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Fastway Returns After Two Decades With A Powerful Guitar Induced Album

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By: Paul Barrel



After 21 years, Fast Eddie Clarke, as Fastway, has released one of the best hard rock albums to come down the pike in a long time. Move over Van Halen, you've got competition for that Grammy nod.

The genesis for Eat Dog, Eat traces back to the summer of 2008, after some live shows Clarke and latest lead singer Toby Jepson (Little Angels) did that year. The pair got together and hammered out the songs, all new ideas. According to Clarke, the initial ideas came together rather quickly.



"Toby came over to my house," said Clarke via email interview, "where I have a little studio, and over about three day sessions we penned all the songs. My mindset was really about just doing what I do best ... coming up with great riffs and good choruses ... no bells and whistles. We almost went out of our way to keep it simple and classic, which I think we achieved."

It wasn't until 2010 that the album was finished. After so much time away, there was an opportunity to start over, a clean launch. But that wasn't in the works.

"We considered starting afresh," Clarke said, "but, as we had done shows as Fastway and still intended to do some of the old great Fastway songs live, we thought we should keep it as Fastway."

Clarke approached this current album the old fashioned way. He built it from the ground up.

"I had plenty of killer riffs already in my head," Clarke enthused, "so we would start with the riff and continue on from there. We built it up as we went along. Toby and I did have a great chemistry at the time and it just flowed, which is all you can ask for when creating an album."

The album also gave Clarke a chance to bring out his trusted axes and reflect upon his approach.

"I think someone's sound is a combination of amp and guitar and how hard you play the instrument," Clarke said. "I play my guitars very hard. On some tracks you can hear them screaming under the strain. I used my 1971 Blonde Les Paul Deluxe for most of the

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rhythm tracks, although I used my Telecaster and Motorhead Strat on a couple of the tracks. For leads, I used the Les Paul and Strat ... my old Les Paul Junior appeared here and there. I have a really great Marshall Master Volume 100 Watt that I have had since 1982, and no other amp sounds quite like it. That is why the guitar sound is so much like the original Fastway recordings. It blew up during the recording of Eat Dog, Eat and we tried other amps, but they were nowhere near as good. So, I got out my screwdriver and set about repairing it ... and was successful. There is nothing worse when recording than breaking the flow and not having the sound you want."

Time plays tricks on present day fans. Recognized as a riff-master and a respected member of the old guard of British hard rock guitarists, Clarke is sometimes lumped in with the greats that actually came before him and influenced his playing.

"My style is third generation blues," explained Clarke. "Bands like Zep and the Yardbirds took their inspiration from American blues. I got mine third hand from them. Jimi Hendrix was also a beacon of light, as I was able to see him perform live on three occasions. I never tried or thought I could play like him, but I did pick up a few tips while enjoying his mastery of the guitar."

Clarke continues to pay homage to the greats as he recalled his beginnings.

"I used to watch the Yardbirds at a local gig near my house," said Clarke. "They played every week, and of course, Eric Clapton was the guitar player, and I thought to myself, 'I want to do that.' That was the start of my journey of guitar playing. I have had a great time realizing my dream; I have been very fortunate with my career. Although it has not all been happy times, I would not change a thing."

Having been bitten by the bug, Clarke started on a three-pickup Watkins Rapier that his father bought for him with winnings from the horse track.

"I will always remember when the guy opened the case to show me," remembered Clarke. "I was blown away ... it had the three chrome pickups against the black shiny body, it really was something. Sadly, it was lost."

By the time he was 23, he was a professional musician, playing lead guitar in Zeus. In early 1976 he was hired as second guitarist in Motorhead. The expanded line-up didn't agree with original guitarist Larry Wallis, who soon quit and left Clarke as the solo six-stringer in the band. Clarke, along with Lemmy and Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor are widely considered to be the "classic" line-up of Motorhead. Clarke has joined Lemmy and current crew on stage through the years and actually reunited with Lemmy and Taylor in 2005 for an episode of "Classic Albums" focused on the making of their seminal album Ace of Spades. Featuring interviews, studio techniques and anecdotes, the episode also included the first ever live performance from the trio in more than 20 years. Clarke acknowledges that they all still keep in touch, though not on a regular basis.



"I hold the Motorhead years very dear," said Clarke. "After speaking to Phil recently it would be good to play with them one more time."

And when asked if there were ever a chance that he, Taylor and Lemmy might ever play or, by chance, tour again, Clarke remains optimistic.

"I am certainly up for it," intimated Clarke. "As you come to the end of your life, you kind of look back and see there were only a few special things, and Motorhead, for me, was one of them. So, to pick up the guitar one more time with Phil and Lemmy would be great. Unfortunately, Lemmy is in no position to do that, as he has his band to think of. I believe Phil would like to taste it one more time also. But you can't always get what you want..."

For all that Fast Eddie Clarke has been a part of throughout his career as a legendary player, contributor and co-conspirator, he remains incredibly grounded, albeit more so pragmatic and reflective these days.

And when faced with his legacy and how he'd like to be remembered by future generations, he politely replied, "I will have to leave that to others. But, it would be nice to be remembered as someone who loved the guitar ... playing and listening ... and as someone who came up with a few good riffs."

Editors note: As of this interview there are no plans currently to tour behind Eat Dog, Eat, as Jepsen has reunited Little Angels.

Read a review of the latest Fastway CD Here:

<http://www.innocentwords.com/tabId/807/itemId/3904/Fastway-Eat-Dog-Eat.aspx>

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