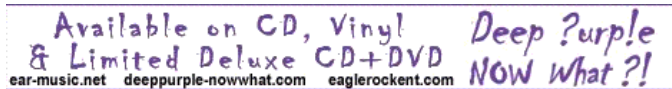


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- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Interviews](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Concert Reports](#)
- [Giveaways](#)
- [Auction](#)
- [Rock Shop](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Links](#)



### Navigation

- Home
- News
- Interviews
- Reviews
- Concert Reports
- Giveaways
- Auction
- Rock Shop
- About Us
- Contact Us
- Links
- Login

### Merchandise

- ♪ APPAREL
- ♪ BIG MEN'S APPAREL
- ♪ INFANT BAND APPAREL
- ♪ HATS, CAPS & BEANIES
- ♪ BELT BUCKLES
- ♪ CUPS, MUGS & GLASSES
- ♪ LIGHTERS
- ♪ BLANKETS
- ♪ WALL ART
- ♪ NOVELTY ITEMS
- ♪ SHEET MUSIC

### The Naked Truth: An Interview with dUg Pinnick of King's X



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By Jeb Wright

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King's X made a big splash as a Christian rock band in the late 1980's and early 1990's. While they like to downplay their Christian status today, even claiming that the early records were not necessarily religious, they were, nonetheless, considered a Christian rock group by the record buying public back in the day. They were, perhaps, the first band to really put rock music first, and their beliefs second. In addition to this, King's X had a very unique progressive hard rock style that caught the attention of rockers who could care less what they were being preached to about. The band consisted of fabulous musicians blurring racial and religious lines.

While King's X is still together, the members of the band all have a life outside of their day gig. Bassist dUg Pinnick has four or five bands, all of them featuring original music. One of the reasons for his creative output is to deal with his personal issues. He creates to heal himself from abusive situations in his past, as well as a way to deal with the disease of depression.

On May 7, 2013, Pinnick will release a solo album titled *Naked*, in which the artist bares his soul for the world to see. Over the past several years, Pinnick has started over, financially, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. He has been close the edge and, on occasion, stared over the edge in the abyss.

What follows is a very open and honest interview with a tortured artist who is doing the best he can, despite himself. dUg fights his demons with music, and so far, it is a prescription that is working. Like the music on *Naked*, Pinnick is an emotional and fragile artistic personality. He is, however, continuing to fight the good fight, always able to find a flicker of light, even in the deepest and darkest of tunnels.

**Jeb: Before we even get into your solo album, *Naked*, I want to tell you that Pinnick, Gales, Pridgen is an amazing album and I am totally hooked on it.**

dUg: That is awesome. I just got home from San Francisco where we are finishing up the second one.

**Jeb: Don't tease me...is it more of the same?**

dUg: It is more of the same. I think the songs are better. It was a lot of fun to make this record. We took a little more time to do the second one. Mike Varney called me up and said, "Do you want to do another PGP record?" I said, "Yes I do, but I have just written five records and I have nothing to give you. I'm burnt." When I went to San Francisco to make the record, I was in the middle of mixing my blues band, Grinder Blues, and putting vocal tracks on this other side project called KXM with Ray Luzier from Korn and George Lynch. George texted me the other day and wants to know when we can get together and work on this.

I told the guys at Magna Carta, the record company, that I had nothing to give, but I got there and they told me Tom was going to be here for four days to do the drums, so we had to write fifteen songs. I was like, "God damn it." I grabbed my guitar and within 45 minutes I had written a song. I wrote five songs in two days. We tracked them and the funny thing is that they decided to do a video on this instrumental track. They said, "dUg, we need you to come up with some lyrics for that song so we can do the video." I went back to the house, where I was staying, and I wrote them. We shit out a bunch of lyrics and music, but we did it. It was stressful, but not in a bad way. It was work to get there and hash out the parts, but it was a wonderful experience.

**Jeb: Musically, Eric Gales and you two are a good match.**

dUg: I have known Eric since he was a teenager. Back in the day, he opened for King's X. He is like a little brother in some ways. I watched that boy go through his thing. He lost his band and he went to prison for armed robbery. I don't see him or talk to him hardly at all. He is just one of those people who pop in and out of my life. We have a kinship, but other than that...he always looked up to me in King's X.

He has grown and he is running neck and neck with me now. It is neat to hang with him and make music, but we don't know each other really well anymore. We make music and then I go back to where I am hanging out and he is with his wife.

**Jeb: Tell me about what you're doing with George Lynch.**

dUg: We are called KXM. We have three songs that we are shopping right now. We've got a whole album almost done. We have Ray Luzier from Korn playing drums. It is good stuff.

**Jeb: You are in a creative whirlwind. How many different things do you have going on?**

dUg: I don't know what is going on, but I have five different projects going on right now. When I moved to California, I decided to break my neck and that is what I did.

**Jeb: What are the plans for King's X?**

dUg: We are getting ready to start rehearsing and we have about ten shows coming up in the next month. We are getting revved up.

**Jeb: You did some shows with Kansas.**

dUg: That was a few months ago. They asked me to be in the band a long time ago; Kerry Livgren called me. That was like twenty years ago. I feel camaraderie with them, but I didn't get to know them well. Getting to hang out with them and talk with them was great. Plus, they play some of my favorite songs and I got to watch them every night.

**Jeb: It is interesting that King's X and Kansas were both known as Christian bands. Kansas, actually were not, until nearly ten years into the band when Kerry became Born Again.**

dUg: They weren't. When Kerry became Born Again and started to change the lyrics to Christianity, that's when Steve Walsh said, "I'm done guys. We can talk about spiritual stuff, but when you put it in an ultimatum then I'm done." Christianity was not cool for a rock band back then. Now, every band is Christian and they drink and they smoke and they do everything. "We don't say fuck, but we fuck our girlfriends." Everybody has their little niche, it is so funny now.

**Jeb: Let's talk about your solo effort that is coming out May 7<sup>th</sup>, titled Naked. Are you playing all of the instruments on this thing?**

dUg: On one song called "Ain't that the Truth" there is a lead break by Tracy Singleton, who played with Fishbone and Mother's Finest. Other than that, I did everything. I like that song.

**Jeb: You are not playing guitar like a bass player at all!**

dUg: [laughter] Bass is my main instrument, but I always write music on guitar. It keeps getting better and better the more I do it. I don't consider myself a guitar player, I just have been writing songs on the guitar for forty years and, as a result of that, I've learned to play guitar.

**Jeb: You have all of these different projects going on, so why do these songs make this album instead of one of the other projects?**

dUg: I don't categorized my songs, I just give whatever I've got to whatever I am doing at that time. The Naked album is a very deeply personal record for me because of the lyrics, so I didn't want to give these songs to everybody. It's my little thing and I wanted to put it out like that.

I was going through a lot of deep shit when I was making that record and it's my deep shit, and not anybody else's. I just feel like this record is all me being me and no one is going to come in and take these songs and change them, or do anything different with them, other than what I gave to them.

**Jeb: It sounds like you are taking this very seriously.**

dUg: This is very important to me because of the state I was in when I wrote these songs. I had to move to LA because I wasn't making any money. I didn't know what I was doing.

I was sleeping on the floor; I came out here basically with my clothes and a few guitars and decided I was going to live like I was twenty years old again. My brother moved into my house and he took over all of my payments and bills and I just left.

I've been out here for three years and I finally feel like I'm alive again. I am getting a life and I'm making music and doing things. Naked is a result of all of that; those three years of trying to figure myself out. It was a pretty rough time for me. I am not complaining because everybody has rough times.

**Jeb: You talk about all of this, even your brother on one of the songs.**

dUg: "Whatcha Gonna Do" is the song.

**Jeb: So that is all true.**

dUg: Everything written on Naked is true shit. The only song that is just made up is "That Great Big Thing." The chorus in that song makes no sense, but the verses are really deep.

**Jeb: People think that you're a rock star, so how can you have trouble paying the bills.**

dUg: We can't have problems with that, or depression, or loneliness because everybody loves us.

**Jeb: King's X was a great band and you were successful, but you didn't sell albums like the Who. Reality is reality.**

dUg: Exactly, and that is what I try to let people know. We didn't sell millions of records and I am not sitting in a mansion up on a hill like the record executive that signed us.

**Jeb: I can quote the song titled on Naked... "Ain't that the truth."**

dUg: [laughter] yeah, ain't that the truth! That song was about Jerry [Gaskill] having his heart attack. I didn't know what to do with myself when that happened because he is in New Jersey and I am out here in California. Everybody was at the hospital with him and I am stuck in LA because I can't afford to go out there. I wrote three songs when that happened. "Courage," "Ain't That the Truth," and "I am Not Going to Freak Out" I wrote while we were waiting for Jerry to come out of a coma.

**Jeb: Sometimes it is the hard times that spawn that creative spark.**

dUg: My best songs come from my worst times.

**Jeb: That sucks.**

dUg: It does suck, but it's true. If I don't have any drama going on in my life then I don't have anything to write about. I have accepted it over the years. I took Wellbutrin for a while for depression, but I found that I couldn't write any lyrics on it. There was nothing getting to me because I didn't care. I just didn't have any deep feelings about anything. When I got off the stuff and almost tried to kill myself, because Wellbutrin will do that when you come off of it. After I got through that—no more of that stuff. I just smoke weed and deal with it.

**Jeb: Where do you go from here? How do you lift yourself back up?**

dUg: I just will keep going like I do. I laugh a lot about things because you have to laugh to keep from crying. Everybody has their problems in life and what they have to deal with, from childhood abandonment, or abusive parents, or other deep, deep things.

My childhood was much different than most people and I look at things differently and it is the reason I have depression. I have just had to learn to live with it. Whatever life has dealt you then you have to deal with it and you can't blame anyone anymore. What I try to do is to write songs about how I feel, without blaming anyone. I try to say that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that you can work this out and that you just need to hang on.

Sometimes I don't think I'm going to make it, but we all get to those places in our life where it is so dark that you just don't think you can make it but, somehow, the light comes on and you just keep on going. That is what I like to write about. I don't like to write about anything final like I want to kill myself.

**Jeb: Do you?**

dUg: Well, I did write a song called "I Want to Kill Myself Tonight" and I ended up changing the lyrics. I knew that even though, right then, I wanted to do that, I knew I wasn't going to do that. That song would be out there forever and everyone would be able to judge me for that, you know. Twenty years later I don't want someone to write me a letter saying, "dUg, why do you want to kill yourself?" It's not like that.

**Jeb: I relate to you as a creative person. I think sometimes we use the creative process, and writing about those dark times, as a way to heal ourselves.**

dUg: It is totally healing. I have this thing called Abandoned Child Syndrome. To make a long story short, my mother and father did not raise me. I was left at an age when I was just beginning to bond.

When they left, it put me into a traumatic place. I have lived with this all of my life and I'm just beginning to understand what it is and how to deal with it. It affects how I look at myself and my relationships with people. You don't feel like you fit in and you don't feel like anyone cares about you and you don't feel like you're worth a people's time. You are a piece of shit, basically. In every aspect, you're a complete piece of shit, because the people that you needed to tell you that you were okay were not there to tell you that and the people that were there would yell at you. I grew up with this outlook on life like I'm a piece of shit and that nobody cares. When I got up on my feet, I realized I had a gift to write music. I had to write songs and sing about things and I was an artist, so I wanted to draw things as well. What was I going to draw or sing about? I wrote and sang about whatever I had in my heart and what I felt. I still do.

If you sing about sex all the time then you might be a sexaholic. If you write about love all of the time then you might be obsessed with love. Everybody has certain things that they sing about. As a result, we show the world who we are through our songs, as artists. My songs are pretty dark, but hopefully there is a light. That is how I live. I live in this darkness and I feel like I'm drowning, but when I come up I can see land. I know it is out there, so I go back down and deal with it—that's how I look at it.

**Jeb: You can feel your energy on the songs on Naked. I really like your guitar playing on the album. I love the solo on "I Hope I Don't Lose My Mind."**

dUg: Thank you, that really means a whole lot to me, you have no idea. I really struggled putting that solo on the record. I was afraid all guitar players were going to say, "dUg, you really tried but you didn't get it."

**Jeb: Do you get in touch with the emotion through the music or through the lyric?**

dUg: When I write a song, I pull up the drum programming first. I reach inside my soul and try to figure out how I am feeling. Whatever energy I have, I channel into the drums and make up some beats. Then, I pick up my guitar and start coming up with chords. Usually, that is the fun part for me; I like to make up interesting guitar parts. When I get the parts done, then I piece them together and make it into a song and I listen to it, without any words, or any vocal melodies at all. I play the music over and over in my headphones until I hear a melody in all of the overtones that are coming through the cymbals, the guitars, the bass and everything. All of a sudden, I will hear a melody come out of it. Something will hit me where I am just depressed. I will wake up in the morning and it hits me really hard and I feel really bad. I go, "Aw, fuck, I've got to get back on track." I did exactly that when I wrote "Feeling Down Again."

My phone rings all of the time because people want to see how I am doing. You can't explain to people who do not live in a depressive state of life what it is like because all they want to do is to be able to fix it. After a while, they get tired of hearing you complain about how you feel. They are like, "Why don't you change?" People don't realize that traumatic things that happen to you in life stay with you the rest of your life. You have to learn how to deal with it and one of the ways I do that is to write songs about it.

**Jeb: I am an emotional person and I drive my wife crazy. She literally needs breaks from me.**

dUg: That's the way I am. I am such deprived person when it comes to needing attention and love that as soon as I find someone, then the only thing left for them to do, by the time I am done with them, is for them to run.

**Jeb: "The Point" is a lyrically amazing song.**

dUg: That song is half about me and half about Jerry. Jerry actually died and came back. Jerry went to that point of no return to where that next step is forever and that is what that song is about. I think that is one of my deepest songs, lyrically.

**Jeb: "If You Fuk Up" is a really strong lyric.**

dUg: That is a serious song for sure. It was the way I was feeling when I wrote the song. The serious side of that song is that you need to talk to someone when you're depressed.

What happened was that I had gotten to a place to where I was so depressed that I wouldn't talk to anyone about it. I was learning great ways to hide it. I realized that when you start hiding those feelings... the people that I know who killed themselves were people that I didn't know were depressed.

I found myself becoming part of that state of mind. It scared me to get to that place. A friend of mine texted me and said, "Are you okay?" I said that I was fine and he texted back and said, "If you fuck up and don't tell anyone, then none of us will forgive ourselves for what you've done. You mean something." I was in tears. I got up and the chorus just came; I had the music. I sat down with the music and the words just flowed. They all came out and it was just exactly how I was feeling at the time.

**Jeb: I know you were raised in a very religious atmosphere. King's X was a Christian band. I know you have now rejected that. Creativity is very spiritual to me. Where are you at with all of that now?**

dUg: I went through a bunch of different emotional attitudes towards the concept of God. It is always changing, but where I am now is that I don't know what is responsible for all of this, or if anything is responsible for it, but I totally respect it. I don't think that it has talked to me, or spoke to me in anyway that I know. I believe that something keeps an eye on me because things happen in my life that I can't believe are a coincidence.

When I think that I am going to breakdown and that I am not going to make it, then I will cry out and say, "I don't know anything, but I am asking for help." I don't attach any names or religion to it. Whatever God is, I don't know, but I am at peace with that. For me, personally, I just want to be in the groove of whatever this all is. I try to create peace and I try to love. I want to be at peace when I die. I want good energy flowing all the time.

I believe all religions, and Jesus, talked about this all of the time. It is the flow of life, the good and the bad and accepting it all. That is where I am at with the whole spiritual situation. Sometimes I sit down and I really want to write a song, but I dry up and have nothing. I go, "Give me some music." Within an hour, I come up with something really cool that I like. I don't know where it comes from, what it is, or why it is, but, to me, it is something outside of me.

At this point in my life, I am not open for anyone to tell me what it is. I am open to hear what another's concept is, and how it works for them. I have total respect for that but, in my life right now, if someone comes up to me and talks about the old religious ways of doing things, I just tell them that I can't do that anymore. That kept me in depression.

Being a Christian, the first thing you learn is that you're not worthy and that you're not good enough. You are going to be judged and if you don't do this, or that, then you are going to go to hell. Since I am a really depressed person, who came from a shame based sort of a psychology, religion is not good for me. The religion that I was a part of didn't lift me up to love myself and to love my maker. It made me feel like I wasn't good enough.

**Jeb: Acknowledging your gay did not help.**

dUg: Especially because I'm gay, in the Christian world that is a no-no. There is a place in the Bible where God says that is an abomination. When a preacher gets up to preach, he says that an abomination is what God hates more than anything else. God hates a lot of things in the Bible, but when God says something is an abomination, then you're going to hell and God has nothing to do with you and there is no way you're

going to change that.

I didn't know what to do anymore and I had no one to help me. I just tried to find my way out of that hole. I started to look back and realize that it was just another religion and that they all have their own thing. I realized it was not the only way. People need something to believe in and they need to feel a part of something and they need spiritual awareness. I have nothing against it, but when they legislate and tell people what they have to do in order to get with God, I say, "Not anymore. Your way didn't work and I've have a new way."

**Jeb: Are you getting on with things?**

dUg: I had an episode a couple of days ago where I was screaming and yelling and breaking down, but something came to me and I feel like I got another piece of the puzzle. I feel like my life is a broken puzzle and I'm trying to put the pieces together. I found another piece, so today, I am sort of...you know how you feel like when you run a marathon, or you've had a long fight with somebody? You just feel drained and weak and you shake...that is how I feel right now.

I had not had one of those emotional episodes in a long, long time. It had been years. I don't know what happened, or what triggered it. It never ends. What keeps me going is knowing that I'm not the only one. Everyone has problems. You were talking about you're problems and we all have them, and that is what makes me want to keep writing about them.

A person can put Naked on and they know where I am at, as they have sat in their room crying. They know that somebody else has been through the same thing. I write songs for me, and for other people, to not feel alone.

**Jeb: You are a tortured artist.**

dUg: That's what they call me. You have to find a way to make yourself that way. Sometimes I think I might be addicted to it.

**Jeb: Like most tortured souls, however, you have a great sense of humor.**

dUg: You have too. How else will you survive? When you see somebody and they say "My grandfather raped me when I was three years old" then they make a joke about it. They have too. It is the only thing that they can do is to joke about it. You don't joke about it, but that's how you deal with it. If you would put your emotions into what you just told somebody that is that heavy, then you will breakdown and break them down too. Why bring everybody down?

**Jeb: It could be worse. Just look at Eric Gales. He went to prison.**

dUg: That is what keeps me going. It really could be worse.

**Jeb: George Carlin said, "No matter how bad you have it, someone has it as worse as you but they have a fucking headache."**

dUg: [laughter] George Carlin is my pastor. If there was a Church of Carlin then I would join. He's my guy.

**Jeb: Last one: Where did you come up with the dUg way of spelling your first name?**

dUg: I am an artist. I paint and I do stuff like that. I always wanted to be a stenographer. My handwriting is really beautiful. I have always taken pride in it. One day, now that we type everything and nobody writes, I accidentally put a big "U" and a small 'd' and a little 'g' and I thought it looked cool, so I have been doing it ever since.

**Check out dUg on Facebook**

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