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Dim the lights,
fire up the candles,
adjust your hearing:
the latest release
from Danzig is out.

DANZIG

by Jeff Jobes

Entitled Danzig IV, the CD sees a maturing band refining their musical style and lyrical musings beyond the realm of intrinsic rock and roll. The album, produced by Rick Rubin, takes the underlying groove that has been present throughout Glenn Danzig's musical career, in the Misfits and Samhain, and adds some interesting new twists. The line-up for the album was unchanged with Glenn Danzig as vocalist, John Christ on guitars, Eerie Von with bass duty, and Chuck Biscuits on drums. However, in mid-September, Biscuits left the band and was replaced by Joey Castillo, formerly of Sugartooth. I talked to John Christ on the day that the Danzig 1994 World Tour schedule was being finalized.

J: Juice: What do you think about the new album?

John Christ: It's a lot different from everything we put out in the past.

There are a couple of signature Danzig songs like Bringer of Death and When You Call on the Dark. But then we have some different styles, like on Cantspeak. Originally that song was Let It Be Captured and they played it backwards and Glenn listened to it and heard something. He said that he had some ideas for some vocals over the backwards track. So they added some forward drums, forward vocals, and some vocal effects and that's how it came out.

J: What brought about the changes?

JC: I think a lot of it was that Glenn decided that he wanted to do some songs in the older vein. People that have followed Danzig from before, from the Misfits and Samhain, heard songs that are similar to the Samhain material. He also wanted it to be more groove oriented. How the Gods Kill had a more rigid structure and on this record, a lot of the time we were just jamming, not necessarily pounding out parts, and we just ended the song and left it that way. We changed some parts but most of it is just the basic tracks without a lot of the overdubs.

J: Can you explain the cover?

Well, the original cover was supposed to feature a different piece of art, but we had some problems getting the artwork together, so Glenn and Rubin put the cover together and you can sort of see two different forms of the [Danzig] skull on it. The lettering on the cover, I think, are old Irish runes that say Danzig IV. Then on the inside cover, there's sort of a yin and yang symbol using good and evil. The number four is for Danzig IV and the "P" is something out of a religious book, but I'm not sure what exactly it means. You'll have to ask Mr. Danzig when you see him. I asked him what it meant and he was getting ready to explain it but then we were interrupted.

J: What about the photograph inside?

JC: I think it shows how we see the establishment dealing with us and what we do. I know we're not big Clinton fans and we thought it would relate to Cantspeak and some of the other songs. If you let things go the way that they are going, you never know, this could happen.

J: This wasn't due to any actual events or threats was it?

JC: No, but there are people that want to challenge what we do, however we haven't met much resistance so far. I think that as soon as any special interest groups or religious groups find us as a threat, then they'll start to bring the issues out. At this point though, I don't think anybody is too threatened by us. We haven't been attacked publicly for anything that we have done.

J: Do you think that it's because the lyrics are too subtle for religious groups to pick up on?

JC: It's not even subtle, it's that there's nothing wrong with it. We're not coming out and saying anything. We're basically sighting facts and truths. So if it's real and it's true, what can you say about it?

J: What are Cantspeak and Going Down to Die about?

JC: It can be taken as a political song where a person "can't speak can't talk can't do the things you want." The person can't do what he wants, but he also can't do what They want, so he's frustrated. He's got to keep everything inside. "I want to live, but I keep thinking suicide." That's a relative theme in today's urban society and the introverted lyrics reflect that. And Going Down to Die is about the downswirling in life. It deals with a man realizing his mortality. It's a big thing in every man's life to accept that he's going to die at some point. If you look at the lyrical content of each song in the order that is presented on the CD, you can see sort of a journey that starts with Brand New God and works its way towards the invocation in almost a turning circle going through the whole transition. Realizing that [life's] not what you thought, it's not going the way you wanted. You get caught up in the turmoil and then you want out and instead of going one way, you go another. You go the dark way instead. And then with the invocation, you start over. It's very cerebral, depending on your perspective.

J: Can you explain the hidden track (track 66) on the new CD?

JC: It's an idea Glenn and [Rick] Rubin had, to do something weird. It's an invocation. Glenn got an instrument called a harmonium, an old style keyboard that runs from air being pumped through the side, and he laid some Gregorian style chanting over it.

J: You did something similar, as far as hidden track, on Thrall-Demonsweatlive, with track 93.

JC: That was the the hidden Mother track. It was exactly six minutes and sixty-six seconds after the final listed track.

(Laughs on both ends)

JC: Well, at least we're consistent.

Note: In the past, Danzig has had trouble with getting the original versions of their videos played on MTV. The original video for Mother, from their 1987 debut album and re-released last year as a single, has yet to be seen on the video network.

J: Have you had any trouble with videos this time around?

JC: Certain people at MTV have made it more difficult for us to get our videos played. That was from the first record on through the new record where we're having the same difficulties with the video for the first single, Until You Call On The Dark, as we did with the video for Mother. Granted, the lyrics are a bit darker, but they're not Satanic per se. To watch the video, there is nothing that offensive in it. You see many more intensely negative and racist things on MTV all the time, and our video is not. It's more of a Gothic portrayal of the imagery used in the song itself.

John Christ also spoke of other projects which include writing musical scores for television shows and movies and his part-time Ted Nugent cover band. In addition, he has interviewed White Zombie and The Nuge himself for a magazine called Guitar for the Practicing Musician and hopes to do a tour column for them. Danzig is scheduled to tour with Type O Negative and possibly Godflesh with a stop in Raleigh in late November. With opening acts like these and the new Danzig music combined with the classic Danzig favorites, this show should prove to be the event of the season.