

Getting back to bass

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"HE'S here again! Oh no!" Nick Oliveri says by way of acknowledging his fourth Australian tour in eight months.

After two solo *Death Acoustic* tours and one playing his beloved bass for punk-rock stalwarts the Dwarves, Oliveri is back in town not just to pummel Australian eardrums with selections from *Time to Destroy*, the coming album from his hard-rocking main group, Mondo Generator, but also to pick up his new band mates for their world tour, which started in Geelong on the day of this interview last week.

"The band is actually an all-Aussie band now," he says, talking a mile a minute as he waits to meet them at Sydney Airport. "For this tour, it's gonna be [Wollongong's] Hy-Test guys Luke and Curley playing guitars and this guy Josh - he goes by [the name] Stooks - he plays drums in a band called Extortion from WA."

Mondo Generator has been through numerous line-ups since its inception in the late '90s but the reason for the latest one isn't as dramatic as the mother of all falling-outs that caused Oliveri's forced departure from Queens of the Stone Age in 2004.

"I have this drummer, Hoss, who's like my partner in the band," Oliveri says. "He's having a baby with his wife - which is totally cool - and he's bowing out of this tour. He's like, 'I'll come back when it slows down after the baby's born.' He knows we've gotta keep it going."

Their last album, *Dead Planet*, came out three years ago. Indeed, in 13 years, *Time to Destroy* will be only Mondo Generator's fourth full-length offering. "I kinda push it [the band] aside sometimes to a fault, which is bad," Oliveri says. "I'm kinda like, 'Well, I can do this whenever I want because it's my thing.' I really need to focus. It's just hard to do when your band is changing all the time."

But Oliveri is proud of the new album - which, for someone who is honest enough to admit that he finds singing "hard", who wishes he was "a little bit better" at playing lead guitar and insists "other people are better songwriters than me", seems like a pretty big deal. Even then, he throws in a self-deprecating: "I pleasantly surprised myself."

"The new record's very interesting," he says. "I think there's a good variety of stuff on it, with all the things that I know how to do sincerely and with some conviction - y'know, deliver it so it's believable, it's real. That was the main thing."

The only preview we've had so far of *Time to Destroy* is the band's raucous cover of Iggy Pop's *Dog Food*, featuring Dave Grohl on drums. "He's my bro. He kinda just rode up on his Harley and he played and then bailed. It was awesome," he laughs.

Does Oliveri have any regrets? After all, had he been a little less volatile during his last few months in Queens of the Stone Age, he might have been, if not quite as successful as the Midas-fingered Grohl, perhaps as influential as the "bro" with whom he is most often associated, QOTSA's Josh Homme.

"You know, yes and no," Oliveri says. "But mainly I'm happy with how everything turned out 'cause the things that really, really matter are the records and the tours that we've done and stuff like that. Our [QOTSA's] worst show was still better than most bands who've ever played their best."

Has he grown up at all, like father-to-be Hoss?

"I've mellowed out a little bit, I guess. I'm not trying to have children or anything like that, though. I think I'm my own kid, ha ha! It's hard enough to take care of my damn self ..."

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