

East Coast ECR ROCKER

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Philly Promoter Pleads Guilty

by Mike Daly

A Philadelphia-based concert promoter has pleaded guilty to falsifying nearly \$1 million in expenses for shows by major rock acts.

Officials for Electric Factory Concerts admitted Sept. 10 that the firm overcharged the artists for production costs, payroll taxes, and

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ECR's HARD ROCKS

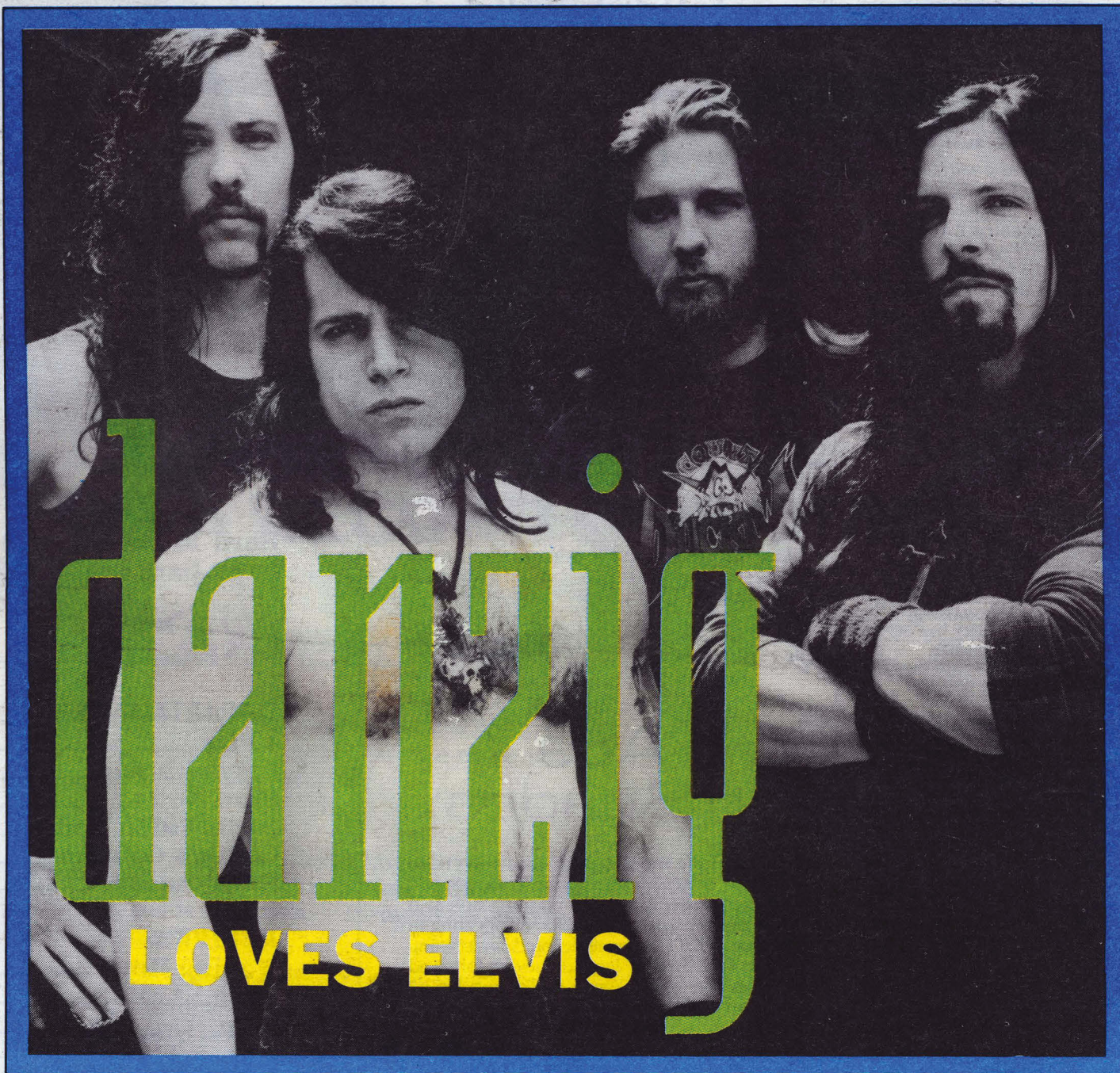
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Lawsuit City:

Family Of Killed Cop Blames Rapper 2Pac

by Mike Greenblatt

It was bound to happen. All of the controversy surrounding the song "Cop Killer" seems to boil down to a consensus view that nobody is going to kill a cop because of a song. But the family of slain police officer Bill Davidson in Jackson County, TX, is not to be consoled. They're convinced their loved one

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INTERVIEW:

John Christ Of

danzig

In The Light Of Darkness

by Keith Lyle

Danzig are always singing about the realities that lurk behind the facades of life. Religion is a favorite topic. Behind every crucifix, say the band, is a system of control and disinformation.

But while the L.A.-based foursome explore the truths behind symbols, they've also had to continually declare the greater meaning that exists behind the band's image and flirtations with evil. No more Satan questions, please. When it comes to Christianity, Danzig declare a higher interest that revolves around the abuses of organized religion.

Danzig III: How The Gods Kill (Def American) places the band—vocalist Glenn Danzig, guitarist John Christ, bassist Eerie Von and drummer Chuck Biscuits—at the height of their steadily growing popularity and offering the best explanations of the purpose behind the trappings of the dark side.

"Godless" is possibly the best rationalization for a band that, despite all the anti-Christian imagery emblazoned on official merchandise, are, in fact, not dancing with the devil.

On "Godless," the dramatically howling Danzig sings, "I can't believe in your pain under the draining of a Christian deities' blood. I couldn't love it anymore. I had to listen to my heart. I couldn't take it anymore so you leave me godless."

ECR recently spoke with Christ while the band were out on the road in support of Black Sabbath. Yeah, pretty appropriate. It's the first time the Baltimore native has actively been doing interviews since joining the band at its inception in January 1987. Normally, it's the band's charismatic and intimidating frontman that's done all the talking.

Though the Christ story is often overshadowed, it's a perspective that reveals the more musical and down-to-Earth aspects of the band. The soft-spoken but to-the-point Christ was raised in a musical family

and started out at an early age blowing on the trumpet and french horn. He soon picked up guitar, started playing in folk groups and studying classical guitar at prep school in Baltimore. At Towson State University in Maryland, Christ concentrated on jazz studies but was unable to ignore the exciting allure of rock guitar.

On the side he performed with various metal musicians but it wasn't until his tryout for Danzig that it all came together. He had never heard any music by Danzig's Misfits or Samhain but he got the job anyway. Three albums and numerous tours later, Christ and the band are getting ready to push darkness further into the light of exposure.

Danzig are now in the middle of a European tour that ends in mid-October. From there, the band will headline an extensive U.S. tour, tentatively scheduled to include White Zombie and a second opener. One of the tour's first dates will be a Halloween performance in their adopted L.A. When the band do eventually return to New York, it will be for the first time in over two years.

ECR: How is Chuck's breakfast cereal collection coming along?

John Christ: I think it's coming along pretty well. Actually, he does most of his collecting while we're out on the road. I know those guys went out this afternoon so we'll see if he picked up any new stuff. He's a character.

What do you think it says about young people in America that so many of them are turning on to a band as dark and over-the-top as Danzig in such a big way?

I think they're tired of what they're seeing, what the media and everybody else has been hitting them with—all this shit. We're straight ahead. We tell it like it is. We don't hold anything back and I think a lot of people are attracted to that. Some people get hung up on the religion thing but if they have any brains



and they dig a little deeper they'll understand what it's really all about. Any kids looking for an alternative to the regular shit that this society's throwing at them take a look at Danzig and most of 'em get into it.

Do you see a rebellious aspect in things that are evil?

Well, we're not setting out to be rebellious. If you look at Glenn and his track record, he's been doing things his own way from the beginning. It's the style, it's the mood. We don't give a shit about what society or anybody else thinks of us or our music. If they think it's rebellious, that's fine.

Do you have any concerns about the possible influence of Tipper Gore on a Clinton administration?

I'll ask you one thing—how come, since Gore has been on the ticket, you haven't heard a peep out of her? They're just playing the political game. They're not gonna say a word about the First Amendment. They're more concerned about abortion rights and the Middle East right now. But you know if Clinton becomes president her mouth is gonna open wide. She's gonna have the press sittin' right there. She'll start quacking and you're gonna see more fire storms about the First Amendment than ever before. It could get really ugly.

What do your parents think of the Danzig records?

My parents, they love the records. They're into it. They're Roman Catholic and, you know, they don't like the talk about sex, which is understandable. But all the religious things, they understand a lot of where Glenn's coming from and his searching about the truth—cutting through all the crap. It seems like truth is being edited for interest groups, whoever's in power. They understand all that. They like the music and, of course, they're proud of me. Yeah, they're real supportive. My whole family is like the biggest fan club right there. They drive hundreds of miles to come see us play. We set 'em up, give them industrial-strength ear plugs and we get some big security guards to walk them in and keep an eye on them and it's great.

How did you feel about Ice-T and the whole 'Cop Killer' discussion?

He got himself into another spot. I think he enjoys that spotlight. He enjoys the arena of controversy. But rap, by nature, is aggressive and confrontational. If you look at the shit that's been going on in California, a lot of people think it's like a new thing or that everything quieted down after the Watts riots. That's not the case. Those people are



Danzig: How Gods Kill cover.

"Those people are struggling for their lives every single day. The media are in there when stuff is going on but they don't care what happens every day. There are murders every single day—lots of 'em you never hear about. There are beatings and cops shooting innocent people all the time and you don't hear about that kind of shit."



struggling for their lives every single day. The media are in there when stuff is going on but they don't care what happens every day. There are murders every single day—lots of 'em you never hear about. There are beatings and cops shooting innocent people all the time and you don't hear about that kind of shit. If you did, you wouldn't get anything else on the news. They can only get so much killing in, right. (Rappers) are just telling you their life story of where they came from and where they've been and some are always gonna be. They're just telling their stories and cops just jump right on it. I'm not cutting down the police. They serve their function and a lot of 'em are doing the best they can with what they have.

Approaching this third album, were you guys at a bit of a creative crossroads as to where you wanted to go with things? Was it tough to decide where to take it next?

I remember we were at rehearsal workin' on new stuff and we were like, 'We want this to be an electric album, a heavy album.' Glenn wanted to produce it and we were like, 'Let's go heavier, let's get a bigger sound and let's have a lot more tension.' That's what we did.

What's the creative process you guys go through to come up with a song?

We don't have a standard process or formula. Sometimes music comes first, sometimes lyrics, sometimes a bit of both. I remember we were working on 'Dirty Black Summer'—that just started from a riff that popped up to Glenn. He just said, 'It's something like this.' So I started fuckin' around with it and changing keys and we got something that sounded cool then started pounding out power chords during the verse. We were looking for a chorus and I just played a minor seventh chord and he's like, 'Oh, that gave me an idea for the lyric. This is gonna be heavy, man.' Then he went home and went off on it from there. That's one instance.

But there are times when he'll sing a guitar line to you?

That's a big part of it, yeah. We do an awful lot of that. He'll pick up a guitar and start banging something out as the basic idea. And I'll say okay but I want it to this and that. Then he'll start humming something and say, 'No, more like this.' I just sort of pick up by ear what he wants and try to get as close as possible. Sometimes I'll be going for something and I'll make a mistake and he'll be like, 'That's it right there.'

You need to have a pretty good working relationship to be able to do things that way.

I can't read his mind but sometimes I'm pretty

close. When I hit it on the head it's just incredible. **Is it ever tough for you to be in a band where one member is such a focus of attention?**

I don't think so. I've been doing it with him for five years now. And that was the whole thing from the beginning. He said, 'This is a band and this is what we wanna do.' So basically I'm helping him get what he wants. He's the singer and songwriter. I help with the process and put in all the extra shit. He'll come in with ideas and I'll make it sound like Danzig. That's my role and that's what I'm good at. I don't get bummed out about anything. If I wanna do it different I'll just put out my own album. I write songs but they're not Danzig songs. If I come up with something and he happens to like it, maybe we'll get together and work something in on the next record. Who knows?

Have you thought seriously about doing your own album?

Oh yeah, I'm definitely gonna do it but I don't know if I'm gonna put out a solo album per se. I'm not so much into guitar player solo albums. Most of the time they suck. I'd like to get into a project with some other musicians and just do something completely different from Danzig and just spread my wings a little bit. I used to play straight-ahead heavy metal and regular rock 'n' roll in the clubs back in the early '80s. I went to school and studied jazz so I've got some of that in my head.

That's right. As a kid you studied classical and jazz music.

I went through the whole thing. You start out in grade school and your parents give you the piano lessons and all that shit. Then I picked up guitar and wanted to learn more so they sent me to study some classical guitar. I did that for a little while. Then, of course, I started listening to Ted Nugent and Van Halen and all that shit so I wanted to play lead guitar. I got in to the heavy metal local scene. And eventually what happened was, I was home from college on Christmas break and I heard through word-of-mouth that there was a band in New York that had a deal all lined-up they had been auditioning guitar players since the Summer. I had never heard of them. So I went up and tried out. They said, 'Alright, we've got some more people to try out. We'll call you back.' So I got Glenn's number and started calling up and jamming rhythm patterns from his songs in to his answering machine, bugging the shit out of him. So he gave me a second audition and I got the job. We started working on the first record that night and I've been with him ever since.

Was the dark character of the band something you were able to relate to easily?

Yeah, I got into it. All the stuff Glenn and Eerie were into—some of it was new to me, some of it wasn't, but it was all real interesting. I started relating to where he was coming from and identifying with a lot of things that he identified with—the dark side of truth. I wasn't afraid of it. I wanted to learn more about it. And the band just kept that direction...because it's real powerful and it's real heavy. A lot of people don't understand it so they're afraid of it...you know, fuck 'em.

What was it about Ted Nugent that turned you on to rock 'n' roll in such a major way?

Just the raw energy, man. The guy is just a fuckin' maniac. His solos were just screaming and raw. *Double Live Gonzo* is just incredible. Then I started to go see him everywhere and he blew me away. There's something about his style—the raw, rough edge, the real emotional and really fast, balls-to-the-wall energy. To this day, I still love the way he plays. **Did he actually have an impact on your style?**

Oh yeah. If you come to see a live show you can't help but pick out a few little things that I stole from him. One of my best friends was a bigger fan than I was. He has everything that Ted ever put out and he would make me learn the shit. He'd come over to my house when I was practicing and he'd say play 'Wang Dang Sweet Poontang' or play live 'Motor City Madman' or live 'Storm Troopin' or studio 'Stranglehold.' And he'd know if I fucked up and he'd give me shit. I like a lot of other guys, too but he was my first main influence.

Would you acknowledge the influence of big '70s rock shows on the way Danzig like to perform?

Yeah. When you first start out you gotta do the club tours and get down in the trenches and battle it out with the fans but we always felt we were a concert band playing in smaller rooms. Our music has a lot of power and there's a lot of space for it to air out. We've always been into the big powerful show. You know,

"Eerie actually has a T-shirt that says 'Not John Christ' on it. We both have the goatees and black hair and a lot of people confuse us. Even on stage from a distance, we're book ends and Glenn's in the middle."



we're big fans of Elvis Presley—need I say more. **I remember after seeing you guys years back play some smaller clubs in Boston and then going to see the show at the Beacon Theater—I wasn't sure how it was gonna come off. But it really worked. You were able to go on to a bigger stage and not really lose anything.**

That's what we wanted. The clubs are cool but our whole stage persona is geared towards the concert arena...and that's where we wanna be and that's where we're gonna end up.

Given the band's character, do you find that fans are sometimes intimidated to come up and talk to you?

A certain percentage maybe but let me be clear, after our shows there are lots of kids that have no fear. They wanna meet you, they wanna touch you, they wanna get autographs, they wanna find out what you're all about. Our fans are really loyal and they dig our whole thing. Some of the fans are pretty crazy but everybody's pretty crazy depending on which perspective you're viewing it from. I forget about that whole persona and image a lot of times. When we're out in a group you do get some heavy reactions. A lot of people are afraid. They're like, 'Oh, that's Danzig man.' They do back off and, you know, that's cool.

Is it important for the band to keep that veil of mystery about it?

I think there's always gonna be a certain amount of mystery to what we do and why we do it. There's always gonna be people who are afraid of what we're talking about and don't really know what we are all about. I'm not worried about that being a problem or whether it goes away. I think that darkness, that edge is always gonna be there.

Do you find that sometimes people get you and Eerie confused?

That's been happening for a long time (laughing). Eerie actually has a T-shirt that says 'Not John Christ' on it. We both have the goatees and black hair and a lot of people confuse us. Even on stage from a distance, we're book ends and Glenn's in the middle. We're used to that whole thing. They'll figure it out eventually.

What's the relationship the band has with each other? Do you all hang out much?

We hang out a lot on the road. On the road we're always going out to clubs and stuff like that. In L.A., not quite so much because we're all pretty busy. Chuck is an artist and he spends a lot of time at home drawing and painting. He recently had some paintings put up in an art show and he did some collectible cards for The Nation's Most Hated People. There's a series of 50 and Biscuits did a few for that collection. Glenn's got a couple of other projects going. He's got a solo thing coming out and he's busy doing soundtrack stuff and doing his martial arts stuff and just the whole Danzig thing keeps him busy. And Eerie does a lot of stuff with the fan club and he's a rockstar. He does what rockstars do.