

ANNUAL READERS' POLL ISSUE

guitar

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Joe Satriani

Talks about his new record, his studio band and his Deep Purple tour

JERRY GARCIA



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John Christ

The perfect foils for Glenn Danzig's oftentimes over-the-top musical demonism were the churning riffs and solid guitar lines of John Christ. Though Christ was seemingly relegated to the role of Danzig's henchman, as were the other instrumentalists, it was hard to imagine the group sounding so sinister or gaining widespread popularity without Christ's well-executed metal dirges. Danzig without John Christ? That would be like a shark without teeth.

Hard to imagine, but true. Christ submitted his resignation to the band this past summer after putting in eight and a half years as Glenn Danzig's guitarist, more than pulling his weight over the course of the band's five records. The reason, like so many musical separations, was simple: the time had come.

"I'd been thinking about it for a long time," says John, "and then it was actually time to go. The musical directions of the band were not heading the way I wanted them to. It was becoming frustrating and it was unsatisfying for me as a guitar player. The songwriting was what it was, and I didn't have much say. I felt like the band was moving backwards and we were going retro, which wasn't where I wanted to head. The first two albums had much better guitar work, but then the last two [studio] records went the other way, away from the guitar. Looking back, there were maybe three recorded guitar solos from all that time that I was completely happy with.

"This past year I didn't feel as much a part of Danzig as I did in the beginning, and I don't know how it happened or why, exactly. But the bass player, Eerie Von, and I both felt that way during the tour. Things had gotten so tense politically within the band that we weren't having any fun. And when Eerie and I tried to cut loose and have fun, that wasn't always appropriate with some people." He laughs, without a trace of irony. "I don't want to say who, specifically, that it wasn't appropriate with. Towards the end of tour I was travelling with the crew because at least they were having a good time."


The downtime after months on the road forced Christ to face the facts of his role as the band's guitarist. "We had just finished the European and South American tour over the summer, and nothing else was confirmed for the fall, although they were talking about doing maybe Japan and Southeast Asia. I had some time to think about it, and realized if I stayed around I would be miserable, and I didn't want to bring anybody else down. On the 5th of July I called the management company and declared my independence." He laughs again, much more loudly. "They were closed on the 4th, or I would have done it then. My manager was cool, he saw it coming. And without coordinating it or anything, Eerie had called him that same morning. I knew he was going to leave, but I didn't know he was going to do it the same day.

"I haven't talked to Glenn since then. After the call I made to my manager, I expected to hear something more, but I never did. Glenn didn't call Eerie, either, and they've known each other for 10 or 15 years. I'm sure Glenn will keep making records, and anybody else who joins him will probably just be happy to be there."

The obvious question arises, then: What now? After all, Danzig was a high-profile gig.

"Well, a lot of people have been calling, asking me what I'm going to do, how I'm doing, when I'm going to get into another band. Right now I just want to regroup and detox after all that time with Danzig. I'm actually really looking forward to practicing again. Nothing appeals to me more than taking some lessons and sitting down with my guitar books and working on techniques and my chops. I was in college studying jazz composition when I joined the band, and I had just started to catch up to the guys who were better schooled than I was. But at the time I decided I wanted to go out and rock and roll, so I auditioned for the band that became Danzig. Now I want to work on my guitar vocabulary. I'd like to do some jazz studies with Larry Koontz, an instructor at CalArts. He's one of these local jazz cats that's been around for a while, and he's hip to guys like John Scofield and John Abercrombie. Hopefully, by the time I'm ready to come out with another record or a new band I'll have all these blues and jazz chops back that have been dormant, and I'll make them a part of my playing.

"In the meantime, I'm keeping busy with lots of projects. I've rerecorded "For Christ's Sake" (from *Guitar's Practicing Musicians, Vol. III*) and done a karaoke version that I can use on my Ibanez clinics. I'm doing some Australian TV music with Ashley Irving, who did the music for the TV series *Silk Stalkings* and the Academy Awards music. I'm still doing the Ted Nugent tribute band [J.C. & The Angeles Dukes], and I think I'm going to do a blues band here in L.A. that does stuff at the House Of Blues and hooks up with local musicians. I helped produce the demo for a new guitarist named Michael Hartman whose been creating a local buzz and getting endorsements. I'm also writing for a number of magazines, like *Musician* and *Rip*.

"Danzig was good exposure for me. I'm grateful for that, and I made the best of it. But ultimately, the music was easy and not challenging, and it was the politics that made it not fun. The business side of music is always tough, and I don't want to sound bitter about the experience because I love music and I can't think of doing anything else. Danzig was more than eight years of my life, and it was a good ride for a long time." 

"There were maybe three recorded guitar solos from all that time that I was completely happy with."