader view of other guitarists and the fans that appreciate him. So, you know, maybe it was youthful folly.

What is your honest assessment of Michael Sweet as a guitar player?

Well Michael's been up to *Guitar World* a couple of times and has done some lesson things with us and I think he's a fine guitar player. I mean, I think he usually serves the song really well, but I think his strengths are more in that area of, "Okay, what can I do to make this song good or make this song better?" That's a perfectly fine thing. In fact, it's an approach that I prefer when I listen to a guitar player. I always want to see what they'll do to move the song along. To make the song better rather than just show how great their chops are.

Good point. What are your thoughts on Stryper's lead guitar harmonies?

Well, they were very innovative for that time. You know, it's hard for people to remember. I mean, guitar harmonies are sort of a common thing now. But they were one of the guys sort of really leading that charge back when they were first starting. Certainly them and bands like Judas Priest, and maybe especially Iron Maiden, who really brought something new to the table.

This next one's one of those questions if you and I were hanging out having a beer or sitting around a campfire would probably come up. What do you think Jimi Hendrix would be doing if he were still alive today, and what would be some of his landmark accomplishments that we probably would have seen in the last 41 years?

That's interesting, because actually we have heard a lot of the things he was working towards toward the end of his life – you know, just studio tapes and stuff from Electric Lady. I think his playing underwent a huge change when Billy Cox entered the band. Jimi sort of moved away from being a rock player and went back to being more of a funk and R & B player. During his last year he was experimenting with horns. And I think maybe you might have actually heard Jimi for a period going through something and doing, you know, maybe even before Prince went there, something more along the levels of that – these sort of funky, jazzy, more intricate arrangements. But, I think that eventually Jimi probably would have wanted to do this because he was always into pushing the limits of the guitar. Like maybe after he would hear someone like Allan Holdsworth, who really was pushing the envelope of using different scales, I think Jimi would have probably had to push there, because, I mean, Jimi was primarily a blues and a Pentatonic sort of player, but considering how adventurous he was, he would have probably gone back a little bit to the woodshed, I think, and learned a little more jazz harmonies. I think he might have ended up going more in a jazz fusion sort of way, but Lord knows what he would be doing after he would come out of that. I mean it's just impossible to imagine, but definitely one of the greatest instrumentalists of the twentieth century.

How has *Guitar World* stayed in print all these years? Especially during the last five years or so when magazines and newspapers have been going out of print?

You know, you have to be able to give people something that they can't get anywhere else. If you're a newspaper that's really complicated,

because the news has been challenged by the immediacy of the internet. Or if you're just talking about some sort of rock and roll news or gossip, you know there are many, many places to get that online. But *Guitar World's* secret weapon is that we have some of the best instructors and some of the best writers working in music today.

Yeah, I think so.

And you just can't find it up online. I've often told people that we have the world's greatest transcriptions, and they think, like – the way you might put it – is that that's being prideful. But the truth is, we really do have the best transcribers in the world and I think, if it's true, it's fine to point that out and to say that.

Sure.

You know, okay, there's all these transcriptions up online, but they're not very good, you know? If you really want to know the real deal and the right fingerings and the right chords and the right chord voicings, you have to go to a *Guitar World* transcription. We also have access to a lot of artists that don't do long interviews online. I think that's the key. A lot of magazines suffer, because you can find things already up online for free, but if you can't find it anywhere else, you're really just going to have to pick up *Guitar World*.

Yeah, I agree. I have long really enjoyed reading *Guitar World*. Just the stories have been great rock journalism. You've got some great writers on staff there.

Yeah, we work really hard, you know? And we really, really care.

Yeah it comes though. Alright, Gary Clark Jr. What is your prognosis on Austin's great guitar hero hopeful? And I'm curious what your opinion is on what he used to do now that he is no longer an 18-year-old wunderkind.

(laughs). I love Gary Clark Jr.'s new record, his new album. I think he's the real deal. I mean we've been covering him in the magazine and I've seen him play at least three times. What's cool about him, what makes him special is first, just like Stevie Ray Vaughan, he can really sing. To me, where most sort of blues rock falls down, is that the singers just ... they're okay, but there's

that sort of cliché blues voice. I think Gary has a really unique and beautiful and flexible voice. He can do that really sweet R&B singing. Sometimes he can sound like Curtis Mayfield, sometimes like Paul Rodgers, but he always sounds like himself. So that keeps you involved. It's great to have



blues chops, but you have to have these songs. The blues tradition is as much about singing as it is about playing. And his playing is really cool. It's a little messy. It's a little funky around the edges. It feels more like Buddy Guy than it is, say, like Joe Bonamassa. Its rough edges make it exciting. And I like the fact that he uses fuzz instead of distortion. It makes it feel different and contemporary and a little bit more "Hendrix" in a way. So, you know, I think he's got a real original approach to things. I like that he does his extended blues things, but then he'll turn around and do more of a song that sounds like The Fugees or something. A real pleasure. I'm glad to see him along with other sort of young guys that are taking a new approach to the blues, like Black Keys or Jack White.

Yeah, me too. Okay, Jimmy Page. What's your honest assessment of his abilities through the years and specifically, I guess, what's inherent in that question is obviously, do you still think he's got it?

I think that he is one of the best rock composers and arrangers ever. I'm fully aware of how sloppy

Jimmy can be in a live situation, but to me, his recordings are pretty untouchable. He has such an original mind. Even when he's playing live and he's sort of jamming here and there, he very rarely ever plays in a cliché'd way. His approach is ... I don't know, I find it very unique. And whether he still has it, I would say go out and see the new Zeppelin reunion DVD. It's really pretty good. I think that the performance is – partly because it's more focused – I think it's as good, if not better than *The Song Remains the Same*.

Yeah, I just saw it in the theater. I like it better than *Song Remains the Same*.

Yeah, I mean it's more focused right?

Yeah.

I thought that "Dazed and Confused" was really good. I've heard over the years everybody talking about Page being sloppy – not *that* sloppy. (laughs) Maybe some of those shows of the late '70s are pretty rough, but I don't know, on record, he sounds pretty good to me.

Yeah. It's funny, I've always kinda preferred some of the bootleg recording performances over *Song Remains the Same*. I mean, certainly "No Quarter" and "Dazed and Confused" were always great, but some of the others ones, like "Rock & Roll" and "Whole Lotta Love" and "Black Dog" ... I always liked some of the bootleg recordings. I thought this was just a stellar performance and the setlist was just perfect.

There are some bootlegs of the band playing in '69 and '70 where they are just unbelievable – Jimmy's playing really incredibly well. It's sort of weird, you hear them from time to time and there have been some bad shows ... I mean you can find some things up on YouTube. But I think he's such an original mind and the compositions themselves are so amazing. I can't really find that much fault with the guy. And I think live it didn't help him that he slung his guitar so low, but it looked damn cool.

Yeah it did. (both laugh) So what's your book about?

It's called, *Light and Shade: Conversations with Jimmy Page*.

Yep, that was one of his favorite phrases.

Yes. And essentially it's a compilation of many of the interviews and discussions I've had with Jimmy over the last 20 years.

Oh, cool.

And you know, tied together with new observations and also some new interviews with Jimmy and new interviews with other people like Paul Rodgers and John Paul Jones, just to get some perspective. Even did an interview with John Varvatos about Jimmy Page's look and fashion and how that's affected rock and roll. And it just came out on Crown this week and it appears to be doing pretty well.

Awesome. Yeah it's got my interest. I will check it out.

It's on Amazon.

So, my three favorite living guitarists are Uli Roth, Frank Marino and Michael Shaker. Who are your top three guitar players?

So, you like the guys who sound like Hendrix more than you like Jimi Hendrix? (both laugh). Well, God bless. My top three guitar players? Interesting question. I like Jimmy Page, because of, I think, the range of what he did and how many different things that he did from the psychedelic stuff to the acoustic D-A-D-G-A-D things to such a wide breadth of playing. It's a little cliché, but I would put Jimi Hendrix second to Jimmy Page, because I really don't think – as those releases last year, the live records, showed – I just don't think that anybody can really touch him in terms of creating an emotion and being able to improvise and sound so free. And then, who would be in my third slot? Hmm. (pauses a moment)

I'm expecting you to say Holdsworth or Di Meola or somebody.

For a little slice in time – not throughout his entire career, but for, like, two or three years – it was John McLaughlin.

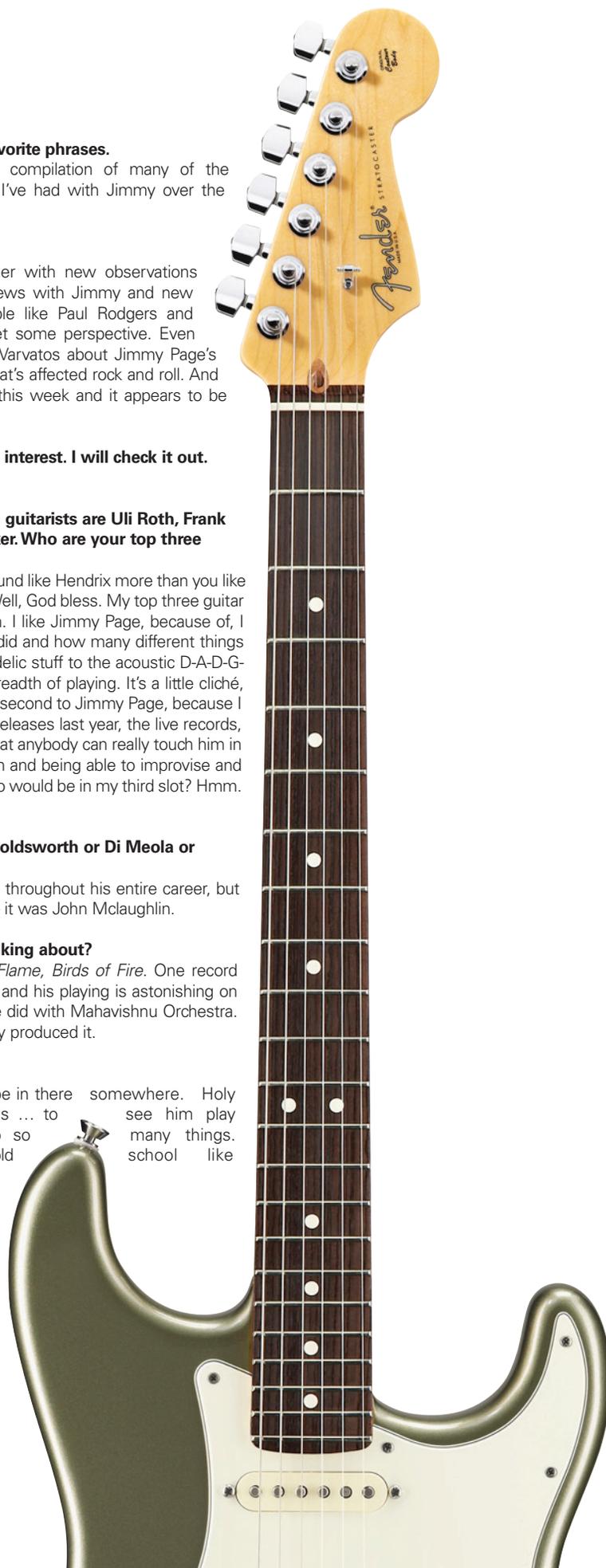
Yeah. Which era are you talking about?

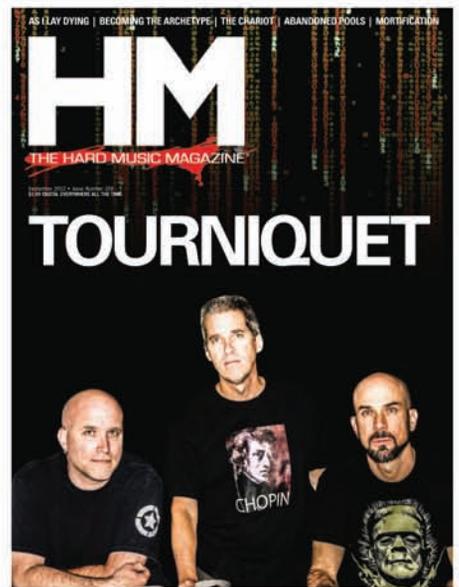
You know, *Inner Mounting Flame*, *Birds of Fire*. One record that always gets overlooked and his playing is astonishing on it is, *Apocalypse*. The one he did with Mahavishnu Orchestra. I think George Martin actually produced it.

Yeah.

Oh yeah, Jeff Beck's gotta be in there somewhere. Holy cow! (laughs) I think Jeff is ... to see him play live now, he just can do so many things. Just fantastic. I guess I'm old school like that.

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LOVE AND DEATH *BETWEEN HERE AND LOST*

Brian "Head" Welch proves with this album that he wasn't trying to revive a declining career with Korn by going into the Christian scene, where people would support him despite a waning popularity in the mainstream. Any suspicions of that are laid to rest with the first riff of this album. "The Abandoning" kicks your teeth in from the get-go and doesn't sound old or tired in the least. The production is brutal, having a clear, distinctive tone while maintaining gritty punch. Can you tell I love this record?

This is better than any Korn record or previous solo record by Head. This is seriously brutal, well-written heavy metal that is exciting to listen to. The cover of "Whip It" (originally by Devo) perplexed me until I heard it. Jeez, these guys know how to make anything grind your bones within you. Occasionally sounding like a close relative of Rob Zombie, Love and Death show how grimy heavy metal can be. If Korn were this good, I'd have listened to them all this time, ha-ha...

This album just doesn't let you up for air. It's heavy all the way through – except the last song, which is still haunting. *Between Here and Lost* grinds you into dust from beginning to end. I love it. (FOOTH & NAIL) SETH HEGOX

Rating system

- 05 CLASSIC
- 04 FABULOUS
- 03 SOLID
- 02 SUSPECT
- 01 AMISS
- * 1/2

**SPOKEN**

ILLUSION

With *Illusion*, Spoken's first album since the band seemingly disappeared out of the recording atmosphere back around 2007, suggests that this disappearing act was merely an illusion. With the 12 songs on this comeback effort, Spoken may have released its most commercially acceptable album to date. While the release has more than its share of hard rocking tracks, songs like "More Than You Know" have the sort of mainstream melodic appeal that will fit quite nicely on modern rock radio. This album's title track smartly vacillates expertly between harsh, hard rock vocals and the sort of chorus even your little sister might want to sing along with. The album's first single, "Through it All," has the kind of intro that brings Linkin Park to mind. What follows is an anthem that aims straight for the heartstrings and hits its target square on. There are times when bands come back, yet appear much like an aging boxer, with little more than a championship legacy to recommend it. Thankfully, Spoken has come back with fists a flying, with plenty of sonic firepower still at its disposal. **[EONE] DAN MACINTOSH**

**STARFLYER 59**

IAMACEO

If there's one Yank in or outside Christendom bent on an ongoing Britpop revival, it looks like Jason Martin. The inspiration and continued attraction to his Starflyer 59 derives from a deep-seeded Anglophilia that, blessedly, lends Martin's maturing, nigh obsessive take on a certain kind of classicism a freshness two decades onward. *IAMACEO* could pass for the outtakes of one of Oasis' mid-'90s Creation Records, albeit with an absence of hedonism and Martin's bassy baritone imparting gravitas to songs alternately acting as personal vignettes and, as on the propulsively danceable titular tune, spiritual allegory. The latter lyrical tack works better by me, all the more when the songs are accented with real piano, toy piano, and marimba (or is that xylophone?), as occurs during the album's second half. If some of the record sounds like Sf59 formula, Martin's also-rans can often pass for lesser bands' greatest hits. A triumph by most all accounts here.

[HUNBERTOW] JAMIE LEE RAKE**THE EMBER DAYS**

MORE THAN YOU THINK

More Than You Think brings a relaxation to the human soul with warm vocals, gently strummed guitars and a steady smooth beat. If you want to take a late night drive through the countryside or enjoy a beautiful sunrise at the lake, this is without a doubt the perfect musical match. The Ember Days do bring a true feel of worship and ambient style of music. However, I must say this album might come off as pale to someone unaware of this band. Most of the songs start off and end the same and have an identical musical structure. This album can be seen as perhaps the new age of worship coming ahead, but yet may attract an older audience as well.

[COME & LIVE] DANIEL GARCIA**OVERCOME**

NO RESERVES. NO RETREATS. NO REGRETS.

I have been a Overcome fan for the last 10 years. In these last 10 years I have seen the three bands Jason Stinson has formed, including Indwelling in 2003. *No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets.* hints at the brutal death metal of *My Eyes Shall Weep* with the metalcore of Overcome's *Immortal Until Their Work is Done*. It is everything that myself and other older fans of Stinson's work love. Overcome is known for its *Spinal Tap* revolving door of members. On this record we get to listen to what Sanhedrin brainchild Steven A. Cosand brings to the table as second guitar player and co-musical writer. Steven wrote the title track, "No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets." Stinson put pen to paper for the title track. The rest of the lyrics were written by Thomas Washington. This is his second time writing lyrics for Overcome, though he did all the lyrics for Indwelling. Overcome's been a death metal band before bands like Impending Doom made death metal trendy. If you are a long-time fan of Overcome, you will love this record. If you are getting tired of the new wave of compressed and gated guitar metalcore, then this record is for you. This is straight 5150 metalcore. **[FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS**

**GREELEY ESTATES**

THE NARROW ROAD

No longer with Tragic Hero Records, Greeley Estates has decided to release two EPs independently instead of one full-length album. The first of these EPs, *The Narrow Road*, features seven hard-hitting, headbanging-worthy tracks sure to please any long-time fan and impress new listeners. The EP begins as the title track crescendos into an explosion of screaming vocals, piercing guitars, and booming drums. The track explores the verse Matthew 7:14 – "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." And then frontman Ryan Zimmerman screams, "Life is a lesson built solely on pain. Few choose the narrow way." Most of the tracks are rather dark lyrically. "Head Underwater" and "Lot Lizards" deal with destructive relationships. "Watch it Burn" focuses on the catastrophic consequences caused by gossip – "Once you leave your mark, you never know where to stop. Once you ignite the spark, I watched you burn this whole town down." The track "Die" is quite an angry song in which Zimmerman vents about the bands who don't want to put the necessary effort into their music, and about the fans who nit-pick every decision a band makes. And "Doomsday" is about, well, the end of the world – it's also one of the heaviest songs the band has done. The counter to all this darkness is the track "Lennox House," which is about actively choosing to live. **[GREELEY-ESTATES] SARAH BREHM**

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Love and Death <i>Between Here and Lost</i>	03*	04*
Spoken <i>Illusion</i>	04	03*
Overcome <i>No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets.</i>	04	04*
Starflyer 59 <i>IAMACEO</i>	04	04
Greeley Estates <i>The Narrow Road</i>	04	04
The Ember Days <i>More Than You Think</i>	03	03
Dynasty <i>Beyond Measure</i>	04	03*
Jason Castro <i>Only A Mountain</i>	03	02
Robert Randolph <i>Presents: The Slide Brothers</i>	04	05
Those Who Fear <i>Unholy Anger</i>	04	03
Capital Kings <i>S/T</i>	04	03

**DYNASTY**

BEYOND MEASURE

Dynasty has brought their L.A. hardcore style back, and this time the emphasis is on the hard. *Beyond Measure* is full of adrenaline-pumping lyrics and circle pits. The album starts out slow with the first two tracks just taking up space. No song stands out as much as the short anthem of "Brick By Brick," letting you know what to expect in a short 54 seconds, the album then leads into a fireball of hardcore. Once the album picks up, there is no stopping. Songs like "Omni-Death" and "Death Solution" stand out as songs that will get your heart racing and your body ready to start moving. Title track "Beyond Measure" showcases what the band has stood for from the beginning and will always stand for. Staying true to their style and delivering an album that is sure to make their fans happy – with guitars, drums and vocals all blending to a hard, fast and full-of-emotion album. There is no sitting still while listening to this album. **[FACEDOWN] TONY D. BRYANT**

**JASON CASTRO**

ONLY A MOUNTAIN

Jason Castro's *Only a Mountain* release is a disappointment to those that expected a whole lot more from a man that counts individualistic artists like Ray LaMontagne, Ben Harper and Bob Marley as primary influences. It is impossible to pick out any of those inspirations on this new album. Instead, this fourth place finisher on the seventh season of *American Idol* comes off as just another generic contemporary Christian singer in the mold of Steven Curtis Chapman and their ilk. Not that there's anything wrong with artists like Chapman; these performers are perfectly suitable for listeners who appreciate 'nice' Christian music that soothes without ever challenging. However, great Christian music is the kind that finds singer/songwriters working out their salvation with a whole lot of fear and trembling, which does not describe Jason Castro. Ironically, this project's best song is a gentle, unifying ballad called "Same Kind of Broken," which also features established teen Christian singing star, Moriah Peters. It's sung prettily over an acoustic guitar backing, and the kind of quietly moving song one might likely expect to hear from someone that counts Ray LaMontagne as a musical hero. However, nothing else comes close to the aural beauty created by "Same Kind Of Broken." The rest of the album is filled up with big, bright Christian songs that sound like factory created spiritual expressions. **[WORD] DAN MACINTOSH**

**ROBERT RANDOLPH**

PRESENTS: THE SLIDE BROTHERS

When Robert Randolph & the Family Band released their *Live at the Wetlands* disc in 2002, it became obvious to anyone familiar with the African American spiritual tradition that these funky young rockers had been to church. You heard it on "The March," "Pressing My Way" and even "Shake Your Hips." They had club audiences, jam and dance band fans and rockers of a variety of assortments ready to stand up and give witness. Specifically, the Sacred Steel tradition that fueled Randolph's talents, grew out of the Pentecostal religious expressions of the House of God Church and the Church of the Living God, where in the mid-1930s the pedal steel guitar had been sanctified as a replacement for the more expensive Hammond Organ to assist in leading worship. In early interviews Randolph spoke of influences like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Duane Allman and Eric Clapton, but never failed to mention their religious counterparts: Calvin Cooke, Chuck and Darick Campbell and Aubrey Ghent. But Randolph also admitted that there was real controversy attached to his embrace of the mainstream (read secular) musical form, and he had real doubt if he could ever convince his spiritual artistic heroes out to a place where a larger audience could hear their craft. With *Robert Randolph Presents: The Slide Brothers*, we hear the expected bluesy Gospel rockers like "Sunday School Blues," which dates back to the late '60s work of Mylon LeFevre, "Catch that Train" and "No Cheap Seats in Heaven." Lord knows, I'm no Pentecostal, but you can certainly feel the Spirit that inspires these songs and performances. But nothing prepares even the most sympathetic listener for the raw energy, aggression and intensity of the playing when these Slide Brothers slice into a traditional blues song, whether it be Greg Allman's "Don't Keep Me Wondering," the two Elmore James tracks, "It Hurts Me Too" and "The Sky Is Crying" or the simmering soulfulness that stirs the currents of their instrumental take on "Wade in the Water." With such powerful instrumentalists in the queue, one would tend to give the vocals a slight, but Randolph brings in Blind Boys of Alabama veteran Jimmy Carter to support Aubrey Ghent on a fine variation on George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," complete with an altar-call shout-out. Blues diva Shemekia Copeland adds her rich soulfulness to the Fatboy Slim pop/rock remix, "Praise You," and the Slide Bros. give so much fresh energy to Rev. Gary Davis and Blind Willie's working of the traditional blues, "Motherless Children," that you'll want to erase the Eric Clapton version from your mainframe's memory. A tremendous celebration of the vitality both of the blues and the Gospel, *The Slide Brothers* manages the odd balance of paying tribute to a long-ignored tradition while pointing at the kind of creative musical fusions that are possible when we bring our humanity into the presence of the living God and give our very best offering. Can I get a witness? **[CONCORD] BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB**

**THOSE WHO FEAR**

UNHOLY ANGER

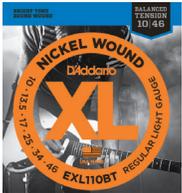
Pennsylvania's Those Who Fear is not kicking the gate open. Instead they are waiting on the other side, and not patiently. *Unholy Anger* is hard, fast, and everything that the industry needs right now. Despite a few issues on the album, the band is coming in knowing their place and wanting to push to the top. With songs like "Burn," which is hard hitting and leaving trails of fire, the album does not slow down and instead leaves a mild pause to breathe. The final track, "Colossus," is a change of pace for the album, with an instrumental track that serves no purpose other than noise. The track puts a stain on the album, which could have been fixed if the band would have placed some vocals on the track. **[FACEDOWN] TONY D. BRYANT**

**CAPITAL KINGS**

S/T

One member of this oft-danceable Washington, D.C. duo bears a hecka resemblance to Joy Electric's Ronnie Martin. It may be the same member who bears a vocal resemblance to Adam "Owl City" Young in a mildly aggressive mood with copious effects abetting his larynx. Yup, it's as if Capital Kings were born to make Christian electro-pop. On their eponymous full-length debut, they cover their nether parts for the evangeli-market by enlisting their label boss (TobyMac, quoting LL Cool J) and other crossover-minded kin in Him. That move reinforces the impression that Capital Kings mean to make sanctified brostep-inflected pop safe for church youth groups and pushing the K-Love envelope further into the current decade. Whether that's the case, they still manage a few scintillating moments, such as when they harken back to the early '90s pop chart aftermath of European techno/rave and bringing in Britt Nicole to fill the shoes Moya Brennan and Leigh Nash have left for other acts with an inkling toward trance. The closing collaboration with Family Force 5's Soul Glow Activatur makes for the most delightfully noisy of the Kings' salvos. A couple tracks earlier it sounds like they grabbed a hip uncle's Fad Gadget and Cabaret Voltaire 12-inchers ... before the processed rockist guitars start in. These guys could go any number of directions, but for now, Capital Kings sounds like a commercially savvy compromise of adventure and safety, mostly for the good. **[GOTEE] JAMIE LEE RAKE**

LIFEstyle



D'ADDARIO NICKEL WOUND STRINGS

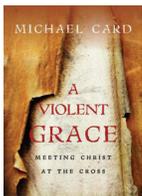
D'Addario, the world's largest manufacturer of guitar strings and other musical instrument accessories, introduces new XL Nickel Wound Balanced Tension string sets. Responding to consumer demand, D'Addario XL Nickel Wound Balanced Tension sets have been optimized to have a comparable tension string to string allowing for greater dynamic control and a more evenly balanced effort while fretting,

bending, strumming and picking on guitar, as well as plucking, slapping and bending on bass. Comprised of mathematically optimized string gauge combinations, each balanced tension set was extensively tested with players and experts in order to insure not only that they were balanced, but that they retained all of the inherent properties expected of a D'Addario XL nickel wound set. [daddario.com]

DARK HORSE

This movie had all the makings of a sleeper hit, but it came out wanting. Picture this: a 30-something socially inept guy named Abe (Jordan Gelber) lives with his wealthy parents, putting in time at a "gimme" job his wealthy dad (deftly played by Christopher Walken) gave him, when he suddenly realizes that he wants a woman. Enter Miranda (Selma Blair), whose recent life mishaps have sent her home to live with mom and dad. Abe practically proposes to Miranda on the first date and the drama is set in motion. The stilted, slow pace (reminiscent of Adam Sandler's *Punch Drunk Love*) seems to just drive the plot into the ground before it can soar. Sure, there's some funny moments, but not even the great Christopher Walken can save this one. [Virgil Films] DV

[Cuss: 20+ | Gore: 0 | Sex: 1 | Spiritual Conversations: 30]



A VIOLENT GRACE | MICHAEL CARD

Jesus was condemned . . . so we could be set free.
He was wounded . . . so we can be healed.
He died . . . so we might have life.

The cross has lost much of its appeal as a symbol of Christianity. Yet what Christ did at the cross remains central to our faith. In this richly designed book, masterful wordsmith Michael Card reflects on what it means for Christians that we meet our savior at a cross. Card combs the Old Testament prophecies and Gospel accounts of Jesus' self-sacrifice, seeking a renewed vision of the cross—the inconceivable meeting place of violence and grace. [InterVarsity Press]



ICREATION I-800

Promising a Bluetooth speaker, landline and iPhone making/receiving calls experience, this device falls flat. Hopefully, the R&D Department will scrap this device and start over to create something user-friendly. [jbl.com] DV

[Setup Ease: D+ | Performance: D | Price: \$160]

EVANS DRUMHEAD COLLAR

The Evans Level360 Drumhead Collar will let drummers spend more time playing and less time tuning. "Drummers have long appreciated the benefits of tuning, tonal range, and overall sustain that is made possible with extended collars found on modern timpani heads. Evans has developed a way to deliver those same benefits to drum set tom, snare, and marching tenor heads," says Evans Product Manager, Dick Markus. Due to variations in drum shell diameters, drum heads often

tend to lay askew on the drum's bearing edge, requiring physical force and over-tensioning to ensure the head's contact with the bearing edge of the shell. The results are frustrating tuning issues, reduced sustain and a narrow tonal range. The Evans Level360 Collar's ease of fit allows the drumhead to have constant contact on a level plane all the way around the drum's bearing edge. This design, exclusive to Evans, delivers ease of tuning, maximum sustain and top performance qualities on the widest variety of modern and vintage drums. [evansdrumheads.com]



THE BEST JOBS IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

MICHAEL REDMAN

The Best Jobs in the Music Industry is a practical career guide for those who love music and are exploring different areas of the music industry beyond the obvious performer route. Michael Redman boils down the job requirements, skill sets, potential revenue, longevity, benefits, and challenges of a variety of music careers both

direct and indirect, spanning from performer to label executive to recording engineer and music producer. Each description of a job starts with a short summary designed to help you decide right off the bat whether this might be something you want to explore further, followed by the real stories, paths to success, and challenges you may confront – all in the words of real pros. Read and learn from people who have lived the music industry, navigated it well, and been successful. [halleonardbooks.com]



VOL. 13 – ONE STEP AWAY

Every day after high school my sister and I would play *Time Splitters 2* for original Xbox. My parents bought me *Time Splitters*, because it looked like a family friendly FPS title. The graphics were bright and cartoonish, and there was a monkey on the cover. Oddly enough, it packs as much action as *Halo*, but combines it with highly suggestive humor. Win/win.

Our soundtrack was eternally Ghoti Hook – usually their debut for Tooth & Nail, *Sumo Surprise*. This album was 14 songs of hyper-fast skate punk that never took itself too seriously, or much seriously at all. They had a strange, unsettled melody that made them both super catchy and rough around the edges. On their debut, there were two kinds of songs: joke songs and overtly Christian joke songs. To be fair, there were a few dips into serious songwriting, like the weighty “Scared Am I” and “Never,” covering unplanned pregnancy and mortality by car crash respectively; also, the break up anthem/album highlight “Shrinky Dinks” – still lighthearted enough for a goofy super-8 music video where hi-jinx, and Alfred E. Newman, ensue. Even their more serious tracks were delivered at unrelenting pace, not ones to allow words to sink in over a ballad or scaled tempo, which again made them feel like irreverent blasts more suited for skateboarding than contemplation.

No, they reserved the deceleration for the bass-driven “Samson,” a song about a modern friendship with the biblical hero. This at a time when my public education brought a culture clash and Christian music was unfairly categorized as either lame or exclusively praise and worship, often both. Ghoti Hook offered a case in favor of the stereotype – not because it was inherently lame (it wasn’t), but because even their goofiness centered around Christian references, like the blink-182 of Christian subculture. “Ooklah the Punk,” for instance, was a song about a rebel who eventually finds Jesus – not in a dramatic conversion, but randomly, as tacked on redemption for the song and character through an unrelated spiritual resolution; this is after the title character battled Lou Ferrigno, the TV Hulk, earlier in the track. “Spice Drops,” a three-quarters instrumental track, was at least a little more outright in its Christian weightedness, an overt blast of the salvation message: “God, God sent His Son, save us from the evil one, bought by blood, begotten Son, for faith is free and very fun.”

Sitting in our town’s best pizza joint (we had three at the time, for a town with a single stop light) I remarked to my brother how broke I was over greased-up pepperoni and cheese. I was aware of Ghoti Hook’s existence thanks to their stand-out presence on a 7-ball sampler, but didn’t have the coin to add them to my tepid collection. In a stroke of fluorescent-lit epiphany, Ghoti Hook both highlighted my financial woes as well as my narrow musical shelf. They would make me an eBay user. That first, cracked-to-hell CD case was like unlocking concrete proof that the elusive Bigfoot creature existed and he was both a little hairier and more melodic than initially guessed; I could only imagine the journey that album took to reach me. The sights, the sounds, the back of UPS trucks...

Now if the album could talk, it would recount a lot of video-game violence and brother/sister sing-a-longs, with my voicing slightly out-passioning and certainly off-pitching her own.

Ghoti Hook was one of the first bands I had a realistic charted progression for. Looking back, it’s a classic growth scenario: hyper-beat, goofy skate-punk band stretches its musical muscles beyond the genre that spawned it and “matures” by growing into a slower sub-set of the rock and roll (speed was everything to me in my early teens). Ghoti Hook’s progression took them into more straight-up classic and hard rock territory on their final full-length *Two Years to Never* and then completes the transformation on their final release, a self-titled EP.

At the time, I thought they “sold out” when they stopped being a straight-up punk band. I felt slighted when they abandoned the spitfire delivery and power hooks of their first two albums, which in retrospect, seem spotty at best (*Banana Man* especially ... while songs like “The Box” have a certain quirky charm on the first few spins, the joke is essentially “we actually put this song on an album”). The very nature of Ghoti Hook’s early material places it as a juvenile pleasure with less to mine artistically, but still plenty to enjoy (although it may put warts on your brain). The later shows strong prowess as an aggressive rock and roll band with serious chops. Gone are the references to Pee Wee Herman and sumo wrestlers. Instead, there are songs about growing older and facing life sub-expectations, paternal abandonment and even the fast car tribute (yes, the Chevy Nova). The drumming is especially stand out – fast and complex, hailing on the side of straight rock beats.

What’s even more asinine is to label them as “sell outs” for moving from Christian punk to Christian rock. Yeah, they had dollar bills in their eyes for that one – like sitting between the youth group punk of Slick Shoes and the hair metal-lite of Petra is a scene cash cow.

Ghoti Hook called it quits with a final show at Cornerstone Music Festival in 2002. This resulted in a live album that was morbid enough to scare my mother – it featured a skeleton troubadour on the cover. Here was the fusion of their silly brand of hyper-punk (performing the classic “My Bike” with former songwriter/guitarist Conrad with “blah!” as the only lyric) and their gritty, paired-down power-trio attack with the playfulness to dress as skeletons for their “death” as a band. Ghoti Hook’s split personalities are on fine display in a collection that doesn’t ask you to choose eras or members or styles, but only reminds you to enjoy live music and support those making it independently.

If hindsight is 20/20, I’d say I’m still nearsighted – but like a good aging punk, my collection has slowed and expanded, losing crassness for introspection. Maybe I’m even maturing. But probably just selling out.

The Question & Answer

WITH KEMPER CRABB

Concerning “Jesus is My Girlfriend” Songs: Observations on the Imbalances of Today’s Worship: Part the Eighth

We’ve seen in this series that contemporary worship music has become dominated by songs modeled on romantic, experiential, subjective musical expressions. We’ve further seen that, though such songs are a legitimate stream of Biblical worship expression, they have been historical and Biblical worship models (such as the Psalms or the Book of Revelation) held in balance with objective, doctrinal song content.

We then began to investigate how and why such an imbalance has occurred in arriving at such an experiential overemphasis. We began by seeing that the deep alienation between God and mankind engendered by the Fall leads men to see the world dualistically, as split between the “pure” spiritual realm and the flawed and imperfect physical world, a view which is a result of the simultaneous and inescapable knowledge that men have rebelled against their Holy Creator while they attempt to suppress that inescapable knowledge (Romans 1: 18-32).

This split was institutionalized in Platonic thought, which hugely influenced monastic thought, which shaped to a certain extent, the way the Medievals viewed Reality, and, with the infusion of rediscovered dualistic Aristotelianism, resulted in a Late Medieval and Renaissance perspective which located emotion and instinct in a “religious” zone, while reason and normative life were seen as belonging to the “secular” sphere.

After the Reformation, German Pietism reacted against the perceived cold orthodoxy of Lutheranism, resulting in an emphasis on subjective, experiential faith, where emotion was considered the evidence of spiritual encounter, a perspective which influenced all subsequent Evangelicalism, interacting with Victorian feminization of the Faith in the English-speaking countries to further push concepts of Christianity as subjective, experiential, and highly emotional.

The institutionalization of this approach amongst Evangelical churches, especially after the Great Awakenings and subsequent revival movements such as the beginnings of the Charismatic Movement in the Azusa Street Revival and in Pentecostal sectors of the Church combined with a correspondent

fear of inability of the Church to answer the challenges to the Faith from the scientific pretensions of Darwinism and other pseudo-scientific movements to drive the Church even further into subjective and emotional definitions of Christianity since these definitions seemed safe from the supposed depredations of modernistic assaults on Christianity’s truths. (For the record, these retreats from intellectual challenges to the Faith were manifestly a failure of nerve on the part of the Church, and are rooted, in my estimation, on the fact the Evangelicalism had redefined it’s concept of faith to de-emphasize the objective, historical, and factual basis of Christianity.)

Actions inevitably have consequences, and the move to de-emphasize the objective, cognitive, historical, doctrinal, confessional, and intellectual aspects of Christian worship unavoidably began to produce an imbalanced Church which was unable to effectively envision a robust, fully-orbed Faith capable of answering and banishing the modernist objections to Christianity. We become like the things we worship, and the current emphasis on an emotional, feminized, tremulous God produces similar worshippers.

Again, the subjective and emotional aspects of worship are both Biblical and necessary, but they must be held and practiced in Biblical balance, or a distortion of worship (and worshippers) will occur. Too much emphasis on doctrine and historical aspects in worship produces a cold orthodoxy which leaves both the Church and the world around it cold. Too much emphasis on subjectivity and emotion, and escapist, inwardly-oriented, self-obsessed Christians who exist only for the next worship high result, leaving the Church exhausted (the price of ever-escalating attempts to recreate the last worship-gasm), and the world round about thinking the Faith irrelevant and devoid of answers for the real world (kind of like, hmmm, our situation in the country today).

It is always perilous to ignore the Biblical model, since we don’t actually know better than our Creator and Redeemer what’s best for us. Go figure! More next issue, perhaps.

[kempercrabb.net]

PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ The Corners

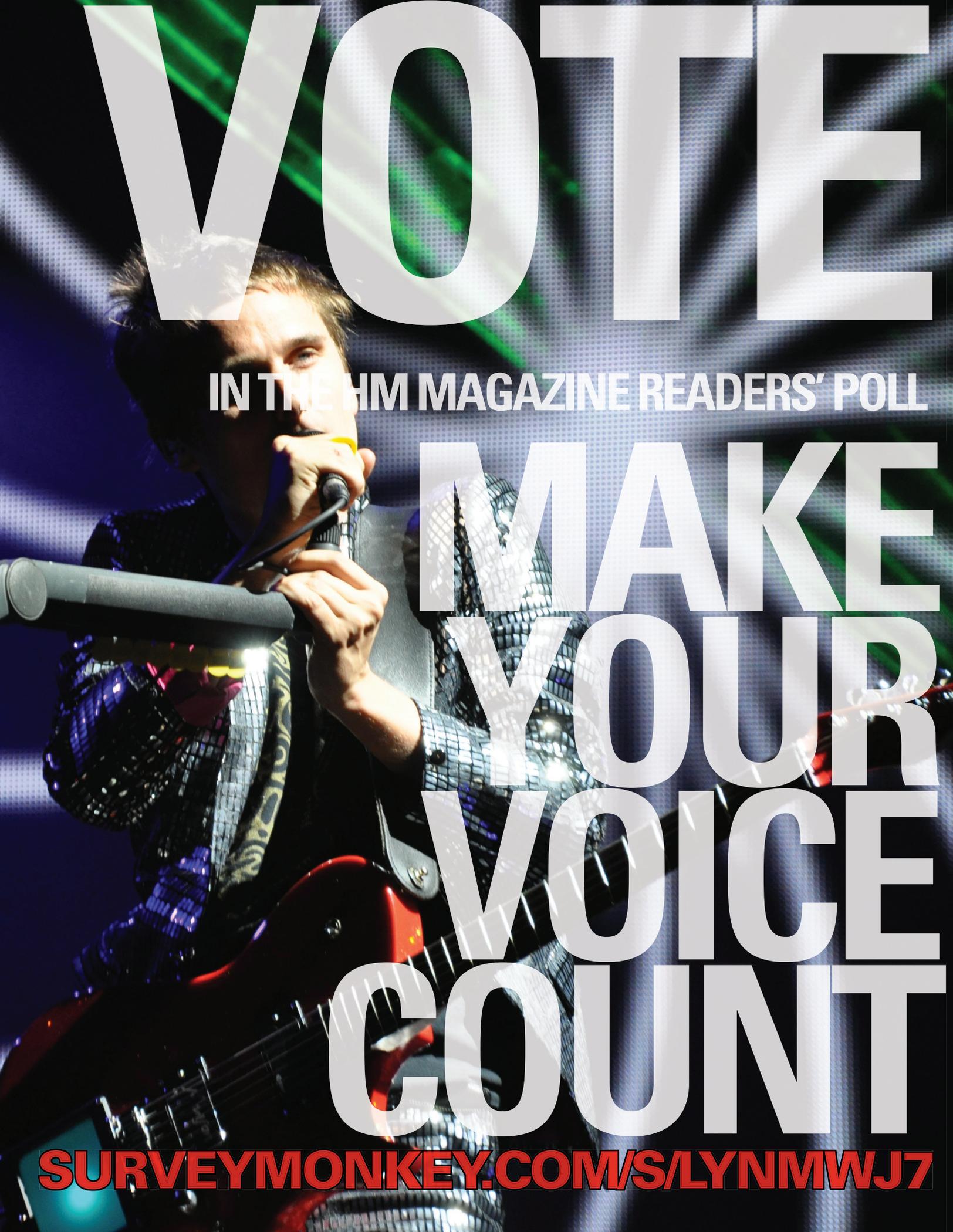
Hailing from Hannibal, MO, The Corners have a breathy, smooth and organic sound that marries elements of Switchfoot, Thrice and Needtobreathe. Their debut release comes out March 5th – *Born At Last*. It was recorded and produced by Philip Zach (Remedy Drive), who did a good job mixing the vocals and multi-instruments.

facebook.com/thecornersfans

☆ DJsiah

This guy has a tender yet strong voice that dances between some EDM and melodic rock a la Linkin Park. Dude has toured with Disciple and is getting airplay on RadioU.com.

facebook.com/djsiah



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HEAVENS' METAL



Antestor

#96 FINALLY! A BLACK METAL ISSUE! ARMATH SARGON

HEAVEN'S METAL

NOTE FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR | CHRIS GATTO

Greetings metal lovers,

It would seem that the world hasn't ended yet and a new year has begun, with many new albums on the horizon. For many of us it is winter time (although for Steve Rowe it must be summer time) and hopefully you're enjoying tunes indoors or catching live shows. Valentine's Day is just around the corner. You know what they say about love springs eternal? Around here it is metal springs eternal, so loved ones, forget the Valentine's Day candy and get your honey some hard rockin' ear candy! This issue, by no sinister design, ended up becoming a black metal issue. Our cover story features the long-awaited return of the black metal monster Antestor and a chat with Finland's own Armath Sargon, along with album reviews and metal news to fill your yearning metal ears. Until next time, blessings, my metal friends!



Chris Gatto, Heaven's Metal Managing Editor



HEAVEN'S METAL FANZINE FEBRUARY 2013 [#96]

THE METALLIC TABLE OF ELEMENTS



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45 METAL FROM SWEDEN Our metal brother Johannes Johnson gives us the latest from the land of the blonde shredders. (But, pray tell, what the heck is that big splatter thing? Is this some sort of printing error? Wait a minute!)



46 ANTESTOR Chris Beck catches us up with a band that left us wanting more and have now returned to deliver. But do they like being called an "unblack metal band?" That's what we really wanna know, right?

50 ARMATH SARGON Chris Gatto gets up-close with this talented and heavy black metal artist. Can we call him "unblack?" Please! (I'm kidding)



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Heaven's Metal Editorial Team:
 Chris Beck, Keven Crothers, Chris Gatto, Mark Blair Glunt, Loyd Harp,
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myspace.com/heavensmetalmagazine
 1-year subscriptions (12 issues): \$12 (Everywhere, man)
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Messenger is a melodic metal band. They have a 6-track EP out titled *Heart And Mind*. This is melodic metal to the bone, filled with catchy hooks and evangelical lyrics [messengerofficial.org]

A Metal Prayer Day was held in Örebro, Sweden. After a day of powerful prayer and fellowship we ended the day with gigs with Messenger, **Divider of Water** and **Simon Adahl**.

Veni Domine is working with a new album. Look for a release in 2013.

Golden Resurrection's new album *One Voice For The Kingdom* will see be released in Europe on 16th of January 2013. It has already been released in Japan. This time they shoot for more guitar solos like their first album had [golden-resurrection.com]

A new release with **Pantokrator** will also see the light next year. [pantokrator.com]

Christian Metalheads International is an international metal ministry with headquarters in Sweden, focusing on prayer and metal Bible outreaches in festivals, etc. [christianmetalheadsinternational.com]





WHEN PEOPLE DISCUSS THE BEST CHRISTIAN BLACK/DEATH METAL BANDS OF ALL-TIME, TWO NAMES TYPICALLY COME UP: EXTOL AND **ANTESTOR**. THROUGHOUT THEIR EXISTENCE, BOTH BANDS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY CREATED MUSIC THAT IS ORIGINAL, PROGRESSIVE, BRUTALLY HEAVY AND, PERHAPS AS THE ULTIMATE TESTAMENT TO THE QUALITY OF MUSIC RELEASED BY ANTESTOR AND EXTOL, APPEALING TO BOTH CHRISTIAN AND UNSAVED FANS ALIKE. UNFORTUNATELY, NEITHER BAND HAS RELEASED NEW MUSIC IN THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. WHILE RUMORS OF EXTOL'S RETURN ARE SWIRLING, THESE RUMORS HAVE YET TO BE PROVEN TRUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ANTESTOR, AFTER YEARS OF BEING DISBANDED, ARE BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM AND SOUND AS GOOD AS EVER. *OMEN*, ANTESTOR'S BRAND NEW ALBUM ON BOMBWORKS RECORDS, HAS A RENEWED SOUND WITH SOME UNEXPECTED CHANGES (CLEAN VOCALS, FIDDLE), WHILE STILL ABSOLUTELY MAINTAINING THE CLASSIC ANTESTOR SOUND THAT WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE. WE RECENTLY CAUGHT UP WITH THE BAND WHILE ON TOUR IN BRAZIL TO DISCUSS THE NEW ALBUM, WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS AND WHAT MAY STILL BE IN STORE FOR THE BAND.

Antestor

ANTESTOR 47

TAKING CARE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS



Chris Beck: *Omen* is your first album in about seven years, since the release of *The Forsaken* in 2005. Who is currently in the band and what have the members been doing during this time?

Antestor: In 2007 Lars and Ronny decided to disband Antestor, due to the lack of members that could properly commit to the band. They continued writing music and by 2010 they had ideas and songs that could become an album, so they started recruiting members and got a record deal with Bombworks. Currently in the band is Ronny Hansen on vocals, Lars Stokstad on guitar, Erik Normann Aanonsen on bass, Robert Bordevik on guitar and Jo Henning Børven on drums. Nickolas Main Henriksen has been with us on keyboards, but he had to leave the band right before the tour because of health problems.

During those seven years, many bands have come and gone. Why return now and come out with a new Antestor album?

We still feel we have something to contribute musically to the scene today, and that we haven't reached our top potential, both musically and in popularity.

Though all of your albums stay in the black metal subgenre, there is still noticeable change and growth from album to album. What

differences and similarities will *Omen* have to your past music?

It's still very dark and we still feel that it has atmosphere and soul. It comes from our hearts and from the dark and troubled times in our lives. Compared to earlier albums, there are more members that write and arrange the music. Five people have written songs or parts of songs for the album (including our previous keyboard player, Morten Magerøy) and there is a very wide difference in our musical backgrounds, so there will be a noticeable difference in the musical styles. This album has more progressive elements, more acoustic instruments and even some clean vocals. At the same time, the main goal has been to write a more brutal and faster album than anything we've done before.

How was the recording process of *Omen* different from your past albums?

In the past we've rented professional studios, and that has had a lot of benefits: great equipment, talented technicians and also the absolute commitment that is demanded by having such a short timeframe for recording. This time we couldn't find a studio we completely liked, and struggled to find a time period where everyone was available. Eventually, we realized we might as well do it ourselves, since we (mainly Thor Georg and Jo Henning) had the equipment to get it done. We also

BY CHRIS BECK

wanted and make the exact album we wanted, not just the best we could forcefully conceive in two or three weeks' time. At the same time, the lack of timeframe has been very taxing, for when you want to do something really, really well and have almost unlimited time, you will use enormous amounts of time to strive for excellence. On top of it all, we had to find time to get all of this done during already busy days. We built the studio in Ronny's home, but we all live in different parts of Norway, so we had to travel back and forth between our homes and the studio a lot of weekends and nights, which was exhausting at times. In the end, we got a product that we had produced and created entirely by ourselves, and we're proud of that.

While we're talking about the recording process we'd also like to thank Thor Georg for doing an amazing job with the recording process. He really took the brunt of the workload and singlehandedly made it possible for us to record the album ourselves. He left the band some time ago to focus fully on his own project, Grave Declaration, which will release their first full-length album soon, so keep an eye out for that album!

The cover art to *Omen* is very eye catching. Is there a particular meaning to it?

The cover shows a half human, half monster apparition with almost unlimited amounts of fingers and knuckles playing a single instrument, heralding and announcing with its music. In very many ways, Antestor is just like this apparition. Our music represents the more broken and monster-like feelings of our humanity, like the apparition in this picture. It seemed a very fitting cover for our return after seven years of silence.

Some of the lyrics on *Omen* deal with events from the past and, ultimately, moving past and learning from these events. What message are you trying to tell your listeners through your lyrics? What lyrics from *Omen* mean the most to you and why?

As to which lyrics mean the most to us, you would get different answers, since several band members have contributed lyrics to the album, with different subjects and angles of approach to extreme metal lyrics. Though at the same time that we have different subjects and ways of seeing things, the end result is the same: there will always be hard times for everyone, even if you are Christian, but if you fight through the hard times, for there are so very many things worth fighting for, and find strength and comfort in God it will always be worth it. Our band has had to endure persecution and resistance from the very get go and there have been over 35 band members involved in Antestor and innumerable threats and acts of resistance against us from both Christians and

secular/satanic forces. So if we can be so bold as to say it, this album is in very many ways a testament to perseverance, and we hope others find hope and strength in that fact.

What tour plans do you have to support the release of *Omen*?

We have family and full-time jobs, so we are very limited in how much touring we can actually do, so this two week Brazilian tour we are on at this very moment is the only tour we will do in 2013. We will do some single-standing concerts in Norway, and we also played some festivals in Holland and Germany this fall to promote the album. We are always open for concert opportunities from interested parties.

The band has been together now for about 20 years. What has allowed Antestor to survive through it all? Did you think you would still be making black metal music after all that time?

A lot of perseverance and the belief that we can contribute quality music when there is so much bad music being released all the time. Our music is also therapy for the darker feelings we experience, so its creation is a very important part of our being. Our music writing skills and preferences have also changed over time, so the music we want to write today is very different from the music we wanted to write and release ten years ago; it evolves all the time and that drives us to release new material. At the same time, we feel our music has such quality that it should reach a bigger audience, so we will continually strive to do just that. We know that many have found comfort and strength in our music, and we hope more people will discover our music and find strength, and hopefully God, through our music.

What are your thoughts on today's music industry, specifically regarding black metal?

Black metal is dead. The progressive development has stalled and has lost its edge in the genre. We don't consider ourselves black metal, but extreme metal. Other people feel that they have a claim on the name and concept of black metal, and we don't want to keep ourselves within any box or confines. We just want to write the music we like.

While we're on the subject, we despise having our music labeled as unblack metal, and have never called ourselves that. We are not against black metal, nor do we have a goal to undo it. We want to be a good addition to the scene and bring some light into it.

Some of my favorite Antestor lyrics are from the song "Mercy Lord" on *Martyrium*, "Create in me a pure heart, oh God. Give me a new and steadfast spirit." This comes from

Psalm 51:10 and has also appeared on Antestor t-shirts. What do these lyrics mean to the band now?

It is a prayer that we, as Christians, need every day. In many ways that is the foundation of Antestor: "Let us keep to Your ways, Lord, and help us to persevere with You and Your message in this world."

How do you balance writing lyrics that are Christian/positive while still appealing to the average (unsaved) listener of black metal?

At the same time that we are Christians, we are also humans. I think almost everyone can relate to parts of our music and lyrics, for absolutely everyone – Christians and non-believers alike –

honest, we don't care. We've never cared about their approval, and we're fed up with their childish attitude.

Same question, but as it relates to Christians and the church... How accepting have they been of Antestor and its music?

In the beginning, we got a lot of crap from Christians telling us that our music was from the devil. This criticism has subsided over the years, but certain "genres" of our religion will never accept it. We don't want to waste our time and energy on such narrow-minded people, but it's sad that such man-made rules govern the meanings of so many people.

"Our music is also therapy for the darker feelings we experience, so its creation is a very important part of our being."

experience hard and terrible times. The Lord does not say we will not meet hard times as Christians, but that He will be with us and carry us through it, and that is a big part of the Antestor message.

What current bands do you listen to or perhaps are inspired by? Are you generally fans of other black metal music?

You will get five different answers for each of the members, but the general consensus in the band is that for the last ten years, not a single inspiring black metal album has been released. Bands that inspire us now are:

- Ronny: My Dying Bride and Devin Townsend Project
- Robert: Annihilator and Meshuggah
- Jo Henning: John Mayer
- Lars: Edvard Grieg
- Erik: Ásmegin, The Spectacle and Norwegian fiddler and composer Nils Økland

How is Antestor generally accepted by other black metal bands and fans of black metal when they learn you are a Christian band? Has this acceptance, or lack thereof, changed at all in the last 20 years?

There are people that tell us that they respect our music and our band – this includes members of some of the most famous black metal bands of Norway – but they won't say it publically. To be

What is your favorite Antestor song (excluding songs from the new album) and why?

- Robert: "Mercy Lord." It's pure and it talks to the soul.
- Lars: It's an extremely hard question, but if I had to pick one it would have to be "Rites of Death," because of the in-your-face-energy of the song.
- Ronny: "Betrayed." The lyrics pose a question that I find very interesting.
- Jo Henning: "Betrayed."
- Erik: "Battlefield." The melodies, riffs, composition and form are just flawless.

Do you feel like you have accomplished what you wanted, or what God inspired, for Antestor? If not, what should fans expect next from the band?

We still have lots of music within us, so we will continue to write. With all the problems that have haunted us all these years, it really feels like maybe the road is paved for us to finally reach our full potential now. As for future plans, we already have plans for an EP that we will release sometime this or next year, when we're ready.

Do you have any last word for Heaven's Metal readers?

Keep your faith in the Lord, rock on, and you will be delivered.





Armath Sargon

EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN AND MOON

BY CHRIS GATTO

I'D SEEN THE NAME **ARMATH SARGON** A FEW TIMES IN THE CD CATALOGS OF VARIOUS METAL MERCHANTS, BUT IT WAS DEFINITELY THE ARTWORK OF THE NEW CD *UNDER THE MOON AND SUN* THAT MADE ME PURCHASE THE CD AND EVENTUALLY SEEK OUT THIS ARTIST FOR AN INTERVIEW. I FOUND A FINNISH MUSICIAN WHO IS QUITE FOCUSED ON THE MISSION GOD HAS GIVEN HIM AND QUITE ACTIVE IN THE BLACK METAL WORLD. LISTEN IN ON OUR INTERNATIONAL CHAT...

Chris Gatto: Hello Armath [real name removed at the request of the artist]. On the CD booklet it says: "All instruments, programming, vocals, all music and lyrics by Armath Sargon." Are you a one-man band?

Armath: I prefer using Armath Sargon as my name in music things and related. This is and will be one-man band – always been and always will be. I play and sing all in it. I am also in other bands that have two or more members. They are: Through the Thorns, Katumus, Knights of the New Temple and Antivenom. I've also got other bands that have a slightly different sound: Zero+onE (industrial/noise/Black Metal), +Majesty+ (EBM/ Industrial).

Can you tell us a little about Armath Sargon's history and discography?

The band was started in 2004 at Jyväskylä, Finland. At first the band was under the name Litostron, but then God gave (the) founder the name Armath Sargon. The third album was released through a small record label, White as Snow. Armath Sargon's music has been described as atmospheric metal with lyrics potentially centered around God, Christianity and salvation. Armath Sargon's record labels: Kalma Productions, White as Snow, Extreme Records, Unblack metal scene 2011, *Cyberian Inner Death* through Die and Gain Records. 2012 reissues, through Sanctus Gladius. 2012's new album, *Under the Moon and the Sun*, through Nokternal Hemizphear.

Discography:

Veripolku (2007) (Kalma Productions)

Opus Apocalypse Rex (2008) (Kalma Productions)

Winter of Tears and Path of Blood

(2009/released 2011 Unblack Metal Scene)

4th Dimension

(2009/released 2011 Unblack Metal Scene)

Dark and Dead Visions of Fallen Souls (2009)

Free download: last.fm/music/Armath+Sargon/Dark+and+dead+visions+of+fallen+souls+FREE+ALBUM
Reflections from Eternity

(2010) (White as Snow Records)

When Love is Dead...

(2010/released 2011 Unblack metal scene)

888 (2011) Free download: last.fm/music/Armath+Sargon/888+FREE+ALBUM

Field of blood (2011) (Unblack Metal Scene)

Hymns from Thy Will

(2011/released 2010 Unblack Metal Scene)

Disc 1 Darkness Turn Into Light

(2011) (Unblack Metal Scene)

Disc 2 Darkness Turn Into Light

(2011) (Unblack Metal Scene)

Cyberian Inner Death (2011) (Die and Gain Records)

The Book of Revelation

(2012) Free download: last.fm/music/Armath+Sargon/The+book+of+Revelation+FREE+ALBUM

Veripolku (2012 reissue)

Opus Apocalypse Rex

(2012 reissue) with bonus CD *Sea of the Blood*

4th Dimension (2012 reissue)

Winter Of Tears And Path Of Blood

(remastered/2012 reissue)

When Love Is Dead... (remastered/2012 reissue)

Under the Moon and the Sun (2012)

The artwork for your new CD *Under the Sun and Moon* was beautifully done by Nokternal Hemizphear. Is there a special theme or message with this release?

I think that message is that you can have struggles in life, but God will lead you through it and give you strength to overcome all evil's plans. Themes are uplifting always in my albums.

Mainstream Black metal became very notorious for its connections to church burnings in Scandinavia some years ago.

With this release Armath Sargon seems to be almost a polar opposite to that scene. Your music is definitely in the black metal vein, but your lyrics are almost worshipful. Is worship and black metal together something you've heard elsewhere, or did you create this idea?

I always write my songs with prayer and ask guidance with them (at the) same time as I am doing them. I think that prayer is the key to my songs, so I'd rather say that they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. I have read the Bible a lot, so I think that my songs are from that fountain that Jesus did speak of when He met the Samaritan woman at the well. I see no point to do music if there is nothing to say through it – and more pointless is to do secular music, that is only pleasing flesh and there is no value to feed souls of those whom are needed that. I wanted to make "Strong Bread" songs that feeds with power all those whom are thirsty and hunger for spiritual food. I have been in Satanism and the occult, so I don't have any need to copycat those bands.

Why choose to play black metal? What draws you to the style?

We did start a black metal band in '90 called Ravendus with my old friends. Also I have played in a band called Eighth Gate (melodic death). In both bands I was playing bass and "singing." My roots are in metal music, so it was clear to me what I do and also God did call me to do this.

Nature seems to be a theme for your music. There's another band from Finland – Immortal Souls – who are fond of using the snow motif for their metal music. Do the beautiful landscapes and the cold winters in Finland inspire your writing?

Nature is part of God's creation and I like to walk in

forests. We have a lot of pine tree forests and pine is my favorite tree. It has always been part of my lyrics and to me there you can see how amazing God is. If you look at a snowflake, no snowflake is similar to another. If you look at a tree, they are all unique, so nature is the greatest proof to me nowadays that God exists.

I was curious what your band name means, so I looked up both words on the internet. I found Armath is a planet from the *Star Wars* world and Sargon was the name of several ancient kings in the Middle East. Is there something that connects the two names?

God did give me the name Armath Sargon through prayer. I did wonder about it, too, but I did stay faithful and did use this name. Later I did find meaning of it: Armath means "Armamathea" and that is Judah in English. Sargon means "God created a kingdom," so if you read the name it proclaims: "Through Judah God created a Kingdom."

I've noticed that many black metal releases are limited runs (only a couple hundred CDs made).

***Under the Sun and Moon* is this way and there was even an extremely limited number (15) of handmade wooden box versions of the CD.**

This seems the opposite of popular logic, which would seem to say that an artist wants to sell as many copies as possible to make more money.

Can you explain the reasoning for this?

I don't do this for money, it is like hobby that I can use as a medium for preaching. Christian Black Metal Scene is small and there is no chance to make money with it. So if you like to make money, I'd make a worship CD. I make this music, because there is people that need music (and) because I was asked to make this from God, so if someday God says, "Stop," I will, but through prayer He still says continue.

In what part of the world do you have the most fans?

I think North and South America.

Do you play live shows and what is next for Armath Sargon?

No, it wasn't the plan of God that I do that (touring), so I don't.

Thank you for your time, Armath. God bless you for shining a light in a dark place. For all our readers interested in this artist, search out his internet presence under the name Armath Sargon. CDs are available from various outlets and the current CD and related apparel is available from Nokternal Hemizphear through metalhelm.com.

ALBUM REVIEWS



INNERSIEGE

KINGDOM OF SHADOWS

InnerSiege are a five-piece metal band from Illinois. Three of their members were formerly from a band called Strangeland. Their style is often described as power metal, with comparisons to Kamelot and Firewind. While those European power metal bands may be some of their influences, it doesn't completely define their sound. InnerSiege are guitar driven, American heavy metal. If I were to compare them to any European power metal bands it would be more along the lines of Dream Evil or Primal Fear. My initial thoughts were that their sound has more in common with bands like Armored Saint, Recon and early Fates Warning. All the elements of a heavy metal classic are in place: soaring vocals, memorable songs, crushing guitar riffs, sweeping guitar leads and a near perfect mix. "Kingdom of Shadows" was mixed and mastered by Fredrik Nordstrom (Dream Evil, In Flames, Opeth). Vocalist Jeremy Ray most certainly studied at the Geoff Tate school of heavy metal vocals, though his tone and phrasing isn't a clone of Sir Tate. He gives a high-caliber performance that is all his own, hitting the highs, but mostly singing in a pleasing mid-range voice. *Kingdom of Shadows* is a very strong debut from InnerSiege and definitely one of the best releases to come from the independent Roxx Records. [Roxx] Scott Waters



GOLDEN RESURRECTION

ONE VOICE FOR THE KINGDOM

Golden Resurrection has returned with a barnburner of an album, titled *One Voice for the Kingdom*. A much more uptempo release is in store for the listener as opposed to their previous album, *Man with a Mission*. That opus provided a much more commercial feel; it is quite clear that *One Voice for the Kingdom* is a more straight-ahead metal record with a stronger neoclassical flair. Tommy Reinseed delivers again on the guitar; he is a tremendous player who has a keen sense of melody and nuance. He can also just plain shred when the song

calls for it. Just listening to his playing during the two instrumentals will make a believer out of you, "Heavenly Metal" & "Moore Lord" are exceptional bits of guitar playing whimsy. One of the things that really stood out to me is that the drums on this release are completely 'natural,' no effects triggers were used. A nice organic sound, which reminds me that human beings made this music, not machines. Rickard Gustafsson takes over in the drumming department and his playing is tremendous, he solidifies a powerhouse rhythm section. The songs are good, solid driving neoclassical heavy metal. "Can't Slow Down," "One Voice for the Kingdom," "Born For the Strangers" are immediate standouts with their fast and furious tempos with stronger melodies. However, this release did take me a few listens to get a handle on the hooks. That is perhaps the one thing that was the most glaring; the melodies didn't necessarily jump out and dig in deep (and) leaving me humming them when the album was over. There isn't a 'bad' track on the album, yet it would seem to me that perhaps an outside producer would've benefitted to help bring out the best in each song. Someone to help make those melodies even stronger and perhaps a little more accessible. Not in the sense of a 'hit single,' but just to help make things a bit more memorable, for many of the tracks are worthy. Christian Liljegren continues to deliver exceptional vocal work in the vein of Dio with a touch of Halford thrown in. The lyrical message that Liljegren delivers is one of hope, without compromise or condemnation. *One Voice for the Kingdom* is a natural progression from the last two albums, with its more upfront guitar work and slightly less polish in the production department. The keyboards have their place, but don't dominate as often as on *Man With a Mission*. Golden Resurrection have again delivered a healthy dose of guitar driven neoclassic power metal. Leather and denim jackets need only apply; this type of music is designed with the proverbial air guitar in mind. I got mine! Where's yours?? [King] Keven Crothers



ROB CASSELS

THUNDER FIRE

In my earliest days of listening to Christian rock, the music of Rob Cassels was a staple in my musical diet – especially the albums "Off the Wall" (84) and "Straight Shot" (88), because by that time, his rocking had gotten more edge to it. Well, jump forward to the present and he is back! Hard edged guitar driven bluesy rock and roll is what we are served up. I would liken his style to Darrell Mansfield but on slightly more distorted steroids. With a raw and gritty hard rock vocal style, it does quite well getting the openly evangelical message across over the musical landscape that ranges from harder rock tunes like "Loves Ya to the Bone," to laid-back soulful blues of songs like "Pearl of Great Price." Rob and the boys tear it up and should please all rocking blues fans. [Independent] Jeff McCormack



NOSTALGIA

(DEMO)

Nostalgia are a California-based Christian heavy metal band. Their sound and their spirit harken back to the glory days of Christian heavy metal when the message was as important, if not more-so, than the music itself. Bands like Bloodgood and Saint are no doubt some of their influences. The seven-song CD demo opens with a straight-forward, up-beat heavy metal song that is built around a crunchy riff and the clean, smooth vocals of Brian Dale. This is followed-up by an overly long power-metal ballad titled "Rekindle the Flame." The song is sung as a prayer and is obviously written to encourage Christians whose faith has waned over time. I can definitely appreciate the emotion that this song is built around, but felt the song itself would have been better if it was shortened slightly and put deeper into the CD. As the second track, the song seems to disrupt the flow of the album almost immediately after only one raging track. "Escape" bring back the intensity and aggression. The song opens with some heavy, laboring bass guitar and slowly builds from a slow, heavy, crunchy

guitar riff to an fast and furious, up-beat chorus. Likewise, "Justified Faith" and "The Separation" are heavy tracks, with "Justified Faith" being slightly more upbeat than the follow-up. The demo ends with two more heavy songs, "Remission Plan" and "Raise the Dead." The later pushing the boundaries of speed metal. The production of Nostalgia's demos isn't bad, though the mix is a bit uneven. The bass guitar is buried and the vocals seem to sit on top of the music most of the time. [Independent] Scott Waters



RIVERA BOMMA

INFINITE JOURNEY OF SOUL

This is the first new music from Rivera/Bomma in seven years. For this new release, the band is made up of founding members

Johnny Bomma (vocals) and Rod Rivera (guitars), as well as drummer Edward Faust and bassist Mike LePond, most known for his work with Symphony X. The band delivers six tracks of modern power metal with some spectacular guitar work from Mr. Rivera. Some of the songs are fairly heavy, such as "In Blood," "The Maker" and "Angel and Demons." "In Blood" actually walks a fine line between speed metal and power metal, with its heavy riffs and upbeat tempo. The remaining four tracks are the short intro "I.J.O.S.," a power ballad titled "In My Dreams," a cover of "Via Dolorosa" and a two-minute guitar solo that ends the album, called "Before The End – MMXIII." "Via Dolorosa" is a wonderful cover of the Sandi Patti classic and is an emotionally-charged song that recalls Jesus' "walk of grief" as His beaten and bruised body carried the cross to the place where He would be crucified. Johnny Bomma sings with a clean, mid-range style and does a wonderful job on this song. Unfortunately, the production on *Infinite Journey Of Soul* holds this CD back from all it could have been. The overall sound is very narrow and compressed and the guitars are muddy and lack definition. This is probably the biggest fault with the recording as those heavy riffs are what makes great power metal. While it's awesome that Mike LePond performed bass on the album, it's unfortunate that bass guitar itself is lost in the mix. Beyond the production issues, Rivera/Bomma's latest CD should please fans of modern, progressive, power metal. [Retroactive] Scott Waters

DIVINE INCARNATION

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATIONS

Moving with the subtlety of a runaway locomotive, the debut album by Divine Incarnation has arrived. *Judgment Against the Nations* is blackened/thrash metal that is long on bombast and short on any kind of subtlety, with upfront guitars and vocals that could scrape paint off a wall. Opening with what I think is the best track, "The Return," you know what you're gonna get. Fast songs that have few changes, but have lots of sledgehammer moments. Other stand-out tracks include, "All Powerful One" and "The Only Way." These tracks have some solid thrashy death type moments, yet have a really strong old school vibe reinterpreted for today. The black metal influence is really strong on the 10-minute epic "Indignation," for me, though I sorta got lost along the way. There are really strong riffs on this album. The production is clean and brutal without being overproduced in the least. This band sounds like someone I'd hear in San Francisco at the Rock On Broadway, very underground and very raw. According to the liner notes, these tracks were originally recorded in October 2009 and July 2010. Perhaps as two separate demos that have been put together for this limited edition release. If that is the case, the production elements are really quite good. On their Facebook page they list their influences as: Bathory, Celtic Frost, Emperor, Hellhammer, Immortal, Mayhem, Slayer. That I can believe! This is a limited edition disc, so if you don't already own one you might've missed out, but if brutal thrashing blackened death is up your alley; grab a copy of Divine Incarnation's *Judgment Against the Nations*. You won't be disappointed. [Sanctus Gladius] Keven Crothers



ANTESTOR

OMEN

Omen marks the return of Norwegian black metal band Antestor, whose last album *The Forsaken*, was released back in 2005. "Tracherous Domain" opens the disc and, in two words, this song "kicks butt." The song has a killer opening that continues to build and build until the song blasts off like a rocket. Once the song takes off it's a blur of guitars, drums and woaaaaarrgh vocals, though there are some twists and turns to the song that keep it from

getting boring. There are keyboards as well, but they aren't the focus of the song and only add to the overall sullen and gloomy atmosphere. "Unchained" follows up with another fast fury of double bass, guitars and grim vocals. The band mixes in some clean vocals on this track, which is actually a bit off-putting at first, only because it's so unexpected. "All Towers Must Fall" is mesmerizing and creates a morose atmosphere. The song delivers a message about the brevity of life. There seems to be a lot of extreme metal bands mixing folk music into their music. "Tilflukt" is a short folk instrumental that acts as an intro to the mostly double-bass driven "Benighted." As would be expected, the musicianship is beyond reproach. To simply play that fast and accurate, even for four-minute spurts, requires more than just talent. It requires skill and endurance. Much of the music on *Omen* display that skill and endurance and definitely accomplishes what it set out to do. It is progressive, post-black/extreme metal that paints a dark, sullen landscape with lyrics that offer hope. [Bombworks] Scott Waters



PYLON

THE HARROWING OF HELL

Swiss doom-mongers Pylon unleash their fourth full-length record, titled *The Harrowing of Hell*. As would be expected

from Pylon, the sound is traditional doom metal with some stoner rock and non-traditional instruments thrown into the mix. The album opens with "Gethsemani," a slow, heavy instrumental that blends and acts as an intro for "Psalm 129a." The Psalm concludes at the end of the first side of the record with "Psalm 139 b." Really, the entire "sorrow" side of the album flows together and should be heard from beginning to end, not as individual songs. Side "doom" features the epic length "Returnal Etern" and a cover of Black Sabbath's "Paranoid." This cover is given a full Pylon doom overhaul – complete with some flute playing. The album features a few guest musicians including My Silent Wake/Seventh Angel's Ian Arkley, Sin Starlett's Reno Meier and Nomad Son vocalist Jordan Cutajar. This time around, the album is initially being released on limited edition, numbered vinyl only. However, there are plans for a CD to be released in 2013 on Roxx Records in the U.S. [Quam Libet] Scott Waters

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THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

CONTENTMENT

In this hectic life with an ever-increasing desire of people wanting more more more, it is impossible for most people to find true contentment. When I left home at age 24 I had no money, an old bust-up car & just worked & worked to build my own life away from the nest of my mum & dad's home. It was a huge shock to my system to suddenly have nothing but myself to pay everything & the only skill I had was my music & willingness to work hard labour jobs.

From day one getting married to Kate, I decided to be content with a little or content with a lot. But, like most, I have never had a lot. But look at it this way. 24 years later I am just 5 years away from owning my own home outright! Just through Kate & I working & working WITHIN GOD'S WILL & CALLING we have grown a good life of enough with no desire for more more more. What comes comes. What doesn't come, does not come. I praise God every day that I am simply alive & able to live a good level of healthy life despite all of the setbacks caused by Cancer 16 years ago! We simply count our blessings one by one.

If one day we got a newer car or made some decent money, then great. If not, I never strive for it. Striving for more brings stress & ill health. Contentment brings peace, calm & a grateful heart for what God has done in and through our lives! I did overwork in the '90s & chose stress stress stress. I was doing God's Mission's work, but never taking time just to rest IN HIM? Thus I got terminally ill. I was content and happy, but was just not time managing & life managing well AT ALL!

I have learnt a lot ... and now, at age 48, if I can pass on ANY words of wisdom from my life experience it would be: TOP OF THE LIST – LIVE IN CONTENTMENT NO MATTER WHAT COMES AGAINST YOU & LIVE EVERY SECOND IN GRATEFULNESS TO GOD & OTHERS! NUMBER ONE – SEEK GOD WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART, MIND & STRENGTH! All of us face hell fights. But NEVER FORGET!! IN CHRIST WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERERS! LIVE IN THAT MINDSET AND YOU LIVE IN THE FREEDOM OF CONTENTMENT!!

Blessings to All.



CHOOSE TO PRAISE