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Anvil interview: Juggernaut of Justice

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Once hailed as the “demi-gods of Canadian metal,” Anvil spent the next thirty years in relative obscurity, despite bands such as Metallica and Guns n’ Roses citing them as inspiration. A documentary in 2008 captured Anvil’s attempt to record their 13th album. And what might have been a last ditch attempt to never stop rocking, catapulted Anvil back into the big leagues.

“To be honest, I’ve centered my entire life around my music,” explained singer Steve ‘Lips’ Kudlow. “I just love it. It’s as simple as that. It brings me complete fulfillment of my desires.”

Appearing in the documentary gave Anvil another chance to live the dream and perform for a whole new generation of fans.

“We love to tour,” said Lips. “The biggest let down is not touring. We are the most alive when we are playing. We are living the dream. There could never be enough.

Anvil released their 14th studio album Juggernaut of Justice in May 2011 and this time they did things a little different.

“What makes this album different is the environment in which we created and recorded in, in a physical way as well as mentally,” said Lips. “The success that surrounds the situation as well as the people who are now involved in our progress, such as our manager, producer and booking agents. These peripheral elements are some of the most important aspects to possess and it is an enormous achievement to have. This removed all of the doubt and fear from us and we were able to feel a sense of freedom we’ve never had before.”

Dave Grohl invited Anvil to record Juggernaut of Justice in his own studio and needless to say drums were a feature.

“The amazing way that Dave reached out to us to help is incredible and hugely generous,” said Lips. “The studio was massive and had really nice guys who knew their shit working there. We were there for about three days doing our bed tracks, when you pay the most attention to the drums. The room where the drums are set up has to be very large but even more important; it needs to sound good in the room, not too much echo and not to dry. This room was superb and it came out sounding great.”

Lips talked about working with producer Bob Marlette to create Juggernaut of Justice.

“On the new CD we had 17 completed bed tracks before Bob was brought on board,” explained Lips. “Bob had a great influence on what and how I sang – that’s what a producer is supposed to do! I was particularly looking for a producer that plays keyboards and that knew what I meant when I told him my plans of the way I wanted to create as we recorded vocals. Bob’s knowledge of the keyboard is hugely valuable in creating vocal and guitar harmonies.”

Lips talked about how he the band wrote the songs for their latest album.

“It’s an interesting process as songs seem to write themselves,” said Lips. “In most cases it begins with something I just picked up my guitar and played. I begin to attach parts by just playing it over and over. Eventually I come up with a few change ups in riffs and we begin working it into an arrangement. Sometimes we discuss the parts and then just play what we talked about.

“The vocal process is different in many ways and I tend to look at it as guitar solos – over dubs! I really pushed that this time as I didn’t have every song totally completed so I could spontaneously create in the studio much the same way as I’ve approached my lead guitar.

Gig Ape: How has your music evolved over time?

Lips: It did a huge path into obscurity by going too extreme and then we finally rediscovered ourselves.

Gig Ape: Define success.

Lips: Success is finding your own musical identity: creating, recording and playing music that is uniquely your own.

Gig Ape: How do you prepare for a performance?

Lips: Drinking room temperature bottled water to ready my vocal chords for singing.

Gig Ape: You've got a magic wand...

Lips: I would break it over my knee and say no thanks....no regrets!!

Gig Ape: Best bit of advice?

Lips: From Jeff (JETHRO Iron Fist) Hirsh: you guys should become a three piece band!

Gig Ape: Career highlight?

Lips: Opening for ACDC for three huge stadium shows: Wacken 2010, Soundwave in Australia, Download 2009.

Gig Ape: Who would you like to perform with?

Lips: Lemmy, he's like an older brother!!

Gig Ape: Ask yourself a question...

Lips: Why do I enjoy listening to the music of my youth? It brings me to a time and place in my life that held the most open possibilities and the fearless innocence to go after anything I desired...

Currently playing on Anvil's stereo are Bloodrock, Melvin Laid an Egg, Thundermug, Bad Guy Quartz, Stoking up the Fires of Hell.

You'll find Anvil is touring throughout the rest of the year. Check their website for the latest details.

www.anvilmetal.com

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