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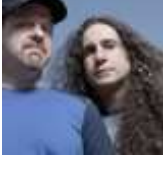
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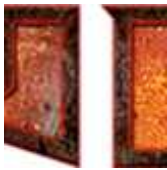
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## Interview

December 20, 2011

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Vocalist Jason McMaster has his influence throughout every genre of heavy



metal, truly a veteran of glam to slam. In the early to mid '80s McMaster fronted metal innovators, WatchTower. WatchTower's first album, *Energetic Disassembly* (at right), was quite possibly heavy metal's first progressive metal record, influencing everyone from the members of Dream Theater to Death Angel. WatchTower was intense, complex and ... incredibly original. From there, McMaster moved on to sleaze rockers Dangerous Toys — a late -'80s hair metal- sounding outfit. Dangerous Toys seemed heavily indebted to Guns N' Roses but the band never took themselves too seriously. Most of the material consisted of top-notch, tongue-in-cheek, party songs. A far cry from McMaster's WatchTower beginnings.

Various formations of WatchTower and Dangerous Toys have been on and off for years, but McMaster keeps plugging



away as a strong metal veteran. His latest project, Evil United, is a five piece of experienced metal musicians (McMaster on vocals, Don Van Stavern on bass, Jason West on drums, and Todd Connally and John Valenzuela on guitars) verging on extreme metal, in places sounding like early death metal, and, according to McMaster, taking a lot of influence from the NWOBHM (New Wave of British Heavy Metal ) days. The recently released self-titled debut is drenched in these elements.

The following is an interview with Jason McMaster:

**Let's talk about the past a little. WatchTower were clearly ahead of their time. Do you think fans of progressive metal realize the band's place in history?**

**Jason McMaster:** In the beginning, WatchTower was like all the other metalheads who wanted to play their fave covers of Maiden and Priest and all that. We liked to do the obscure Accept and Raven songs, Tygers of Pan Tang, etc.. but, plenty of Rush and others were there.

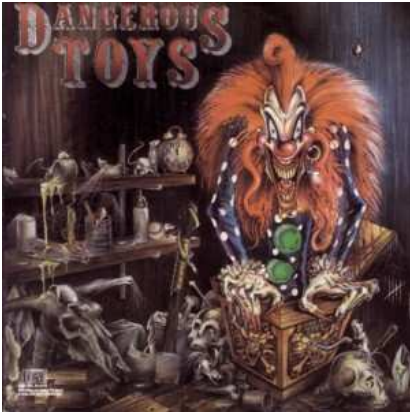
At that time and for years into our own material, fans were just into the fact we had good, fun, crazy songs. No one, even the band, would ever know 'til much later that we were creating a new style of metal or even progressive music. I personally knew that the WatchTower guys were extreme musicians and still in high school. I was secretly so very proud of that. I want to say when Mike Portnoy and Chuck Schuldiner would say in the press how influential WatchTower was to their music — that's when i would realize it was real.

**Why did the band members split off? Your take on it, that is.**

**McMaster:** The band never split. Billy White (guitarist, founding member) wanted to play a different, wider range of guitar. I left to sing rock 'n' roll with Dangerous Toys, but not until Ron Jarzombek joined on guitar, and he and Doug started writing. I helped them get a new singer — first Mike Soliz from Militia, and then finally recorded the second record with Alan Tecchio (Hades, Non-Fiction) on vocals. The third record is a mystery as to why it hasn't been released. It's been recorded and re-recorded many times. It's on a shelf somewhere in Texas.

**Were your fans of WatchTower surprised when you left and fronted Dangerous Toys?**

**McMaster:** Yes, some were pissed off, and had no idea how to react. They felt something. I like that part of it, it meant a lot to them, but, I had to explain that same feeling to myself. Leaving WatchTower wasn't easy. Being in a new band with peeps I barely knew was wild as well. But, it's something I do not regret. I was so very pleased to be able to do some WatchTower shows a decade later in Germany and Holland.



**Dangerous Toys' fame shot up pretty quick. Do you feel that this had its plus and minuses?**

**McMaster:** Definitely. The machine was oiled up and shooting us up very fast. But, the summer of '89 is an awesome moment for music. Things were changing. You can say we had a killer record, and we did, but all of it is fleeting either way. From clubs to arenas in less than a year — on the first record — and then feeling wrong about leaving a selling tour of large proportions to record songs you haven't even written yet, all the labels decision, opened our eyes the first time. We didn't want the first tour to end at all. Even after eleven months straight.

Lars Ulrich told me once — he won't even remember this — he told me it happened too fast, and how could it last. It was no secret that the fame of Guns N' Roses was the reason that a lot of those class of '89 releases would either do really well, then lose total grip, or just come out and drown.

**What are you most proud of, WatchTower or Dangerous Toys?**

**McMaster:** It gave me a career in music. WatchTower is the band I cut my teeth in, and showed me what integrity was, playing the music I want to play, but the Toys thing showed me more of that. It showed me how and where and how my integrity — in any style of music — needs to be there on any level. Sure, the gold records are fun, but those are more like bad ass bowling trophies.

**You were one of the metal musicians in the '80s who spoke out against using the term "poser."**

**Because you always had an eclectic taste in metal. Does that still apply?**

**McMaster:** It's important to wear the badge you rode in wearing. Don't change your colors just to fit in. That's metal, but it's that integrity thing again. Waiting for your fave song to come on the radio is posing, and/or lazy. Owning the record and having it in your arsenal of kick ass music for you to bathe in whenever you feel like, and not wait for a DJ to help you get your groove. Speaking out against something is one thing, but art comes in any form. It's making quality music of a style that you might be unfamiliar with, and being able to bring something to the table is just creating art but with your heart and soul. It is the most important thing. Creating something that doesn't grasp those ideas, isn't creating at all.

**Do you feel Evil United takes some musical influences from those past bands?**

**McMaster:** I think so, but it has the new production value to add something fresh. A lot of reviews have put the New Wave of British Heavy Metal tag on Evil United, and most have noticed the newish feel and sound.

**Do you feel you get a lot of fans from those past bands, coming to Evil United shows, buying the new album?**

**McMaster:** Yes. a lot of Toys fans, who were also WatchTower fans. Evil United still has yet to play more than

ten shows. We hope to get more under our belt in the new year. We are also writing new material.

**Would you consider Evil United death metal? The name and music suggests it. Or would you like to defy genres?**

**McMaster:** No, I think that elements of the genre are there, and should only indicate we are fans of extreme music. I feel Evil United is extreme but its covering a lot of ground, not one speed or style. Omnivorous. Lots of peaks and valleys being explored, without losing the old school metal style.

**Evil United has a lot of experienced musicians. Does this make things easier? What do they bring to the table?**

**McMaster:** You know it's gonna be good quality writing and recording. It's a problem that all of us are so busy with other bands and projects, but it also makes it easy to write and record and not even have to be in the same room. Digital recording has made this a weird industry since the old days.

**How did the band come together? Explain some of the other projects you are involved in.**

**McMaster:** I've known these guys forever. They're all San Antonio, Texas metal alumni. Don van Stavern, bassist, is in Riot, and was in San Antonio Slayer back in the early '80s, played with WatchTower alot, before they broke up after they played with Slayer from Los Angeles. That's a legendary moment around here. But, Don and these guys had a band in the '90s called Pittbull Daycare. They lost their singer of ten years plus, and asked me if I wanted to write with them. A couple of years later, here we are.

Other things I have going: Broken Teeth at twelve years and six records out and counting. I front the power metal band, Ignitor, with a new record about to pop called *Year of the Metal Tiger*.

**You're a veteran now. Is there still a good metal scene in Texas? What about the changing metal scene in America? Compared to Europe?**

**McMaster:** There is so much metal now. Texas, sure, probably more in the New Jersey/New York area but its a scene. Austin, of all places, isn't known as a metal town, but there is a lot of it. Classic metal styles are not in abundance, mainly Death Metal, I think, which has produced some insane drumming in Texas. I am sure it's like that all over: young metalheads learning blast beats. I love it, but, it's one thing. I would say Europe has the rest of the world beat on more metal than anywhere else in the universe. And all styles.

**Was there ever a time when you wanted to change careers, away from music?**

**McMaster:** No way. I have friends that have tried to give it all up completely, only to want back in a year later and wonder why they did that. It's all about when you get older and you think you're sick of not getting paid and you want to be comfortable in all forms and not worry about silly small shit. But, you miss it, because of the way the music makes you feel inside. That's the only reason to play music. It's not only a job/career. It's an emotion-evoking spirit that can be part of your soul.

**What about tours and immediate future plans?**

**McMaster:** I teach vocals at the School of Rock in Austin. The school is a corporate school (50 schools nationwide) run grassroots style. That's my "day job" and its awesome. Ages 8-18. and then there are the ton of bands I am in. So...I got not time to dilly-dally.

**What would you like fans to take from Evil United?**

**McMaster:** Get the record if you love thrash. [You can order the record here]



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