

Exclusive interview with Stryper frontman Michael Sweet

MICHAEL SWEET | AUGUST 31, 2012 | BY: MICHELLE HUMPHREY

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Legendary Christian rockers [Stryper](http://www.examiner.com/topic/stryper/articles) made their debut in 1984 with *The Yellow and Black Attack*. They have sold more than 10 million records worldwide and are continuing to break new ground today. They are one of the few bands from the '80s that still has their original members which include brothers [Michael Sweet](http://www.examiner.com/topic/michael-sweet/articles) and Robert Sweet, Oz Fox and Timothy Gaines. They were one of the first Christian artists to achieve and maintain success in the mainstream music world. When Stryper released *To Hell With The Devil*, their success was catapulted to the top of the charts. The hit single

“Honestly” became a Billboard Top 20 hit and reached number one on MTV’s song countdown, as well as the hit “Calling On You.” Recent albums *Reborn*, *Murder by Pride* and *The Covering* have also been on the Billboard Charts.

In a recent interview with lead vocalist, lead guitarist and songwriter Michael Sweet, he talked about the band’s

history and where they are today. Sweet grew up in Orange County, California in a musical family where music was passed on from generation to generation. "It helped to develop my interest. I started playing guitar at the age of five," he said. He also sang and was in a trio for a while called Roxx Regime, before Stryper was formed in 1983.

The band formed during what came to be such a decadent time for music on the Sunset Strip. "It was definitely an interesting time," Sweet recalls, "We did what we felt and took a lot of flak for it...we were touring with Anthrax at the time and took heat from the press. We tended to be a mockery at times, but in the end, it comes down to the music and performance." The band members have always risen above the negativity and criticism. "We are four guys just like everyone else. If we read something really nasty we rise above it and try to be a light in a dark world. We always remind each other of that," he said.

Stryper is one of the few bands from that era who have longevity in the music business. Sweet believes that reason is because of the band's consistency. "If you look back at all our records, we've been good about consistently releasing them. A lot of bands aren't too consistent," he said. The band also has a long line of hit songs. Sweet's favorites to perform include "To Hell With The Devil," "Soldier in Command," and "Reach Out" because he loves to see the excitement in the crowd when those songs are performed. "The crowd seems to love them a little more," he said.

Sweet is working on an autobiography, the working title is called *Honestly*, that is scheduled to come out this fall. "It's an interesting read. I talk about Robert and me fighting as kids and not talking for years when I left the band," he said. "This book is 100% true. It's really different from past musician's autobiographies...sometimes they seem a little stretched," he said. Sweet hopes to release the book simultaneously with his solo album also due out this fall.

"After almost 30 years in this business, we are blessed to be able to continue doing what we love most – making music! God has blessed us with talents and abilities and we plan to continue on this path as long as God calls us to do so," Sweet said.

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