

Nick Oliveri - interview

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Rock wildman Nick Oliveri is known as the (once) more openly maniacal half of Queens Of The Stone Age. Anyone who has followed his career more closely knows that the 2004 dethroning couldn't stop him.

Not only did he play for desert rock icons Kyuss before joining Josh Homme in QOTSA, but since then he's been involved in some searing punk acts (Moistboyz, The Knives, The Dwarves, The Uncontrollable), as well as dropping in on the Desert Sessions and Eagles Of Death Metal albums. And let's not forget his psychotic primary project Mondo Generator.

Earlier this year, he visited alone – guitar in hand – ready to wreck Australian stages in an acoustic setting. Yes, Nick Oliveri has unplugged. No one really expected dreamy finger-picking and soothing melodies, but he made certain that they didn't leave without seeing the whites of his eyes – playing screaming covers of brawny tunes from his own projects and some punk classics. Then he released an album of them, the raw, ragged *Death Acoustic*.

He's already back, so big is the love. It's no coincidence that his acoustic tour crosses paths with long-time partners-in-crime The Dwarves but he's achieved a feat in getting Blackie from cult heroes The Hard-Ons to try his hand at bare strumming as well. Maybe this is the future of punk. Let's sneak some questions in between his creepy giggling.

It's Saturday night over there, why aren't you out raging?

Naw, that's every night. Every night can't be a busy night. Saturday is like amateur night anyway, there's a bunch of idiots out in LA. You crash your car if you drive anywhere on a Saturday.

The tour you have is pretty loopy, getting Blackie from the Hard-ons to do solo stuff too.

Yeah, it's going to be great. I think he's doing acoustic. I don't know. He might show up with an entire band. Hey, I have no idea. Either way it's going to be great.

And you're playing with Blag Dahlia and The Dwarves as well...

Yeah, it's midway through the acoustic tour. Right smack bang in the middle of it will be some Dwarves stuff, which will be cool to jam with them for four shows. It'll be great.

Aren't they going to wreck you? Isn't Blag a bad influence?

Naw, man, it'll be great, it'll be a lot of fun. They're one of my favourite bands to play with.

Maybe you're a bad influence on him...

Aw hell no, hell no. Well, maybe a little bit.

Did you choose to come back so soon because of the response from your last effort?

If you guys will have me, I'll come down. I really like going to Australia, it's a great place. I never got to play a lot of venues in smaller towns. There's a lot more to Australia than just the cities and I want to explore that. I mean, I've never seen a kangaroo. It's different, it's cool, I wanna see one.

Let's talk about *Death Acoustic*, were you always going to do this project or did the recording just stem from your acoustic sets?

It was fun to do those shows and it's better to have a record out to play shows with and to plug [Laughs] It does help to do shows so it makes sense have a record out. It's fun to do, I'm diggin' on it. I prefer the band thing but that isn't always on the cards, y'know.

***Death Acoustic* features covers of your various bands' tunes. Why didn't you write new songs specifically built to be played acoustically?**

Because I like to take old punk rock songs that I really enjoy and play them acoustically. They're good songs and I think a lot of times people forget that. People that are older don't really listen to punk rock but these are songs that can be played in any style. I just want to play songs that are fun for me. Sometimes other people's songs are more fun to me because I prefer other people's songwriting to my own. That's just me. Some people are 'My songs are the best, man!' and that's cool, but I prefer to play songs that people can dig on another level.

Acoustic is weird to play. Singer-songwriter shit is boring to me. But I guess if you don't have a band around to represent your songs properly then it makes sense to play your own shit.

Is that why you still choose to howl and scream over the guitar?

It's just because I don't know how to sing any other way, to be honest. When I sing real soft, I think 'Damn, I sound like a pussy'. It's hard for me to hit notes, so in order to hit them I gotta really push air and to push air I have to scream sometimes. I prefer to do it that way, rather than go the obvious route of singing really soft. I wanted to stay away from that.

Even though it's just you and the guitar, I noticed that you offer special thanks to Josh Homme for the recorder...

Yeah, he gave me a little thing to do home recording. I taught myself to record with it, to the best of my ability. I had to record all of this stuff on Garage Band first. [Laughs] I recorded it at home.

Did you tweak anything on this year's re-release of Mondo Generator's debut *Cocaine Rodeo*?

No, that was exactly what it came out as. There's a live record added, but that's the first record with two extra tracks on it. That's pretty much how it came out originally.

In your Wikipedia there's a trivia bullet-point that says "Nick Oliveri openly dislikes Creed and Staind." Where did that come from?

[Laughs] I don't like Creed. I don't like Staind. I dunno, I just don't like those bands. They kinda suck. No other band really bothered me that much but those bands really bugged me at one time. I remember when we were recording some time ago, someone asked me about it. At the time I was really hating them. I think I had a girlfriend who liked them at the time, or said she liked them, and I'm yelling 'Shut up, don't talk to me again!' I dunno, whatever.

I feel like I should add to the list; who else is shitting you at the moment?

[Laughs] I dunno, it's just those two bands. Oh, I hate all the emo stuff - that's pretty lame. Look, I was holding on to a lot of anger for those two bands for a long time but I realised I was giving them too much credit by getting mad. Giving them hate or love is the same so I decided to stop hating them, it's not worth it, it's a waste of energy.

Nick Oliveri Solo Acoustic Tour

Wed October 7 - Brass Monkey, Cronulla
Thu October 8 - Del Plaza, Gold Coast
Fri October 9 - Step Inn, Brisbane
Sat October 10 - Hermanns Bar, Sydney
Sun October 11 - Heritage Hotel, Bulli
Mon October 12 - Mona Vale Hotel, Mona Vale
Tue October 13 - Kings Arms, Auckland
Wed October 14 - Bodega, Wellington
Mon October 19 - National Hotel, Geelong
Tue October 20 - Republic Bar, Hobart
Wed October 21 - Northcote Social Club, Melbourne
Thu October 22 - Jive, Adelaide
Fri October 23 - Settlers Tavern, Margaret River
Sat October 24 - Norfolk Basement, Fremantle

Nick Oliveri with The Dwarves

Friday October 16 – Gaelic Club, Sydney
Saturday October 17 – Corner Hotel, Melbourne
Sunday October 18 – Nightlife, Gold Coast

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