

## NEWS

### FAMOUS UNDERGROUND - Cracking The Surface

#### Hot Flashes

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By Carl Begai

If you're a Canadian that lived through big-haired rock/metal scene in the the late '80s and early '90s, you don't need the history lesson that comes with the name SLIK TOXIK. For those that find themselves here thanks to the buzz created by former ST frontman Nick Walsh's new band, FAMOUS UNDERGROUND, all you need to know is that before grunge showed up to ruin the party in the '90s they were a big deal at home, with a smaller contact buzz in the United States. Songs like 'Helluvatime' and 'White Lies, Black Truth' from their Doin' The Nasty record were MuchMusic staples through '92 / '93, and Walsh was the kid with a huge voice that overshadowed / excused his pin-up status depending on your sexual persuasion. Slik Toxik died a quiet death in '94 after releasing their second album, Irrelevant, and the band members went their separate ways. Walsh held a singer's course, however, and pursued various projects before forming REVOLVER with bassist Laurie-Ann Green, a band that enjoyed middling success but never hitting that Slik Toxik high.





A name change in the fall of 2011 to Famous Underground came with a new focus, however, and the pieces of their long-unfinished puzzle began to fall into place. A record deal with German label Dust On The Tracks, a new self-titled debut in stores, Famous Underground is now more than just a cool idea and Walsh is on his way out from under Slik Toxik's shadow after almost two decades.

"The label is actually utilizing the Slik Toxik name as a positive thing, which is odd for me," Walsh admits. "It's like 'What happened to the 20 years in between? Why weren't you people using it then?' (laughs). Now I see stuff saying 'Featuring Nick Walsh of Slik Toxik, who gave us that great sleaze rock album Doin' The Nasty!' I'm like, 'Really?' (laughs). I don't mind saying I'm the guy from Slik Toxik but I don't want that to be a focus for people. I'm the guy spearheading my new band."

Something that's going to take a while to catch on, particularly at home from Walsh's first-hand experience. He offers a very recent example of what he's had to deal with since Slik Toxik packed it in almost 20 years ago.

"I had a call from the promoter who did the Todd La Torre-fronted QUEENSRYCHE show back in March here in Toronto a few weeks before it went down. Just a message on Facebook asking me to give him a call when I had the chance. I was thinking that it could work for us, that doing a show supporting Queensryche would look good on our resumé. I called him up and he told me that he has SLAUGHTER coming to town this August, and he was wondering what it would take to do a Slik Toxik reunion show. I had to wonder what rock he'd just crawled out from under (laughs). I told him that we were offered a bucketload of money 10 years ago to do a reunion and I turned that down, so it wasn't about the money. On top of that, some of us haven't spoken to one another in 10 years or so. I told him 'It's not gonna happen, but since you got in touch with me through Facebook, have you not seen any of the new stuff I'm up to now?'"

Pegging the Famous Underground sound in print isn't an easy task by any means. Calling the band sleaze rock in accordance to Walsh's Slik Toxik roots is a disservice, and full-on metal they're not (although the band's live covers of MEGADETH's 'Peace Sells... But Who's Buying' and MOTÖRHEAD's 'Ace Of Spades' proves they can indeed pull it off). The international hard rock/metal press has jumped on the Famous Underground debut, and while opinions on the highs and lows of the record may vary, it's been acknowledged across the board that the band does a fine job of walking the line between traditional and something gritty and new.



"I'm a fan of a lot of the metal or rock that's out today," says Walsh, also a discerning fan of old school metal bands like MERCYFUL FATE, CRIMSON GLORY and IRON MAIDEN. "Out of the 'new' groups out there, I like AVENGED SEVENFOLD, STONE SOUR, DISTURBED, and part of the reason for that is I can hear elements of some of the stuff that I love that influenced me so much in that music. There are so many sub-genres in metal and rock now, I just say our music is a combination of many varieties of hard rock and heavy metal. We're not going to paint ourselves into a corner and strictly do one form of rock or metal, we're not going to shy away from ballads because some people think they're not cool."

"Famous Underground is all-encompassing because we like all kinds of music," he adds. "Look at GUNS N' ROSES, who were hailed as one of the most dangerous bands around back in the day; they also put out 'Sweet Child O' Mine' (laughs) and a whole record (G'N'R Lies) with a bunch of acoustic stuff on it. We're one of those types of bands. We're not going to try and fit into the mold of cock rock, but at the same time we're not going to shy away from having girls at our shows. We've got elements in our music that'll bring the guys and the girls out with their fists in the air."

The one thing that can be agreed upon is that Famous Underground is most certainly not Slik Toxik 2.0. Sure, the ballads 'On Broken Wings' and 'Forever And A Day' might be tilted in that direction, but it ends there. Given the darkness and dirt of tracks like 'Necropolis', 'Dead Weight' and 'Mommy Is A Junkie' it's doubtful Walsh would come off as convincing if he tried to pull off another 'Helluvatime' or 'Big Fuckin' Deal' under the Famous Underground banner.

"If I was 20 years old, partying for real for the first time and sniffing for... females (laughs) and living at home with my parents, maybe I would write sleaze rock anthems because life would be a party," Walsh offers. "If I had to sit down and write those kinds of songs vicariously through somebody else, as a songwriter I'm sure I could do it. And I could do it with conviction because I lived it. But am I living it now? Absolutely not. I think Famous Underground is a band that sings about the human condition. We're not preaching, but we're pointing things out to people, saying 'Look around at the world you're living in.' There are things going on that need to be brought to people's attention, there are other things that need to be celebrated, and if they don't get it in a song they're not going to get it at all. The age thing and where I'm living today and what I do for a living, these are the things that are a muse to me. These days something that I might read in the newspaper or see on an HBO special can fire me up to create something out of nothing as opposed to a boner (laughs)."





"One thing I can say about Famous Underground's sound and live performance... I grew up listening to bands like METALLICA and Queensryche, who definitely weren't singing about partying and getting laid. But, I was in a band that was partying and getting laid, so I think we've taken some of the influences from my early years and sort of amalgamated them with my Slik Toxik past. We're like that bridge between Metallica and Guns N' Roses and ALICE IN CHAINS."

Judging by the aforementioned reviews, Europe is prepared to embrace Famous Underground if and when they travel across the pond to do some roadwork. With a European record deal and management in place it's more than just a pipe dream. In fact, equally unique fellow Canucks DANKO JONES - who have a similar set-up - have enjoyed playing stages big and small across Europe for years.

"Our primary focus is the European market, and we inked a deal with a label that has bonafide distribution in other areas of the world which is a bonus" Walsh explains. "It's really easy to get swayed by the idea of focusing on things here at home since the album has an official release in Canada, so we have to give our heads a shake and keep on track with Europe. We're thinking about doing the third video - maybe for one of the ballads - because the album might be marketed slightly different depending on the territory. It's nice to have those kinds of options open to us."

The drive is on, the pedal is buried, and the momentum is building as far as Walsh is concerned.

"I'd like to release the record, get over to Europe and do some shows, and then release a new record nine months later without even stopping."



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