

As a die hard fan I ordered Joe Hasselvanter's two records that had been out from Rock Saviour and bloody fuck these two albums happen to be nothing less than pure jewels. The new work of Hasselvanter under "The Hound Of Hasselvanter" is nothing less than a pure magic moment of traditional Heavy Metal with a modern production. Thus said, I wanted to know more about this Metal head who also featured in Pentagram, Phantom Lord and the mighty Raven. Joe has given us his dedicated view to Metal, many people

Hi Joe ! How are you today ? Excepted from the new release what's up from your side ?

I feel stellar ! Rock 'n' roll has been treating me good !

I've to admit that "The Hounds" album fucking kicks the ass, it's a brilliant mix of NWOBHM with a modern sound. The tunes sound like as if they were written 30 years ago but the production and the way of delivering them give a strong and powerful Metal. Congratulation. How do you feel with this new opus ?

Your description is exactly what I was going for on this album because I think the world needs a shot of Heavy old school with a modern recording twist ! To date this is my heaviest offering. The response from the fans and the press has been unreal.

Let's keep on this topic, I know that before recording an album, we've a idea of how it should sound that's sometime miles away from the final result...what about yours with the new opus "The Hounds" ?

First of all, the writing of this album comes directly from the man upstairs and I kid you not ! I had a very negative life situation hit me and this album is my testament to getting through the bad parts and finding redemption and then ultimately finding healing, emotionally and spiritually ! I basically took my orders from unknown cosmic whereabouts ! I heard this album in my head, exactly as it is, long before it was recorded although certain things vocally and on the guitar did spontaneously happen in the studio for sure.

Excepted me being wrong you played all instruments in the new record "The Hounds". But as far as I know you're primarily a drummer, so how long have you being playing the other instruments ? What is the instrument you feel most comfortable with ?

I've been playing guitar since I was fifteen years old. I was in to Pete Townsend and Leslie West a whole lot in those days but got really serious about guitar when I saw Glen Buxton play with Alice Cooper and Marc Bolan when T.Rex came to town in 1971. But of course I can't forget seeing Tony Iommi play for Sabbath in '71 either ! These guys made guitar playing look effortless and they were rock stars. I got interested in bass when I first heard Glen Hughes pound it out on those old trapeze records. So I have done this for a long time and decided it was time to step out of the shadows. Besides I know how to lay it down thick and you don't hear to many people nowadays doing that. I am most comfortable with drums but that's only because I've played them for almost half a century ! Now where's that wheel chair ?

Through all the pictures of you in "The Hounds" booklet you play with a SG, Gibson guitar, is it your favourite guitar ?

According to you, what are the main differences

with the famous Stratocaster that's been largely used in the 80's ? By the way, very few new combo play with a SG now, this guitar is heavily rooted in the Hard Rock / Rock n Roll with a specific sound don't you think so ?

The Gibson SG is the greatest power tool invented since the drill ! They are

The Hounds of Hasselvanter

very easy to play and really have a perfect combination of warm and dark tones. A Fender Stratocaster is a great guitar for Metal if you

like that good old classic Hendrix sound but most people that play them now have them fitted with pick ups that make them sound just like a Gibson ! I think they are missing the point entirely ! My SG is a 1969 model with stock rusty micro phonic Humbuckers that are really out of control when I'm on ten ! Controlling that chaos is what it's all about with me and there are some that say I'm mad for doing it this way !

The booklet of "Road Kill" explains that a journalist described "Lady Killer" as one of the worst album ever released. Even though I've to admit the songs are not as strong as the new one, "Lady Killer" suffered from crushing riffs, without saying it's the worst album ever done of course. Then, what is your view now on the materials of this album and what was your reaction when you read such a hard review about your work ?

I loved the record "Ladykiller" when I was done recording it. Possibly because no one that I know had ever done an entire LP by themselves with reasonably good songs. But you have to understand the circumstances surrounding this album. I was recording records with Jack Starr that were sub-par at the time that he himself wouldn't even put his name on which made absolutely no sense. "Ladykiller" was to be the last of three albums for Dutch East Records. I had the bright idea of making this my solo album and canning Jack's vision of it becoming an all girl band album with me being the sole musician and a female singer, hence the name "Ladykiller" ! Finally I came to my senses and decided to start taking some credit for something in life besides banging chicks ! So I got rid of the female vocalist and proceeded from there. Working with Jack Starr is at best selling your soul to the devil, just ask anyone who's been there. So when the bad reviews came I had pretty much washed my hands of the project already. Because of Jack had made it become a bad memory. I do like a lot of the ideas on the album. I only wish that I would've had more time and money to make it better, but it still sounds heavy despite it all ! Jack actually told me that the songs on "Ladykiller" were better than they deserved to be ! What the hell does that mean anyway ? Years later I found out that it had become a cult classic and that existing copies were going for as much as \$90 ! On later trips to Europe I found myself doing a lot of interviews about the Dutch East Releases and I was always being asked when would I finally re-release

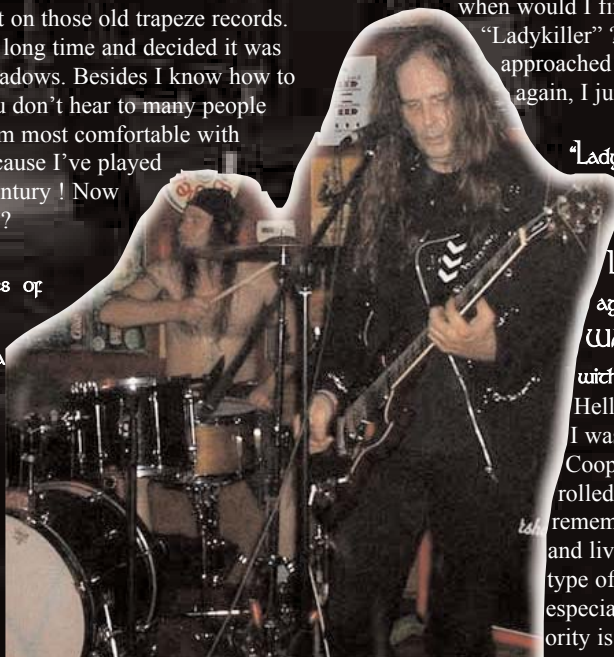
"Ladykiller" ? When rock saviour approached me about putting it out again, I jumped at the chance !

"Lady Killer" 's cover somewhat remembers some pictures of Blackie Lawless and his early aggressiveness within W.A.S.P., do you agree with me ?

Hell, in those days I thought I was Blackie Lawless, Alice Cooper and Ozzy Osbourne rolled in to one ! You have to remember I was in my twenties living in Manhattan and living the wild rock 'n' roll lifestyle 24-7 ! In that type of environment you kind of lose your true identity especially when you're 27 years old and your first priority is looking for girls and posing at Metal shows !

The Hounds of Hasselvanter

In 1986 you recorded two new tracks as follow up to "Ladykiller" with Victor



Gripping that are "Rotten To The Core" and "Chased By Your Demons".

How was this session like and was it difficult to not record something that would sound like a second range Pentagram ?

This was I believe, Victor's first dry run escape from Bobby Liebling's Pentagram. Bobby often takes the credit for things other people have contributed and I know Victor wanted to strike out on his own and finally build a legacy for himself as a singer and guitarist. I had split with the band four years earlier so I was sympathetic to what he wanted to do. Victor and I both love '70s Glam Rock and '70s arena bands like Nazareth. We just put it all in to a blender with Victor doing his best Dan McCafferty impression. It was a blast to make and I think the songs are great hard rock anthems.

That's perhaps a stupid question but why did you name a tune "Rotten To The Core" like this as it was yet a tune Overkill recorded in 1985 ? Did you know this combo when you were recording the two tracks session ?

At that time we weren't up on what Overkill was doing, although they are a fine band. I think that song was really about Victor's state of mind in the '80s.

I was wondering what lead you to record a follow up album to "Roadkill" and furthermore as a solo project ?

I mean many members consider the past as the past and focus on new band....

My answer to your first question sums a lot of that up. But this is an area of my career that I feel I have sorely neglected. I, like Victor, do not want to cut myself short by just being a member of this band or that band and never having the opportunity to bring fourth songs undiluted and un-compromised by other musicians that want to change your ideas into something totally different. In other words I want to bring it on "my way" ! Isn't that a Sinatra song ? I just feel that the world needs to finally hear what I have to say ! Everyone else in the music business has, why not Joe Hasselvander ? I currently have put together a touring band around "The Hounds" album with the help of Gary Isom (drums) ex- Spirit Caravan, Unorthodox, Iron Man and Kayt Vigil (bass) ex- Slyzak, Hatchet Face. We have been doing real Heavy one off gigs up and down the eastern seaboard of the U.S. and getting a fantastic response and fan base ! I actually played two double-header gigs with "The Hounds" and "Raven" that were highly successful. We also did a New Years Eve gig in Western Maryland and had Bobby Liebling come on at the end as a special guest to sing two songs that I wrote for Pentagram "Petrified" and "The Ghoul". The crowd went mental !

Both of your albums have been released through Rock Saviour that is linked with Iron Pegasus Records, could you tell us who is behind the label exactly ? Will you record new materials through this label ?

Rock Saviour Records is a new German label started by Costa Stoios who also currently runs Iron Pegasus Records, a kind of Gothic Death Metal label catering to the gloomier side of Thrash. I actually enjoy some of his bands. He has great taste in music, new and old ! Rock Saviour is his valiant attempt to create a high-end type label featuring classic Metal style groups with great audio recordings. So far he is doing a fantastic job and is signing some killer bands yet to be released that will make your head spin ! I am proud to work with him and we think a lot alike ! Working with Costa is more like a partnership than some sort of cold agreement. He is very receptive to all marketing and artistic ideas from his bands.

I will also be recording my follow up album in the fall of '08 on his label !



In 1986 you did the drumming for "Day Of Reckoning" in Pentagram that is a classic Doom release now. Even the cover is a classic I should say. What is your regard on this release and how was the recording session ?

To be truthful, the original version of that album features Stuart Rose on the drums and I actually only played on "Burning Saviour". It was later when Peaceville records signed the band and it's entire back catalogue, that I was asked to replace Stuart's drums with mine and to simply just play over his tracks. That was like pulling teeth because his meter was all over the place and nothing like mine. It was very unnatural, to say the least !

Let's keep on this topic, while you were drummer in Pentagram you were also playing with Phantom Lord that was a Speed Metal band. Both bands had a drastically different musically view, hence was it hard to switch from one to the other and to keep a slow tempo with Pentagram ? I guess it was really exciting playing so many different kind of Metal ?

Absolutely ! I like to play any kind of music that is high energy. As long as it fits my style.

To close the chat with Phantom Lord that band split after the recording of the "Evil Never Stops", what were the reasons as the combo was really great and offered crushing tunes ?

Phantom Lord is one of those mysterious little albums I did with Jack Starr along with devil child for Dutch East Records. They both were recorded in about 3 hours over two weekends. As for the second Phantom Lord album I had nothing to do with it ! It seems Jack found some more suckers to do his dirty work on that one. I once again, like a lot of the ideas that came out of both Phantom Lord and Devil Child even if all the tracks were done in one take and the mistakes that were made had to stay on the recordings because of the time constraints and miniscule \$200 budget. Other than that, I sometimes get a kick out of throwing one of those platters on my turntable and head banging to it. I am instantly transported back to 1984 !

All along your long and extensive musical background, what were the most exciting moments as a member of bands ? What were the best gig you've ever played and the worst of it ?

The most exciting moment for me was with Raven on the Kreator / Raven tour and we woke up in Madrid to find out we were playing to 50,000 people that night along side my favourite Spanish Heavy Metal band, Baron Rojo ! The best gig I ever played where I actually played well and the venue was great as well as the audience had to be the German festival "Bang Your Head" 2006. That show was fully documented and is out now on DVD ! The worst gig I ever played was with Pentagram in Wilmington Delaware in 1987 at this horrible little club that I don't even know the name of. The gig was sold out but the minute we hit the first ungodly loud crash

chord the place emptied out like a cattle stampede. When we asked the owner for our pay, they pulled guns on us !!! That scene was kind of like death eating a cracker.

Joe, as you probably started to listen to Hard Rock in the early days of Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Black Coven and Judas Priest I'd like you to describe the vibe that was around this new form of music. How did you get



into the beginning of Hard Rock and how old were you ?

Everything starting from 1965 to present has been ultra exciting for me as far as music is concerned. Not much has changed really since '65 except the volume level. I was 6 years old when I first saw the Stones on television. That was it. I immediately formed what was to become my first very successful local band "The Midnight Riders". People thought it was remarkable seeing such a young kid bashing the drums and of course we had two ultra-sexy go-go dancers complete with frilly mini dresses and matching white go-go boots. What got me in to Heavy music was seeing Blue Cheer for the first time in 1968 on American TV. That's when my hair grew down to my ass and I started playing double bass drums. That's also when the decibels got turned up through the roof. It's funny how life creates these weird full circle situations because in 2005 I performed my first time on drums with the great Blue Cheer in Laconia, new Hampshire and recorded 6 of the 10 tracks of their brand new album "What Doesn't Kill You" !!! For me, it's almost like an episode of "The Twilight Zone".

Thence few years after Heavy Metal broke ground with albums like "Metal Heath" and "Killer" that opened gates to something heavier and harsher, do you remember what was your first Heavy Metal release you had and how did you feel when you listened for the first time tunes like "Cum On Feel The Noise"/"Metal Heath", "Wrathchild", "Angel Witch" from Angel Witch ?

To me there were so many heavier bands than this in the '70s for instance the song you mentioned "Cum On Feel The Noise" was originally written and recorded by the 70's band Slade. Their version is thousands of times heavier and cooler than the Quiet Riot version. I do admit that the bands you're talking about did turn the music business around and take it out of the disco rut it had been in for almost a decade. I suppose my favourites from that time were Quartz, Angel Witch, Fist, Raven and who can forget Witchfinder General ? Yeah ! Those were exciting times, Metal ruled.

What is your regard on the evolution (or should I say heavy-tution) of Heavy Metal through nearly 40 years both as a fan and a musician ? What are the most impressing bands that really astonished you since the 70's ? Is there a band you'd would have been member of ?

I would loved to have played for Sabbath, Alice Cooper, Priest, The Sweet. Too many to mention. If you saw my sacred record collection you would be crushed from the heaviness represented there. I have been lucky enough to play with many of my rock idols or at least open for them. I found that I can match my guns to theirs anytime.

Let keep on this topic, as you are rotten to Heaven Metal and loud music, I'd like you to name your five most heavy albums of all time ?

How do you see the current Metal scene with all the different range of Metal from classic NWOBHM to Neo Metal (that according to me isn't Metal at all) and what are the bands that really astonished you through their evolution ?

My all time heaviest picks would have to be : "Vincebus Eruptum" Blue Cheer/ "Outside Inside" Blue Cheer/ "Master Of Reality" Black Sabbath/ "Budgie" Budgie/ "Sir Lord Baltimore" Sir Lord Baltimore. As far as the current popular Metal bands, I think you have to disqualify anything put out by the mainstream media. Today the real stuff can only be found in the under-

ground or independent label realm of music. I've visited underground band websites on Myspace that have some of the coolest heavy groups I've ever heard. Some of them are signed, some of them are not. People nowadays don't always consume what the media tries to force down their throats. The fans want something real without drum machines and idiots rapping about "the hood" over top of mindless repetition. I personally am also done with all the cookie monster vocalists who take a perfectly good instrumental arrangement and ruin it with growling noises that are supposed to scare us. Sorry. It only makes me want to knock their backwards ball caps off their heads. Who ever told them that. What they were doing was in any way close to adequate ? Give me a break. As for who had the greatest musical progressions throughout their career, that would have to be Black Sabbath.

At least in the world of Metal. They never sold out and they've been around now the longest. They were never afraid to break new ground and always managed to keep their integrity. Not too many bands can say that about themselves.

I think that you might know "Spinal Tap" movie. I guess you might have funny stories like in this movie through your different musical experiences, could you relate us one or two of them ?

A real good one happened to me and Raven just recently in Spain, when Mark Gallagher missed his flight and because of that he missed all his connecting flights to Madrid. We had to go on last at 2:00 am because of this. After countless bands had played this huge festival there were only 2000 people left when there had been 10,000 earlier in the day. We played one song and then they pulled the plug on us in the middle of the 2nd song. It seems the mayor of the town wanted us to stop because of the late hour so we stormed off the stage and then suddenly we're asked by the same mayor to come back to the stage because the audience loved us and he thought we were great also.

So at that point we hit the stage again and within five seconds they pull the plug again like saying to us "you didn't like it the first time did you?". Well, you're really going to hate it the second time. Hahahahahahahaha !!! That was pretty Spinal Tap. I'm having an anxiety attack thinking about it now.

You're the current drummer of Raven, as this combo is one of the pioneer of NWOBHM I'd like to know how Gallagher's brothers approached you and how was your first jam with them ?

I was playing drums for legendary blues rockers Savoy Brown and they put the vocalist and I up in a house in upstate New York that Raven just happened to live in. This is how I met John and Mark Gallagher. We had the same taste in obscure British bands from the '70s and became fast friends. One week after I recorded "Roadkill" I received a call from John telling me that Rob "Wacko" Hunter had left the band and that they wanted me to play on their new demo that they were to record at the famous Bearsville studios in New York. Right away we had that magic chemistry although at first I wasn't used

to playing so many parts in one song but after all, that is their "athletic rock" take on music. Raven took me to the limits of my drumming which is exactly what I had always needed to break big in this business. Raven has taken me places I would have never seen as an entertainer and I am really thankful to them for that. Although it's debatable to some, I seriously don't believe Pentagram would have gotten this much exposure without Raven's help either.

Thanks a lot for the answers Joe, feel the music loud and proud.... Hey thank you brother and doom on !!! (let's fucking rocked)

