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Steve Asheim interviewed by PSL

Many people probably thought with the Hoffmann brothers getting booted from Deicide, this would be the end of the band. Fortunately that wasn't the case, and with the addition of Jack Owen [formerly of Cannibal Corpse] and Ralph Santolla [formerly of Death], the quartet has clearly re-vitalized themselves, and there's no doubt *The Stench of Redemption* will surprise a lot of people. Drummer Steve Asheim recently called me from the Earache headquarter in England to discuss the new album, the addition of Jack and Ralph, The Hoffmann brothers as well as lots of other things.



**Pictured:** Steve Asheim

Musically it sounded like you peaked around *Once Upon the Cross*, and from thereon it was more or less just more of the same, but with *The Stench of Redemption* it's like you've been reborn. Where do you think you peaked with the old line-up?

Musically I think *Serpents of the Light* was kind of our peak. Back with the old records *Once Upon the Cross* was kind of the height of what our popularity was going to be at the time, so I think soundwise that album sounded great. I think it was great material, and I definitely think it was kind of my favourite of that period, but the peak musically I think that kind of happened on *Serpents of the Light* with that line-up in that era anyway, in the 90's.

With *The Stench of Redemption* is sounds like you've re-vitalized yourself. I assume the addition of Jack and Ralph has played a large part in this?

It's a growing part. I mean the addition of two very talented guitarists, like those guys, was invaluable to the new Deicide even happening and definitely to what *The Stench*

*of Redemption* sounds like, as far as the heavy emphasis on melody and leads and common guitar-work. You know the other stuff, everyone was kind of used to already the brutal drums, the brutal vocals, the hard riffing, but yeah the melody and the depth to which they can make the guitar-work feel is definitely all due to them being the new guys in definitely. That would not have been possible with the old line-up. I mean you heard where the old line-up was going, so...

The picture on the back of the promo CD is very similar to the one on the debut *Deicide*. Is there a meaning behind this gimmick?

[Laughs], yeah, Glen as a matter of fact, had the idea to go back and do that, and he probably have a couple of reasons, but the one as far as kind of making a statement as how this is kind of a new slate for us now. That was the beginning then, and this is kind of the beginning now, a new beginning, so the picture was a way to go about covertly getting that kind of point across and we'll see who notice this. You did, and only a few people have really asked about that. It's a subliminal kind of thing.

A lot of people keep saying this is not the real *Deicide* and so forth. Do you think the new album will make those people shout up?

Well, you know, people are into what they are going to say, and I understand how the Hoffmanns have their hardcore fans out there and that's fine. I think once people hear the record, they may change their minds. Yeah, it may not be the old *Deicide*. It's definitely a new *Deicide*, and I think the album is so promising that people going in and expecting it to suck and expecting not to like it because of two new guys will be liking it at the end of the day. So yeah, I think it will turn them around, definitely. People looking down on us lately will be able to see that we're back and give us a second chance.

I can't recall having heard a *Deicide* album with so many leads and epic stuff on before. I think it bears certain similarities with *Vital Remains*.

Well, I think that is a coincidence only in the way that when you have great guitarists working on records, great guitar stuff it's going to happen.

How much input has Jack and Ralph had on the song-writing?

Well, the song-writing they didn't really have much impact on it. I mean, I write the songs, I write the riffs. Me and Jack put them together. Ralph actually wasn't even there for the writing of the second half of the record, but he was sure there in the studio. A guy like Ralph doesn't really need to be there because the way he works... you got to understand the way people works and sometimes it's just not the way they work, but the way he works is he has the skills and he has the knowledge and he has a sense of music. He can hear something and immediately burst out an idea for it, so it's kind of how he worked on the record. It was very spontaneous, and it kind of sounds that way and that's how it got that fresh feel that the album has. It's because a lot of the stuff was spawned in the moment and spontaneously done.

Did any of the songs that Tony Lazaro wrote make it onto the album?

That Tony Lazaro wrote?

Yes, Glen told me that Tony had written some songs when I met him in 2004!

Well, not for *Deicide*. No, so we've never done anybody else's songs.

When I spoke to Glen in 2004 it sounded like both Dave Suzuki and Tony Lazaro would join Deicide on a permanent basis. What happened?

Yes, at that time that is what he wanted to happen because he's known those guys and he's obviously done the Vital Remains record and wanted those guys to be in Deicide, but those guys were Vital Remains, and they didn't want to give that up. They are Vital Remains and don't want to be anything else, so whatever Glen was looking forward to at that time and whatever you may have heard just didn't work out. So we had to pursue what we had to do so that is whatever this is now ended coming about.

If I'm not mistaken every single Deicide album has been recorded in Morrisound Studios. A lot of bands go from studio to studio! Any particular reason why you stick to Morrisound?

Yes, because we all live in the town there, and it's a great studio. We kind of like to watch expenses. There's no reason to go to some far out studio or country to write up expenses. I mean if you want to work with a certain producer, and he won't leave won't leave the studio, and this and that that's one thing, but we really don't work with producers we produce it ourselves. I produced this record pretty much, and we can't do that in any studio and, the engineers, the Morris brothers, over in Morrisound are great, and it's a world class studio with world class people, so there's no need to go anywhere else for us. I mean, we're comfortable there. They know us, we know them, and it's just a great relationship we got with that studio so yeah we'll do our next record there too and the next after that.

With the exception of *Scars of the Crucifix* you've always used either Scott Burns or Jim Morris as engineer/producer, but you used Neil Kernon last time. This time you went with Jim Morris. Why was that?

Being with Earache on that first record, they were kind of hot to make things different and shake thing up a bit. They thought brining in a producer because they had worked with Neil before a few times, and he was like a new name in the scene and kind of get that name attached to us. I think it was a good idea at the time and just the way the scheduling worked out the outcome could have been made more efficiently I would say, but Neil is a great guy of course, and we got a great product with him, but as far as working together in the future it probably won't happen because we don't need to be produced by anyone. I mean we know what we want to sound like.

*Scars of the Crucifix* had this bonus DVD coming with the album. Have you done something similar or special this time too?

We were planning on getting some extra DVD footage and stuff like that, but not much of that ever happened, but I'm sure as a record company Earache has plans about some kind of special packing and something to make the package worthy of being bought. I mean that's what they do, that's their goal. Maybe not a DVD this time, but there could be an extra DVD down the road at some point.

How did the Deep Purple cover "Black Night" come about?

It came about because Glen had been toying around with the idea for three years about doing a cover song, but no one was into it. The Hoffmanns weren't into it, I wasn't really into it either, but when Ralph and Jack came into the picture, he mentioned it to them, and they were both into it. I at the point said: 'well, since I'm the only one who's not into it I'll just go along and do it because these guys want to'. So

the song itself Glen picked it and kind of worked it the original way and for me that just wouldn't work out. The slowness of it - what kind of drove me into playing extreme drums in the first place was not having to play slow stuff like that, but the idea of still doing a cover was cool. We played around with it a bit and what we did was that we turned it into a Deicide song. We turned it into a death metal song and changed up a few things, the speed and the time signature and just went nuts with it and to kind of further that story we have not had permission to put it out in Europe because word came down directly from Deep Purple's management who heard the song and said it's just too far out, and we don't want you to put it out, but in the US they somehow found a way around that so it will make it out somehow. People will end up hearing it in Europe somehow eventually.

As I understand the album was supposed to have been released on the 6th of June. What happened?

We went into the studio and were recording, and we didn't really hear about the plan to release it on 6/6/6 until we were already in the studio, and we never really thought about it, and they kind of sprung the idea on us a little too late otherwise we could have made that happen. As it was we had already to shows booked, about two weeks of shows on the west coast of the U.S. and so that was going to interfere with studio time and everybody knew it. If we could have finished the record before we went they may could have gotten it out to 6/6/6, but the scheduling of the studio being what it was everybody still knew we weren't going to get it out in time for that, but Earache being a record company and thrive on stuff like hype and something like the 6/6/6 release date is something they cannot afford to pass up so that being what it is they were able to release that internet EP, the two songs, and I'm glad they did it because it was a lot of publicity, and I liked it because I'm happy with the record, and I wanted to get some of it out there as soon as possible, and I think that was a good way to go about it, and it went down great. It was a great teaser and perhaps it will hold them over until it comes out in August.



**Pictured:** Deicide

You released a DVD earlier this year. Was it important to get it out and show that there still was a Deicide after the Hoffmann brothers got the boot?

Yeah, it's definitely important to make people sure that you're not broken up, because most people had probably thought that, and we had plans to make a DVD with the Hoffmann brothers, but they were just not going with it. I mean they signed the contract, then they started threatening to beat up the cameramen if they showed up and stupid shit like that. It's like: 'why are you even in the band if you don't want to put stuff out?' that whole brought over and did what it did, and only because they left were we able to put out a DVD in the first place.

Do you or Glen have had any contact with the Hoffmans?

I do, but Glen didn't really have much contact with the Hoffmanns when they were in the band. I haven't talked to Brian in years. I haven't really talked to Eric lately. I talked to him once or so and he just... I don't want to say too much and come out and bash him but he went on the internet and bashed the hell out of me that's for sure, so if I tell the guy is out there doing nothing and probably won't be doing anything it ain't a lie. I'm sure you haven't heard about them doing anything because he's not doing anything.

Yeah I was wondering because they've been pretty much silent since the departure!

Yeah, besides getting on the internet and making an idiot out of himself he's been pretty silent, and that is probably going to continue because that I know of he's not getting another band together and doesn't plan on it. I don't even think he has a guitar to practice on. I don't know what he's deal is. He calls me ever once in a while and it's just pathetic let me say that so...

What about touring? Any chance of seeing you on tour in Europe any time soon?

Yeah, I know we've had some trouble over here in Europe for seemingly an endless amount of time. We rode through here some time last December, November, October or somewhere around that. But we have plans for one so once this new record is out we definitely plan on touring over here. We have some plans in the works to tour with Vader in January I think. We're going to see if we can get that kind of bumped up for Christmas time, but yeah there we will be over here at some point definitely and we'll be playing the shit out of the new material and plenty of the old stuff too so fans who were disappointed by previous shows and cancellations and stuff... I mean I sure understand why they are pissed, and once they hear the new record I think they will hear a new spark in Deicide, and I hope they cut us some slack and come back out to the shows. We for sure are going to give them a great show.

Wasn't there talk about you touring Europe in July?

Yeah, we had it scheduled, but it didn't pan out, and I tell you there is a lot of behind the scenes stuff that probably no one really cares to hear about all they know is that we didn't show up for something we were scheduled for, but in sense we were kind of pined into a corner with a guy who we were doing the tour with. He stood us up for information and were supposed to do something and didn't and went ahead and published dates online that we hadn't confirmed which kind of locked us in publicly and he tried to put us in this position, where we were locked into something and at the end of the day Glen Benton isn't going to sit still for that kind of thing so with the new agent we have involved these kinds of problems are hopefully a thing of the past. We certainly don't anymore plan on booking tours and cancel them for no reason.

Anything you wish to add to conclude this interview?

It's been a while since we played in Denmark. I think we played the Pumpehuset when we were over there. We have some great fans there, and I love going to Denmark. I think the Konkhra guys are from there? We toured with them, so watch out for those guys. We will definitely be coming back, so we hope everyone comes out. Hope you enjoy the record!