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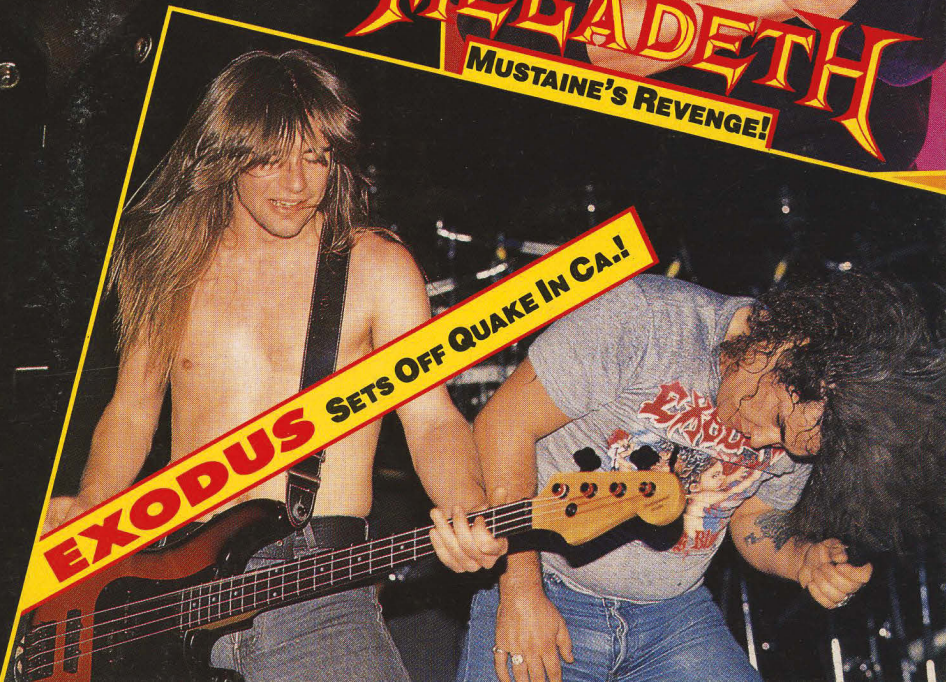
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- Cover Story:**
- 4 Ozzy Osbourne**
Satan Goes Straight!?!?!?
 - 8 Metallica**
Kirk Hammett Interview
 - 10 Megadeth**
More Mustaine!
 - 12 Testament**
 - 16 Anthrax**
State of Insanity
 - 22 Chainmail**
 - 24 Metal Wax/Demo Derby**
 - 28 Crumbsuckers**
 - 36 MEGADETH POSTER**
 - 38 Accept's Wolf Hoffman,**
Gets Technical!
 - 41 Metal Movers:**
Holy Terror, Forbidden, Rage, Realm
 - 46 Tape Trading:**
An Abuser's Guide
 - 50 Rigor Mortis**
 - 52 Violence . . .**
takes its toll!
 - 54 In Concert:**
Combat's Ultimate Revenge II
Exclusive photos and live review!
 - 56 Motorhead**
 - 59 Danzig**
 - 64 Exodus**
Creates Earthquakes!
 - 71 Slayer**
pull-out



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DANCING WITH DANZIG

By Christine Natanael

As I was on my way to the Geffen Records offices to do this interview with the charismatic lead singer of the group Danzig, (the notorious Glenn Danzig himself), I was a bit apprehensive as to what we would talk about. I didn't want to do the usual rehash of his Misfits/Samhain career since that was in the past. I wanted to try to get into this guy's personality and give you readers something that you didn't know. So I'm reading the prepared bio that the company sends along with the tape and pictures of the group to try and get an idea of which direction the questions should turn. I come to the sentence, 'Glenn speaks through his songs and what he doesn't say through his music he doesn't wish to share'—so what the hell do I ask this guy now? Is he going to play cat and mouse with me or what?

What I found was a guy that was passionate and opinionated and

honest in his intentions and creations. He is sitting in the conference room drinking a bottle of orange juice, and his aural vibrations are extending into every crevice of the room. As one who isn't easily intimidated, I found myself feeling a little off guard. There is a primitive sexiness about the man and a predatory sense of intellect. He immediately put me off by telling me his views on the media.

"I don't like the press much," says Glenn with a stern intent gaze meant to bore directly into my soul. "I don't think that any press is good press. I don't think that way and a lot of people do. I don't care whether I get interviewed or not. It's not like my main goal in life is telling everybody what I think and feel. If someone's interested, genuinely, then great."

So here I was sitting in front of this man who could care less about the press and wondering what the f**k I

was martyr playing for, when I realized it was because I was genuinely interested in the dude and wanted to find out what his action was. Now the interview was going to be done by my rules. I decided to go against the grain and ask him about everything that he hates to talk about. I began with his childhood. What type of background produces a man like Glenn Danzig? I found out that he grew up in New Jersey, just far enough out to be suburbia and close enough to New York to feel the beat of the city.

"I had a lot of friends and I was a loner," he tells me, and I begin to wonder if this is more perpetual double talk or just a complicated smoke-screen meant to keep me at an arm's length. "Me and my friends always got in a lot of trouble. We used to build forts, but then anyone who came by, we would attack and tie them up. We were always getting in

trouble for tons of other stuff. Like when I was about eleven I got arrested for breaking and entering this department store. I've been talking to people and talking about getting into trouble when we were kids and everyone was like, 'no, I never did that.' So I'm thinking that maybe I'm more f**ked up than I thought I was."

With that comment he breaks into a warm peeling laughter and I knew then and there that I shouldn't have been so apprehensive. After all, it's not every day that you've known somebody for two minutes and they're telling you all about how they were a juvenile delinquent.

So I asked him how he knew that music was the thing that he wanted to do with his life. The answer came easily and without hesitation.

"At an early age I became a road manager for a band," says Glenn. "Basically I was cleaning drums and stuff. Then I became a singer. It only took me about two or three months. I didn't like road managing at all."

From there his progression in the music industry has been legendary. There aren't too many people who don't know the name Glenn Danzig. The reason why is because he is totally committed to his craft, and will play anywhere as long as it is a job that pays.

"We've done stupid tours all over everywhere," he says with a smile. "You'd be surprised at the places we've played. We do those on the off nights as we're going through the towns. It's like a paid rehearsal and we do it. We used to have, with Samhain especially, we had certain towns we would just play because we always had a good time. We did it once on like an off night just to play and pick up some money and we had a lot of fun, so on the next tours we would just book it as kind of a fun gig that we could have a lot of fun playing and have fun with the people there."

"I've always been firm in the belief that if we go out and do a show then we should get paid for it," he continues. "It's my job. Besides being a lot of fun and the thing I want to do, it is also my living. I want to be paid for it. People don't realize that, and then they wonder why their favorite band broke up. The reality is that you have to have money to eat and you have to have money to have a place to stay. If you are devoting all your time to your band then your band may not be making any money. Reality sets in and the band breaks up because everybody has to get jobs."

There is no half stepping when it comes to dealing with Glenn Danzig.

He is a strong individual with a direct sense of the things that he wants to do. His personal philosophies are simple and to the point.

"The people that are gonna burn out will burn out anyway, no matter what and no matter where they are. You either want to do it or you don't want to do it. The things you can change you can change, the things you can't, like going from town to town and being in a different city every night and all that stuff, that's part of it, and if you can't handle that, don't do it. Don't whine about it. I hate people that whine. I hate people that complain. And I hate people that don't pull their end. I hate all that. I hate weak people. I just want to walk away from them. I don't want to be bothered by them."

That may be part of the reason that Mr. Danzig is so successful. It may also be part of the reason why he is working with the notoriously demanding Rick Rubin and his stronger than

"I don't care whether I get interviewed or not. It's not like my main goal in life is telling everybody what I think and feel."

thou company, Def Jam Records. The first contact that Danzig had with Rubin was in July of 1987 at the New Music Seminar in New York City. It is the ultimate industry schmooz event of the year and deals are done in such unlikely public places as the hotel bar. Danzig didn't know who he was, which may be a little unbelievable knowing the reputation of Rubin, and had to make a few calls to a few people to find out who he was and what he was doing.

"We started talking about what he wanted to do if we decided to go with Def Jam. A lot of his ideas and my ideas were the same. What he saw in the band is exactly the same things I saw in the band; the aggressiveness, the attitude, the whole deal, so it worked out very well. He's to the point. I don't like people who beat around the bush. He tells you exactly right up front. You don't have to mince words."

In putting together his band he had

certain qualifications for the musicians to meet, which were basically that they should be able to fit in and believe in the same things that he believes in as a musician. He definitely wanted the dedication to be there and the sturdiness of character. A natural choice for bassist was Eerie Von, whose great stage presence in Samhain had earned him the respect necessary from Glenn to be included in this project. John Christ was the only guitar player who passed the audition that was held when Danzig decided to take the deal with Def Jam. His searing six string work doesn't "sacrifice the passion for the technique." Chuck Biscuits was the only choice that Danzig had for a drummer, there was no other, period. His work with Black Flag and the Circle Jerks was the natural basis for his opinion. Glenn feels that this is the ultimate music machine and the best vehicle for the expression of what it is that he is trying to say at this time in his career.

The topic then came up about the commerciality quotient of this album. Many of the people I know who have heard it have said that it is very commercial and that it is not a natural progression from the earlier Misfits/Samhain ideologies. Glenn just kind of laughed that off in a nonchalant manner and told me how he deals with the concept of himself as a composer and performer.

"It's not 1981, it's not 1983, it's not 1985, it's 1988, and things don't stay the same," he points out to me in a tone of certainty. "As much as I like to retain certain things from the other stuff I've done, like the aggressiveness, the brutality, that kind of stuff, the songwriting is gonna have to change eventually or you become the Ramones. There's just other things. As long as you keep the basic stuff that everybody liked from what you were doing before, whatever you do after that will always be attractive."

"It's different all the time," he continues. "Sometimes the lyrics come first, sometimes the music comes first. Like I've said before, for every song that made it to the record there were ten that I threw out, didn't even bring down to rehearsal; that I just wrote and played the next day that sucked so bad I just threw them away. I don't keep them. After this record is done I don't even care about it anymore—it's done—next. I'm gonna have to play this shit for fu**ing years, you know? I know a lot of people that live in the past and live off the past. I'm not one of them, and I don't deal with those people." □

