

SFL Music Magazine

July 2009 - South Florida's Music Magazine

Disturbed

Cadillac Creeps - Aaron Lewis - Tori Amos
Nine Inch Nails/Janes Addiction Tour Kickoff

David Draiman of Disturbed
Mayham Festival
Cruzan Amphitheatre
West Palm Beach, FL



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SFL Music Magazine

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SFL Music Magazine is published monthly, exclusively on the interweb via the World Wide Web from Delray Beach, Florida.

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Nine Inch Nails and Jane Addiction

The NIN/JA Tour Kick-Off

By Matt Pashalian

There must be something very special about South Florida that touring bands seem to all be in on. For some reason many a major concert tour tends to start right here. We're either great people to get the kinks out on, or privileged to see everything before a band has fired it's last cylinder. As long as we're talking about firing on last cylinders and going off with a bang, Trent Reznor decided to call the final Nine Inch Nails tour the 'Wave Goodbye' tour, as it's the man's farewell from touring, and possibly even the name Nine Inch Nails. Going along for the ride is a true reunion from Jane's Addiction on what's being dubbed the NIN/JA tour. Clever huh? In either case, we still got treated to by far one of the best concerts of the year and SFL Music was there up close to catch the tour kick-off of the NIN/JA tour at Cruzan Amphitheatre.

The first performance to hit the stage was a set from Street Sweeper Social Club, fronted by The Coup emcee Boots Riley with Rage Against The Machine/Audio-slave guitarist Tom Morello. Musically it's very much what you would expect from the two; very politically charged, funky, metallic, and that unmistakable semi-modern Zeppelin inspired sound that has become synonymous with Morello. Though the band seemed to be having a lot of fun on-stage, without a proper single out, or the name being promoted as well as it could have pre-show, their show may have went a little over the heads of those in attendance.

The weird thing about the night's show was having Nine Inch Nails hit the stage when there was still light outside. Trent Reznor seemed in great spirits, even cracking a joke that he was 'trying something different today...white pants.' The set opened with NIN alum Robin Finck playing a dissonant guitar line leading into "Home" off of the expanded edition of *With Teeth* before smoothly transitioning into "Somewhat Damaged." The metallic "Last" went into crowd favorite "March of The Pigs/Piggy" medley. If you were the fairweather radio

fan this show may not have been for you though as Reznor has called this farewell tour one for the fans. Previous NIN tours you could go to expecting certain songs to be played; you know, the all too familiar radio singles. These shows are fairly mixed and somewhat void of a bulk of them as Reznor decided this tour will feature songs that have long been deleted from the band's setlists, and some tunes being played for the first and last times. Among them "Metal" and "Gone, Still." For the radio fans, played for the first time ever live was "I'm Afraid Of Americans," which Reznor originally did with David Bowie referring to it as 'Kind of by us, kind of not' and thanked the crowd for their support over the years.

The back to back punch of "Mr. Self-Destruct" into "Burn" was a great surprise, headbang worthy, but the real surprise for this fan came with "Fragile," not since played live since the bands *Fragility* tour. No NIN show however would be complete without "Wish" and accidental set closer "Head Like A Hole." NIN generally is the kind of band that does an encore, and this

Trent Reznor and Robin Finck of Nine Inch Nails



Jane's Addiction axeman Dave Navarro amid one of many solos

night that encore, which was to be “Hurt” was cut due to time constraints out of the bands control. Even without the gentle piano ballad though, a set was delivered that was a bombast of emotions rolled into every song.

Though some may have found it unfair for NIN to go on before Janes Addiction, Trent saw it more as a sign of respect to the band that gave his it’s shot at the first Lollapalooza tour. How ironic that the first Lollapalooza festival was to serve as Jane’s farewell, while this tour serves as Nine Inch Nails?

If you were a Jane’s fan this show was nothing less than a treat as it’s the band’s first true reunion with bassist Eric Avery who, one could argue didn’t seem too happy onstage, but if ever there was a member who took what he did serious and had a sheer intensity in this band, it would have to be Avery. While most bands would open with something huge, fast and heavy, Jane’s Addiction comes out with the moody “3 Days” before going onto “Whores.” All of the crowd favorites were in tow on this set, from the hard rocking “Mountain Song” to the crashing “Ocean Size.” The thing that I thought was very interesting was how the band, in some ways, made things look and sound lot like 1991, as if nothing had ever changed. If you’ve seen Jane’s on the 1997 Relapse Tour or 2003’s Lollapalooza Festival, you would have noticed that some of the songs un-

derwent a certain makeover, some in structure, and some in solo arrangement. Some seemed a bit more clean, but for purpose of authenticity songs like “Been Caught Stealing” and “Stop” were played more like their original album versions than the way they’ve been performed live on previous post break-up tours.

Even at the ripe age of 50, vocalist Perry Farrell still hasn’t seemed to have lost his step as frontman extraordinaire. His interaction and wise-cracking with the crowd was great, as was his emotion in “Than She Did” and the beautiful “Summertime Rolls.” Perry, the once former south Floridian goaded the crowd throughout the night about the beaches, shared a quick story and shined to the male audience, “Some of you guys have got big muscles, but that’s

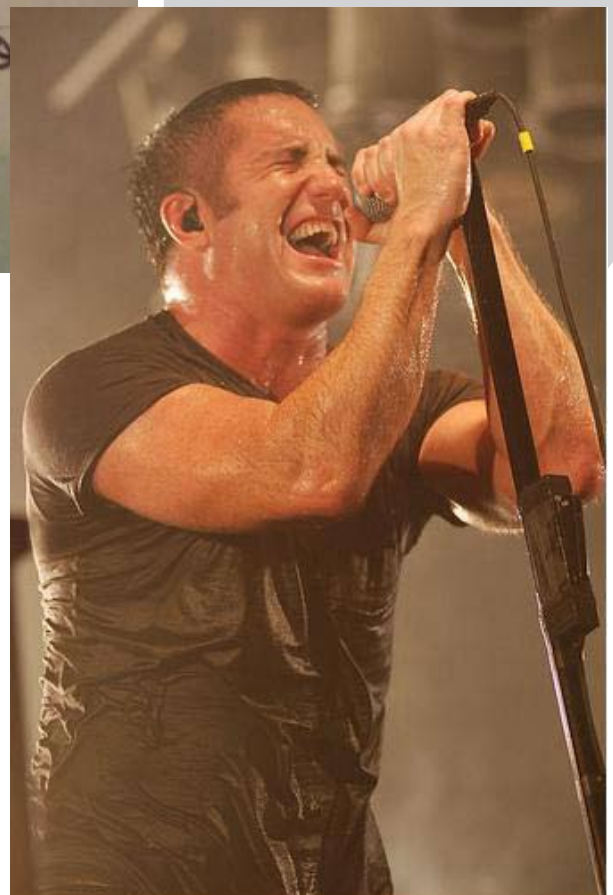
ok, cause I can sing” before breaking into “Ocean Size.”

For a closer, the band came out more stripped down for thir biggest hit, radio staple, “Jane Says.” With both guitarist Dave Navarro and Eric Avery on acoustics and drummer Stephen Perkins on steel drums, the band swooned the crowd one more time before bidding us goodnight. One can only hope that this reunion lasts long enough for the band to give the south Florida crowd another terrific performance.

Newly reunited Jane’s Addictions (bottom left) kicked off their tour in South Florida with a set list (right) including fan favorites. Below, Trent Renzor of Nine Inch Nails sings through his downpour of sweat.



Tony Landa



THE PARLOR MOB

By Hilary Saunders

The Parlor Mob is the best classic rock band that wasn't around in the 1970s. With Mark Melicia's howling vocals, Dave Rosen and Paul Ritchie's heavy guitar riffs, Nick Villapiano's rumbling bass, and Sam Bey's rapid-fire drums, the Parlor Mob sounds like an incongruous blend of the best that decade had to offer. Though they list musical influences like modern outfits At the Drive In and MC5, listeners can also pick up tinges of Lynyrd Skynyrd in songs like the loose, steel guitar-based "Can't Keep No Good Boy Down" and echoes of Led Zeppelin in the lead song "Hard Times" from the group's debut album *And You Were a Crow*.

Although the members of the quintet originally hail from small towns around Red Bank, New Jersey, one Mobster has a connection to South Florida. Lead singer Melicia moved to the Sunshine State when he was in 7th grade and graduated from Boca Raton High School in 2000. Though the Parlor Mob has been touring nationally since *And You Were a Crow* dropped in May 2008, they never hit South Florida until February and Mark's mother, Melisa Melicia, had never seen her son's band perform live until they played the Culture Room in Fort Lauderdale this past Valentine's Day.

Mark—who opened the show with a quiet, "Hi, Mom"—said in an interview with SFL Music Magazine that he doesn't consider South Florida home, but that he enjoyed seeing his family and high school friends populating the small club. Melisa, who had a prime spot in the front row, relished the show as any proud mother would.

"It was an amazing day for me!" she exclaimed. "They worked so hard. It was so great to see them having fun."

And that's precisely what makes the Parlor Mob stand out from many other small modern rock bands. "We play really hard," said Mark. "Our live show is

"For me personally, it was the first time I got to play in front of my family and friends down there so that was really really awesome. I think for everyone else, it was really cool for them to get to meet my mom and my family down there. It was cool, it was like a family vibe."



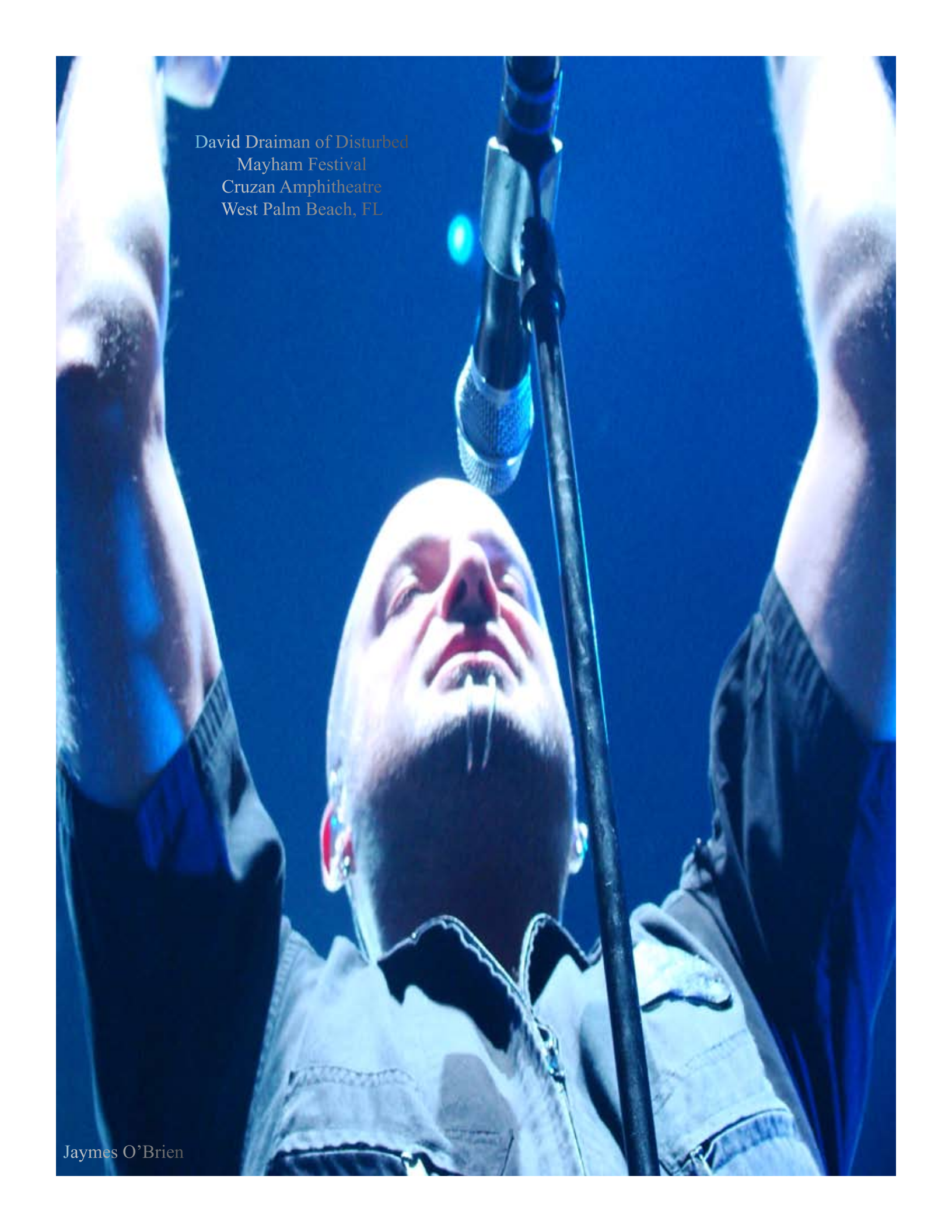
really aggressive. We put 110% into every night, everyone of us... It's worth coming to see. We try to be as creative as we possible can and challenge one another, which is what makes it a healthy situation to be in for us."

Behind the thunderous wall of driving rock and roll, mops of hair, scruffy beards, skinny jeans, and fedoras, the guys who make up the Parlor Mob are genuinely nice guys, though. They interact with audiences during shows and hang out with fans for hours afterward. According to Melisa, "They all stayed here after the show and they even cleaned up after themselves!"

The group dynamic also keeps the Parlor Mob guys grounded. Each member contributes to the songwriting process and they all travel in the same van on tour. "I know now that we're closer than we've ever been both creatively and as friends and as family," said Mark. "In writing our next record, it's going to continue to progress as like a cohesive, united, unified vision of five dudes who love to play with each one another and challenge each other creatively and get the best out of one another... Together, we're way better than we are as individuals."

As for the tour, the Parlor Mob recently returned from a European stint and plans on hitting Canada in June. They return to the United States in July for a few headlining shows and festival dates. As Mark described, "It's like, you go on a road trip with your friends for about a week...we just get to do it for eight months out of the year and for a living." Life on the road has its rough patches, though. "Sometimes it's frustrating. Sometimes you wish there were more people out. Sometimes you wish that somebody was doing a better job than they are. Sometimes you wish more people are paying attention. And sometimes you're just sick of being in a van with five other dudes that all smell," said Mark. But he said quickly, "Most of the time it's just great, you're travelling around with your best friends hitting all different parts of the country in a way that most people just don't get to see it."





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Disturbed

By Joseph Vilane

*I*t all started from one jam session 13 years ago; singer David Draiman arrived to meet founding members of Disturbed (guitarist Dan Donegan, drummer Mike Wengren, bassist Steve "Fuzz" Kmak) and was ready to sing to original songs; unveiling a voice unlike no other. His voice has that signature growl that most Disturbed fans have grown accustomed to, but there's much more than the emotional outbursts, there's passion and professionalism that lures within the mind of Draiman.

During their first jam session, the mood was cordial, and Draiman had the guts to say "Let's just, you know, let's just jam." And from that day forward Disturbed continue to write and record for their legions of followers around the world. Influenced by Metallica, Pantera, and Black Sabbath, Disturbed have a strong melody piercing through the hard rock heavy metal sounds, and most importantly they love what they do.

Their accomplishments continue to grow, as album sales have soared well beyond ten million at this time. The music was created without restraint; heavy metal with an alternative edge, and for many people it's the soundtrack of their lives. Disturbed motivates listeners to feel indestructible and to touch base on the core of their reality.

On the band's first album *The Sickness*, their music style was compared to mostly nu metal bands such as Korn. With the release of their second album *Believe*, the band progressed with a more mature musical direction. As the years have passed, one thing remains certain, whenever you hear a Disturbed song bellowing from the darkness or from a far, it's surely recognizable. You hear the throbbing drums, the powerful base lines, the groovy guitar and the echoing voice of singer David Draiman.

Hailing from Chicago, Illinois, the band's fourth and latest album *Indestructible* debuted at Number 1 on the billboard charts in 2008 and continues to impress listeners all over the world. It's the overall theme of the record that motivates its listeners, and to rest assure that this band hasn't changed but has evolved with a sound even stronger from when they began.

"Inside The Fire" was the first single to grab the audience's attention, with the synthesized effects in the intro; this song kicks into motion and gives Disturbed fans some delicious melodies to digest. Disturbed re-



cently announced that the next single from *Indestructible* is "The Night", with a music video that will follow, filmed in January 2009.

SFL sat down to talk with David Draiman about the overall mindset to continue writing and recording impressive songs one after the other. Our conversation was very cordial as we discussed longevity in the music industry and one very unforgettable honorable moment when a fan presented the band with a gift that is priceless.

SFL: I want to congratulate you on your continuous success for over a decade! Your music has evolved throughout the years, with

a decade! Your music has evolved throughout the years, with the bands new record Indestructible what did you set out to accomplish?

David Draiman: Well we definitely wanted to try and recapture that primal darkness that gave birth to us in the first place with this record. A little bit of the vibe for the first record we were trying to go back to the spirit of it, and things that defined where my mind was at the time, where I felt natural than the darker aspect. So we wanted to make that conscious effort (with Indestructible) without divorcing ourselves from what we've accomplished in terms of complexity and the great earth using the melodies

Your voice has progressed onto a new level with Indestructible that signature growl is still there, but there's various emotions expressed throughout your overall presentation.

We definitely try and continue to expand all of us with what we've done prior, I think that this record has some of the most challenging range wise as far as singing for me, some of the most melodic moments that we've created yet and at the same time also go in areas that are the most brutal and the most severe in

the terms of tonality that I've ever tried on this record. I kind of wanted to try and push the envelope in the area that we could.

Lyrically, you've touched on a personal ground touching base on some personal relationships, heartfelt expression in the theme of this record.

We wanted to go with the title of Indestructible, it's the overall vibe of how the record makes you feel, it's a record that makes you feel powerful and it's meant to strip you of your fear, it's meant to be a soundtrack for indestructibility, and it hopefully accomplishes that so far.

When I go to the gym I always bring a Disturbed CD to help motivate me, its different than anything you'll hear in the industry today. I've never looked better since I started listening to you guys (laughs).

Glad we could help (Laughs)

But it's the driving sound that you guys have mastered, with the new album there's a lot more guitar solos this time around. What influenced you to go in such a powerful direction?

To be honest the influences have been and remain the clas-



sic metal bands, Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Metallica, Pantera, these are the bands that made us want to play and are still the bands that we derive the majority of our inspiration from.

Did you ever imagine ten years down the line that this thing would be as big as it has gone; did you ever envision the longevity of this project?

To be honest with you, no. It's nice that it has evolved into that, its nice that we have been able to maintain it, its nice that the fans stood with us from the beginning of time, we'll continue doing what we do as long as there are people willing top come see us, we love doing it and love playing live. I don't think our desire to do that is ever going to go away.

Was it your original intention to create a sound unlike anything else before?

We certainly wanted to try and achieve our own identity. But we've been very fortunate that it has become as distinct as it has, it truly is and we thank God. When you hear one of our songs start there's no mistake that it's us, and it's nice. It was not a conscious thing, but its something that we're very thankful for, no question about it.

One thing you guys haven't stepped away from is that you sound very metal, you haven't changed too much to the point where the music is unrecognizable, and for a lot of artists it's hard to maintain their identity. But what do you think about the pressure that musicians face today, when they are unable to stay true to themselves.

I think anyone who tries to jump on a bandwagon for all the wrong reasons you'll get burnt, they really will, you have to stick to your guns. You need to play and wrote what you find most satisfying ultimately otherwise its going to show. You can fool yourself; you have no point in trying.

You definitely can't force creativity.

People can always smell a rat.

As far as this record is concerned what are some of your proudest moments?

It's so hard to do that because the songs are so unique and take on a life of their own, they have such direct personal meanings its really hard single out, certainly inside the fire, indestructible , the night, enough, haunted these are all



highlights on the record, criminal, those are some of my personal favorites.

There's so many good songs off the record, when I listen I'm not compelled to skip tracks, it's like a good motion picture you want to watch or listen from the beginning till end to get the full effect.

That is the idea, it takes quite a bit of time assembling the order of those songs, making sure that the order is adequate so if you are listening to beginning to end it doesn't seem to follow in any point or time, and there's artistry to that too so its nice when people listen to it from the beginning to the end.

If you can go out there on stage and make your music sound even better than the CD, it's safe to say you've accomplished your goal. Tell me about the feeling to get up on stage after all this time, how do you motivate yourself every night and to not lose the same feeling you have from the get go.

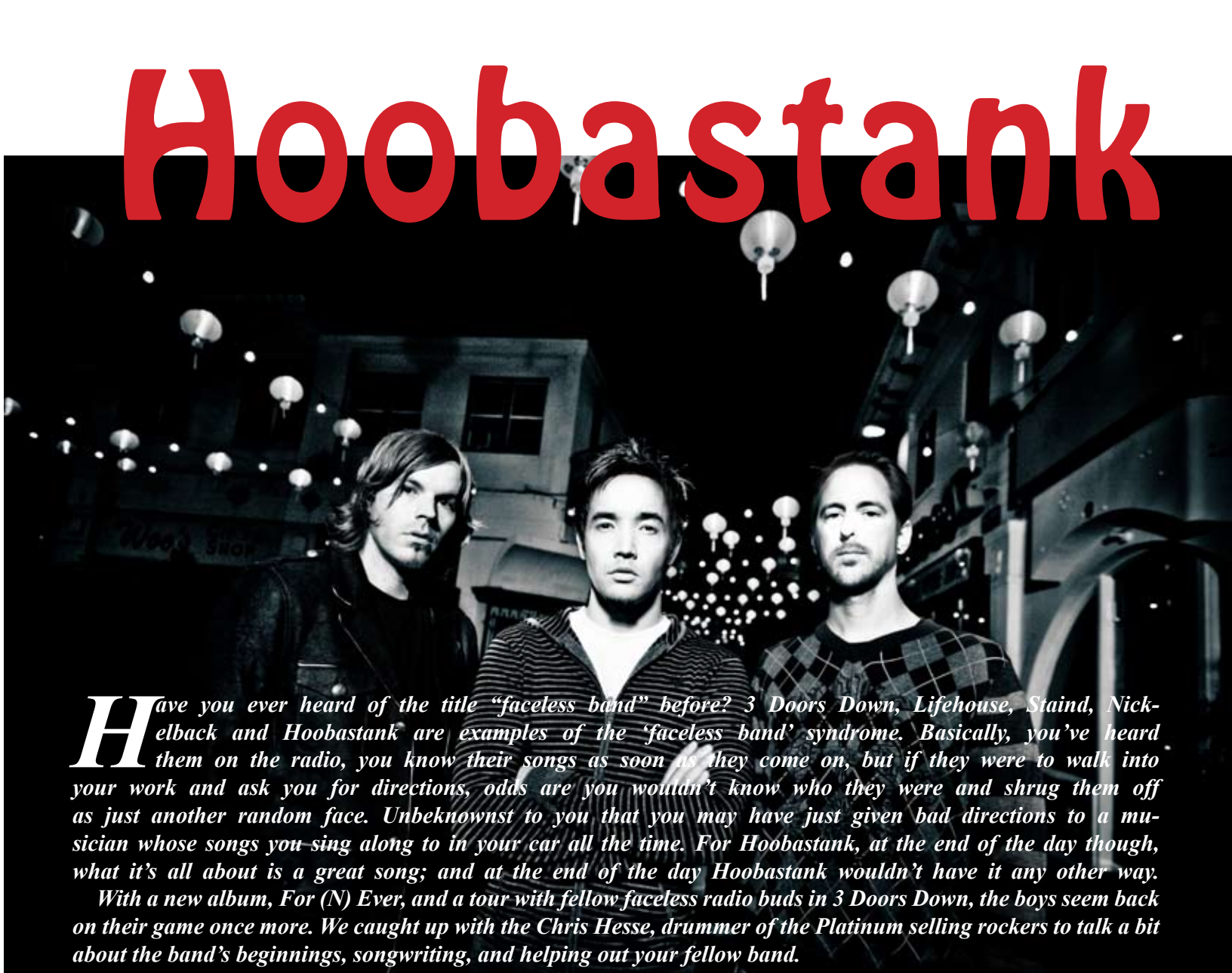
Well, it doesn't come from us it comes from them. Its really all about the crowd, I mean we can generate a certain amount of energy out of them, out of individuals, but at a certain point it really is so dependent on the crowd, we really do depend on them to drive us, as much as we drive them, that's maybe why we drive them as hard as we do. Cause we're reliant on their energy.

I'm sure you've had a lot of conversations with a lot if different fans that have stood out throughout the years, but was there one compliment from a fan that makes you realize why you still do this everyday.

Well, there was a master sergeant in the army who presented us with one of his bronze stars, because before when his platoon used to go on any mission they would listen to us, to get psyched up and feel powerful, he credits us for them not losing a single member of the platoon. Things like that definitely rank up there.



Hoobastank



Have you ever heard of the title “faceless band” before? 3 Doors Down, Lifehouse, Staind, Nickelback and Hoobastank are examples of the ‘faceless band’ syndrome. Basically, you’ve heard them on the radio, you know their songs as soon as they come on, but if they were to walk into your work and ask you for directions, odds are you wouldn’t know who they were and shrug them off as just another random face. Unbeknownst to you that you may have just given bad directions to a musician whose songs you sing along to in your car all the time. For Hoobastank, at the end of the day though, what it’s all about is a great song; and at the end of the day Hoobastank wouldn’t have it any other way.

With a new album, *For (N) Ever*, and a tour with fellow faceless radio buds in 3 Doors Down, the boys seem back on their game once more. We caught up with the Chris Hesse, drummer of the Platinum selling rockers to talk a bit about the band’s beginnings, songwriting, and helping out your fellow band.

SFL: the new album is probably the band's most aggressive effort yet, especially vocally. What made the band go in this direction?

Chris Hesse: I think having about a two year break and taking a step away from everything, coming back and being hungry for it again. So what you're hearing is hunger! Actually it's kind of funny because I think that our first record is our most aggressive one.

What's a common misconception that you think people have about Hoobastank?

I think that people listen to us and they think of us as a slow ballad rock band, which is part of who we are. Every album that we've had has had a few slower songs, but I think that what people don't realize after hearing the album *The Reason*, is that we have a lot of harder rock songs on their too. People who hear "The Reason" definitely associate us with ballads even though there's still plenty of rock left pumping throughout the record.

You guys chose to do the new album with Howard Benson who has worked on every Hoobastank album to date, what is it about him that makes him the perfect fit for Hoobastank?

I don't know if he's the perfect guy for the band, but he's good at what he does. He's great at finding the hooks and drawing them

out. The first album we really liked a couple projects that we heard. Sonically for one. There was one particular band that we were on tour with called Blindsight, and they were like a Christian hardcore band. Watching them play live, when you hear their album, which was just so good, clean, and polished, it was like wow, if you can pull that off you must be good. With the second record we liked his work on the first album, and it seemed like a really good match. Now with the new album we wanted to track a little bit with a different sound to kind of switch it up. He really wanted to do the record too. He wanted to do it so bad and kept calling and calling. So we got this 'A' list producer who, pretty much everything he does he just does really well. When someone like that is begging to do your album it's kind of hard to turn down.

It must also be a nice to have a producer who believes in the band's music that much as well and isn't just in it because it's their job.

Totally! It's great because you reach out to some people and they're just like, 'I don't know' or 'maybe.' But with Howard he's thrilled about being part of the process.

If you could pick a song on the album that you would say epitomizes the band as writers which one would you pick? I thought 'So Close So Far'

That's a good question. What would you pick? Just out of curiosity.

Honestly, I thought "So Close, So Far" was a very good representation of the Hoobastank sound. Plus it brings back the feeling I think I had when I first heard the band where you hit the repeat button a few times. It stands out.

Not a bad thing. I don't know. I think I would pick something more mid-way in my own head. For me, I almost feel like the song "We Are One" really does it. It has both elements of what we do. It has the more up-tempo verse but is still melodic and pretty. Plus it's a positive song. Lyrically, our songs are always pretty uplifting with the exception of this one...angry songs. But as far as lyrical content and lyrically, that one epitomizes who we are as a band.

I've read that the band really raised the bar as far as songwriting is concerned on this album. In that sense, how did it differ from your previous discs?

There's a few different ways that it was different. With the first album, like I mentioned earlier about feeling hungry, we had the same angst that we did for this album. You know, it's your first album you ever produce, and I don't think that we have ever felt more excited about anything in our lives. There's a definite angst, and energy. On our second album, *The Reason*, there wasn't even as much energy as our first one. Luckily we had "The Reason" on there because personally, I don't think it was one of our better records. I think it may have been our worst with the exception of the song "The Reason." The last album, musically was a better album. As far as sales go it was a flop and commercial success. The last album, *Every Man For Himself*, we were coming off of so

much success from *The Reason*, plus tons and tons of touring. We almost didn't really care about creating for success, just a record the way that we wanted. Howard Benson didn't give us any crap for it. We basically just had free reign, and we did. It may have been a bit unfocused, but there was still some good stuff on it. This time around there was no second guessing what we were trying to achieve. With this album we wanted to come out with something really strong. Just a lot more focus and angst this time. We were really hungry again.

Speaking of the *Every Man For Himself* album, the disc's first single "If I Were You," was actually about another band that you toured with. Care to elaborate a bit on the story behind that?

Yea, it was inspired by a few things at the time that Doug was writing the lyrics, which was while we out on tour with Velvet Revolver. Don't get me wrong, we love the band and they were a lot of fun to be around. Incredible to be around. These icons. These are like, you know, Slash, Duff, they're amazing. They were super sweet. But there was this one person who was a fucking asshole; and that was the singer. He seriously is probably one of the biggest pieces of crap that I have ever been near the vicinity of in a really really long time. Maybe my whole life. The song was kind of about him and the tour. A couple people it was inspired by really, but mainly Scott Weiland. I don't know the guys, and the only time I really saw Weiland was when he was blowing through the hallways yelling at his assistant. Just such a bad vibe surrounding that guy. He's so messed up on drugs, and he's so far gone that nothing else matters to him. I feel like the only thing he probably cares about is getting drugs or getting high.

Was this the first time that a song had been written about a person who was in a band that you were on tour with?

Pretty much. Other than that we haven't had bad experiences with other band. It's weird because pretty much every band that we've toured with has been really cool. There have been a couple of exceptions, but they weren't as bad as him. Most of the time on the road the band's that we've toured with we totally thrown down and have a really good time.

What have been the bands, or even your personal favorite tour?

We had a really good time with 311. It was a long time ago, almost kind of hard to remember. But we toured with them for like 3-4 months when our first album came out. The guys were really nice. The shows, their fans, they're all great. The shows are just awesome, the fans were gracious, they just jump around and move around a lot. Their crew. Just the whole package. It just doesn't get much better. Such an enjoyable tour to be on.

Hoobastank just jumped onto the 3 Doors Down tour. How long of a run will you be with them?

This tour started a couple of weeks ago and ends in March. After that we'll do a headlining run before heading over to Japan



with 3 Doors Down, Evanescence and Staind. It was awesome. Kind of like what I said about 311. Everyone in all of the bands were so cool and grounded. That festival was so great. We were like we need to make a package tour with 3 Doors Down, Staind, Evanescence and us. Just because we all really enjoyed each other's company so much, plus it would be a tour of a bunch of really great bands.

Hoobastank got some help from Incubus in the beginnings, who are also a southern California band. How did the two bands connection start out?

That was pretty much it. They grew up in the same neighborhood as our guitar player Dan. He knew them from going to shows and stuff like that. Made a friendship with them and they were helping us out. When we started they had already established themselves in Los Angeles, they just weren't signed yet. They were selling out The Whiskey and The Roxy and all of the big local clubs. The first few shows we ever played were selling out The Roxy and Whiskey with Incubus. There were a ton of fans and it was awesome. They even turned us on to their producer who did their first record S.C.I.E.N.C.E. A lot of connections we got through them. Our record deal was even through their guitar player. He gave their A&R guy a CD once they got signed and then he in turn signed us. A lot of hand me downs from them. Then when we put out our album we went out and toured with them almost non-stop for a year and a half. That was a really exciting time. The first real tour that we ever did as a band. Just imagine wanting to do this your whole life than bam! You're thrown out with Incubus and playing in front of thousands of people every night. Your album comes out, the single starts doing really well. Really, it can't get much better than that.

The band has been in the game now for a good ten years now, how would you say the industry has changed?

The most obvious change is that nobody buys records anymore. I'm an audio file snob. I love listening to really well produced music on high quality stereo equipment. So I was looking at buying a really nice CD player and my thought was, why buy a CD player when I have everything on my iPod, just books and books of CD's. It almost seems like a waste of money to go buy a CD player, even though they do sound better. The convenience of iPod's and mp3 players are pretty much killing the sales of records. That's the biggest thing. There isn't as much money from the record labels as far as advertising and marketing like their used to be. We got signed right around the time that this all started to happen. I remember when our album came out and went Platinum; people were telling us if this was 10 years ago you would be triple Platinum. Since so many people download illegally now, it's been around seven years since that album came out and it's got to be tenfold that. Nobody buys records anymore. It's crazy.

What advice do you have for the local unsigned band trying to get seen/heard?

You just really have to be in it for the right reason. That's the biggest thing for anyone trying to do anything; your heart has to really be in it. Not because you want fame, fortune, or to look cool and be on TV. It's probably not going to happen because, believe it or not, people can see through that kind of crap. Obviously you want to put out a CD of good songs, and if you're making really good music people will notice and start coming. Be in it for the right reasons. It might sound silly, but you really need to just follow your heart.



AARON LEWIS

By Matt Pashalian

"...Could It Be That The Grass Is Always Green..."

As far as voices of a generation are concerned we really haven't had one in a very long time; and then came along Staind and thousands all over the world took solace within the words of the band's vocalist, Aaron Lewis. If you've ever seen the video for the once MTV staple "Outside" and saw the faces of the many fans in the attendance, it becomes unmistakable that this is a man who truly does have an aura surrounding himself that is so magnetic that he could easily capture the attention of an arena with only his voice and a six string to carry the sea of people along. On Staind's major label debut *Dysfunction*, Lewis and company began their connection with songs like "Home" and "Me," and furthered this voice with the release of *Break The Cycle*. A monstrous disc spearheaded by lead single "It's Been Awhile," Lewis' openness grew, and a connection with a generation that echoed what Lewis sung about hung on every word.

Now the band is enjoying success with their sixth disc, *The Illusion Of Progress*, and Aaron Lewis is getting ready for a new first, his own solo record. Almost every year we here in south Florida have one thing we can truly look forward to and appreciate greatly, and that is seeing Aaron perform a solo acoustic set at the Hollywood Hard Rock. Never an event to be missed because, as big as the venue is, Lewis is still able to make you feel as if he's playing in your living room. We had the privilege of a sit down chat with Lewis to discuss Staind, his upcoming solo disc, performing, and just why the music industry is such a mess right now.

SFL: You started doing these solo tours in summer of 2004, whose idea was it initially for you to go out and go it alone?

Aaron Lewis: It was mine. It was something that I did before the band even existed. For me it's like coming around full circle. **Your solo tours are very successful, you play most of the same venues that you do on Staind tours, and oftentimes sell them out. Does that ever surprise or shock you?**

It definitely provides a little comfort in knowing that I have job security.



Last year when you came down on your solo tour you performed "Tangled Up In You," which you said was going to be on your first solo record. It instead ended up on *The Illusion Of Progress*. What made you want to submit it to the album instead of keeping it for your own?

My plan was for it to be on the solo record, and what ended up happening is as we got down to the end of the record and were listening back to it, trying to objectively look at it to see if there was anything missing, it just seemed that that particular flavor was missing from the record at the moment. So I reluctantly gave the song to the Staind record. Shit just works out that way sometimes.

Were there any other songs that you were performing on your solo tour that you were considering for the Staind disc as well?

No, the rest of the stuff is still going to be the foundation for my solo record.

Have you started recording preliminary tracks for your album yet?

I haven't done any recording yet, and as far as when the record will be out...it will come out

when I can release it and not have it interfere with Staind in any way. Probably at the end of the tour cycle when we've gone everywhere we need to go with Staind and we're off of that schedule. To be more definite than that is a bit impossible right now.

From your catalog of music, what would you say would be the best synopsis for fans wanting to know what your solo disc is going to sound like?

Over the years the songs that I've written on an acoustic guitar and brought to the table have been "Outside," "It's Been Awhile," "So Far Away," "Everything Changes," "Zoe Jane," and "Epiphany," "Tangled Up In You," etc. All of the acoustic based songs that we've recorded over the years and put on records have been songs that I just wrote on acoustic guitar. I guess that would be more from where I would be coming from.

Is there one particular song in your set that you've wrote that you feel most proud of overall?

Probably Zoe Jane. That was my first daughter and those feelings that I express in that song are probably one of my proudest

moments besides being a dad in general. Definately a song I'm most proud of.

Now will your solo disc be acoustic based or electric?

(Long Pause) Yes (Laughter) I don't really know yet.

Your lyrics have reached out and helped a lot of people over the years. What goes through your mind when a fan comes up to you and tells you how much one of your songs helped them through a rough period of their life and told you a pretty heart pulling story?

I guess it makes me feel like maybe this is what I'm supposed to be doing. Maybe this is what my purpose is in my life. I'm certainly not naturally good at anything else. This is the one thing that I've never had to try at. I try not to think about things like that.

Many of your songs have helped a lot of people, but was there a song that helped you growing up?

You know when I was growing up there weren't songwriters like myself that put it out there like that. You know, I was probably 18 or 19, I can't remember how old I was when I first heard Korn for the first time. Jonathan Davis is really the first person to really wear his heart on his sleeve to the extent that we tend to.

Speaking of lyrics, the new Staind album is decidedly a bit more upbeat. Since 14 Shades Of Grey your lyrics have been brightening up a bit; to quote you, "the grass is always green (This Is It)"

The biggest thing that's changed over the past ten years is that I have an amazing wife who has been with me through all of it, three beautiful girls, a family and a purpose for living you know. My lyrics always come from within me, so I guess that's what's making it a little bit more optimistic.

Since the release of Dysfunction there has been somewhat of a backlash from some fans complaining that the band has lightened up a bit too much and aren't as heavy as they were on Dysfunction. Does hearing about this ever get to you?

Sure, you know I don't understand why anybody would want us to write the same record over and over again. Why anyone would want us to be stuck at the maturity level that we were at when we wrote our first record. I'm sorry, but if me growing from record to record lyrically, and the band musically isn't okay with you than I guess we lost you along the way. And that's okay. It is what it is. I've spent my whole career doing what I want to do, not doing what people other people told me to do. I've kept it pure, I've kept it real, and I'm not going to start changing that now. I'm not going to regress and write angry, heavy, angst ridden stuff because that's not how I'm feeling inside. If you can't accept that, I'm sorry.

When I last spoke with Mike at the beginning of the tour we talked about the meaning behind the new album title, The Illusion Of Progress, after the fact did you think that you may have set yourselves up a bit for critics that constantly bash the band by saying that all of your music sounds the same?

It's the easy way out for critics that like to talk shit and not listen to the music that they're talking about. I mean how can you listen to the record that we just made and say that that sounds just like our other records. It's an untrue statement, and it's a very unfair statement from people who obviously don't listen to the record before they write a fucking review of it. It's getting old and it's been the deal with us from the word go.

A short time after Break The Cycle was released Staind graced the cover of Rolling Stone Magazine and you were quoted as saying that "Parents Have Forgotten How To Be Parents." Do you still agree with that quote a few years later and how does being

one yourself now change your opinion?

It just solidifies my opinion even more. We have definatly, in all of the distractions around us in the world, we have forgotten what it means to be a parents and what that responsibility entails. It's more important to bring money into the household it's more important than anything. Our only responsibility in life is to mold the young minds of the children of the world so that we're not living an 'Illusion of Progress,' which we're doing right now.

Is there a particular moment in your career that really stands out in your mind?

The phone call that I got saying we just sold 716,000 records our first week. That was a pretty monumental day.

How do you feel you've changed as the frontman of Staind over the years?

I guess if anything I've weeded out all of the suggestions that have been made to me over the years. What I should be doing as a frontman and purified it down to where I would have liked to have been all along. I guess that's the difference between a show now and a show then. Before, everyone was making me be a frontman. I'm not a frontman, I'm not an entertainer, I'm not animated, full of things to say. My job is to go out there and play the guitar and sing the songs to the best of my ability, right there at that time. Not concentrating on going to this side of the stage, or say this here in this song, or say this in between this song. Those bands that get the crowd all fired up and have this stuff to say in between songs, it's the same thing every single night from a script. Exactly the same every night. What's more fake, me standing there just delivering the songs, or this big thing that everyone thinks is so great that's as rehearsed and planned as anything can possibly be. I may no the most visual spectacle, but I'm staying true to myself and not reading off of cue cards. It's all a gimmick. It's all been done by every rockin' roller since Elvis. What I've always found ironically funny is how people hold it against me. I don't use the gimmicks.

There's something very magical about your acoustic sets, almost a friendly 'you're in my living room' vibe with your demeanor, joking with the audience, and the way you carry yourself. Do you feel more at ease up there onstage by yourself?





gether again. What's on the records from record to record is a step away from what was on the record before it.

Since the release of Chapter V you've been playing electric guitar live throughout, for the most part the whole set, what brought that on?

Going back to what we were talking about before; weeding out the things that people told me I should do over the years instead of just doing what I wanted to do. What you get now is what I always wanted to do. I don't want to be a frontman. I've always accompanied myself. I didn't own an electric guitar until 14 Shades of Grey. Now I have a collection you read about. While we recorded the new record, between me and (Producer) Johnny K, we must have spent a hundred thousand dollars on guitars, just while we were in the studio.

Live you've done quite a few collaborations (Linkin Park, Shinedown, Theory Of A Deadman, Seether, Limp Bizkit), any chance of someone guesting your solo record?

We'll just kind of see what happens. I don't really know. I have some ideas, a few phone calls to make, but honestly don't know. As far as collaborating with anyone, I don't know, John Lennon I guess.

How do you feel you fit in the current music scene?

Do we? I don't know if we do, or if we ever did. We really never did. The bands that found us and the bands that surround that band, I don't know if we ever fit into that. We were never nu-metal, we never had any sort of hip-hop element blended in with things and we've been classified nu-metal for pretty much our whole careers. We never did fit, and I still don't think we fit. Right now in music we certainly don't fit in with The Killers, My Chemical Romance or 30 Seconds To Mars, or any of that stuff. That seems to be what's setting the trends right now. Everyone is wearing their

Because I'm only being myself. I'm not trying to put on heirs, no false front of anything. What you see is what you get.

How do you feel about Staind's overall progression from Tormented to your current disc?

I think it's a very obvious and apparent progression. Every record is change. There is a Staind sound. That's what happens when four guys get together, the same four gets together again, and the same. four guys get to-

gether sister's pants and dressing like the guys from those bands. So do we fit into that, no, not at all. But again, I don't feel like we've ever fit in. Without sounding arrogant, the band's that we get mentioned with now (Three Days Grace, Seether, Theory Of A Deadman, Puddle Of Mudd, Nickelback), these band's have come after us and are fans as well, so it feels pretty good that, without making an impact as far as awards and Grammy's, we've made an impact. Not fitting in kind of worked out pretty good for us.

Your acoustic set runs about 2 hour or so; out of all of the songs that you play that aren't yours, any you wish you wrote?

Bob Seger's "Turn The Page" is a good one. I wish I wrote that one.

Any surprises in store for your next acoustic run of dates?

There's a few new songs I've learned. Some eclectic Staind songs that only made limited edition discs, like "The Truth." The new songs that will be on my solo record. No new covers though, trying to steer away from those. There's never a setlist or any kind of plan. I know at the back of my mind the last three songs that I'll play.

With the internet and YouTube, do you feel that some harm has been done as far as putting together setlists both solo and for Staind?

It's really a double edged sword. The more you can reach out and have people discover you the better off you are. But at the same time, it does tend to water things down and create its own set of issues. I guess an overall, there is more good than bad.

Last year on your solo tour, fans called out songs and you actually played them, going as far as figuring out one on the spot before the crowd.

I set myself up for that kind of thing when I open myself up to suggestions so openly. I really never spent much time learning songs growing up. I'm really not that good of a guitar player, I can accompany myself. That's pretty much it. I can play rhythm, but during Staind if Mike's guitar rig went out and it was just me, it would not sound right at all.

Do you have any advice for the local, unsigned bands trying to be seen and heard locally to take it to the next level?

It's a scary time right now. Nobody knows kind of times. It seems that the CD is about to fall to the wayside like the 8-Track, Cassette, and Vinyl. It's a very scary time to be in the music business. It's not a very good time to be trying to get into the music business. I think that for the time being, the music business has kind of forgotten how to make a career, and build one from the ground up. It's all about the one hit song on a record full of shit. When that one hit song has done its round, there's nothing to follow it up and with and the band is gone. The same thing happened in the 80's with the one hit wonders. Band's got signed because one single; not for an entire record, or their overall musical ability, one song that people thought was catchy. My suggestion I guess is to refine your craft and make sure that you have a whole record full of great songs and not just one good song that everyone likes. Try to get as far as you can on your own because the furthest you can get on your own, the more that the people who look for that kind of music will take notice. In the Massachusetts music scene there were bands like Tree and Dropkick Murphy's, Mighty Mighty Bosstones; we had to fit in with that. We were trying to be as heavy as we could and the first thing Fred Durst said to us when we found us was, "Your singer can sing, let him sing." So that kind of turned us in this direction and look what happened.

CADILLAC

CREEPS



There's a little something different that's been lurking in south Florida lately. Maybe you've been lucky enough to catch them live or felt their presence on the internet. With a sound that takes collective cues from metal and shock to glam and pop, The Cadillac Creeps have come into their own sound that truly sets them apart. Add into the mix a stage show that would plaster a grin across even Rob Zombie's face and you have the ingredients for a band that has earned the bragging rights to say that they really are different. Has your interest been peaked? Read on, this is your introduction to south Florida's Cadillac Creeps...

SFL: How did the Cadillac Creeps come together?

Rico Creep: Me and Joel had similar influences in music and we started kicking around an idea for something completely different for south Florida. Joel knew AJ through a friend of his and he was totally on board for the project. He brought a completely different element and style to what we were originally looking for but it fit so well. We struggled with a drummer for quite some time, but when we found Johnny, there was instant chemistry. That night we were already writing music. We all had the same vision, avenue that we wanted to go down as far as the style of music and look of the band. It all just went from there until it became the Cadillac Creeps.

How did you guys come up with the name?

Rico: I like Cadillac's, classic cars, and the cool thing is that the guys in there band all share that similar interest. We wanted to do something really creepy. Something that visually you would remember. When people go and see a show, even if it's at a dive bar, they're paying to see you. They're paying to see something, so we wanted to bring something to the stage that was really creepy. Our love for classic cars and horror movie fit together and the two words roll off the tongue easily. So again, that's what formed that abomination of The Cadillac Creeps.

Joey Creep: Every time you hear the name Cadillac, what comes to mind is the image, classic, quality, something that has depth and desirability to it. We take that and the creepy parts and take the best of both.

John Creep: I second what Rico said as far as people coming out to pay and see something theatrical. I've never been into seeing a band that looks like they just rolled out of bed. I think that we're offering something very cool, theatrical, something to watch and the music is great.

Rico: Whether it's the sound, vision, name of the band, we want to give south Florida, the rest of the US, and the rest of the world something to look at.

Cadillac Creeps is comprised of members from all of the US. How did your surroundings from these various places influence you?

AJ Creep: I come from up around New York, New Jersey area. I'm totally about Punk rock and growing up around CBGB's, getting to see really cool bands play. I was really involved in a lot of the harder music scene from New York. I just grew up around a lot of different musical influences.

Joey: I'm also from the North East and that's where I got a lot of my musical influence from as well. Running around The Village and going to the punk, hardcore, and metal shows around there.

Rico: I'm from Los Angeles so, needless to say I put that little squirt of gothic in the music. I came from the pseudo gothic culture of Jane's Addiction, Sisters of Mercy, and that type of element of alternative music coming out of Los Angeles. Things that were a bit darker but still rock n roll. A lot of influences from that aspect.

John: Definately the New York scene. The darker seventies stuff and New York Dolls, Kiss.

What differences do you see in the live

music scene as far as from where you grew up in comparison to our scene?

Rico: A huge difference. the main one is the visual. I hate to keep going back to that but I've heard a lot of good bands since I've been here but the majority, not all, but the majority don't seem to be very image based. I realize that there are probably a lot of bands who rely on image and sound horrible, but you put the two together and you have something you can rock and bang your head to. But yea, a lot of bands look like they just rolled out of bed. Dickie shorts, flip flops, t-shirts; and the sound great, I have nothing against them. But if you can offer an audience a show, something for their Friday or Saturday night out. Somewhere to go, something to see, that's what we do/

AJ: A killer image and a great show, but also show people that we're also musicians and we know how to play our instruments really well. When people see that they'll be like, wow, not only did they look cool on stage but they sounded incredible too. That speaks volumes.

Joey: I like how when people here us they hear influences, but they can't actually say that we really sound like another band.

John: I have to go with everyone else. Back North there was just a more diverse melting pot of look and style. We're just trying to bring back that diversity of styles where there isn't that whole different mix. **How would you describe your music to a complete outsider who has never heard or seen you before?**

John: I would say AHHHHH!!! ...and that's to describe the music, the show, the look. The music is tight, it's different. Elements of metal, 80's glam, LA, everything. I think that's we've picked up a lot of steam recently because we're able to appeal to a wide audience since we can't be

nailed down.

Rico: A horror show. We are an abomination and we realize it. our music is a basis of rock n roll, classic horror films, tattoos, leathers, Harley Davidson's, and just stir the whole pot. maybe the foreskin of Satan. Stir up the pot and vomit it onto an accepting audience and you have a sound from the underground that is brand new. **The band just recently returned from the Draculacon festival in Pennsylvania, how was that experience for the band?**

AJ: An amazing experience for us to expose all of those people to our kind of music.

John: It was a great show, with a nice size theatre and full lights. I think we got our point across really well and I think we made a lot of new fans and in a couple of months I would imagine there will be a bunch of little baby creeps running around as well.

Joey: That show was great in a sense that it was the first time that the entire audience was knocked on their ass. It was a really successful show and worth the traveling and snags that we hit along the way. We made a lot of new fans because a lot of people liked what they saw live and it opened up some doors for us.

Rico: A horror convention in Las Vegas and one in Orlando. Not that we're into the whole convention tour thing, but there's a lot of interest in us now thanks to that show and the sound that we have. **I understand that the band just came out of the studio and have released a few new recordings. So many people have been asking. Those two tracks can be found on both our website and Myspace pages.**

Rico: Oh yeah! We popped out two new

songs, but we're in the process of recording a whole album. So that is soon to come. So many people were asking because of the Youtube and Myspace videos which just weren't cutting it for them. So

AJ: We went in with the mindset of doing what we wanted and it came out great.

John: The two cuts that are up right now we're asking our fans to come out and vote for which one should actually be the first official video.

Rico: Part of the video will be shot in south Florida. We're going to invite a select group of our fans to come out and be part of the different scenarios of the video. **Where do The Cadillac Creeps come from on a lyrical standpoint?**

Rico: As far as the music it's definatley a collaboration, but as a lyricist I think I've evolved and changed over the years. With this band it's just all about where the music takes you. It's hard, aggressive, in your face, horror, and a lot of fun. The songs themselves almost seem to write themselves without sounding campy. Whenever the songs hit us all, the ideas, titles, lyrics, they all come and form with the music. It's the oddest thing because I'm used to it being the complete opposite. The lyrics really do write themselves.

Joey: There's an aspect where we're just having fun. The songs hit a chord with us personally and it gives it that personal touch. Rico is just really great at interpreting our collective emotion when it comes to certain things. **What are the bands plans for the next year?**

John: World domination.

Joey: We just want to get our name out there, the music, and introduce everyone to something that they're not going to catch on any given Friday at the local live venue. Something that they'll wan to see on a much bigger scale.

Rico: Let everybody know what we're about. We want all of our shows to be different. We don't want to be out there playing every single Saturday where everyone knows they can go out there and see our show again. When we see our show, it's special and we won't always play where you think we're going to play. It could be anywhere from the Culture Room, to Budapest, to the back of a flatbed trailer rolling down A1A. In this coming year we plan on doing some select show that are going to be really tasty and sweet so people can see something that they've never seen in south Florida. You have no idea where the Creeps are gonna play, but when we play you better be there!



Taproot



Taproot vocalist Stephen Richards woefully sings on “It’s natural,” from his band’s latest offering, *Our Long Road Home*. For a band that has enjoyed success, toured and traveled the world on some of the hottest tours for the better part of this decade only to be dropped from your label after your band’s third release, these words seem to be that of reflection. However Taproot will be the first to tell you that yesterday is only history and today is a gift, and that it is for the Ann Arbor, Michigan quartet rounded out by guitarist Mike DeWolf, bassist Phil Lipscomb, and new drummer Nick Fridell. For a band with such dark, heavy, and oftentimes bleak sounding music, you wouldn’t expect a group of guys with such optimism, heart and humor, but with Taproot that’s exactly what you get. For any band to go through what Taproot has gone through would probably spell disaster, especially in today’s waning music industry. After losing their label, the band instead dusted themselves off, regrouped, and started writing what would become, in this fans opinion, their best work since their sophomore effort, *Welcome*. The tunes that compile *Our Long Road Home* show a maturity, both lyrically, and musically as issues of growing up, coping, and a deeper sense of melody is eschewed throughout the discs’ dozen tracks. Don’t mistake the band’s maturity and melodicism as a sign of slowing down though as they’re currently out on the road with peers and fellow road warriors *Sevendust*, another melody driven metallic rock band. Before the band’s tour stop at Ft. Lauderdale’s *Revolution*, we sat down with the foursome to discuss their new album, growing up, line-up changes, and their long road back...to Florida!

SFL: The name of the new record is *Our Long Road Home*; can you explain the significance of the album title?

Stephen Richards: It’s basically a culmination of where the band is at in this point in time. The name is significant in that it’s our first album that we’ve done since we signed to a major label. The first time we’ve gone back and did it on our own. Kind of like how we used to do our demo’s when we first started out. Our first independent release since parting with our former label Atlantic, so it’s, in a way just tying ourselves back to our roots aspect of being at home, recording at home, doing it our way. The record itself I think kind of

incorporates everything from the first three records. It has a little bit from each album, so it’s a good fulfilling Taproot.

As far as the initial writing was concerned, was their any pressure on the band as you went in without the support of a label and not knowing exactly how you were going to release it upon completion?

Stephen: I don’t think that it put any added pressure. If anything we put pressure on ourselves to write the best music that we can, do what we want to do and such. As far as finding a new label and not knowing what we were going to do, it didn’t really weigh into the writing process of the new

record.

Mike DeWolf: I think we just kind of went and did our thing and hoped that things would work themselves out. Let things fall where they may. **SFL:** Each of the band’s records has its own unique sound that expands upon the previous. How was *Our Long Road Home* different than previous albums?

Stephen: I think overall it was a little more relaxed. The first record was pretty easy because most of the songs on *Gift* were songs that we had already been playing for a few years at that point. It was only two or three songs that were written for that record, so it was like, just go out to Los An-



geles, track it, done. We just spent a couple months in the studio, where *Welcome* and *Blue Sky Research* were relocating to California and spending six months writing, rehearsing, perfecting our performance and getting in the studio. This record was more comfortable at home, taking our time and seeing how it would come out without having a deadline and worrying about wasting someone else's dollars and living in a foreign place away from the people that we know and love. So it was just different in that it was relaxed and at our own pace really.

The band has really grown musically and lyrically from album to album. How do you feel about the band's progression from *Gift* to *Our Long Road Home*?

Stephen: Proud. Like I said, I think especially with *Gift*, I don't think a lot of people realized that when we released that record a lot of the songs were a couple of years old. I think especially the biggest jump musically, lyrically, and sonically was between *Gift* and *Welcome*. I think it really threw people for a loop and made people

think that we were totally changing, not realizing that there was a good three years of progression, growing up, changing, inspiration between the two records. We don't really set out to do anything other than just write what we write and come up with the best things that we can. We don't sit down and say, ok, why don't we try doing this or that. We just kind of let it go and see what comes out. The coolest part is that we never really do the same thing twice. We do get lumped into certain types of genres and other bands though because we gel well with other types as well. You know, we've done Ozzfest twice, and at the same time we've played with Rick Springfield...at an art festival.

Lyricaly the underlying theme on *Our Long Road Home* seems to deal a lot with growing up and getting older. Was this something that was on your mind that you were very conscience of, or did it just pan out that way?

Stephen: Just that I'm an aging guy at home, waiting to get together with the band to write. I don't think it's a conscience effort as much as just the reality.

Mike: It's like a reality album. I'm kidding.

The band has made some fairly big leaps musically from each record, especially from *Welcome to Blue Sky Research* which was more melody driven. Do you feel that you may have lost some fans along the way because of such a big leap in sound?

Mike: Probably, yea. But I never really see a point in doing the same thing over and over again. It's not fun for us. Maybe other people would enjoy it, but we don't and where's the fun in that. We'll take our chances.

Taproot's original drummer Jarrod hasn't been playing out on tour with the band for a while now, how has your new drummer been working out?

Mike: Look at his facial hair, its amazing!

Stephen: He's terrible! No, it's been going really good. We've known him for a long time, he fits right in and he's been doing great as far as performing and it's the first time I've seen a drummer try to attempt saving a singer from getting his ass kicked, so that was cute.

Mike: We asked him to grow a beard when we first started with him and now he's shaving it. Tomorrow it's handlebars.

Will Nick be permanently replacing Jarrod in the band's line-up?

Stephen: Yea, pretty much. I mean, Jarrod has the real life going on now. Family,

job and it wasn't really an odd transition. It was like look, I'm not going to be able to go out. Ok, well if you're not going to be able to go out, and that's what we need to be able to do, so, bye bye.

Mike: It was just the reality of the situation and once we start playing with someone else it's not like he can just jump right back in whenever. Just moving on.

Nick Fridell: I've actually played the new album more than Jarrod has since he never really toured or rehearsed it. I don't know why but it crossed my head the other day and I was like, wow, that's sort of weird.

For the live show, Jarrod handled all of the backing vocals as well. Will Nick be taking over this live duty as well?

Nick: If we can rehearse, definatly.

Stephen: It's in the future plans. But even the approach that we've had lately, we're not running as many crazy rigs and effects or anything. We're really simplifying everything and just getting back out and rocking again. But for live stuff I would really like to have the live backing vocals again at some point. I think the approach is really going back to the beginning with *Our Long Road Home*'s approach again. Getting out there and just rocking.

Velvet Hammer was the band's management company for quite a few years and now they're your label. How has the transition been from being on a major to an independent?

Stephen: Actually it's been a lot smoother than I guess it sounds on paper. Although, they were our management basically from the beginning. They were the one's who originally got us signed to Atlantic in 2000, so we've pretty much spent our whole career with those guys. Even though they were our management, they were also our subsidiary label through Atlantic, so we've actually kind of always been on Velvet Hammer. It was fun being helped out by the Atlantic resources, but they were pretty much in control in helping us with our careers since day 1. Doing the album was more of an investment, both on their side as well as our side. That means that we don't get docked 17% of the management cut too.

Mike: It's like a whole new world for trying to make a living as an artist of musician. Everyone is trying to find a new way to do something different, stay alive and do this. It will be an ongoing search.

Where do you see the band 5-10 years from now?

Mike: Ft. Lauderdale.

Stephen: I will be ashes spread across

the ocean. One day at a time man.

Is there a particular song on the new album that you feel is a good representation of where the band is headed in the future musically?

Stephen: I don't think we could select a song that would say where we're going since that really ties into not really trying to do anything in particular. It just kind of comes out, but I think the first song on the new record, "Path Less Taken" is a good representation of everything that we have done, as well as can do. It has a lot of heavy stuff, as well as melody, there's fun screaming shit, and it's a great opening track for an album, as well as for live. It's probably one of my favorite Taproot songs to date. I think that incorporates a little bit of everything that we tend to offer, but I don't think that it's necessarily a representation of what we will be doing. You never know. **With four albums and a limited amount of stage time out opening for Sevendust right now, how do you go about putting together a setlist that satisfies the band and the fans?**

Stephen: It's a painstaking process for someone like me who is very indecisive. I try and keep everything in mind when it comes to putting a set together so, obviously, even though it's a little bit more fun to play some of the newer stuff, we're not going to not play stuff from the first two records. With our live energy, notoriety and representation as being a fun energetic, crazy heavy live band I just break it down. 9 songs-2 from the first three records and two from the new record. It's a good mix of

singles, past singles, heavy, and fun newer rush stuff to promote the product. If we sell a few more copies of Welcome, we'll get a plaque. We haven't beaten "Poem" as a closer yet though, we have a new opener.

Before the band released Gift, there was already a huge buzz on the band via the internet on bulletins, street teams and fan sites. How do you feel that the internet has changed how band's, including yourselves, use it as a tool to get heard?

Mike: At the time it was huge, not a lot of people were using it in that way to its full potential. But a lot of things have changed since then. You can't do a lot of things that you used to do back then, but now you can do a lot of new things. We continue to use it in as many ways as we possibly can, but it's always going to be one of the main ways to get out there and be seen and heard.

On "It's Natural" there's a female vocalist with Stephen. What made you want to bring this element into the picture?

Stephen: Basically it was Mike's idea to do something crazy and high. I could actually do it pretty well, but people thought it sounded a little too Jonathan Davis-ey because he sings higher now, and I have a voice. Our producer Tim Patalan, who tracked Kristen Von Burthal, who just came down, read these words quickly, read it five or six ways and then nailed it on the first take was really cool. On Welcome, we tried incorporating orchestral things and stuff like that; we really enjoyed seeing what else we could add to make things fun cool, and round out the sonic vibe on what was to be there. Having the female voice there

singing so pretty and the idea of what she's singing about lyrically is kind of grotesque and freaky, the contrast between the beauty and gross idea behind it was cool. In the bridge where the two of us are both singing came out really cool too. Kind of like, hey, do we know any girls. Tim did, she came in and nailed it, we gave her some beer that that was that. Cheap and easy.

Playing together for so many years the band no doubt has many B-sides sitting around that

never make it onto albums, imports or online outlets. Are there any plans to ever release these rare tracks?

Stephen: It's possible. I think a good 70% of the stuff that we've recorded makes it out either overseas, or being posted via online leaks. It could be cool to do at some point depending on cost effectiveness, time, it could be fun to go back and do some of the older tunes that were never tracked for the old school fans. We literally have well over a hundred songs that have never even been tracked. There's a lot of potential, but we want to continue to move forward and you always want to be creative in doing new stuff. At the same time we already have another record to go called The Episodes. It'll be amazing. One day at a time.

How do you feel that Taproot fits into the current music scene?

Stephen: I don't know how we fit in at all. Sevendust likes us.

Mike: I think we fit into a lot of different areas. We can play with the heaviest of the heaviest and someone at the other end of the spectrum. I don't think we necessarily fit in all that well. We're just ourselves. It's kind of better to not fit in.

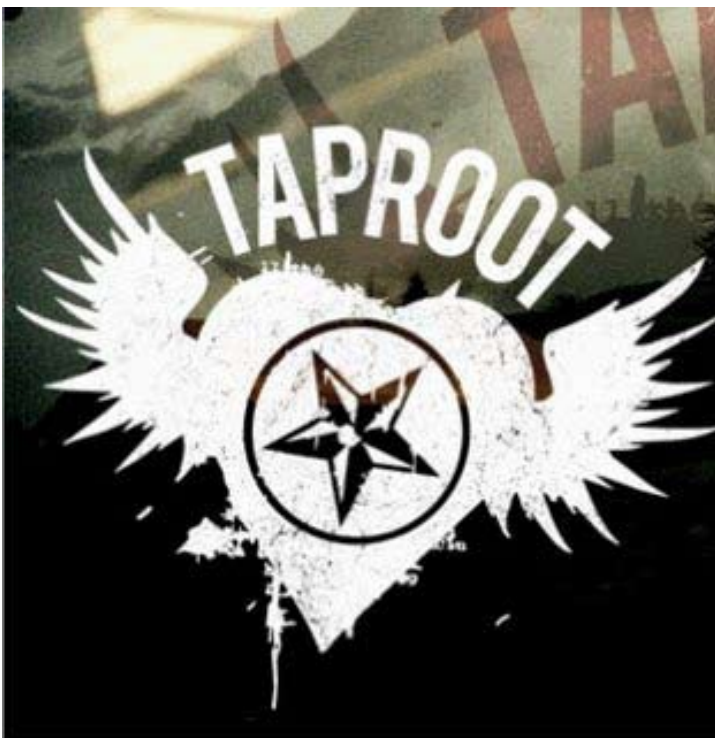
Does The band have any newer influences that have made their way into the Taproot sound that have had a hand in changing or making you take risks that you may not have taken?

Mike: I think a lot of influences come from where we our in our lives. When we were talking about growing up, new experiences everyday. bring those into our writing. I don't think we try and write a song like this or that. It's a bit more natural.

You guys have been in this now over ten years. What advice do you have the local and unsigned band's who are just trying to get out there and be seen and heard?

Mike: Don't quit your day job!

Stephen: Follow your heart and do what you want to do. The industry is still changing and it hasn't found its course where you know what's best to do. The way that we did it, as opposed to trying to reach out and look for help, saying look at me. We just started playing out in Detroit, MI, because Anne Arbor is a college town. There wasn't a lot of rock going on, just cover bands and your standard college rock scene. We ended up turning it into a scene where there was a good one or two hard rock shows that we would play, same place, downtown. We got the people to come to us as opposed to us trying to reach out and sparsely make small connections by sending out your demo CD's and whatnot. If you can, get in with Fred Durst and try to piss him off, that will help!



Green Day
21st Century Breakdown
Reprise Records



I think it's safe to say that with the immense success of Green Day's last release the pressure should have been on. With *21st Century Breakdown*, the band continues in the vein of American Idiot with a similar 'punk rock opera.' This time around Green Day decided to work with a producer with more of a 90's pedigree in Butch Vig, who is most noted for his work with Smashing Pumpkins, Sonic Youth, and Nirvana. So does Vig affect the band's signature sound? Let's take a listen.

The discs' first single, "Know Your Enemy" is a true return to form as the tune could be plunked onto any of the band's previous discs and easily feel at home. Tenderly sung vocals against a piano is a bit of a surprise for this listener at first on "¡Viva La Gloria!," but it that soon changes into what you would expect these punk vets to produce.

Things start out on the light side on "Before the Lobotomy," this time with an acoustic guitar. What really makes this song though is the bridge, basic and one that, melodically we have all heard a hundred times before, but there's a feel that can only be described as 'epic.' "Peacemaker" explores more of a country-western musical theme to it.

The real album standout is the mid-tempo Pink Floyd meets Beatles piano ballad "Last Night On Earth." The slide work on the track fits the mood of the track more than any song on the album.
-Matt Pashalian

Silversun Pickups
Swoon
Dangerbird Records



From the get-go, Silversun Pickups show a huge leap in songwriting on *Swoon* with open-

ing track, "There's No Secrets This Year." Fuzzy guitars still dominate the bands sound throughout the disc, as do layer's of Aubert's vocals, backed by bassist Nikki Monninger. The pairs' vocals mesh beautifully as airy, dream-like guitars swirl around your head throughout the verses of "Growing Old Is Getting Old."

The band shows some growth on "The Royal We" with verses that get a subtle touch by string and horn sections throughout and an almost desperate tone to Aubert's voice when commanding, "Carefully look over your shoulder." A string section rears again on the ironically titled, "It's Nice to Know You Work Alone." The real irony is that the vocal lines during the verses are split, but with such tonally similar voices, it's very hard to tell. Put your head phones on for this one.

Odds are by the time you've read this, you may have already heard *Swoon's* lead-off single, "Panic Switch." If you've only heard the shortened radio edit, you may want to pick up the album or purchase the song itself as the songs power is almost completely lost on the radio version. What you're really missing out on is the bridge of the tune as Aubert's solitary vocal against the songs' carrying bass line breaks into an interesting interlude break. Aubert's whisper moves onto a scream before it explodes back into the chorus where everything is grander. One of the album's true standout tracks.

With *Swoon*, Silversun Pickups seem to have outdone themselves. The band has matured from Carnavas focusing more on songwriting than just creating sonic landscapes,
-Matt Pashalian

Yeah Yeah Yeahs
It's Blitz
Interscope



The cool thing about the Yeah Yeah Yeahs is that they've never been content to rest on their laurels. They've always incorporated different sounds and dynamics, increasingly stripping away the layers from their guitar-based art punk with every record. Since their smashing 2003 debut *Fever to Tell*, they've pushed the limits of their musical prowess that they continue to do to further effect on their stunning new album, *It's Blitz*.

On this record, Karen O and company venture out into subtler territory with their use of keyboards and stick percussion as on the gorgeous

"Skeletons." It's these moments that find Yeah Yeahs at their boldest, expressing a mood of subtlety and quietness that contrasts amazingly against their flat-out rockers.

The opening piano notes on "Runaway" create such an intensity that's amplified further when the synthesizers and the string arrangements come into play. "Dragon Queen" ripples along with a solid dance beat and a simple guitar lick by Nick Zinner. One of the best tracks is "Hysteria," one beautiful love song with some fantastic percussion by Brian Chase.

The band can erupt just as quickly and effectively as on the dance rave "Heads Will Roll" that is absolute ear candy with Karen O barking continuously "Off with heads!" The New York trio radiate so much confidence and joy on the first three album tracks alone that you wonder if making a record is really this effortless. The jangly eruption of guitars from Zinner on "Dull Life" is pure delight behind Chase's effective drumming.

Whether they're rocking out or branching into subtler territory, *It's Blitz* is another triumph for a trio that never seems to leave a surprise stone unturned

-Jeff Noller

Depeche Mode
Sounds Of The Universe
Capitol



Depeche Mode have never ceased to amaze in the near three decades that they have been a group, releasing a string of trailblazing albums that have ran the gauntlet from synth-pop to industrial to rock with ease. Their twelfth album, *Sounds of the Universe*, continues this trend following the critical and commercial success of 2005's *Playing the Angel*. That record proved to be one of their strongest and successful albums that was due in no part to Ben Hillier's production and David Gahan's emerging role as a songwriter that added more bombast to their sound.

With *Sounds of the Universe*, the British trio pulled a surprise and returned to using the equipment and styles of the early 80s work. At first, you think that they're trying to make a "classist" Depeche Mode record, but that's not the case at all. The band has always used synthesizers and electronics throughout their career. What resulted instead was a vibe and feel that differed completely from *Playing the Angel*. Combine the use of older keyboards and electronic instruments

with Gahan and Martin Gore's current lyrical and songwriting styles, this equates to an exciting formula that ends up delivering in spades.

"In Chains," the album's opener builds slowly with burning intensity that sets the tone for the rest of the record. Gahan has come a long way as a vocalist since he took lessons back in the mid-90s, and his swoon is an absolute delight. "Wrong" oozes with panache, while "Come Back" roars with heavy percussion and echo. These tracks contrast gorgeously when matched with "Peace" that's one of the album's strongest moments that recalls the band's industrial-pop heyday with an incredible vocal delivery by the aforementioned Gahan.

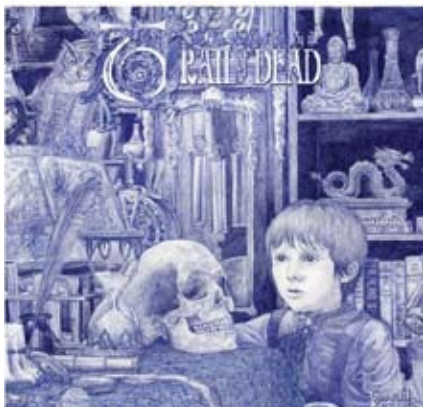
Gore's guitar blasts against the classic drum machines and synthesizers with roaring bass lines is simply beautiful as in "Fragile Tension" and "In Sympathy." "Perfect" has some melodic harmonies that reaches back to their debut album, *Speak & Spell*, that shines when Gahan's vocals come into the picture. The band wouldn't have been able to make an album like this twenty-five, thirty years ago as Gahan, Gore and Andrew Fletcher have really stepped up their craft, and made an amazing album.

-Jeff Noller

...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead

The Century Of Self

Justice



After hearing the slow-burning intro of "Giants Causeway," it's clear that And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead sound rejuvenated on their new album, *The Century of Self*. After finding both 2005's *So Divided* and 2006's *World's Apart* too labored and meticulous in their approach, this record finds them playing live and loose. This difference is staggering and welcome since we haven't heard their sound like this since 2002's *Source Tags & Codes*.

Producer Mike McCarthy helps realize their progressive ambitions without abandoning their punk roots as on such powerful rockers as "Far Pavilions," "Isis Unveiled" and "Halcyon Days." No longer nit picking their writing and production with overblown insanity, AYWKUBTTOD's music feels organic and graceful as on the beautiful "Inland Sea." "Bells of Creation" explodes with hypnotic power that's both grand and free-wheeling. It's a scope of liberation that's lacking in most bands out there today in poplar music

that receive more attention than they should.

The quintet from Austin, Texas are one of the few bands that can realize their ambitions in the studio, whether it's fuzzed-out guitar epics or beautiful piano-driven ballads as on "Inland Sea" and "Lunar Park." Although, their arrangements can still overwhelm at times and overshadow their emotional delivery as on "Pictures of an Only Child" and "Insatiable One," this is only a slight drawback. The band sound revitalized on *The Century of Self*. A muscular and powerful record that gets better with every listen

-Jeff Noller

Tori Amos

Abnormally Attracted to Sin

Universal Republic



Let's be honest, Tori Amos has spent the last ten years delving deep into concept pieces that became more and more dense and esoteric. Not that stopped her from being an intriguing and interesting artist because the songstress has always had an incredible knack for artistic composition and direction – even if you had to have a Doctorate in Tori-ology to understand each record entirely. This latter statement might be bliss for her die-hard fans, but they also kept new listeners from jumping into her catalogue.

Let's face the facts that after releasing her seminal classics, 1992's *Little Earthquakes* and 1994's *Under the Pink*, she went off the deep end into self indulgence. She followed her musical whim to such obscure heights that her albums lost the cohesive vision that had made those records so amazing with the exception of 1998's excellent *Songs from the Choirgirl Hotel*. Her work turned into a series of puzzles that no one outside of her hardcore following wanted to take the time to decode.

So after climaxing her conceptual whims with both 2005's *The Beekeeper* and 2007's *American Doll Posse*, Amos decided that the time had come to scale back. She went into her studio and wrote a batch of songs that would focus on her strengths as a great songwriter and pianist. From that perspective, you would think this would mean a dynamite collection of 12 songs that would match the cohesiveness of her first two albums.

However, *Abnormally Attracted to Sin*, Amos' ninth album, is the polar opposite from being tight and united. Clocking in at 73 minutes through 18 songs, it is way too long to keep anyone's attention going. Almost every song fails to catch fire from the opening "Give" with its trip-hop synthesizers

to "Welcome to England" that gets lost in the tape loops. The Indian-tinged "Strong Black Wine" and the roots-based "Not Dying Today" are Tori-styled rockers but they suffer from the same lack of cohesion and hooks. "Flavor" meanders into Nowhereland, while "Maybe California" runs into... dare I say, Adult Contemporary territory – Seriously, if you think of any easy listening radio station out there like the Coast in South Florida, you would not know that this was Tori Amos.

By the time you get halfway through the 18 songs on the record, you're exhausted from boredom. Really, nothing clicks the way it should. There are some interesting ideas, but nowhere near enough direction to drive them to fully-developed songs. "Fire To Your Plain," "Police Me," "That Guy" and the title track are just a few examples from the second half that suffer from this. It's a frustrating listen because you know the woman can play piano like no other.

There are a couple of gems still on here such as "Curtain Call" with its seductive and luscious rhythms that releases short bursts of guitar with slow and precise drumming by Matt Chamberlain. "Fast Horse" is a great acoustic guitar number that brims with intensity. But "Lady in Blue" is by far the best moment on the album with a great bluesy guitar solo toward the end of the song that careens beautifully with Amos' piano playing. Sadly, these are the only moments, and you have to really sit through the album to find them, which makes it all the more unsatisfying. It would have been great to see Amos make a strong, cohesive album, not just continue to indulge her musical whim by writing nearly two dozen songs that have no consistent and developed vision.

That's the problem with *Abnormally Attracted to Sin*, none of the songs catch on the way they should. There are too many half-baked ideas, and could have used someone to come in and seriously edit. She could have done so much more than she does here, and that makes this record all the more heartbreaking and disappointing from such a stellar talent as Tori Amos

- Jeff Noller

All American Rejects

When The World Comes Down

Interscope Records



All American Rejects have done it again! I really wasn't sure if the band was going to be able to top their last effort, 2005's powerhouse *Move Along*. But with *When The World Comes Down*,

The World Comes Down, the band shows somewhat more maturity, and musicianship in songwriting leaps above their peers. *I Wanna* sounds very much akin to the band's self-titled debut, but with the production of their previous effort. Everything is crystal clear in this tune, right down to the slight piano melodies in *I Wanna*. The lyrics to *I Wanna* seem to be back to the campiness of their debut as vocalist Tyson Wheeler blandly croons, "I wanna, I wanna, I wanna touch you/You want to touch me too."

Besides the mock orchestrations and hand claps, a nice touch brought into *Fallin' Apart* is a choir, while *Damn Girl* is almost semi-reminiscent of The Police. The disc's first single, currently impacting both rock and pop radio, *Gives You Hell*, seems a bit unlikely at first listen because, honestly, the first few seconds have a real, 'what is this?' factor going for it. Once you get past the corniness of the song it starts rocking a bit and then the big touch, a whole gang of, what sounds like a football team chanting the chorus as if it were their mantra. The band fiddles with stripped down acoustic goodness on *Mona Lisa* before breaking the door down on the driving *Breakin*.

The real standout on *When The World Comes Down* is *Another Heart Calls*. Coupled with female vocals provided by The Pierces that, honestly sound a bit like a mature Hillary Duff, this is one of those build and build songs that you hear once and click repeat repeatedly afterwards. Only on release number three, I see AAR as an alternative rock band that may actually have real staying power.

-Matthew Pashalian

Franz Ferdinand *Tonight* Domino



Franz Ferdinand had the intention of completely changing their sound and approach from their 2004 eponymous debut and quickly-delivered 2005 follow up, *You Could Have It So Much Better*. Whenever you not only make this statement publicly and then decide to spend four years going down this route, the expectations are going to be high. This makes their third album, *Tonight*, all the more unsatisfying.

Yes, they brought on producer Dan Carey who's worked with everyone from CSS to Kylie

Minogue to help realize this new direction. However, it doesn't sound like a complete 180 like the way that Radiohead went into electronic and atmospheric sounds following their 1997's seminal *OK Computer*. Instead, *Tonight* follows the same formula that they established several years ago on their debut only fine tweaking their approach instead of doing an overhaul.

Having said this, it doesn't mean that this is a bad album. *Tonight* has the focus and cohesion that was sorely lacking on *YCHISMB*. They deliver a crop of sharp and stylish dance rockers as on the opening "Ulysses," the swaggering "No You Girls" and the afro-pop rhythms of "Send Him Away." Singer/guitarist Alex Kapranos incorporates keyboards and beats effectively on many tracks that help add dimension such as on the brilliant "Twilight Omens," the disco drone of "Live Alone" and the robotic bounce of "What She Came For" and "Can't Stop Feeling."

However, after hearing the final three tracks that actually do find Franz Ferdinand pushing the musical envelope that you realize that they could have done so much more than they inevitably did. The dark and seductive seven-minute long "Lucid Dreams" burns with delight, while "Dream Again" displays a spooky and minimal ambiance with its echoing electronic beats and triangles. The acoustic simplicity of "Katherine Kiss Me" closes the album with such a definitive contrast against the rest of the record that you wish that they had taken some more chances.

Tonight leaves you feeling disappointed because they have the potential to do much more with their music than some fine-tuning. The truth is that after taking four years to do a follow up, Franz Ferdinand could and should have made a quantum leap instead of just a few baby steps

- Jeff Noller

Incubus *Monuments And Melodies* Sony



Usually a Greatest Hits collection means one of two things; The band is done but needs the money, or have changed labels but are still obligated to one more release. In Incubus' case, it's really morose putting a nail in the coffin of the band that once was. Never is this more evident

than with opening track and lead off single to *Monuments And Melodies*, "Black Heart Inertia." Not quite losing the jangly feel that they've esewed in their past two albums, add in a guitar solo and you have a pretty good idea of where the band may be heading on their next full length. Pop radio gems like "Drive" and "Love Hurts" sit well next to the air to muscle of "Pardon Me" and "Nice To Know You." Though most fans will tell you that the first disc should really be called a 'Radio Singles' disc, due to it being void of the gems each album holds that usually become live concert staples. However new track and first disc closer "Midnight Swim," come off awkward and almost demo like as if something is missing; or maybe it's the abundance of Cymbals being bashed by Jose Pasillas.

For the long-time fan the second disc is really what makes this package worth the money. Usually a disc of B-Side tracks seems a bit incomplete and you easily understand just why the tunes hit the cutting room floor; not quite the case here. A single that was missing from the band's early years, "A Certain Shade Of Green" off of *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.*, may have been missing on the 'hits' disc, but we're given the band's jazzy acoustic rendition of it instead on Disc 2, making it a gain. Also an alternate version of "Neither Of Us Can See," originally released on the *Stealth* soundtrack features only Brandon Boyd on vocals, minus Pretenders Vocalist Chrissie Hynde who appeared on the original. Incubus are no stranger to covers and keeping on the theme of strange, their cover of the Prince classic "Let's Go Crazy" shouldn't be much of a surprise as this is a band who have covered numerous Lionel Richie songs. Boyd's Rock N' Roll Pastor impersonation and guitarist Mike Einziger's Prince-like solo'ing would make the Purple one proud.

The first disc to this limited edition 2-Disc set is mainly Incubus' offshoot of radio singles which, most are probably a little tired of, but for the fairweather fan this disc packages all of those up neatly for you with the second disc being as a bonus.

-Matt Pashalian

Jane's Addiction

A Cabinet of Curiosities

Rhino

If there's one thing that can't be said, it's that this box set is not cheaply thrown together. With the band finally kissing and making up with original bassist Eric Avery, the time to put out a Jane's Addiction box set of rarities seems like the most absolute perfect timing. While most of the time a box set seems so flimsy and just not what you would expect when you finally have it in hand, in both material and packaging, Jane's Addiction seems to be one of those band's that, you can expect the unexpected. If they were to call this box set 'The Vault,' or 'The Safe' it would probably be a plastic or tin encased holding for its discs of wonderment. A Cabinet of Curiosities resembles a jewelry curio cabinet made of a pressed wood, complete with handles and a tiny latch to keep its contents securely closed. Keeping with the theme there are two more doors behind it with see-thru windows giving you a small glimpse of what's inside; it's a real tease the first time opening this. Within your final contents is 4 digi-pack style cases for each CD and DVD, a book, and a pouch containing 4 Tarot cards for each band member, as well as 4 individual voodoo dolls about the size of one of three parts of your pinky.

The book is really the average norm for any given bands box set; tales of the bands' beginnings, discography, and some of the better live shots. A few cool things thrown in though are stories by friends. Everyone from Slash of Guns N' Roses, Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan, right down to Jane Bainter, the muse for, arguably the band's biggest hit, "Jane Says."

Pop in Disc 1 and you're greeted to 17

tracks that give you a real take on what demo tracks really are. The true standouts are the 5 Radio Tokyo demos which, the fair-weather fan may find a bit more enjoyable as far as quality is concerned. Perry's vocals are true to the phrase 'raw' on any of these given tracks. "Jane Says" is brighter and somewhat campy, while "Mountain Song" and "Had a Dad" from the same session have a bite to them that if were released today would still be relevant.

Disc 2 may have some cool demos of songs like "Maceo," a track earlier released on Kettle Whistle, but live renditions of Led Zeppelin classics "Whole Lotta Love" and a mock version of "L.A. Woman," just seems to stand out as awkward next to the anti-racism cover of Sly Stone's "Don't

Call Me Nigger, Whitey" with Ice-T (anyone remember this video?).

The third disc of music you can really consider a live album. Its set list very similar to what you hear on the band's current reunion tour, just in a different order. With live music trading communities on the internet a disc like this may seem a bit like a cop-out, but for a soundboard recording of the band in their prime, this box set would feel a little incomplete without it. "Up

The Beach" and "Summertime Rolls" are the type of songs that any fan will tell you are better enjoyed in a live form because a studio could never truly capture their power.

A Cabinet of Curiosities gives fans something that they have wanted for a very long time; a

true DVD version of the long discontinued VHS of a fan video 'Soul Kiss.'

Now bootleg versions can surely be thrown away. Also included

are three live videos shot for MTV in

Milan, and all of the band's music videos, including the, at the time much controversial video for "Mountain Song" and the beautiful "Classic Girl." I know that some fans may cry that Jane's Addiction have already put out a Rarities collection with 1997's Kettle Whistle, but in all honesty, a real fan should inarguably admit that A Cabinet of Curiosities is the fitting way to put out this kind of collection. For a band like Jane's Addiction, even though they only had three official releases, with only two being proper studio albums, this truly was the way to go. -Matthew Pashalian



Land Of The Lost

Will Ferrell's absurd comedy is usually disappointing, but director Brad Silberling's *Land of the Lost* is a pleasant surprise. After sitting through too many of the actor's sports-themed flicks and reading quick reviews of his latest movie, you will be caught off-guard with *Land of the Lost*, laughing out loud.

Farrell is Dr. Rick Marshall, a thick-headed scientist that travels to an alternative universe with two side-kicks. There's a wise-cracking redneck survivalist, along a gorgeous female research assistant. On the refugees' complex venture back to Earth, they must locate a doorway home. On another dimension, they run into adventures trekking through a desert, caves, rivers and battle extraordinarily intelligent dinosaurs, their hatching eggs, super mosquitoes and painfully slow reptiles called "Sleestaks." The team later gets to watch creature reproduce, a.k.a. "tap that ass." The brilliant Farrell attempts covering his body with urine to stay undetectable to the creatures. And yes, the yellow liquid does burn the eyes. The cast all possess humorous one-liners throughout the picture, like claiming "I bet somebody's growing weed in here," while rambling through a forest. At one point, the crew drinks a trippy juice with a heroin-like effect while Jimi Hendrix plays in the background. "This is just like Sandals resort," claims the Southern boy. Farrell, a T-Rex-fighting Romeo, eventually develops a heated love interest with his beautiful assistant. The silly doctor's escapades are truly terrifying, but fascinating at the same time. Considering that the fate of the universe depends on Will Farrell, you better be in the mood to suspend reality and simply have fun watching *Land of the Lost*.
-Todd McFliker



Public Enemies

The year is a depressing 1933, J. Edgar Hoover is running the nation and Johnny Depp is the notorious bank robber John Dillinger. It's director Michael Mann's latest thriller, *Public Enemies*. Based on a true story, the action begins with the scar faced outlaw breaking out of Indiana State Penitentiary. The charismatic Dillinger outsmarts the system time and time again. His jail breaks are legendary and the American public embraces the outlaw. The smooth talking felon decides "Let's go to Chicago and make some money."

Dillinger picks up *La Vie en Rose*'s Academy Award winning actress, Marion Cotillard, at a nightclub. The young beauty teaches the villain to dance to "Bye Bye Blackbird" before becoming his girl. Dillinger insists that the authorities are neither tough enough nor smart enough to catch him. America's most wanted man even wanders into an empty Police station and strolls around for a couple of minutes. He firmly believes that one's past has no meaning. Dillinger explains, "The only thing important is where you're going."

Christian Bale is Melvin Purvis, the Bureau of Investigation's top agent that's responsible for capturing the sociopathic Baby Face Nelson. Known as the Clark Gable of the FBI, Purvis gets appointed to capture America's Public Enemy Number One. He's even told by a figure-head to play dirty, even if the folk hero refuses the bad guys' payroll. Purvis recruits a notorious crew of Western ex-lawmen to hunt down Dillinger. Watching Batman chase Willy Wonka with charming one-liners here and there is certainly entertaining. The flick is nothing special. It's not worth a \$50 night out to the theatre. -Todd McFliker

