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HELL HATH NO FURY LIKE A DEICIDE REBORN



It has been more or less two months since Eviltion Magazine last threw a mammoth chunk of well-tenderised churchman's meat before all the bible bashers and confessional malefactors out there. If memories should fail, what we had on offer was a very, very, very, very, very blasphemous interview with former Deicide string-cuddler Eric Hoffman (which can be accessed elsewhere in our interview section). So, after such a short while, what is there to rabbit on about as to the following week-old dialogue with firearm aficionado and firearm blastbeater Steve Asheim from Florida's finest fiendists? Not much else than that *The Stench of Redemption*, their second album release on Earache, could well turn out to be the first huge-ass nail in the coffin of Benedict XVI as well as one hell of a defiant fingerfuck to those who believed not in the second advent of these veteran Sunshine State iconoclasts. Without further irrelevancies, here is to the Horned One and the blood-famished bandsmen he convoked one star-crossed eve in 1987...

"Hi, this is Steve from Deicide."

Hello, Steve! How are you?

"I'm doing fine, thanks."

So, would this be interview # 1,000,000 for today?

"Well, we've done a lot of interviews so far this weekend, but today we've just been screwing around the office doing DJ stuff and so on."

Which standard question about Deicide bothers you the most?

"Probably all this about the Hoffman situation, I guess. It's really gone ugly and I'd rather just forget about the whole thing."

What is the high point of your career up to now?

"I think that recording this album is really a high point of what I've done so far. Show-wise, we played a really big festival out there in South Korea about a year ago. That was pretty much a highlight. We were headlining to about 30,000 people out on the beach with 20-foot flames shooting out all over the place. That was definitely a highlight as far as playing live goes, for sure."

To what extent and in what sense can *The Stench of Redemption* be seen as a step forward from the previous record, *Scars of the Crucifix*?

"I would say that there are a lot of differences and advancements. The playing, the production, the songwriting; it feels more completed. Not that *Scars of the Crucifix* was polished, but this new record is definitely not as polished. Have you heard it yet?"

Unfortunately, no. What I've heard so far are the two tracks from the online 06.06.06 release...

"Right, people have told me that the iTunes releases were a bit sketchy at some points, but I haven't heard them myself. But yeah, the new work is definitely – not even steps – but entire leaps and bounds ahead of our previous catalogue, even *Scars of the Crucifix*. We've been sort of building up to that kind of playing, at least drum-wise. This is in a way the accumulation of my skills over the years. I was able to play everything I wanted to do and more on this record, so I'm super happy about that."

A few people have compared the new material to the *Legion* album. Do you agree with that view?

"Well, I definitely think it has the energy and the fire of *Legion*; the fire that we had when we were young. The new line-up and the freshness that the new guitarists have brought in helped to kind of 're-fire' us up. I think that a lot of that newfound energy and motivation can be heard on the record. But also, because a lot of people consider *Legion* to be a rather complex record, I think they recognise some of that complexity in the riffs on the new record, and that's how they correlate the two. In my opinion, some of the new stuff sounds trickier than it really is, but since we wrote it and know it like the backs of our hands, we may just be used to that feel of complexity."

Have Jack Owen and Ralph Santolla brought any specific musical flavour to the Deicide sound?

"They've definitely expanded on the sound and helped to create the new vibe that can be heard on the record. They brought a lot of new ideas to the table. As far as the music goes, I wrote all of it for this record, but when they heard the songs, they were able to just stack their own ideas on top of that. And there was no end to it, it seemed. They were coming up with leads from the first day we started playing these songs; coming up with their own harmonies and generally an endless flow of guitar-oriented embellishments. They said to me: 'Hey, if you hear something you don't like, just let us know and we'll not play that'. They pretty much just went for it, and I didn't hear much that I didn't like."

If you were to choose a favourite album from the Deicide back catalogue, which one would it be, *The Stench of Redemption* not being an option?

"Yeah, everyone is sick of hearing me say that it's my favourite record already! [laughs]. I'd have to say *Once Upon the Cross* and for many of the same reasons that I would pick *The Stench of Redemption*. A lot of things came together right for that record. The songs were well-written, as well as the production and sound of the record were good. We still had a good amount of enthusiasm. I think it was a good third record so I would have to pick that. Also, the material on *Serpents of the Light* comes close to it even though it kind of lacked in the sound. *Legion* is a great album but it also lacks in the sound department. Yeah, and the first record is full of classics too... I hate to call my own stuff classic and all that stuff, but it's been said to me so many times, and that's what people think of it. Deicide fans, anyway. So, I really like them all."

Does that mean you can listen to *Insineratehymn* and *In Torment in Hell* and appreciate them for what they are today?

"Well, that was a weird time, and I haven't actually listened to *Insineratehymn* in a few years. I simply don't have it. I have a few copies of *In Torment in Hell*, and I listen to it every once in a while with the knowledge of what went on in that particular era. I can take that personally into consideration as to what those albums mean to me. They were not recorded in the best of times for the band, so they were obviously not the best of records for the band either. One thing impacts the other."

What makes Deicide a death metal band of their own?

"Glen Benton, of course, is the main thing that sets us apart from other death metal bands – and he always has been. He may be getting older and mellower, but the guy is still just out of control – and always has been! [laughs]. That's just the way he is. Another thing that sets us apart, in a more musical way, is that we always strive to be brutally fast, heavy and all that, but at the same time come across catchy and understandable, using stuff with a nice flow that doesn't feel choppy. So, I would say that the fast, yet catchy riff is a musical trait that sets us aside. Not that other bands aren't catchy or anything, but that's how I've always tried to approach what we do."

What is the biggest misconception of Deicide and Glen Benton?

"I think there's a pretty one going around out there which claims that he's a Christian and shit. I think that's a pretty good misconception. We can go out there and say about a lot of things that they are misconceptions, but perhaps there is some truth to it. As far as tours and cancellations go and that we are difficult to work with and manage... Back in the day, when we were all young, pissed-off and angry young men, doing what we did, sure, I guess we were definitely hard to deal with sometimes. I don't fault anyone on whatever feelings they have on that, but nowadays we are sort of trying to put that misconception behind us. With all the inner-band turmoil being done and over with, we can really focus on what's important which is creating good new music and hitting the road in support of it instead of ditching tours, cancelling shows and getting screwed by people. Just really having everything under control."

Ever since the release of the self-titled debut album Deicide have observed an express anti-Christian agenda. In these days and times, however, would it not make more sense in terms of working as a musical channel for a Satanic mindset and thus a self-sufficient and autonomous outlook on life to lash out at religion as a whole?

"Well, I think that from Glen's perspective, in that he was in particular scarred by Christianity as a child, it has always made sense to have that as a target. I mean, he wasn't tortured or persecuted by Muslims. His personal experience derives from anti-Christianity. That's what he grew up around. As you grow older and develop a mature mind, you can accept current events and take them in. And sure, it would be a good way to go, because that's how I feel about the whole thing. If you have to make fun of and ridicule one religion, all religions deserve the same. Why not? You could make a concept album and pick out any religion in the world and write a song about how ignorant they are. That would piss everyone of."

What fuels your anger, and how does it materialise in Deicide?

"I started in this band as an angry young man, for sure, and I've had my experiences with seeing how false and phoney church and religion are. So I've had no problem with bashing them around – fine with me! What drove me to anger was the realisation of how hard life can be at a young age, which resulted in the self-realisation of a kind of self-reliance, so to speak. When you realise that no one is going to lift a finger for you, and you are literally going to get fucked over by everyone you ever meet, and that you can really not trust anyone at any point, you become in truth self-reliant, and in turn you realise that you're not going to be able to rely on any kind of religion or that kind of bullshit, and that if you're sitting around and waiting for things to get better, it's not going to happen. You've got to do it yourself. That fuelled me and to this day I'm still extremely self-reliant. I sort of got all my shit under control because of it. Today I still don't need this or that to function; I just need for me to be in control."

So, the meaning of the name Deicide as in 'the killing of a god' could well translate into this idea of exterminating outer influences and regulations in order to take control of and becoming the god of your own life?

"Sure, sure. You're killing the reliance. Everyone can have their own take on things and I can give you mine: For Deicide, the killing of Christ and the killing of all religion and beliefs centres on the idea that once you've wiped all that away from the world, you can make everyone realise that there isn't anything to look forward to. Sitting around and hoping... That day is over. So you better get off of your ass, get out there and make something happen, because no one will make it happen for you."

What spurred you on to become a musician back in the days?

"Hell, music itself. That's always kind of connected with it. I heard things I liked early, and it kind of always just went that way. As a child, you have a lot of interests. You hang on to a couple of them for a few months, and then it sort of dies away as a personal fad, and music was just one thing that never went away – ever – and it was there from a very young age. Like I said, music itself got me on to it, and it was always the hard rock of the day. I started listening to music when I was seven or so, and it was not just kids' music. It was the rock music of the 70's; that was what I grew up with. All the heavier stuff from those days: Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. All that stuff as well as Queen and Kiss when I was very young. Then it became the 80's and I started listening to the early thrash and crossover stuff of those days. In the mid-80's with speed and power metal and all the other different forms of metal you had out there. At that point I was ready to jump in there myself, playing drums for this or that band. Then the evolution of death metal came around from thrash and speed metal... So I can pretty much trace the direct lineage of metal all the way back. It was the music itself that drove me."

How is the chemistry in the band different now; not as much in the sense of what the Hoffman brothers took out of the band but more in terms of what Ralph and Jack have brought into it?

"Well, the obvious tension that was always around is gone, so that just makes things a whole lot easier to deal with. Every situation from the travelling to the playing and the practising... All these kinds of arrangements as well as the financial side of it have got to click in order to make a thing like this work. With the new guys in it makes everything run so much smoother. Everything is pleasure now, and everybody looks forward to going on the road and going to practice. Well, not everyone... [laughs]. 'Ralpho' doesn't like to practise much, but then he really doesn't need much practice. He's rather weird in that sense, but I've got to hand it to him. It's about 110 degrees where we practise so he isn't much into that. He's always prepared and can play the shit whenever we need him to."

When did it turn out that Dave Suzuki was not to be in the band after all?

"He basically just helped us with that one tour we did the DVD for. Glen had wanted both Dave and Tony [Lazaro] from Vital Remains to become guitarists for Decide, but Dave was really into the Vital thing. I mean, they're Vital Remains and they don't want to be Decide. So Dave helped out for that one tour, and it worked out great. Horns up for Dave; he's a great guy as well as an awesome guitarist, and I'm glad he was on that DVD. It really captures that period of time. The main thing is that they just wanted to be Vital Remains."

How come the bonus material from the special edition of *Scars of the Crucifix* was also included on said DVD, considering the current and ongoing controversies with the Hoffman brothers?

"You know, that's a good question. They had some extra features that they wanted to put on that DVD. Some of it was an actual show with the Hoffman brothers, but to tell you the truth it was unreleasable because of the performances. We could have put it out if we wanted to, but in my opinion it was just not up to standard. So they had to have something else to put on there as a special feature, so they decided to throw that DVD documentary back on there. In retrospect, though, they were saying to us that they had wanted it to be on there. It was a pivotal moment in Decide history, if you will, where the DVD kind of shows that transitional period; these were the original guys and 'boom!' Here is this change with two new guys in the band. Or actually, it's only one new guy who stuck around for this new record. *The Stench of Redemption* is still sort of elaborating on the band story in terms of the line-up and whatnot. So, with the new record – and possibly another DVD – we have sort of made a story out of the whole process."

Can the new record be seen as a testament to the fact that Decide are stronger than ever?

"Definitely, yes. It is absolutely satisfying to me personally to be able to make this record in the time frame that we did it and to have it sound the way it does. Like I said, I think it's our best album to date. So far a lot of people have gotten really into it, and no one has disagreed with me yet. Yeah, it's definitely a testament to that after the trouble we've had, and after the amount of time we've been around. It feels great to be able to put something out that still sounds fresh and relevant in this entire 'wash' of metal that is everywhere – and that when people think we're done. So for us to still be current when everyone thinks that we're just old and done with is definitely satisfying."

Why did you decide to do a rendition of Deep Purple's "Black Night", which – as far as I know – is the first cover song in the history of Deicide?

"It's the first cover we ever did, yeah. Glen had been throwing around the idea of doing a cover for a couple of years, but the Hoffman brothers never wanted to do one; and to tell you the truth I never really wanted to do one either. However, when the new guys joined the band, Glen brought it up again, and both Jack and Ralph were totally into it. So at that point I was kind of outvoted so I decided to go along with it. They picked "Black Night" and we worked with the original version of it, and I was just really not into it. We ended up switching it around and turning it into a death metal song – and that I can deal with. I've heard that the guys from Deep Purple's management got to listen to it and said 'Whoa, you can't put that out?!' [laughs]. As a result they put the brakes on it here in Europe, but somehow we were able to get it out in the States. So, it's going to make it out; and it will be leaked out everywhere no matter what. That's the story of that cover. I don't know if there will be any more in the future. Maybe, but I'm sure we'll 'deicide' it up if we do."

Will Deicide still be at the Christ-hacking and Christ-slashing business in ten years?

"Hopefully, we will still be active because I still love what I do, and I'm still in a good enough shape to do it. If I can still be recording and doing all this stuff in ten years, that would be great with me. I would have no problem with that at all, since I'm not looking forward to retirement or any other kind of line-up work. Plus, I plan on being alive for quite a while... So why not?"

Conducted and written by Misereion.