



{teeth of the divine}

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April 17th, 2012 / [Interview](#) with Fastway / Article by E. Thomas

All Fired Up Again



This is one of those special sort of interviews for me since guitarist “Fast” Eddie Clarke’s contributions to one of my all-time favorite bands, Motörhead, had such a huge impact on me growing up and still does to this day, not to mention his work in Fastway, particularly that brilliant first album. I still recall purchasing Motörhead’s No Remorse cassette at a record store in San Antonio, Texas during a visit one summer, a [consumer product](#) decision that changed my life (grabbing a copy of Celtic Frost’s To Mega Therion didn’t hurt either). But enough with all that nostalgic blathering and on to the business at hand. It’s taken two decades, but Clarke is back in a big way with a fantastic new Fastway album, one that should blast any remaining memories of the questionable material that followed All Fired Up right out of your head. Clarke is joined by vocalist/bassist Toby Jepson and drummer Matt E on what is without question a great hard rock album called Eat Dog Eat. Welcome back Eddie and welcome back Fastway. Read on.

As a fan of those early albums I was excited to find out about a new Fastway album.

The first one and the second one?

Yes, *Fastway* and *All Fired Up*, great stuff.

A great album that first album, wasn’t it?

Oh yeah, and when you talk about all-time-great riffs, “Say what You Will” is a killer.

It was just one of those [records](#). I think you get a couple of chances in your life and that was one of them. It just all clicked into place. I was fresh from leaving Motörhead and it was kind of like a bit of a chance for me to do something that I always wanted to do.

I’m trying to remember what even led up to that split with Motörhead. Were you just tired of it?

Oh no, I thought I’d probably die in Motörhead some time on stage in my life. That was sort of a band of brothers really. Time kicks on and the same kicks in and situations change, you know. After the *Iron Fist* album, which was the last studio album I did with the band we weren’t happy with it. The album didn’t flow like the others. Then we went on tour in England and the tour didn’t go very well. Not because the kids weren’t there, but because the drummer [Phil “Philthy Animal” Taylor] insisted we play all the new album, but the new album wasn’t in the shops. So for the first time in about five years our gigs weren’t feeling as good as they used to. We were playing all this new stuff and the kids were standing there going “what’s this?” So we came off the back of that and then management said we were off to America now and asked about doing the single with The Plasmatics. They wanted us to do “Stand by Your Man.” Well, it seemed like a gimmicky thing to do to me and I didn’t like it and it didn’t go down very well. Lemmy and Phil wanted to do it and I said well I ain’t doing it. And that’s when the rift started. That’s the thing that broke the camel’s back really, but there was a slight buildup over the previous six months. But I just didn’t want to be associated with the single and I was so “anti.” So I said, ok, I kind of did what the drummer did on that tour when he said “if you don’t play the album I’m leaving.” So I said “ok, then fuck off” [laughs].

***Iron First* doesn’t stand up as well to what came before and what came after really, except it did produce one of the all-time classic Motörhead songs in the title track. But I agree; the album didn’t really represent well the music of that era.**

That’s right; you could feel that it was kind of slotted together. Like bits of one and bits of the other, but no real continuity to the album. The opening track was ok I think and there were some good bits on there, but it wasn’t a full Motörhead album. And we had just been on tour with Ozzy in America

and we had been touring all that previous year and then of course the record company wanted another album out last week. At the time we didn't get to work with the old producer so I ended up producing it, which I didn't want to do but I did because we had to move forward. It was all kind of bitty when something is not coming together. I think we just weren't ready; we needed a rest really. Of the course the worst of it was the record company was hassling us. So we go out on tour and the record isn't even out in the shops because the record company didn't get its business together.

Dealings with record labels didn't seem to be one of the fun parts of being in Motörhead then.

Well you know, things happen, but it just seemed like such a major mistake. I think it really put us off balance a bit.

That tour with Ozzy when he was supporting his debut album *Blizzard of Oz* must have been huge for Motörhead in America though.

Oh yeah, we enjoyed it! The damn thing about it was that I think we were a little bit before our time in America. When we were in Omaha, Nebraska and places like that the audience would be sitting there with their mouths open going "Hey, what's this?" They weren't sure what to make of it. It was like we just landed from Mars or something. So we had some tricky times and our confidence was a little bit rattled. But likewise we had great gigs in Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, but there was a lot of places that didn't quite know who we were.

Both bands got on well too.

Yeah, it was Ozzy who phoned up and said "I'm touring American for my new album and I want you guys to come with us." I mean it was fantastic! Lovely band and Randy [Rhoads] was a lovely bloke, a quiet little fellow and a wonderful guitar player. He was such a nice gentle man and for him to die that way was just unbelievable. It just didn't seem right.

Then when you jumped to Fastway you got to tour with some classic bands as well, like AC/DC on the *Flick of the Switch* tour.

Oh man! I remember we were doing the Saxon/Iron Maiden tour and we had an American road crew and it was "Oh man, we're on a real tour now and doing all the A-list venues!" And that was pretty good, so it was like I wonder what the AC/DC tour is going to be like. And it was up a notch to the bigger arenas. It really was fantastic and AC/DC is one of my favorite bands anyway. So it was an opportunity to watch the guys and see how they do things. The album was doing well and it you'd listen to the radio and "Say what you Will" would be playing.

Do you hear the influence of your playing in the styles of other musicians and bands, since so many have clearly been influenced by Motörhead at least and Fastway as well?

Well I guess I hear ways of making the same sort of noises I was making. In Motörhead I had to adopt a style to fit the whole thing and I think that was what was unique about it. I had to adjust my playing to be able to play along with Lemmy. He had his own sound and he had his own way of doing things, which was great for me because I kind of like fitting into things. And it kind of forced me to do something that wasn't the norm. I had to find something special that would fit with Lem. That's why I stand out a little bit as my own man. If I had just been playing in a blues rock band I would have just went along with all the other blues rock players. But because of the Lemmy situation and the way the band was structured I had to play this different thing. At first it was difficult, I must be honest. But once we got it sort of cornered after about 12 or 16 months it started to really cook. I mean I haven't

changed my style. I still use the same guitars, the same amps, and I have the same sound. So it's kind of like there are bits that will always be in there, that'll always be me.

Staying on the early years for just a bit more, it's interesting that a movie and soundtrack like *Trick or Treat* ended up having so much staying power, kind of a cult 80s thing that is still recognized and discussed today.

It was such a funny album. I think albums have a sort of history of their own. The circumstances are what often determine how an album is going to turn out. *Trick or Treat* was the last thing I was going to do with Dave [King]. The third album, *Waiting for the Roar*, which I didn't like very much, didn't do any business so Dave wanted to go off and do some Irish music. Well, then we got this offer to do *Trick or Treat* and I said to Dave how about this as sort of a last thing we do together. Plus I'd never done a soundtrack. He finally agreed. I was talking to the director and I read the script and he would call me up and go "Look, I need a kind of tune that does such and such..." So I was being slightly directed as to how to write the material for the particular theme; he didn't want it too fast or too slow. And it was very interesting writing like that because it's not too musician-y. You know when you're a musician you want everything to sound as fancy as possible so people listen to it and go "oh fantastic!" But doing it this way we kept it very simple. I really do think that's what worked. The whole album was done like that really. We didn't get too emotionally involved in the tracks. When I listen to it I really like the album; it's a good little album. The songs don't have anything really pretentious; they're just kind of there. It did really well at the time I remember and people always ask for "After Midnight" or "Trick or Treat" and it's kind of funny because I didn't think it would have done that well because of the way we did it, like almost kind of a throwaway thing. I think it's probably our best selling record [laughs]. The other thing is... Well, you know how singers can get; they have to get all deep and meaningful and all that. The nice thing about it was that Dave didn't really delve into it too much. He did it more like a straight ahead rock record. He didn't get into deep lyrics or any of that. I think that helped because singers can sometimes get a bit carried away and complicate things where it's not necessary.

After the last Fastway albums you did with the completely revamped lineup you did the solo album, *It Ain't Over Till it's Over*...

Those last Fastway albums, I was very ill then. I hooked up with a guy named Lea Hart and he kind of took over the show. I was drinking heavy then. I was on my knees, mate; I was wrecked. It was all the emotional stuff with Dave moving on and the record company leaving me and management leaving me... I thought I was finished really. The last Fastway album, *Bad, Bad Girls*, I wasn't even in the studio; I was in rehab. And the same with the other one with all the keyboards and stuff on it; it all got done when I wasn't there. I hardly played on it to be honest. I kind of like to set the record straight a little bit because sometimes I feel a bit embarrassed about a couple of albums I was hardly on, yet my name was on it. But I think I put that right with this new one [laughs].

Oh hell yes. But after the solo album you really weren't doing a lot, other than a few smaller projects. What were you doing?

What happened was I was in rehab for five weeks or so and everything had fallen apart. So you're a bit fragile when you go through all of that and it takes a bit of time to recover. So I figured I'll write an album of my own and just start recording. When you stop drinking it's amazing how much time you've got [laugh]. Like what the fuck am I going to do now? I'm going to write some songs then! So it's quite handy. I was quite lucky. So I did the album and released it and I thought it was really good. Lemmy sang on it and it's got some great tunes on it, but I did the major part of the singing. And I know I'm not a singer, but I'd been so upset by singers in the past that I couldn't face working with another singer at that stage. My biggest problem in rock 'n roll has always been singers. So I said fuck

it, it might not sound right but I can't work with another singer so I'll have to do it myself. So that's that the shortcoming really, that the singer... I mean I'm not a singer. But I think generally it's ok. Then after that it was received really bad and nobody gave a shit. I got it released in a couple of places, but there was nothing to follow up with.

Then I said fuck it and went to the country for a bit in the west of England in a cottage. There I did a bit of fishing, did it up, and thought "maybe this is it." Then I got a call from Lemmy asking if I wanted to play at their 25th anniversary show [at Brixton Academy, released as *25 & Alive Boneshaker* DVD]. I mean I had stopped playing guitar; I still played at home. I went down and did that with Lemmy and it was really great. The crowd went absolutely mad! I really enjoyed it. Then I set my sights on seeing what I could do next. It's been a long haul. In 2006 I did an anthology album [*Fast Eddie Clarke Anthology*] in my new studio that I had built. I finished that and then I got some calls in 2007 about doing some shows with Fastway. This drummer guy who is a big agent said "Look man, I'll play drums, why don't we do Fastway and I'll get some great gigs." And then he said he's got this singer named Toby Jepson and did I want to meet him. So I met Toby and he seemed alright for a singer [laughs]. I know all about singers you know [laughs]. And then we got John McManus on bass from the Mama's Boys. Do you remember them?

Oh yeah, I had one of the albums way back in the day and saw them open for Ratt in Saginaw, Michigan years ago. Great band.

Oh yeah, they're a great band. I really like 'em and they supported us on the Ratt tour. So that was kind of nice and we had this little outfit. We did these festivals here and we went to Japan. And it was all great. That was kind of how it came about, but there were long spaces in between. Between '93 and '99 I was just sort of hanging out on the West Coast and doing some fishing. I was renovating houses too. I was actually doing that before I could make a craft out of a band; you had to do anything you could.

A live box set was released too, *Steal the Show*.

Yeah, that was released two years ago. Somebody just contacted me out of the blue about it. I knew about the shows, but they all appeared online; you could buy them for a dollar I think. I thought it might be just as well to put them out, have them all in one thing. It was just an independent company and I thought why not? Jerry Shirley (ex-Fastway, Humble Pie) was writing his book at the time and I asked him what he thought. He thought it was great because he was writing the book and it was taking all his time, so he couldn't make any money. Have you read it?

No, but now I'm curious.

I've kind of been curious. I bet it was pretty over the top in Humble Pie, I'll tell ya. So that's how the box set came about. I mean the recordings could have been better I have to say. But I thought it was kind of nice to have them all in one place and tie up all the loose ends. And we had never done a Fastway live album.

So the ball got rolling with Jepson and you got some shows under your belt. At what point did you decide that you were going to record another Fastway album?

After the shows in 2007 we did one in 2008 and I said to Toby, "yeah man, why don't we write an album" or "write some songs" I think it was. So he came over and stayed with me for a couple of days over a few weeks here and there. Well as soon as we sat down we wrote three tunes! It was just pouring out. I had riffs coming out of my ears, I was enthusiastic and it was rubbing off on him, and we were getting on. The speed at which we wrote the album was fantastic. And they're all good tunes

as well. But then of course things happen. [Drummer] Steve [Strange] went to do something in Coldplay and Toby got an offer from a band in America so he just left and went over there. So I'm just sitting here thinking "Fuck" [laughs]. I've got all these great tunes and that's it. So I was a little pissed off and I didn't speak to any of them for the whole of 2009. Then Toby called in 2010 and asked if we should do something with Fastway. We talked about it. It was a bit stale; we needed some new material. So I said to Toby we should finish the songs we got and I offered to pay for the album and said he could produce it, and then we'd see what happens. That was it and he agreed. I knew some of these songs were good and it just seemed right. I don't write that many tunes. I don't write tunes all day. I've only got what I need. There are no excess songs sitting back at my house you know [laughs]. Like "we need a song, oh fuck I better pick up the guitar then and start strumming" [laughs]. So that's how it all came about. We did it in the fall of 2010 and it's taken us this long to get the record out. The business is so different now.

It is indeed. Were you having difficulty finding a label to release it?

Well, we had some willing to put it out for nothing and that was fine. I wasn't worried about the money; I was a bit worried about the commitment. I couldn't find anybody that had the commitment. A German company, SPV, came along. They're a Saxon and Motörhead label, but they had some problems. But they said they'd give me a little bit of money and put it out; not enough to cover the album, but just as a gesture. And I liked that. I mean they were going to have to work to get their money back anyway. It's that mentality thing because I'm from the old school. So we went with them and they've done fantastic. They've done very well over here. When the record comes out in America I'm hoping to tour there, just a little bit. So if the record over there can just get a little bit of a look-in then it'd be easy to go over and play. I'd like to do America one more time before I die.

And I would think there are quite a few people over here that would like to see you again. On the American release actually, I was surprised to see the album being released by MVD Audio. Not that they're a bad label; quite the contrary. I just assumed SPV would cover this territory as well.

Well, MVD were recommended to me by an old business acquaintance of mine who said he had worked with them and they were very good. What he said to me is that these were nice people and are trustworthy. The problem we've got now is that there are all these little labels out there now and it's not that they're not trustworthy, but what happens is they put your record out and it's a bit mayhem; nothing gets properly organized. So he said he'd ask them if they'd take the record and I said great.

***Eat Dog Eat* is a good album top to bottom. The quality never even falls to mediocre. You'll get those stuck-in-an-era folks asking only if it sounds like "Say What you Will," which is silly really. But it's basically a blues based hard rock album with some signature Fastway elements, and surely your signature playing. But it is not simply emulating the self-titled album or *All Fired Up*. It's just a kick ass hard rock album.**

That's probably the biggest compliment that you could have given me; that it's back to back. I'm quite proud of it. On some of the others albums I've done there were always one or two songs you weren't sure of. But I'm not hearing that on this album. I thought it was me getting old, so to hear you say it it's great since I don't feel so fussy now [laughs].

There are a couple of standouts in "Deliver Me" and "Leave the Light On," but there isn't a single cut you'd want to skip.

"Deliver Me" was the first thing I did. I sat down and I had this riff that I started playing, and I thought it was good, sort of Zep-ish. He had a lyric in a half an hour, so we bandied it about a bit in

arranging. But I think that's what done it for us because it was such a great start. It's a great song, I love it.

It's also a fully realized effort for two other reasons. One is that Jepson is such a classic bluesy vocalist sort of steeped in the British rock tradition.

On this record, yeah, but the funny thing is I've heard some of his other stuff and it doesn't sound anything like this. He is such a different player when he's doing this stuff; it was such an eye opener. I couldn't really tell before that he was really good because the genres that he was playing were a bit more poppy – "I miss you baby, I love you baby" and all that. But on this album he really turns in the performance of his lifetime.

That and you got a strong bottom-end rhythm section sound. It's tight and it doesn't just sound like "Fast" Eddie and some other guys. Toby does a bit more with his bass at times than just hold down the rhythm.

We rehearsed three weeks before we went in and then we set up in the studio and played it in a live sort of atmosphere, just to recreate the way we used to do it in the old days.

It does have that feel to it.

Yeah, and I was so pleased with it. I was a bit worried because this is the first album I've done on Pro Tools, so I was curious. So we did everything we could to make it sound old fashioned if you like.

It is definitely rooted in fundamental blues-based hard rock, but then you've got the song "Fadeout" that has more of a modern sheen to it.

I love the ending of "Fadeout." That's got to be the best fuckin' ending I've ever done! I just couldn't believe it. I hated having to cut it off, so I said why don't we start it with that [laughs]. It's been a long time since something excited me that much. There were some great moments in the recording of the record. I hadn't been to the studio for 20 years properly and it was such a fuckin' powerful thing; it was almost like comin' on. I just loved every minute of it, man. I was soaking it up. I didn't realize how much I missed it.

There are so many cool moments too, like on "Do You Believe" with some prominent bass parts and "Sick as a Dog," which is supremely catchy with an old school Motörhead type of riff.

Yeah, I did think "Sick as a Dog" was a little Motörhead-ish. It really sounded like it should be on a Motörhead album [laughs].

You end with "Only if you want It," which is kind of this definitive feel-good closer.

Yeah, it's got kind of that warm sound that doesn't tax you too much. I had that riff knocking about for quite a while. I was trying to use it and trying to use it and it was so fantastic to finally get to use it.

"Dead and Gone" surprises you, especially the first time through the album because it's got that acoustic, laid back first half and then the second half explodes into this heavy boogie thing. Like what the hell?

[Laughs] Toby played me a bit of that and I said let's organize that and put it on. Of course, it's when you're dead and gone, and I'm old now so it won't be that long. I've never had an acoustic song on a

record, so I said I was going to put this ending on it [laughs]. Actually, the vocals on that are quite relevant as well. I didn't want just an acoustic song. I fulfilled a few things, the bucket list and all that; I crossed a few off with this record.

Great album title too, pretty clever: *Eat Dog Eat*.

Well, that's the singer thing. We had about 10 ideas and he stuck that up there and we dug it. After two days the only thing I could see was *Eat Dog Eat*. It just kept coming out at us. Toby's got some reason why he had *Eat Dog Eat*, but I'm not sure. When I ask him about it he says, "well, it's the reverse of dog eat dog." Oh yeah, yeah [laughs]. What did you think of the cover? A lot of people were saying it's not good.

I thought the cover was fine. To be honest, I didn't have a strong opinion one way or the other, but I didn't have a negative opinion.

I've seen a couple of reviews where they said that cover was rubbish and cheesy. James Flames was the artist. He's an American. He does all this heavy art and nice art. He's wonderful, a lovely man. We were in the studio and we had a magazine and James was in there, and Toby said "Oh, I love this guy," so I said well let's send him an e-mail and see if he'll do the cover and that seemed to be meant to be as well. He seems to be a lovely bloke. I mean it's art, not just a fuckin' cover. I think it's so well done and he did it by hand. It's a masterpiece. But unfortunately I think we got it wrong on the cover, as much as I love it. I've never had someone do actual artwork for a cover. But you should look at his website; it's got some lovely stuff on it. You won't be disappointed. I think he's in Virginia or South Carolina or something. <http://www.jamesflames.com/>

The reviews of the album I've seen have been pretty positive across the band. That's got to be satisfying.

Oh the reaction has been great. Over here before Christmas I did loads and loads of interviews and they seemed to love the album. Everybody seems to like it. Because I had no expectations. I've seen a couple in America too and they were positive. America is a Fastway territory I always thought. It's so nice to have an album out with people going "Hey, Fastway, doing it right again."

Do you hear anyone saying it's a good album, but qualify it by saying it doesn't sound just like the first and/or second albums?

A couple of people have said that. I've picked that up a little bit. I disagree in as much... See the problem of course is that Dave King had such a distinctive voice. It was a big part of the sound. That first record had its own sound; it was quite unique. And Jerry Shirley's drumming was quite special. So it did make for a special sort of record. But I see *Eat Dog Eat* as a natural follow-up. This should have been the follow-up record, moving forward as it were. But it's taken me 30 years anyway [laughs]. I'm a bit slow sometimes [laughs].

It is great to hear you so excited and I was excited to have a new Fastway album in my hands, one of such quality. You just don't hear too many albums like this anymore

Because the music business is so fucked up I've obviously been getting a lesson in it. I'm very concerned about where the new talent is going to come from. There is no breeding ground for new bands now. It's very difficult over here and I'm sure you're having problems over there too. At least then record companies and management did put a little money in the pot, which some struggling bands need to develop. And it just ain't there anymore. So what you get are bands that sound ok, but

they're just not quite ready. They sound a little bit unfinished. I think it's just lack of funds. But it is what it is.

Looking back what would you say are your proudest accomplishments as a musician?

I've had a great career and have been very fortunate. Motörhead was probably the highlight of my career because of all this great stuff we did and the challenges we faced. And then of course our time in America with the first Fastway album was absolutely mind blowing. Of course, Motörhead never meant anything in America, at least not on the level that Fastway did. I have my disappointments too, the latter half of the 80s with some very poor albums and poor decisions and obviously my problems. And *Eat Dog Eat* is really the icing on the top of the cake. I finally set the record straight I feel. And to have two classic tracks, "Ace of Spades" and "Say What You Will," that are going to go on after I'm gone is. "Ace of Spades" is still the bee's knees over here and "Say What you Will" still gets played in America and people love it. So to have two classic tracks in my life, it just doesn't get much better than that. So I've been very fortunate. You need a big slice of luck in this and I think I've had my fair share.

<http://www.fastwayofficial.com/site/>

<http://www.fasteddieclarke.com/>

http://mvdb2b.com/?site_id=mvda

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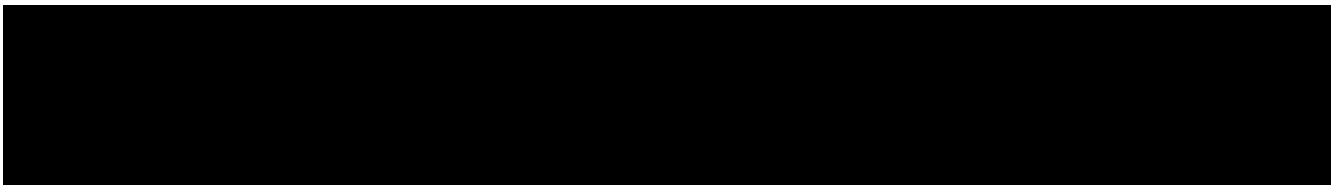
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