

FEATURES

DEAN WEEN OF MOISTBOYZ JAMS ECONO AND AIN'T NO SENSITIVE PUSSY INTERVIEWS

By Brad Cohan

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photo via *Philadelphia City Paper*

When the gloriously deranged iconoclasts Ween shocked its loyal fan base with its untimely breakup after nearly three decades of weed-eating, helium-sucking, avant-jam band bat-shittery, the question was what Gene (a.k.a. Aaron Freeman) and Dean Ween's (née Mickey Melchiondo) next moves would be. The beloved Gener was first out of the gate, offering up his "recovery record" (Marvelous Cloud) while Melchiondo—blindsided by his childhood best bud/band-mate's decision to arbitrarily put Ween to bed—focused on his fledgling fishing business he calls Mickey's Guide Service.

Now Melchiondo is finally putting Ween in his rear view mirror and is back in full force. He's taken his ax out of its brief retirement, and with his blistering six-string, revived longtime outfit Moistboyz, the scuzzy-assed blues-punk bar band he shares with a dude even more brain-fried than his former Ween cohort. Guy Heller—or as he's known under the deliciously revolting pseudonym Dickie Moist—first teamed with Melchiondo to form Moistboyz way back in the early 90's and it's no wonder their pervy rawk shitbaggery caught the ear of Beastie Boy Mike D, who originally signed the 'boyz up on their Grand Royal label.

Twenty years and change and a few records later, Ween is dead and the Moistboyz are left standing and the new V (via their own Neverman label) is testament to Melchiondo and Heller's rock godheadness. Heller's white-trashed, tat-covered and Iggy-shirtless histrionics meets Gibby Haynes-esque sleaze makes him one of

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rock's best and volatile punk front-men you've never heard of. Heller has no problem getting all un-PC on your ass, hurling the most delicious of tasteless of barbs and cuss filled diatribes while Melchiondo plays guitar god, letting loose on epic boogie 'n' chug shredage. On *V*, Moistboyz hit shitstorms of both the country home twang of "Down on the Farm" (an ode to the Pennsylvania farm Ween and Heller lived on) and "One Cut at a Time," just a tender ditty about Jerry Sandusky getting his ass-raped in prison. There ya go.

We caught up with Melchiondo to get the dish on the Moistboyz, how they stack up to Ween, and the solo record he's currently hard at work on

Noisey: Hey Mickey, how ya doin'?

Mickey Melchiondo: Doin' good.

I saw that awesome episode of *Guitar Moves* you did with Matt Sweeney.

Oh, for VICE, yeah [laughing]. I've known Matt since back then (in the Skunk days), before that even.

Yeah, I saw Ween, Skunk and H.P. Zinker at Maxwell's in Hoboken in 1989.

Oh, I remember that! I loved those guys. H.P. Zinker—that's funny. Good call. I have pictures from that show.

What do you remember about that show?

Not much. That was really the old days. Yup.

Last night was the first gig of the Moistboyz tour. How'd it go?

It was awesome but I can't hear out of my left ear today—at all.

Really? Well, that sucks.

I'm kind of concerned, yeah. I don't know whether its congestion or I actually blew up my ear [laughing]. Loud fucking band.

What took so long for the new Moistboyz record, *V*, to come out? *Live Jihad* came out in 2006 and *IV* came out the year before that. It's been a while.

Ya know, it didn't take really long by the time that we decided to do it—it only took like a year. But Guy moved to Texas, so it was kind of hard for us to...you know...I mean he was in Texas and I was in Pennsylvania. Then our local bar here (John & Peter's Place in New Hope) had their 40th anniversary and they wanted to do something special so I called Guy to see if he would fly out and I'd get our old band back together and do it. Guy came out there and then we had so much fun. We did a couple of shows, actually, that was part of that thing (the anniversary) and then it was like, "Wow, let's do a new record." Ween was already broken up at that point so I had the time and just seeing Guy again and just playing the gigs again reminded me and it was like, "Fuck. Would you willing to come back and make a record?" And he said, "Yeah." So, about a year ago, Guy was here for Hurricane Sandy, from September through Thanksgiving, we made the new album and then I went to Austin in February and we finished it. It was just him living in Texas, ya know. Had he been local, I'm sure we would've made the fifth record much sooner.

Moistboyz have been around a long time, huh?

Yeah, over 20 years.

Almost as long as Ween was around, right?

I known Guy almost as long but...uh...Ween would have been 29 years right now. But fuck, yeah, I guess I've been with Guy somewhere between 20 and 25 years.

How did you and Guy meet originally?

We're both locals, going back to high school. I remember one of my friends later became his girlfriend and then

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Aaron (Freeman) and I lived together at a place we called The Pod and then when we got thrown out of there, Aaron moved into a farmhouse, which basically was five other dudes—most of which were in Guy's band, False Front—and that was when I became really close with Guy. I'd spend every night over there recording with Aaron and hanging with those guys and Ween and False Front were playing a lot of shows together.

Guy and I then started this thing (Moistboyz) on the side and it was just punk rock originally—that was the idea. It was gonna be just really, really fast punk rock stuff and then it got good really fast, actually. It was different and it definitely had its own identity, which it still does. I then had a tape of it and the Beasties had just started Grand Royal so got a tape of it to Mike D and he was like "I would totally put this out." I think Moistboyz are one of the first Grand Royal releases, actually, or like the second or third, maybe. It was the Beastie Boys thing, us and Luscious Jackson. We're the first three. That made it official and we've just kept doing it. That was like the early 90s, so...

Back then, did you think of Moistboyz as a different release for you, guitar shredding-wise, than what you were doing in Ween?

Ween was never inhibiting, you know what I mean [laughing]? Ween wasn't the kind of band where I'd go, "We can't do that because that wouldn't be Ween." That was the opposite of what Ween was. We'd go for everything. But it was different in the way that we (Moistboyz) definitely have a harder ethic. I would say the Moistboyz, lyrically and like, our "code, [laughing]" is very, very focused. We're trying to make kick ass rock and roll, in a nutshell, all the time.

That's the Moistboyz "code?"

We're not trying to make...sensitive pussy art [laughing].

Has Guy, or Dickie Moist, always been somewhat of a provocateur? Is that a shtick?

He's a wonderful dude and super, super intelligent but there's all sorts of different sides to him—he's a person. But he's the real thing, he's a true rock and roller—to the bone. Rock and roll is like a religion to him, like it is to most of the fuckin' people I know, actually. But (Guy) especially so. He's a great front-man; he's the real thing. He's a real front-man, a very serious man and he's my friend.

Touring with Guy must be kind of insane.

Our touring hasn't been too heavy. We did a bunch of it for the last two records but not as much I would have liked. The Moistboyz is definitely something special. If we are coming around your area, you should come see us because it's not like we are ever gonna saturate. It's a very high energy thing that I think if I did it full time, like every day for two years, I don't think I would survive. Somebody would be dead [laughing]. It's taxing, like the practicing we were doing is something that is necessary on a physical level as much as it is learning what the notes are and leading the songs. It's not easy; it takes some fuckin' stamina to play those songs at the right energy level [laughing], to execute them properly you're gonna...I estimate when I'm back by Christmas time from this (tour) run I'll probably be down to 160 from 175 [laughing].



The Moistboyz live show is that physical?

Oh, yeah. You have to change everything when you're done: the jeans, the sneakers, the socks, the underwear. And I'm playing guitar. Guy is up front.

How is touring different aesthetically with Ween than it is with the Moistboyz?

Well, aesthetically, where I last left Ween off, we were a lot more cushy than the Moistboyz. We're touring in a van, we're sharing rooms, and we have no tour manager even. But the music business has also gone that way and it doubly sucks. We put out this record (V) ourselves on our own Neverman Records, we paid for it out of

pocket, we released it on our own label, I produced it and we recorded it in a place we rented. Labels don't give you advances anymore to fuckin' make records—those days are just gone. So, this will be my first tour in a couple of years but the Moistboyz thing is obviously a lot more gritty (than Ween) and it's a lot fuckin' more DIY. We're in a van, no tour managers, we loading our own gear, we're doubling, tripling up in hotel rooms, most of our meals are probably going to be provided by the club, which is fine. I've done all that shit before and I don't mind doin' it again. Fuck it. If Mike Watt can still tour that way then I can still fuckin' tour that way.

You're jammin' econo, man.

Yeah, exactly! Fuckin' Moistboyz jam econo. That's the short answer to your question between Ween touring and Moistboyz jam econo.

Have you missed touring since Ween was out there on the circuit? It sounds like it.

Uh....nobody in the world will tell you that they miss being on tour. Not Charlie Watts or not Mike Watt, actually. It's the playing on tour is what you miss. The rest of touring stinks: the driving around and the waiting. Playing live fuckin' rules and I miss that tremendously. But, no, being on tour, no. I did 25 years on tour. I know exactly what to expect, exactly what it's gonna be like. It's part of who I am but now more than ever it's the best way to make a living as a musician and it's still the best way to get your music to people.

I don't get it when a band sends me a link and says, "Here, listen to my band at our Soundcloud page." It's just like, "I'm not fuckin' doing that. No way. What are you, crazy?" But if I was to hear it playing somewhere and go like, "That sounds cool. Who is that?" I might be inspired to check it out or see a band come through your town, play your local club or somethin' and you see 'em you're like, "Oh, god, those guys fuckin' rule." But I know one way of doing things in any band and it's the old fashioned way and that's the way we're gonna keep doing things. You take a while to make record, you write a lot of songs, way too many, you pick the ones that are the best that work the best as a record and then you get a label to put it out and then you go on tour to support it, ya know?

Is the Moistboyz audience the same people who are going to Ween shows?

It definitely is. It took a little while but there you'd be wrong in assuming that there just fans of Ween and Moistboyz both. There's certainly a lot of crossover and spillover. But there are a certain amount of people that prefer the Moistboyz to Ween or I am sure there are a lot of Ween fans who don't like the Moistboyz. Where the fuck were we? Southern California. There was a big contingent of Mexicans at the gig and I'm talking to them and I knew immediately—and it was confirmed upon talking to them—that they had no fuckin' idea who Ween was [laughing].

Guy doesn't seem to be filled with the usual vitriol and is not as confrontational on the new record that on previous ones. Is that intentional? Is he mellowing out or some shit?

Nothing on any project I've ever been involved in has ever been intentional. People assume a lot more, like when they say, "Were you going for this thing?" We definitely weren't going for a thing with this record that said, "We want this record to differentiate itself from the last one by this." What happens is you automatically grow: your songwriting gets better, your lyrics get more meaningful, your playing gets better, you become a better engineer. I just look at it as progress. I think that very one of our records has progressed from record to record and gets a little but more, whatever, a step up. Step up your game a little bit more.

Did Moistboyz ever play a gig with Ween?

No, not that I can think of. I don't think we ever shared a bill. We shared some members and we were all friends back in the day.

Guy's lyrics offend just about everyone and of course Ween had some songs that caused some stirs.

Have you ever gotten shit for Moistboyz?

Nah, I don't think I've ever been involved in something that didn't offend somebody on some level, in every band that I've ever been in.

Nick Oliveri is playing bass with you on this current Moistboyz tour. Is he now christened Nicky Moist?

Ya know, I didn't even think about that. He brought it up and I think he really wants to be Nicky Moist. But then we have to do something with Hoss Wright and Stephen Haas. We'd have to make him something. But Nick is probably talking to fans somewhere telling them he's Nicky Moist [laughing].

What's the difference between Guy and Aaron Freeman?

Uh, what's the difference? They are just two completely different people. Leave it at that. We all used to be great friends. I don't even wanna remember it any other way, to be honest with you.

So you, Aaron and Guy were all tight?

Oh, yeah. We fuckin' lived together—that's what I'm saying. We all lived together at the farmhouse. Guy's band, False Front and Ween. It was very incestuous; we were all very tight. That's the way I'd like to remember it. There's a song about it on the record, "Down on the Farm." It's all about that period of time—Brookridge Farm in Lambertville. That was the band house; that's what it's about—it's about all us living in the band house. There was about a hundred people that lived there, different faces in time. It was almost like a boarding house for our friends and local musicians. Someone probably has done but make a family tree who lived there from the original tenants to the very end when they tore the place down.

How do you balance your fishing business and touring with the Moistboyz?

This will be my sixth year of being a full-time charter boat captain. A lot of people warned me, a lot of my friends who were chartering before I was who had their captain's license said to me, "Hey, be really careful you don't burn out on it." It's really hard work and they are really long days, it's dangerous and you don't really make a lot of money. But the reason ya start doin' it is because you love fishing. And what happens is you end up hating it; it's like any job. So last year and the year before, I went, especially because Ween broke up, I took on way too many trips. I've been fishing every day for the last couple of years, pretty much. I decided next year I'm gonna balance. I'm gonna focus more on music next year. I'd like to get my solo record out. I started on it and then I put it aside for a while we did the Moistboyz—I focused everything on that. So I'd like to finish that. I'm doing a lot of TV stuff, soundtrack stuff, I got a bunch of commercials goin' on right now for Dick's Sporting Goods, like four of 'em. They're for Adidas. I did some earlier this year, I'm doin' music for a reality show that goes on the air next year. I'm gonna balance the two. I'm not gonna stop fishing but I'm gonna do the trips that I like and the ones that I want. There are certain times when the fishing is phenomenal and they're the most fun ones. But then there are other ones for whatever is out there and just taking people out just for entertainment for the whole day. I'm probably gonna pick the seasons where the fishing is the best.

Are you going to try to get a label to release your solo record?

I don't know, actually. I don't even know what benefits there are to being on a label anymore, unless you're getting a push that Kanye gets or something. There's such a chasm between the super, super huge acts and acts that can play bars and clubs. Major labels, I don't think, are interested in signing a band anymore that could sell 100,000 records. The days of getting \$200,00 or \$300,000 advances and making three videos is over.

Did you put together a band for your solo thing?

I know so many great musicians that I've always wanted to play with and a lot of them are right here in my backyard. There are people I've always wanted to play with that I'll probably ask. I know already there are a couple of guests I'm gonna have. It's gonna be funny, you'll see. The Moistboyz record just came out and we are on tour so I'm taking one thing at a time right now. This is gonna keep me busy for a while and I'm committed to it. We spent a long time doing it, makin' the record and getting it right so I want to make sure we go out there and present it right.

Where did the Moistboyz name come from?

I can't even fuckin' remember. Actually I do remember. We started the band in the summer time and I was living in this apartment at the time. Guy was at the farmhouse and I was in the apartment. We would come over to my apartment and it was before we had a (band) name, I think. It was so fucking hot. I lived in the upstairs of this really, really old, really crappy apartment with no air conditioning. It was middle of the summer and we were right in the middle of downtown New Hope so we had to close the windows because the neighbors were like—you can reach out and touch the house next to you. So it would get to be like 150 degrees in the room and filled with cigarette smoke, we'd be drinking these giant mugs of fuckin' coffee and sweating so bad and that's where it actually came from—the Moistboyz. It's such a soft name for such a vicious thing [laughing].

By Brad Cohan | Dec 17 2013

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