

King of Queens aces 'Acoustic'

By Jim Sullivan | Friday, January 22, 2010 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Music News

Nick Oliveri's new solo album is called "Death Acoustic." There's truth in that title.

The former bassist for Kyuss and Queens of the Stone Age plays acoustic guitar and sings on it. If the tunes aren't about death exactly, most are nasty, hard and vicious.

Oliveri, who plays an early show this evening at the Middle East, was working on a new album in Oslo, Norway, yesterday when he answered our questions by e-mail.

You have been touring around the world. The US tour kicks off here in Cambridge. *How have audiences responded so far?*

Oliveri: The crowd response has been great. Acoustic is a hard buy sometimes. I don't approach the acoustic set in a traditional folk or singer-songwriter way. I come out playing and singing hard, and sometimes screaming as loud and hard as I would with any of my past bands. I play songs that I love and play punk songs acoustic. I do also get mellow and play some of my softer side as well.



The split between you and Josh Homme in Queens of the Stone Age was not, I understand, a pleasant one.

Yeah, it was six years ago. Feb. 15, 2004. And I just moved on. I miss my band. I miss my family. But my new family I would die for too. Me and Josh have since made up as brothers and hang every now and again.

What made you want to do this kind of project and tour?

Staying busy while my bandmates are having kids and being family guys. Music has always been my wife and kids. So, I am trying to do what it is I do. I am coming out on stage with me and my guitar and my loud, weird voice. At a point in the set, I have a great singer, Michele Madden from an Aussie band called Tourettes and an L.A. band called Meldrum, come up for a few songs. But for 45 minutes or so, it is just me.

Were you at all inspired by the "MTV Unplugged" glory days of Nirvana?

I love Nirvana. I mostly started playing acoustic while on tour with QOTSA. Josh wanted days off and me and Mark Lanegan would fill in our days off with acoustic gigs.

There are a lot of cover songs, but did you write and choose songs for this album with the understanding they would work for the solo shows?

Yes! I wanted to play songs that I like. And I like other peoples' songs better than my own. But I do like my stuff, too, and play quite a few of them.

It is not your typical singer-songwriter acoustic record. The first song ends with a curse. It's pretty ferocious. Pitchfork said, "The album is full of brutality and hostility and offers a bleak, sometimes frightening character portrait of Oliveri as an outcast not fit for normal society." Any comment?

I put my pants on one leg at a time, drink my beers, and, well, I guess Pitchfork has a point.

There's the closer by our late New England hardcore punk anti-hero, GG Allin. GG seemed to live (and die by) what he wrote. Lots of drugs, booze, anger. How much of this is true of you? Any irony or tongue-in-cheek here?

Never let truth get in the way of a good story.

Is there a theme to the album?

I'm no peace-and-love, '60s folksinger. I'm a rocker from a time when rock and punk was unpredictable and dangerous. And I never grew up. Death metal, death punk, "Death Acoustic." It's my style of acoustic.

How close is the person we hear on the album to the real Nick Oliveri?

It's the same to me. It's like truly playing naked. Only I don't have to take off my clothes. You have been in a lot of bands and continue to be.

Yes. I play in a lot of projects and bands. I am trying to keep my rent paid just like everyone else. Just because I love my job doesn't mean it's not one.

You took the name Rex Everything and play bass in the notorious Dwarves. What's that like? What did you take away from that quintessentially nasty/fun band?

Well, I learned to be a better player. Sgt. Salt Peter, the bass player I replaced, is one of the best players I have ever heard play a bass. I think we all can get better as players (if you want to and are open to trying to learn styles different from what you think you already know). I know you can always learn more. And playing acoustic makes me a better singer and guitar player every gig.

Do you work Queens of the Stone Age songs in to the set? How do you decide what makes the cut?

I love my past and I am very proud of what I have recorded and the bands and players I have been lucky enough to play and stand next to, QOTSA being one of those bands. I miss playing those songs, so I play them. I wrote "I'm Gonna Leave You," and I just thought, "Why not cover myself?" I do it again on the record with a song off our first record together recorded in 1990 - Kyuss' "Wretch" - called "Love Has Passed Me By." In the live set I also play "Green Machine" off Kyuss' "Blues for the Red Sun."

Nick Oliveri, with a spoken-word performance from Dave Tree, at the Middle East, Cambridge, tonight at 7. Tickets: \$12; call 617-864-3278.



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