

SPIN



NEW MUSIC PREVIEW '91

**We've Seen the Future:
Our Annual Look at
the Best New Artists**

**Exclusive: Mike Tyson
Interviews L.L. Cool J**

**When Cultures Clash:
Hank Shocklee Interviews
Paul Simon**

**Glenn Danzig
of
Danzig**

**Poland: Rocking
in the Freed World**

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Volume 6,
Number 10





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The best, the brightest (and in one case, the darkest) artists to watch for during the coming year. Call it SPIN's house of the rising stars, from the devilish Glenn Danzig, page 28, to the deee-gorgeous, deee-groovy Deee-Lite, page 32. And that's just for starters: Other artists, scenes, and styles determined to impress themselves upon you in 1991 follow, beginning on page 36.

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Danzig cover and above photographs by Anton Corbijn. Deee-Lite cover photograph by Jesse Frohman.





We are at the end of rock history. The concept of new music is finished. All that's gonna be said has already been said. All that's left is an endless recycling of past styles, sounds, gestures, attitudes, and subjectivities.

Oh, yeah?

Tell that to the Bay Area thrash-funkateers, or to the British indie dance bands, or to Deee-Lite, Danzig, Monie Love, Brand Nubian, Alice in Chains, and all the other awe-inspiring artists that make up SPIN's New Music Preview '91.

In 1991, rock, hip hop, and house are still the only art forms that matter. While the rest of the culture finds the past impossible to evade—to the point that art and nostalgia are synonymous—popular music thrives, despite the best efforts of Nick Tosches, Kurt Loder, and Jean Baudrillard. That's why new music is still important.

Most of the bands featured here are, in SPIN colleague Simon Reynolds's phrase, post-postmo-

NEW MUSIC

All the new music that's fit to hear: the sounds, the scenes, the styles, and the signposts.

PREVIEW

demists. If postmodernism in pop has come to mean a cynical regurgitation of pop's past, the hegemony of the eye over the ear and the triumph of style over content, then these music makers are a reaction against all that. Whether they pledge allegiance to rock'n'roll paganism (like Danzig), to an African-American version of Islam (like Brand Nubian), or to the New Positivity (like Deee-Lite), these bands have something to say—without the quotation marks—and a neat way of saying it. This is music that's not aware in advance of its place in history.

Most of the bands here are also musical miscegenists. The days of strict racial demarcation between metal and funk, rock and rap, college rock and house, are nearing their end. In the world of sound, color is irrelevant (except when it comes to getting paid, of course).

What's old in new music is the shock of the new. (None of these bands are the new Stones or the new Pistols, thank God.) What's still new is the shock of the now.

To borrow a hip hop phrase, this is next-school music.

FRANK OWEN

Is **GLENN DANZIG** Elvis's evil

Morrison? He's the most charismatic—and genuinely



twin reincarnated in the steroid-pumped body of Jim
scary—rock'n'roll performer around. His band,

DANZIG, embodies both rock's past glories and the promise of its future. Whether you like it or not.

LEGS McNEIL reports. Photographs by Anton Corbijn

It looks just like the shopping mall from *Dawn of the Dead*—after it was rid of the zombies. The entire place is deserted. None of the shopkeepers are in their stores, but the happy fluorescent lighting and the ultra-pleasant muzak is still humming along. Everything is on automatic pilot.

Suddenly, the silence is shattered.

"Ahh, man, there's gotta be a titty bar around here," complains Glenn Danzig to his road manager, George Harris, and his security chief Jesse James, as the three breeze through the mall's entrance.

"Empty! Just the way I like it—no assholes in my way," Glenn beams, throwing his shoulder-length black hair out of his face to reveal his striking looks. With his monstrously developed chest and his evil eyes, he looks like a cross between Jim Morrison and Cro-Magnon man. Only meaner.

"What do you want first, titty bars or comic books?" George asks.

"Comic books," Glenn answers.

"I already asked about the titty bars. They're down past the hotel," George says as he scans the Deerfield Shopping Mall directory in search of the comic book store. This evening's Danzig concert at the Palace Theater in Waukegan, Illinois, has been canceled. The hall owner got hold of the band's latest release, *Lucifuge*, and opened up the CD sleeve to see it formed an upside-down cross. To him, Danzig is an obvious sign of what Geraldo has warned everybody about: satanism, cult murders, and, of course, the theme music of eternal damnation.

"Yeah, it was the upside-down crosses and all that shit," says Danzig. "But here's the stupidity of it: The hall owner is supposed to be a good Christian, but if he knew anything about the upside-down cross, he'd know it was a very holy symbol. In fact, St. Peter was crucified upside down, because he said that it would be blasphemy to be crucified like his lord, Jesus Christ . . ."

Danzig speaks in a bored tone that sug-

gests he'd rather be concentrating on comics than theology.

"It was St. Peter or St. Paul, I forget which . . ."

Glenn and Jesse and George don't give a fuck about the canceled show. They're just glad to have more time for serious comic shopping.

"You have any more Mighty Mouse Number Threes?"

Glenn asks the fat, obnoxious store owner, while the other two comb the racks. There's a whole section of nothing but advanced Dungeons and Dragons guidebooks, as well as picture dictionaries of fantasy weapons and tactics for future wars. On the wall is a poster of Judge Dredd executing another cyberpunk perpetrator.

This isn't a comics shop as much as a convenience store of chaos for the postpunk, post-hardcore, post-everything kids who inhabit the wasteland, knowing that death and destruction are already upon us. These kids know there's nothing left to do but sit back and enjoy the fires burning out of control.

As lead singer of the Misfits, the seminal hardcore/thrash band of the early '80s—and later of the more experimental band Samhain—Glenn Danzig had always



Danzig with the Devil:
rock pagans on a roll.



employed his fantasies to create chaos for the world to enjoy. After 10 or 15 years of this, he's bored with explaining things. It's not what he likes to do. You either get what Danzig is doing, or you can fuck off. And it's that attitude that has them screaming in the aisles for more.

"But you're smart enough to realize," I persist, "that when you put out an upside-down cross it's going to piss a lot of people off?"

"If it pisses people off, that's their tough luck. I don't care about people with small minds."

He stops. The eyes grow darker, the bulging biceps tense up, the threat of violence radiates out of every pore.

"I don't like hassle in my life," he says, getting quieter, more intense. "Because I, ah, I have a really quick temper and it takes a lot of meditation to keep me from killing the world every day of my life."

The tension is broken as he compares his comic book loot with George and Jesse and cracks that devious smile.

church and state. Nor is it about censorship. This goes way beyond that. What Danzig is about is drawing the line between those who believe in the facade of the American Dream and those who want to fuck all night, howl at the moon, and lay it all to waste, celebrating the survival of the Greatest American Nightmare—the New Rulers of the Malls surveying their domain, announcing that they now own the wasteland, and scaring the hell out of the rest of the population.

Somewhere between Madison, Wisconsin, and Columbus, Ohio, Danzig pulls me to the back of the tour bus. "You know if you're gonna fantasize," he says, "go all the way. That's my problem with people: They fantasize halfway. I always believed fantasy was, How far can your mind go? Don't settle for nothin' when you can have everything. That's how my life is. Why set your sights on ten when you can set your sights on a million, a billion, a trillion?"

Glenn Danzig is a new hero to America's post-apocalyptic youth—a comic book cover come to life, proving that they can endure and flourish in the wasteland.

When Glenn Danzig isn't being intense, ready to attack, he lets out that smile. That huge one—showing off all the teeth—that makes him look like the Big Bad Wolf caught holding the freshly devoured carcass of Grandma.

But just as fast, the smile is gone. Glenn suddenly looks up at the store owner and asks, "Hey, what about those Mighty Mouse Number Threes?"

Do you want to take a life? / Do you want to cross that line? / Cause it's a long way back from hell / And you don't want to go with me.

—from "Long Way Back From Hell"

Onstage at the Barrymore Theater in Madison, Wisconsin, the following evening, it's easy to see why Danzig is the Next Big Thing. His Jim Morrison looks and vocal style—that same slurred, malevolent baritone, his monstrous physique radiating sexuality—combine with the tightest, most straight-ahead rock'n'roll band out there. Chuck Biscuits on drums is just above the huge skull with the piercing blue eyes. Eerie Von on bass and John Christ on lead, with their long black hair, pale skin, mustaches, and beards, flank Glenn and hammer out the sound—a stirring, complete celebration of the Dark Side.

But it's not heavy metal. No boring guitar bullshit, indecipherable thrash, or high nasal screams. Just loud, evil rock'n'roll with a bluesy edge. And because of its simple, punishing fullness, the theater in Madison is packed with delinquents, punks, skins, and skateheads, as well as buxom blowjob blondes. All push to the edge of the stage and alternate between drooling at Glenn's feet and banging their heads on the stage floor.

This is definitely not an R.E.M. college crowd. The college kids will come around in a year or two, but right now Danzig is only for those who can appreciate this Frank Frazetta cover come to life. You remember those wonderfully violent Conan covers where the Barbarian is slicing the Intruder's head off with the giant sword while the big-breasted sorceress stands behind him, warding off huge saber-toothed tigers? To these post-apocalyptic kids, Glenn Danzig is a new hero, their authentic champion of evil—a comic book cover come to life, proving that they can endure and flourish in the wasteland.

I'm the wolf / I'm the one you want / I'm the killer wolf / I'm 'onna pound you home.

—from "Killer Wolf"

"Is that the difference between Danzig and the Misfits," I ask, "that it's more Glenn Danzig's personal fantasy?"

Glenn tenses. He hates to answer questions about the Misfits. They remain the mythic hardcore band—a nice moment in time that influenced a lot of people—but they're not the thing he wants to be remembered for.

"The funny thing is that the Misfits weren't really popular when they were around," he explains. "Also, they weren't very good live. I was good, as good as you can be at eighty-million miles an hour.

"I don't think a lot of people got what I was doing in the Misfits. The guys in the band didn't even get it. They still don't get it. I hate those guys. I can't stand them. The Misfits didn't break up on good terms. I cut myself loose because it was a dead end. They couldn't play to begin with. They didn't care about the fans, and they didn't want to be professional. They were holding me back. So I joined up with Eerie, and we did Samhain. Eerie and I used to hang out together when I was in the Misfits, because the guys in the band didn't like to do anything. They were rich snobs. They only liked doing drugs.

"But after I started Samhain with Eerie, the other guys in the band left and we had to start all over. It would have been easy just to be Samhain, but I thought it was better just to start from the beginning with Chuck Biscuits and John Christ and just have our own identity.

"Rick Rubin [Def Jam cofounder and now head of Danzig's label, Def American] came to see us at the New Music Seminar in '86 and he came running backstage and said, 'You guys are great! The best band I've ever seen, blah, blah, blah. . . .' He gives me his card, and I think he's a freak. I didn't know who the fuck he was. But he seemed sincere.

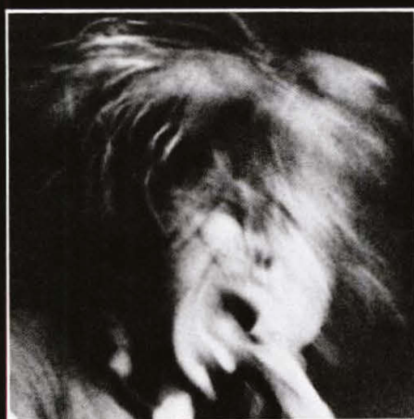
"So I went down to his offices, right off Houston [Street] in New York City, and I hear this loud music blaring. And it isn't even a fucking record company office, but a fucking loft apartment. Records all over the place, phones ringing, people calling, Rick screaming, 'What? What? What? Fuck you,' and sticking the phone into the speaker and then hanging up.

Glenn cracks the smile again when he thinks of Rick



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Zbigniew Holdys

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in the public schools.

Young people are pushing back. A crowd of 5,000 young people marched on the residence of the Archbishop of Warsaw and pelted the old buzzard's house with condoms.

NEXT TIME I see Zbiggy, he is rocking New York's Limelight disco. The club is housed in what used to be a church. Behind Zbiggy is a huge stained-glass window; above him, huge gold crowns hang from the rafters. In Poland, the setting might be blasphemous. In New York, it's just another gimmick.

Zbiggy, who used to be so anti-Communist he wouldn't let his bass player go on stage wearing a red T-shirt, is now himself wearing a Soviet army cap and a red T-shirt with a hammer and sickle on it. On a high-speed rampage called "Just Another Day," it comes to me. Perfect is Eastern Europe's answer to Living Colour.

After the show, Zbiggy is helpfully carrying a fold-up table out of the dressing room. He says he thinks the

crowd and the show were too nostalgic for the days of martial law. He prefers to talk about what is going on in Poland today. He criticizes Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity, and even the church.

"The older generation [in Poland]," he says, "does not see the border between them and the younger generation which has a different future." But Zbiggy insists that he is now a follower, not a leader. "Any political creation by people my age in Poland will be manipulation. Maybe the new generation will need advisers and I will be glad to help them, but the young people must take the power themselves."

Outside the dressing room, the DJ is cranking the disco. The Chinese girls are shaking it, even the Poles are getting funky. The rock'n'roll legend of the East has been quickly forgotten, even by his countrymen.

Zbiggy doesn't seem disappointed, only determined. He's been listening to rap and thinking about how to incorporate rap into his rock. He's patient. He played the dives of Gdansk and the student clubs of Wroclaw. He gagged on tear gas and sold millions of albums. He compromised himself, outlasted the Communists, told Soli-

darity to fuck off, and lit out for the bright lights of the West. He'll rock another day; another town. Zbiggy has met his new boss: the show-biz monster.

Danzig

continued from page 30

Rubin.

"The problem with Danzig, if anyone has one, is that the image isn't far from the person," he says. "It's a very scary thing. When I see films and videos of us I laugh because I guess I *am* kind of scary. It's weird. I don't try to analyze it, but when I sit down and think about it, I think, yeah, very dangerous, very violent, very. . ."

The scene drifts back to the previous night when Glenn was searching for the ultimate titty bar. He didn't find even a bad titty bar. Just miles of corporate headquarters, fast-food joints, and shopping malls. His search led him instead to an Osco drugstore where he took refuge in the video section and found *This Is Elvis*. As he was standing in line at the cash register a tabloid headline snagged him.

"Finally—Proof That Satan Exists," it read. "Never Before Seen: Photo of Devil Leaving Victim's Body During Exorcism Ritual!"

And Glenn laughed, knowing that the true evil in this world was the killing sameness surrounding him in the supermarket, and the headlines of fear that force the population to seek refuge in these safe, sterile worlds. Glenn was still laughing outside the supermarket as he walked past a green dumpster filled with Halloween pumpkins for the kiddies and let go with his elbow into one of the jack-o'-lanterns waiting to be adopted. *Whhhompffff!*

His laugh got even meaner and filled the half-empty parking lot, causing young mothers to clutch their kids, and old men with six-packs under their arms to lock their car doors and drive away. If America shakes in its boots over a faked picture in the *Weekly World News*, Geraldo's tales of devils in high places, and backward masking on Judas Priest's records—well it hasn't seen anything yet. And Glenn Danzig's eyes burn with an evil delight; he knows he is just the guy to show 'em the true meaning of terror.

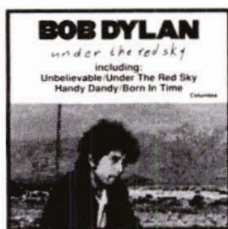
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