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Photo by Michael Levine

DANZIG

—By Amy Beth Yates

It all started with the Misfits. Who would have thought it would come this far? The Misfits were a trio from Lodi, NJ, formed in the '70's. They were the first to successfully mix horror movie imagery with punk music, a new terrain back in those days. The band certainly was popular when they were around, but now they have become legendary since their demise in 1984. When the Misfits broke up, leader Glenn Danzig went on to form Samhain, another band that collected a large devoted following, this entity departing from the living in 1986. Now, Glenn is back paving the way into man's inner workings with the simply named Danzig.

"With the new record, people are more receptive. They know more of what I'm doing

now," describes Glenn. "It's not sitting still. In other words, the Misfits were fine, then came Samhain and now Danzig. People are starting to understand that you can't live in the past. There are a lot of bands that just live off what they did. I guess that's fine, but then you become such an oldies band. The trick is to do something new that people will like. And it should challenge you as an artist. If it doesn't, you should do something else."

And judging from the history of Glenn Danzig, he's into challenging, be it with his lyrics or his outlook on man. The new Danzig record bears the distinctive mark of it's producer, Rick Rubin, he head of Def Jam records and producer of Beastie Boys, and the Cult. It seems that Rick is more into working with veterans of the scene now, after propelling the fledgling Beasties into the world.

"Rick came down to the New Music Seminar show we did and he wanted to sign us. And at that time we were talking to Elektra, Epic, Profile...his was just the best label for us to go with. He's the president of his own label and he's the best as far as artist commitment. I didn't know who he was when he came down!" Glenn recalls. "The Beastie Boys album wasn't out yet. As a matter of fact, at one of the meetings I had with him, he played me the record (*Licence to Ill*). And he had just finished up the Slayer *Reign In Blood* record. When we got involved with Rick it was easily two years ago."

Like many other artists, Glenn is running into a little legal problem with his past. Is it a coincidence that the release of *Danzig* and the re-release of *Walk Among Us*, a long out-of-print Misfits album, coincide?

Glenn declares, "No. Slash Records planned it that way. And they're scum. We've tried suing them and everything. It's ridiculous. They say they never lost the rights (to *Walk Among Us*). My lawyer was like "That's bullshit! I've got the contract right here!" So basically what happened was we got WEA to stop funding the record. But Slash doesn't care—they're still putting it out with their own money. They say all they owe me is money, that's it. That they still have the rights, which is a load of *shit*. I just have to decide whether I want to pursue it and take them to court."

What about the high price *Walk Among Us* was fetching before its re-release. Glenn doesn't have much sympathy for such, feeling, "That's kind of silly. I think a lot of stores saw a chance to make big bucks. And a lot of stupid people spent the money on it."

And after the Misfits called it quits in '84, Glenn went on to form Samhain, a group that produced two albums and one EP. Glenn started Samhain (the pagan name for Halloween) with Eerie Von Stehman, the only musician to follow him through to Danzig, he having been both bassist and drummer for others in his career.

"Eerie was a friend, he was the photographer for the Misfits," notes Glenn. "We used to hang around together. As a matter of fact, the last

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two or three years of the Misfits I didn't hang around with those guys (Jerry and Doyle) at all. We just had nothing in common...Eerie and I would go to shows a lot. So that's how Samhain formed. And also we had a lot in common. Originally we were going to call Samhain Danzig, but we just felt it was a little too Billy Idol-ish at the time. But me and Eerie talked, and we got Chuck (Biscuits, ex D.O.A., Black Flag, Circle Jerks) and John (Christ) in the band and it wasn't really Samhain anymore. I have a thing about how a band isn't really a band after so many personnel changes."

Glenn's lyrics were always a distinctive part of his music, delving into the darker side of the human animal. He once stated that his lyrics are mostly about killing and the end of the world...are they still?

"Yeah. The lyrics on this album are like that. I'm trying to delve into other stuff a little more—like sexuality," he claims. "I write the songs like it's always been. I bring them down, we rehearse them and work them out. But I've always had this thing with the Misfits and Samhain. You have to write something as good or better than I'm going to write, (in order for the band to perform it.) To be dedicated to songwriting, you don't just pick up a guitar and write a song, and bring it to rehearsal. That's nuts. It's a craft, it takes a while to learn how to do it. I've said it a zillion times and I'll say it again...for every song that makes it to rehearsal, I write 10 or 15 that go into the garbage. It's dedication. And then people sit down and say "Am I that dedicated and objective that I can say something I wrote sucks?" I can do that," he asserts .and who is going to question that?

Glenn and his band just wrapped up a tour, and although Glenn doesn't like touring England, he still managed to enjoy himself and create some havoc when teamed with another band of bad-assed veterans. (And he does look like he could wreck some serious havoc!) "We did three weeks in England with Metallica, which was fun. We got into a lot of trouble," he laughs. "Because you put us and Metallica together and you have a lot of trouble. We did your typical stupid shit. A long time ago I could drink almost anyone under the table, and them I just said "Fuck it." Nothing, no alcohol or anything. But we got around these guys and just start drinking and forget about it. We tipped a luxury Fiat over. The four of us, me, Eerie, James and a friend. I mean this was a nice sporty...we threw it over on its hood, not just its side! We just picked it up and flung it over. That was a lot of fun," he laughs, adding, "and other silly things like that all along the tour."

Some of which best remain unsaid! So speaking about the shows and touring, is Danzig performing any Misfits songs? Glenn answers with the slight correction, "You mean play any Glenn Danzig songs? Yeah. We rework them just like we did in Samhain."

So does he find the audience still holding on and asking for Misfit songs? Glen replies, "That hasn't been happening. It filtered down a lot at the end of Samhain. I have kids coming up to me and asking "How come you don't do 'He Who Cannot Be Named' or 'Arc-Angle?' All these Samhain kids are coming to shows and asking why we don't do Samhain songs," he laughs. "Well, this is Danzig, you know! But also I've got kids up front singing along to

every song off the Danzig record. I mean, I forget a line and all I've got to do is look at one of those kids to know where I am," he laughs anew. "It's really fun. And we're reaching a different audience now too. And these kids know every line, note for note!"

From The Misfits to Samhain to Danzig. A



Photo by Michael Lacaine

long career, with much more to come from this adaptable walk on the dark side musician. This time, however, the group had better remain stable cause picking another name in the future may not be so easy!