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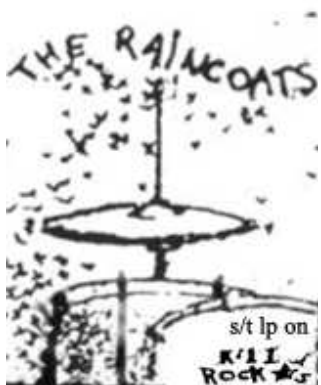
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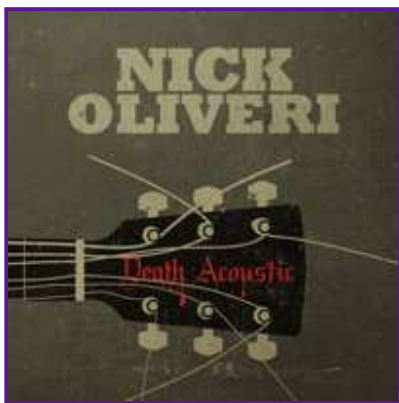
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## Album Review



### [Nick Oliveri](#) [Death Acoustic](#)

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Before getting booted from riff monsters Queens of the Stone Age in 2004, following their breakout *Songs for the Deaf*, the goateed, often-nude Nick Oliveri was one half of the group's core duo-- alongside frontman Josh Homme, an anchor at the center of a rotating cast of contributors. Oliveri served as the band's sparkplug, counterbalancing Homme's melodic falsetto with his screeching hardcore vocals and adding a degree of batshit

craziness to songs like "Tension Head" and "Quick and to the Pointless". Oliveri's absence would take its toll on Queens-- they haven't reached the same heights without him on subsequent records *Lullabies to Paralyze* and *Era Vulgaris*.

Since that time, Oliveri has played in a slew of bands including the Dwarves and L.A. hard-rock outfit the Knives and continued work on his long-running punk-metal project Mondo Generator, but has remained mostly out of the spotlight by comparison to his ex-bandmembers. (Even lesser known guitarist Dean Fertita has gone on to work with Jack White in the Dead Weather.) Now comes *Death Acoustic*-- as its title implies, a stripped-down solo album-- featuring a straightforward combination of Oliveri's gutter-punk howl and acoustic-guitar strumming. Despite these simple elements, the album features the same brutality and hostility as his contributions to Queens and other groups, and offers a bleak, sometimes frightening character portrait of Oliveri as an outcast not fit for normal society.

*Death Acoustic* is a pretty strange record and there isn't much precedent for it beyond perhaps the outlaw country of singers such as Hank Williams and Waylon Jennings, men who sold the idea of themselves as kinds of modern-day desperados. The difference, I suppose, is that Oliveri seems to actually *be* that character in real life, and when he delivers lines like, "I use crystal methane by the boatload/ I live off straight booze, I just don't fucking care," in the G.G. Allin cover "Outlaw Scumfuc", you don't really question the validity of that statement for a second. In one sense these songs are effective, as the listener gets some insight into Oliveri's persona, but the material is so violent and misogynistic it makes it difficult to find a way in.

But beyond the lyrical content are songs with real structure and melody that reinforce what made Oliveri an integral part of Queens in the first place. His guitar playing is tight and forceful throughout, and his cover of the Misfits classic "Hybrid Moments" is tender and even pretty, with double-tracked vocals that add nuance to the song's simple blitzkrieg bop. Even the stripped-down rendition of "Gonna Leave You" from *Songs for the Deaf* included here serves as a reminder of what a potent combination he and Homme were back in the day. It's enough to make you long for a Queens reunion, but it's darn-near impossible to imagine Homme listening to *Death Acoustic* and hearing the sentiments of a changed man.

— [Joe Colly](#), October 9, 2009

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