

ROCK & REVIEW

Interview With FAITH NO MORE

Arguably one of the more influential bands of the early '90's, **Faith No More** has spawned equal parts fans, critics and imitators.

Despite huge commercial success with 1989's *The Real Thing*, *FNM* has been a victim of sorts of the short attention span MTV vidiots. When it's new, it's the best. After that, whatever.

Fortunately, the band has made it through a rough period intact. Conflicts with now-excused guitarist Jim Martin made recording and touring for their last album, *Angel Dust*, a nightmare.

But with the just released *King For A Day/Fool For A Lifetime* continuing in the band's eclectic tradition, those praying for Faith No More's successful return have been rewarded. Bassist Billy Gould took a few moments to speak with us from San Francisco at the conclusion of a short European tour.

ROCK & REVIEW: Considering that this is the play it safe '90's, why does Faith No More continue to take risks and put all kinds of different music on their discs?

BILLY GOULD: The same reason people like to bungee jump, I guess. Just the thrill; the risk is part of the thrill. Taking a risk and pulling it off is more exhilarating than just sitting on your ass, or doing something that you're going to tour with for a year and a half that doesn't excite you. First of all, we have to make ourselves happy. We tour a lot, and it becomes hell if we don't like the stuff that we're doing.

R&R: When you sit in the studio and decide on songs, do you make conscious efforts to pick some songs which you know people are going to like and some songs which you aren't sure if they're going to like?

BG: On our records, we just like to have a balance. We don't want it too heavy and meathead-like, to where it's just like

some Cro-Magnon record, and we don't want to make it too syrupy and poppy so it doesn't have any bite. We just like to make a record that's well balanced, the way a meal would be; the meat, the vegetables, the potatoes, the dessert.

R&R: What part of the meal do you like the best?

BG: The whole thing. It all serves a different purpose. I think I wouldn't like one if it didn't have the other. Just like if someone speaks quietly all the time, when they shout you notice it. You have to have those kinds of contrasts.

R&R: That type of contrast is obviously a big part of Mike Patton's singing style. Since he joined the band, how do you think he's matured and how do you think the band's matured?

BG: I think he's matured a lot as a person. Singing-wise, he's probably a little more comfortable with who he is. I think that goes for the whole band. I think that though we set out not giving a fuck what people thought about us, we always gave a fuck. We always wanted to do things that we would respect if we were somebody else, we had a certain standard.

"Now I'm realizing that there's not a group of people who have better taste than anybody else. If we like it, it's fine. If people don't like it, it's cool, I can live with it. It's kind of become a matter of personal satisfaction. Luckily, we don't have any kind of identity in the media, where we have to be a certain way. Like we don't have to be a heavy metal band and we don't have to be a pop band, we can pretty much be what we want. So it's good because we can be who we are.

R&R: When Jim left the band, you had someone you knew in Trey Spruance take over his spot. What was the studio transition like?

BG: It was great, it was awesome. We had a guy we were playing with who we could communicate with on a musical level, and that was a fantastic thing.

R&R: Was he someone the whole band knew or just Mike?

BG: I'd met him a couple of times but I didn't know him very well. And believe it or not, Mike was the only guy who was against him being in the band because he knew him too well. I thought he was a really good guitar player and he was. He did a great job on the record. But it turned out to not be such a reliable thing. I'm glad he decided not to be in the group before we went on tour.

R&R: I was worried that the sound of the band would change when Jim left. But that's really not the case at all.

BG: The media is very interesting, because you can perceive a band by the way they look. People thought the heavy side of our band was going because Jim wore a leather jacket and smoked cigarettes and drank booze. You equate the image with the sound. In our case, that wasn't the way it was. I think we had to choose between going the image way or the sound way and I think we chose the sound path.

R&R: Was it Jim's decision to leave?

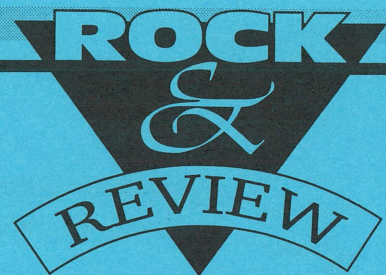
BG: I think that he's happier he's out but I don't think he wanted to go. We just couldn't operate any more. We couldn't write songs, we couldn't do anything. It was just a bad situation. We would've had to break up.

R&R: Was it because there was too much of a tug-of-war between which direction the sound was going to go?

BG: If it was that easy, we would have just compromised and worked it out. It was a tug-of-war for no apparent reason, as far as I could see. It was just a difficult situation.

R&R: For you core guys (Gould, Roddy Bottum and Mike "Puffy" Bordin), who had stuck together for so long, was it really a tough decision to make, to tell Jim, "Hey, we just don't want you in the band anymore?"

BG: It was tough in the beginning and we didn't make decisions. During *Angel Dust* we probably could have done it, because *Angel Dust* was a bitch. It was really hard to make the record, to write the record, because we were trying to get somebody to even learn the part.



BASSIST BILLY GOULD

Then touring *Angel Dust* really sucked. Because we were touring with somebody who didn't even like the record, who'd do interviews and say the record is no good. So that was a problem, because we were working our ass off. We probably should have made the move earlier, but we tried to work it out. When you're in a band that starts selling records, you just can't fire people anymore. It's not so easy.

There starts a time when lawyers get involved. It's not a good situation. Plus, let's face it, people did recognize Jim and his part of the identity of the group.

A lot of people advised us that it was a stupid thing to do. But I think if we kept going like that, if we didn't break up, we'd be a Vegas act.

R&R *I thought Angel Dust was a very underrated record. In a way, it was the opposite of a sellout. It was harsher and more powerful overall than The Real Thing. Why do you think some people didn't quite take to it?*

BG: I think a large part of it was that

the record company didn't understand it, so we were at odds from the very beginning. I also think we were very antagonistic toward the record company, so it wasn't totally their fault. I think with *The Real Thing*, we were being marketed and promoted in a way that we weren't comfortable with. I don't think we identified with the people we saw on those posters and in those videos.

I think that we decided to pull in the reigns a little bit and keep a little more of our artistic control. And we were kind of aggressive about it, we were kind of negative about it, even. But it was really good for us because it kept the doors open for us toward possibilities and doing whatever the hell we wanted to do. I think we got through that. I think Mike Patton, especially, broke that teenybopper image, thank God. Now he's just himself. And that's way more preferable than being chained to a cartoon image.

R&R: *That's true, because for your new fans, that's the way they knew you, from*

that one video (Epic).

BG: And we're still dealing with that. It was almost bigger than we were. *Angel Dust* just had to happen. We had to make a conscious break.

R&R: *Do you regret some of the highs in life you guys reached when "Epic" broke?*

BG: No, I think all of it's been educational. I just think what happens when you have a single that takes off and you've never had to deal with it before, no matter how prepared you think you are, you're not. But once you've been through it, you know where your feet are and you can deal with it if it came a second time. Everything we've done, even the mistakes we've made, have helped us because we're still alive and making records.



Rating

9

FAITH NO MORE

*King For A Day/
Fool For A Lifetime
(Slash/Reprise)*

Six years ago, Faith No More left a unique calling card to the world with their barrier-breaking, unconventional *The Real Thing*. Unafraid to mix elements of punk, metal, rap and even lounge music, their huge hit single, "Epic," and its memorable, fish-flopping video catapulted them into superstardom after years of underground cult status.

One very underrated and underappreciated album later, the band has returned with more of its uncompromising vision. While 1992's *Angel Dust* and its sometimes fierce, brutal nature didn't win over some critics, listeners of the new *King For A Day/Fool For A Lifetime* would be hard pressed to find fault with much of these 14 tracks.

Thanks to the band's well-chronicled variety of musical influences, they have been able to overcome the loss of metal-inspired lead

guitarist Jim Martin with apparent ease. Martin's ouster allowed Trey Spruance, who also plays on singer Mike Patton's side project Mr. Bungle, to step in and show that FNM is truly a group effort. Though Spruance has deferred to Dean Menta for permanent band status, his heavy riffing allows the FNM sound to remain intact.

And what a glorious sound it is.

Keyboardist Roddy Bottum gives FNM much of its distinction, eerily laying the foundation of many of the songs while drummer Mike Bordin pounds his kit into submission and Billy Gould strangles his bass.

But since his debut on *The Real Thing*, it has been Patton who has stolen the show. His voice may have been a bit higher as a 21-year old back then, but his ability to Jekyll and Hyde between manic, crazed preacher and Vegas lounge crooner is still unparalleled.

It is also Patton's campy lyrics which make this a fun and slamming band. This is clearly evident on "Ricochet," as Patton chidingly reminds us of our childhood with "It's always funny until someone gets hurt." In his own twisted way, he follows it up with "And then it's

just hilarious." Silly, but part of the joy of listening to a FNM record.

"Evidence" offers a change of pace, its smooth, piano-tinged melody could almost be considered beautiful. It is also the key to what make Faith No More great; the ability to shift from a gentle piece to a total thrashfest and still interest the same listener. Most bands can't even come close to this diversity. Unfortunately, most are too scared to try.

There is much here for FNM fans to sink their teeth into. "Digging The Grave" is as close to typical as can be with this band and its sound is instantly identifiable. "Star A.D." provides a jazz-influenced theme, showcasing horns, a funky backbeat and other nuances which make it enjoyable to get to know inside and out.

There are only a few boring moments throughout the entire 57 minutes, specifically "Take This Bottle," a crawler which never gets moving. But when a band puts out three straight phenomenal albums, they're entitled to an occasional slow spot. After all, Faith No More is a true rarity in its day -- they are unique.

