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N I G H T
SITES & SOUNDS

DANZIG

Out of the Dark
with John Christ

INTERVIEWS WITH:

Jackyl

Geno Delafosse

Duke Tumatoe

Harmonious Wail

Catch of
the Day:



Yule
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Danzig Spread Their Wings

An Interview with John Christ of Danzig by Paul Gargano

Danzig held their own long before they broke rank as one of the year's most unsettling radio success stories—for years being acknowledged as one of music's sinister, darker forces and possessing one of the world's largest cult followings. With "Mother," however, that all became a thing of the past.

Since 1988, the eclectic quartet has reigned as metal's unrecognized and enigmatic alter-ego, but it wasn't until 1993 that they were thrust into the proverbial spotlight. From the murky depths of the musical abyss the band ruled over with clenched fists, to life amongst fleeting chart-toppers, gangsta' gunmen and line-dancing cowpokes, Danzig managed to ascend the musical staircase without so much as a glance at the radio startlets they trampled with Thrall-Demonsweatlive.

While the commercial establishment was a surprising conquest to most who have been long-familiar with Danzig, it was the band's label that marketed the muscle behind "Mother" and pushed the mood-rock artistry to national recognition. The credit lies predominantly with American General Manager Mark DiDia, who saw a lull in the radio market and approached namesake, frontman and founder Glenn Danzig with the idea of releasing the remixed track from the band's debut as a single, said guitar player John Christ.

While the success may have put a damper on the protective nature of the band's hardcore following, Christ viewed the expanded interest as a refreshing change, welcoming the opportunity to build on the band's cult-status. "I never expected it," he said in a recent interview from Arizona, where the band had just opened their tour in support

of Danzig 4, "it's been an underground thing for so long, breaking the Top 40 for even a short period of time was weird... cool, but weird."

Weird would probably be an understatement, especially for a band that the mainstream has previously avoided like the plague. While they've never before been media darlings, they have been privy to frequent reviews—enough to keep the band flowing and interest from waning. Their 1988 debut melded Danzig's punk roots with a metallic twist of the blues, an attention-getting effort that marked the start of a diverse and varied future. *Lucifuge* was released two years later, constricting listeners in a blues trance that could provide a musical accompaniment for black death.

With *How the Gods Kill*, Danzig ventured into the varied realms of arena-rock potential. The 1992 release offered a guitar-driven power that strayed from the blues dirges of its predecessors, while



Danzig are (from left); Eerie Von, Glenn Danzig, John Christ and Joey Castillo

wrong thing, I don't know."

Redemption was delivered in 1993, the year Danzig turned the music world inside-out. The *Demonsweatlive* EP gave birth to the second-coming of "Mother" and marked a turning point for a band whose abilities had previously been overlooked in the wake of their foreboding image. "For me, that's been the main impact," Christ said of the single and the band's success, "you play that song in the live shows and everybody comes alive and it starts getting out of hand."

Which brings us to 1994 and the release of 4—a coming of age for a band that is long overdue. The gut-wrenching collection offers a core of classic Danzig tremors that culminate in a fitting response to their newfound fame and fortune. From the brutality of "Brand New God," the unfamiliar track that opened their tour with Metallica this past summer, to "Invocation," a hidden track that takes its roots in Danzig's macabre exploration of life's darker side, there's an experimental tone throughout. It pushes through in the distorted industrial light of "Cantspeak," the band's latest single and forthcoming video, and for the longtime faithful, finds solace in the dark comfort of "Stalker Song."

"We didn't go out to do another 'Mother' or do the opposite," Christ said of the latest album. "We just went in our own way with a natural progression. It wasn't preconceived and it wasn't motivated." Would there be any other way for Glenn Danzig, the fabled frontman who has found his place amidst the most storied artists of our day? He's the undeniable focus of attention for the band, "as a lead singer will be, especially when the band's named after him," Christ concurs, but as far as the hype goes, he offers a different perspective. "He's a lead singer—he's got lead singer's disease, but he's basically a nice guy and has a good sense of humor," he said of the man he has played with for the past eight years.

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INCOMING ROCKS

by RACHEL

I'm running out of time to fill your rock 'n' roll brains with wonderful facts. Right around this very day several historical things happened—by golly, you should spend a few moments learning, reminiscing, or grieving... In 1967 The Monkees, who were modeled after the Beatles and therefore scorned as the "pre-fab four," were created for television. Also in '67, Otis Redding was killed as his plane crashed into Lake Monona. In 1969, The Rolling Stones and co-sponsor The Grateful Dead gave the Hell's Angels \$500 worth of beer to provide security for a free concert at Altamont Speedway in California. As the Stones performed "Sympathy for the Devil," a film crew recorded the stabbing death of 18-year-old Meredith Hunter in front of the stage. On Dec. 8, 1980, at 10:50 p.m., returning home with his wife from a recording session, John Lennon was shot five times and died within the half-hour. Among the many born in December: Jim Morrison, Ted Nugent, Greg Allman, Keith Richards, Frank Sinatra, Bo Diddley, Jimmy Buffett, and Frank Zappa.

Back to the here and now...

In a triple assault on the ears, gothic rockers Danzig bring their "4" tour to the Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee Dec. 10. As I quote myself from last issue, "the band that brought you 'The Origin of the Feces,' 'Type O Negative,' and Britain's industrial noisemakers Godflesh" open the show. Last I heard, tickets are still available. If you're in the mood to party later that night, there's a post-Danzig thing going on at the Unicorn.

T.A. Vern's is bringing the Bullet Boys on Dec. 2. This low dough show marks the return of the Boys to Milwaukee after recent gigs at T.A. Vern's and the Summerfest Rock Stage. True Logic and Calamity Jane will also perform. It's only \$5 to get in; tickets are available day-of-show at the club.

Jackyl is also returning to T.A. Vern's. This fivesome played at The Haven two years ago and since then have appeared at Summerfest, opened for Aerosmith and were one of the dozens of acts at the 25th anniversary of Woodstock. They were possibly the favorite act at the New York festival, where they stumbled upon that whole ransack-the-food-stand-and-steal-some-chow thing and scored a free pizza. I didn't

get any cost-free za, so I'll be at the show to take revenge! Also performing that night, Dec. 7, are Milwaukee favorites Picasso Trigger and Sahara Jack. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$18-day-of-show.

It took about a year, but it was well worth the wait for Sahara Jack's new CD, "Looking For Gold." There's a good mix of songs on this one—hard rockers, ballads, funky and slightly jazzy tunes. There's even a few live tracks recorded at Kenosha's Stage One by Knobbywood Estates. Run out and see this great act at the following dates (and pick up a copy of "Looking For Gold" while you're at it): T.A. Vern's Dec. 3 and 7 (with Jackyl and Picasso Trigger), Who's On First in Milwaukee Dec. 10, Barney's in Oshkosh Dec. 16, Sir Buk's in Monroe Dec. 17, Pitcher's Mound in Beloit Dec. 18 and 31, and Stage One Dec. 23.

Here's another Wisconsin act that's busy working on a CD. Until the release of "Driven" in December, you can see Lake Geneva's Shut Up and Drive live throughout the state. Their Milwaukee debut performance is at T.A. Vern's Dec. 16 and 17, and they'll also be appearing at the Badger Bowl in Madison Dec. 2, Brewsters in Delevan Dec. 9, and the B&B Tap in Oshkosh Dec. 10.

On Dec. 10, there's a Megalithic Records X-mas Party at Peabody's in Milwaukee. The event begins at 3:00 p.m. and features handfuls of local and regional acts including Antagonist, Maximus, and Victims of Voodoo.

It seems a lot of bar owners fall into the Sagittarius-Capricorn portion of the zodiac, as three of our favorite Madison-area clubs throw birthday parties this month. Gonzo's Birthday Bash, with the Madman's own group Metal Gonz, will take place Sat., Dec. 3, celebrating Gonzo's 32nd. How's Slugger's Inn in McFarland honors its namesake at How's 40th Birthday Bash on Sun., Dec. 18. Also, Madison's Club Tavern holds Moose's 18th Birthday Party on Fri., Dec. 23.

One last note: bands should remember to mail, fax or e-mail their entries for our annual band guide. The MS&P will be out on Jan. 19, and listings are free! You can't miss. Find an entry form in this issue or at your favorite music store. See you next time for end-of-the-year fun.



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GET INTO THE COLD

"We make sure that he's fed. You have to make sure Glenn has food in his belly or we don't know what's going to happen."

Creatively, things aren't as bleak for Danzig's bandmates as some might assume. While Christ admits that he does get frustrated at times, he understands that Danzig created the band, comes up with most of the lyrics and is the origin of a lot of the musical ideas. "We bang heads a lot, but we all want what's best for the band," Christ said of their working relationship. "As long as Glenn's got control and the rest of us are able to do what we need to do, everything's cool." And when things start to get a little tense, Christ has his solo projects to serve as creative outlets. "It's much more rock n' roll. I've decided I don't want to follow in the footsteps of a guitar god like Eric Johnson or Joe Satriani, I want it to be more of a rock n' roll type of group."

"I didn't even know if I wanted the gig," Christ said of his invitation to join Danzig's self-titled band. "I hadn't heard of Samhain or the Misfits, but it was more about the whole possibility of the record deal and everything." The style was a jump from the classic arena-rock upbringing Christ's guitar influences were entrenched in, but something inspired him to leave college and spread his musical wings. "I wasn't used to it—all the dark stuff and symbolism, dying my hair black, the black clothes, all the really serious guys, no smiling, no

Danzig

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nothing—that was all a big jump for me. But I figured, 'what the heck, I'll fit into this, go with it, and see where it heads.'"

Claiming Ted Nugent as his guitar idol, Christ made the jump from classic rock standards to Danzig's punk-blues-metal amalgamation without so much as a second thought. And after eight years, Christ has become more than comfortable dealing with the baggage that comes with being a member of Danzig, most notably, the whole question of the occult. "Until every publication and every radio station has had their shot at the question, we'll hear it," he said, offering his own solution for fans obsessed with answers. "Sit in a room by yourself with headphones on, read the lyrics as you listen to the music, then we'll talk."

In the meantime, Danzig is on tour and using their music to wage unholy war on stages across America. "Each set is like a living thing," Christ said of their live show. "When you put it together and start playing songs in a certain order, you want your high and low points in the right places. You want to be able to bring the audience up and bring them down; you want to control the flow of the set and the energy—you bring it down, then crank the intensity back up again."

Danzig will be performing at the Milwaukee Riverside Theatre Saturday, Dec. 10, with support acts Godflesh and Type O Negative.