

Live to Rock

FEATURE
BY PUGSLEY

AFTER ONLY FORMING IN 2017, BAD WOLVES ARE ALREADY HOWLING WITH SUCCESS...

It's rare to see a metal band scream up the charts like a heat seeking missile, especially with a debut release, but that's exactly what Los Angeles powerhouse Bad Wolves have done with 'Disobey', an album long in the making.

But don't be fooled, these hard edged LA music veterans haven't just turned up on the scene, most of them have already enjoyed long successful careers with other established bands. Although according to the current members, nothing has ever been quite like this, and it seems fans all over the world agree. You could even use the old cliché that 'all the moons have aligned', although in the case of the Bad Wolves, it seems every planet in the solar system have aligned, beginning a world assault even they weren't expecting.

Composed of drummer John Boecklin (ex-DevilDriver), lead vocalist Tommy Vext (Divine Heresy, Snot) as well as guitarists Doc Coyle (ex-God Forbid), Chris Cain (Bury Your Dead) and bassist Kyle Konkiel (ex-In This Moment), it may seem like Bad Wolves have just exploded onto the scene, but the idea began well before their first recording. It was over four years ago actually when in 2015 founding member John Boecklin found himself searching for something more. Fast forward to 2019 and Bad Wolves have already made a name for themselves, and Live to Ride were lucky enough to recently catch up with John just after their sound check at Qudos Bank Arena in Sydney, only hours before Bad Wolves hit the stage in support of Nickelback's 'Feed The Machine' world tour....

"It's a different experience than anything I did with DevilDriver. The music is different, the genre's different, it's much more expansive and we're experiencing radio play which we never did with DevilDriver. I'm learning this whole side of things that I never knew. It doesn't feel like just another metal band or another cycle, everything feels different and fresh, and as a drummer it's very different too. I actually started writing a long time ago, with no idea of what I was really doing, but now we've got other members, it's definitely more like a band, with everyone bringing something to the table – it's not just me sitting in my bedroom trying to start a band, it's really happening. And it's kind of crazy! Some of my friends are saying you've got to be with JB cos he's having all the luck right now."

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Of course like any new venture you need to have the right people behind you in support, especially if they're already a success story themselves like Zoltan Bathory from Five Finger Death Punch who is actually the band's manager.

"Zoltan's been great. Once he got on board things changed – but he's not our actual day to day manager, he doesn't book flights and make sure everything's alright on tour – he's more the big picture, making sure we're on the right path branding ourselves. He handles all the merchandise stuff too, which is what he loves to do. And advice musically is important as well. We're just now getting the second album done and we've got a few bits and pieces that we're running past people, and it's always good to see how he feels about it. We've written a lot already and we've still got a lot more to write!"

Of course the biggest release from their debut album 'Disobey' was without a doubt the cover of Cranberries 1993 release 'Zombie', which notched up over 180 million views, hit number one on the iTunes songs chart as well as being the best-selling song on iTunes in 2018 here downunder. Add to that Platinum in the US and Canada along with Gold here in Australia, and you're looking at one very illustrious awards list, accolades most bands only dream of.



"It was a little too much last year towards the end. I ended up doing the most shows I've ever done in a year – we started in April and we played just over 190 shows – it was the most I'd ever done in that amount of time. I just knew it was time for a break – but fuck it, I'm fine with it. Careful what you wish for – I'd rather be a little upset and tired from touring all year than not being able to do it at all!"

Being in a different place musically than he has ever been before, it was interesting to hear John's thoughts on not only the new album, but also Bad Wolves in general.

"I tend to like the more musical deeper cuts of the album – even though they don't represent the band as much as I thought they would. I'm kind of a metal guy, so if something is intricate and not so formulae, that's the stuff I like! But also some of the songs like 'Hear Me Now' which I wrote – I didn't necessarily think it was good when I did it, I wrote it a long time ago, and then thought maybe now's the right time. Metal is such a small world, and its nick picked to death – if you step outside of this world or that world you're no longer true. You know I get it, I remember being let down as a fan when band's got lighter as a kid, but I just don't care now, I'm 38 and I'm doing what I want to do. If I write it and I get a feeling from it, cool, let's do it. So it's nice to set the scene right off at the gate – people already know we're not going to be strictly a heavy metal band – so there's no ifs and buts about it when you have a song like 'Hear Me Now' and 'Toast To The Ghost' on the same record – it's pretty broad, so I think people know we're going to be at radio and we're also going to be writing metal songs!"

"Recording 'Zombie' was Tommy's idea. He kind of had the song already recorded and we had it remixed when he came into the band. Originally we had arranged to do the song with Dolores O'Riordan, but unfortunately she passed away the day she was supposed collaborate with us. So we made the decision to release our version of the song prematurely and donate all the proceeds to their children...and that was that!"

Those proceeds massed up to \$250,000, which was an amazing gesture from the band, and one that didn't go unnoticed. But it was never accolades they were after, it was just something they felt was needed. They now tour proudly playing Zombie in the repertoire, usually at the climax of their show, which is another fitting tribute to Dolores. But as always, life on the road can often take its toll, just like John alludes to after one of his biggest years ever touring the globe.

LEADING THE PACK



Live in Sydney

Turns out thanks to Janine from Dallas Does PR, we were invited to enjoy the show after the interview, and the performance Bad Wolves put on at the Qudos Bank Arena before Nickelback last month was ferocious and full of energy. Tearing through a few songs from their debut album, it wasn't long before they had the crowd pumped and screaming for more. And when they ended their set with their much anticipated number one hit, 'Zombie', the arena went mental. It was also clear just how much it meant to the band, especially lead singer Tommy Vext, who couldn't hold back his tears towards the end of the song. It was one hell of a show, maybe even better than Nickelback!

Just a few personal questions to finish off...

So who were your musical influences growing up?

I got into metal when I was about 11. You know Metallica, Megadeth, Primus and from there it really seeped into more underground stuff. I think in the mid-90's it was Fear Factory, Korn, Machine Head, they were bands that were important to me. But then I really like 80's pop music too - I spend a lot more time listening to that these days than anything else - Huey Lewis and the News...

What about your first ever drum-kit?

You know how it goes when you're a kid and you try something new but a week later you're already over it. Well for that very reason my parents decided to rent me a kit - a four piece kit just to see if I liked it. And it stuck. It's kind of expensive to get someone a full kit just to have them lose interest.

What about the first car you ever bought?

A Jeep Liberty...but now I've got a Lincoln Hybrid - which is pretty cool. But the first car I ever had was a Fleetwood Cadillac which my parent's handed down to me. That was probably the best car I've ever owned. I also had a Dodge Charger for about a year, a '78 Classic, which was awesome, but it just broke down every fucking week.

And your favourite drink?

*I suppose my favourite drink would be a Vodka soda with a splash of orange juice. But I can drink all kinds of alcohol, it's fun to get drunk... **LTR***