

METAL HAMMER



SLAYER
"THEY DROVE A TRUCK
THROUGH THE SCENE!"
SHOW NO MERCY, HELL
AWAITS, AND THE BIRTH
OF A LEGEND

*"I'm not a nice guy. I'm a weirdo,
uncomfortable in my own skin"*

TOOL

METAL'S MOST MYSTERIOUS BAND OPEN UP

FUTURE
ISSUE 396

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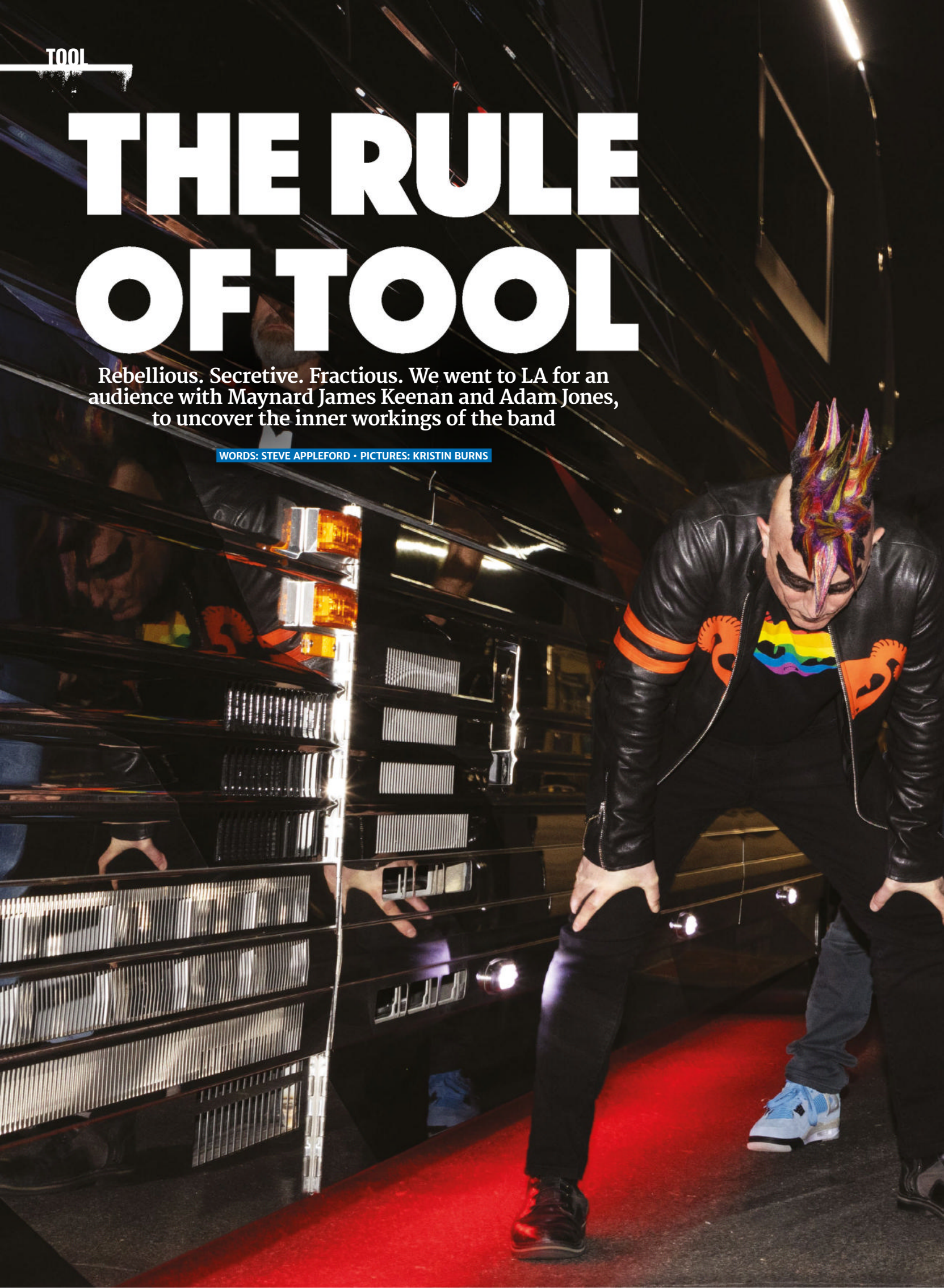
DOOM
How one iconic game
transformed metal

TOOL

THE RULE OF TOOL

Rebellious. Secretive. Fractious. We went to LA for an audience with Maynard James Keenan and Adam Jones, to uncover the inner workings of the band

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Hours before showtime in Los Angeles, Adam Jones is making art. The Tool guitarist spends most of his days on the road like this, reaching into a box of coloured markers backstage and adding drawings and his signature to posters commemorating each night of the tour. Tonight also happens to be St. Valentine's Day, and the first of two sold-out hometown concerts at LA's Crypto.com Arena, but there is no entourage in sight as Adam happily draws away.

"I like doing it because I love drawing," says Adam. He's dressed in a black t-shirt commemorating the fictional shark fisherman Quint from *Jaws*. And on the wall behind him is a banner in the colours of the Mexican flag, with the image of two beefy masked wrestlers and the words 'Lucha Bros'.

Adam is sitting just steps away from the concrete hallway where, in 2019, he finally met his personal guitar hero, Eddie Van Halen, who attended a Tool show that night in one of his last public appearances.

"If I had died right after that, I would've been happy," Adam says. "That was incredible. Meeting your heroes is crazy."

Adam and the rest of Tool have that same effect for much of the current generation of heavy music listeners. After a 14-year wait, Tool showed they were still at the height of their powers with 2019's *Fear Inoculum*, an epic alt metal collection of deep, expansive songs that were soaring and filled with darkness.

The band – Adam, singer Maynard James Keenan, drummer Danny Carey and bassist Justin Chancellor – have been bringing those songs to live audiences ever since, and will play the UK during May and June. The band remain a mysterious entity to most, but Adam is chatty and amiable backstage as he reflects on the band's past and present.

What is it about the partnership you have with Maynard and the others that still works at this point?

Adam Jones: "One thing, we split everything four ways. We're friends and we also let each other be each other. It's such a relaxing, no-pressure kind of relationship. And then we're all very different in tastes of music and what we do outside of the band, but when we meet as the four of us in the centre of this entity called Tool, it just works. It's really magical and it is very rewarding. It's very uninhibited. I have the best job in the whole world, you know?"

When Tool were finishing up this last record, a lot of people out there were impatiently wondering when it would arrive. Was that pressure on the band, or was it completely ignored?

"Most of the people that you hear from on those things – like, 'When's your next record?' – when you do finish it, they're like, 'OK, when's your next one?' You can't make people happy. We have this very selfish approach to art. It's our rules. When you start trying to make people happy, you're losing yourself. You're losing that burn inside you of why you do what you do."

You've set pretty high standards for yourself at this point. Is it a challenge to meet those standards?

"We try to find that common ground and remember the love of music, instead of going, 'What did good on the last record? Well, we should do that again.' We're doing what we do. I just always want us all to get along. I don't want to fight. We *do* fight. But just let people be who they are.

"There was a time where Maynard and I were talking, we were using analogies, but I used painting. And I said, 'OK, Maynard, I'm a painter who does sketches and thinks about concepts, and I look at other masters' works of art, and I figure out the lighting, and then I have to figure out my palette of colours, and then do a couple practice paintings, and then do the painting, and then maybe sand up part of it, blah, blah, blah... And it turns out really good.' And Maynard can sit down and paint it in one day, and it's really good! Ha ha ha! It's two different approaches.

And we have to be respectful about that. And the other guys too, not just me and Maynard."

Our understanding is that the music largely comes first?

"Almost 99%. When you're with other guys, it has its own journey. After a while, Maynard was just like, 'Look, you guys do your thing, and then let me know when you're about ready.' And it works. That's that thing where you're letting people be themselves. When we start to write, Justin and I bring riffs in, and Danny Carey will take a simple riff and right away just play the most opposite, mind-boggling time signature to the point where you go, 'What are you doing?'"

"It reminds me a lot of when I used to work on movie make-up effects, and the process of designing something: latex, silicone, foam rubber, polyurethane? How is it being lit? And all that stuff is a fucking pain in the ass. And then dealing with movie people is the worst thing ever. But then when you see it on the screen, you're like, 'Let's do it again! It's great!' That's the same thing with music when we finish – it's such a hard process. So when people want it – 'Do another record!' – it's a compliment, you know?"

Have you already started writing for the next record?

"No, we're jamming. We haven't really hit that mark. At some point someone's going to call another person and go, 'Hey, what do you think?' No. 'OK.' Sometime later, 'Hey, you ready?' And they go, 'Yeah, I'm ready.' 'I'm ready too. Let's start jamming.'"

Several years back, we interviewed Mastodon, and they were talking about their first tour with Tool, and described how you

guys were actually pranksters behind the scenes...

"Well, they could take it. I just thought we were cut from the same piece of cloth. I really liked Brent [Hinds]. He's such a good guitar player. But it was also really easy to fuck with them.

"I've always said, we take what we do very seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously. And that's the truth.

You should see just our text chains – me and Maynard and Danny and Justin. Half of it's like, 'OK, we need to make a decision', the other half is just fucking memes and quotes from stupid movies."

“TOOL IS A COMPLICATED BEAST WITH A LOT OF EGOS”

MAYNARD JAMES KEENAN

Is there anything from Tool's early days that you miss?

"I look at it like it's the same. I mean, we were younger, probably in a van. Probably had more energy than I have now. My fingers worked a little better than they do now. But I would probably say where I'm at now is my favourite time. I have a family now."

Because of the way Tool present yourselves, along with some very enigmatic visuals, do you think there are misunderstandings about what you guys are really about?

"Yes, absolutely. But that's kind of the magic of it: it's left open for interpretation. Remember when you were a kid and you bought some record, and all you had was the art to look at? Then you did an interpretation of what they were saying? It's very personal. I've never heard anyone go, 'Hey, your music fucked my life up.' I've heard people go, 'Hey, this song meant this to me and blah, blah, blah...' I don't have to go, 'Well, that's really not what it's about.' That's what you get out of it. And it's great."

At tonight's show, Tool won't be using the big screens to show close-ups of your faces, and that's intentional...

"It's not about our personalities. It's about losing yourself and to forget about your wicked life for two hours. It's entertainment. What would I want to see?"

Maynard James Keenan is
Tool's "concentric weirdo",
but dammit, it works!





Adam Jones claims to have the best job in the world. It's hard to disagree

"I RIP MY GUTS OUT WHEN I LOOK AT IT"

As Tool's main artist-in-residence, we asked Adam Jones to reveal some of his biggest cultural influences to date

DUNE

As a former special effects artist on major Hollywood films, Adam is a connoisseur of sci-fi. For him, it begins with Frank Herbert's epic 1965 novel, *Dune*, and especially this infamous quote: 'I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear.'

"Last night I watched *Dune* again – the new [2021] movie, which I really like. I also love the [1984] David Lynch one," says Adam. "That's one of my favourite sci-fi books. Frank Herbert's writing is so good. That book has really affected me. It's affected my thinking. I've recited the 'Fear is the mind-killer' [mantra] many times when I've been stressed out! Ha ha ha! It really helps."

CAMILLE ROSE GARCIA

California-based artist Camille Rose Garcia is known for paintings of gothic playful scenes with a dark streak, rooted in ancient cartoons and Mexican culture. Tool have included her work on their show posters.

"I really love her," says Adam. "I can see her influences – like a lot of 30s and 40s cartoons and old Disney stuff – but she has her own thing. I feel like when I see one of her paintings, I'm in her head."

GIBSON GUITARS

In recent years, Adam has been releasing signature guitars through Gibson, with vibrant finishes that include reproductions of some of his favourite artists, including Mark Ryden and vintage Frank Frazetta.

"I didn't really like how they treated me before. They now have a guy [CEO Cesar Gueikian] who's a good businessman, but he is also passionate and loves music. He wants people to pick up a 2020 guitar and go, 'This has quality like a '57.'"

JULIE HEFFERNAN

Brooklyn surrealist Julie Heffernan creates paintings of women in hallucinogenic contact with nature. Her work has also been used on Tool show posters.

"She is an amazing painter and artist and has an approach to conceptualising a story in her paintings. I have Julie Heffernan's paintings hanging in my house, and they tear me up. So every morning I get to wake up and look at one and just go, 'Ugh,' and just rip my guts out when I look at it and enjoy the beauty."

That's what Tool fans have come to expect. But 20 or 30 years ago, going to see Eddie Van Halen play, would you have wanted to see him blown up on the big screen if there was one?

"Well, it's different times. It's a different band. Where Van Halen probably would've given people a closer look of them running around onstage and doing kicks. And that's what's so great about it. Art has no rules – none. And when you start following them, I just think you kind of lose yourself a little bit."

How do you normally spend your time after you've played? Since this is a hometown show for you, do you go right home or do you hang out here for a while?

"I got home at three in the morning. My wife got up, hung out. It was great. I just had my third kid. Well, I accidentally knocked up my wife before Covid, and then we miscarried and we were like, 'Oh, let's have another one, goddamn it.' So I have a 10-year-old, a seven-year-old, and a six-and-a-half-month-old, and I couldn't be happier. So I just hung out with them and I come in here. Everyone in the world wants to come to the show, but I have my close friends. I will spend time with the friends that came because I love them, and then go home. My wife's going to be asleep anyway."

"WE DON'T TAKE OURSELVES SERIOUSLY. AND THAT'S THE TRUTH"

ADAM JONES

You went to high school in Illinois with Tom Morello and played in a band together. It seems like a miracle that you would both become so successful in music.

"It's crazy. But the thing is, I have a lot of friends that have done

very well because I hang out with heroes. Maynard – I saw that in him. We were friends and we listened to *Master Of Puppets* and would headbang in his car, and then we'd go home and watch [1985's] *Demons* and Dario Argento/Lamberto Bava shit. We had so much in common, and I just saw his drive. When I heard a demo tape where he was singing, I was like, 'God, man, you can sing!'

"We always talked about putting together a band, and I just wouldn't let it go. And then Danny Carey, who is Eddie Van Halen on drums – I'm not kidding. And Justin, when it comes to music, he's as sharp as any blade on a knife."

Maynard James Keenan also agreed to meet *Hammer* in Los Angeles, but when his throat seized up hours before the concert, he bowed out, spending his time regaining his voice in time for the show.

"No noise came out. I had to get shots and all kinds of shit just to get the show off," he explains days later on the phone, then adds his personal code regarding live gigs: "I don't cancel. That sucks, cancelling."

Onstage, he seemed very much the same explosive frontman, dressed in a black vest, white sleeves rolled to his biceps, a crisp mohawk wig on his head, as the big screens roiled with images of hot lava. As ever, he sang from platforms at the rear of the stage, often in silhouette, sometimes pacing like a caged animal. On *Pneuma*, his vocal was filled with heaviness and deep feeling: *'We are spirit bound to this flesh... We are will and wonder, bound to recall – remember!'*

"THAT'S ON THE LIST OF REGRETS – A LONG WIG WITH HAIR IN YOUR MOUTH"

MAYNARD JAMES KEENAN

Earlier, the audience were instructed to keep their phones out of sight for most of the 11-song performance, but when one fan near the stage started shooting the set anyway, Maynard stopped mid-song to shout: 'Put your fucking phone away, dickhead! Seriously.'

Tool play by their own rules and personal idiosyncrasies, and have survived long past a first decade as mainstream rock hit-makers and MTV stars to become a deeper, more profound version of themselves. With years between albums, it's not nearly enough to keep Maynard occupied. He currently has both of his other musical projects – A Perfect Circle and Puscifer – active as recording and touring acts. But Maynard is notably impatient with his first and most popular band, and would love to get them on a path to writing and recording another album before they die.

Tool have lasted a lot longer than most of your contemporaries. What is it that works with Tool, that keeps the band going at the level you want it to be at?

Maynard James Keenan: "I think the mistakes that we've made along the way aren't the kind of mistakes that end the career. They're just the kind of mistakes that kind of delay the career in a weird way. We made the correct mistakes, not the wrong mistakes. I don't know, like not doing heroin! Ha ha ha! There's no divine plan. This is just fate. We are the last one standing for whatever unplanned reason."

Is the way Tool works very different from the way you create music with A Perfect Circle and Puscifer?

"I think there's something to be said for friction and the need to create. When you get fat and cosy, that art tends to disappear a little bit. Over here, we're like those overcrowded rats in a terrarium, with plenty of food, plenty of water, plenty of bedding, and we just start eating each other because we're bored. When you have to actually struggle to find the food, find the shelter, find the clothing, there's something to be said for that friction. It's where the art happens. But when you're rich and cosy, time is a beast, 'cause there's no sense of urgency. So that's why I think things take a little longer, 'cause of the success. It almost is a deterrent, and you don't really have a sense of

Danny Carey: "Eddie Van Halen on drums"



The super-sharp Justin Chancellor



Tool: worth the wait



"HE WAS A FRUSTRATED ROCK GUITAR PLAYER"

It's been 30 years since the death of US comedian Bill Hicks. We asked Maynard to tell us about his friend



Bill Hicks was a firebrand comic who examined the absurdities of modern life, religion, drugs and more with a sharp eye and an even sharper tongue. Tool were friendly with him, and they once planned to tour together. The band dedicated *Ænima* to Bill after he died from cancer in 1994, at age 32, and sampled his voice on the track *Third Eye*. Thirty years on,

we asked Maynard about his lasting memories of Bill, and he poked gentle fun at the comedian's modest musical skills.

"We would talk on the phone quite a bit," remembers Maynard. "We had some good conversations and long nights. I remember him working on an album where he was trying to integrate music and guitar into his final release.

"He would always make fun of himself on that, like a frustrated rock guitar player with a Messianic complex. And it was definitely that. That album was him trying to insert these not-great guitar riffs into his comedy, which worked when they were edited down. But what he wanted to leave in was like, 'Dude, some of that needs to be on the editing floor.'"

urgency. So a month can pass with nothing happening and you don't feel it. Whereas if somebody is desperate to put food on the table, you're probably a little more efficient and a little more organised to get things moving along."

The last Tool record took a long time to come together.

"Those guys will argue with me 'til we're blue in the face, but it didn't need to take that long."

Do you think the experience of making *Fear Inoculum* will have any impact on the making of the next one?

"Well, considering one or more of us will be dead if we wait another 14 years, we might want to figure out a better way. So maybe figure out how to move faster. Make it the priority. You don't have to skip any of the art part. You don't have to skip any of the creative process. You just have to force yourself to be in the creative space more often and more consistently."

"Tool is a more complicated beast with a lot of egos and a lot of other things going on in our lives. But all the creativity's there, the songs and the ideas can flow and the arguments ensue. As soon as we get past the arguments, we can get shit done! Ha ha ha! I think we could do it more efficiently. And I think everyone's on the same page that we have to get through that, because we can't drag this out another 14 years."

You're very good at changing your persona from one band to the next, using wigs, costumes and make-up. How do you separate what makes sense for Tool vs. A Perfect Circle vs. Puscifer?

"Sonically, it's going to be different, but it has to be visually different just to separate it. So you kind of paint yourself in that box of having that ridiculous wig on. That's on the list of regrets – a long wig with hair in your mouth. That was awful."

There's an inherently enigmatic aspect to Tool. Do you think a lot of people have misunderstandings about who you are?

"None that I pay attention to. This is the thing that we do. I'm sure it could work better and make us bigger if we did things differently, but this is what we're comfortable doing and this is where we are."

"I was talking to a friend of mine, and we were getting into a gin project, and the company we're talking to is like, 'Yeah, [Maynard], we'll have you do all these things...' Look, dude, [actor and Aviation Gin co-owner] Ryan Reynolds enjoys mingling with people. He's a very enigmatic person. He's Canadian. He's just a nice guy. I'm not a nice guy. I am a concentric weirdo. And I'm uncomfortable in my own skin. I definitely don't like being around a lot of people. It has nothing to do with the people. It has to do with me. So I can't be the guy out doing the kind of things... like Dave Grohl and Ryan Reynolds. I cannot be those people. I can't even fake being those people. So you just have to do what you're comfortable with."

When you're on the road, how do you fill your time offstage?

"There's a million products out there for people having problems singing and all kinds of wives' tales about maintaining your pipes. There's Throat Coat and lemon and honey tea and all that. It really comes down to oxygen, blood flow, just getting your body to be able to heal itself. Water, sleep and shutting the fuck up are the top three for maintaining your voice. But to me, the fourth element is some kind of workout regimen that gets blood flowing through your body. Just being a couch potato and sleeping all day is not good for your throat."

"The show is the number one priority. Being able to pull out that show is the only thing on my plate. So I'm thinking four

shows ahead of making sure that I'm ready. You can't have a bunch of spicy food the night before a show or a day of show, or the show's fucked. I have to really pay attention to that stuff."

Is there anything about the early days of the band that you particularly miss?

"When you're first getting going, there's no rules, because nobody knows what they're doing. You're just out there to find your way, and you're shredding and trying different things and feeling your oats."

"But then when you become popular and people start forcing their expectations on what they think you're supposed to be doing, it kind of boxes you in a little bit. We're still stubborn and we're going to do what we're going to do, but it does feel like within the band, you have ideas of, 'Well, this is how we do it, and this is what we do.' It didn't used to be that way."

What do you remember about your very first tour overseas with Tool?

"I managed to get advice on many occasions from Henry Rollins. And one of the best pieces of advice he ever gave me was like, 'Your crew works harder than you are. Don't be a bitch to your crew and don't allow your opening act to be a bitch to your crew. It's not gonna go well.' That was huge. It was just good to have that advice early on, so I didn't

step in shit right away. He also mentioned when you go overseas, it's going to be culture shock, and don't be the fucking American going over there. Just listen, learn, pay attention and just don't be that guy."

Were Black Flag especially important to you?

"Absolutely. That whole era of music was incredible. Having seen those guys playing in tiny clubs and just going for it – whether there's one person in the room or a thousand people in the room – the punk rock energy of what was coming from the stage was hugely educational. It was the balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. And for them it was all intrinsic. They had to be on that stage making those noises."

Nobody did that kind of music thinking they were going to play stadiums.

"That was the attitude in the beginning with us. We were just going to do this thing, see where it goes. And then when it started really taking off, I had to make sure that I kept my finger on the pulse of what it means to struggle. Being able to do it up there because you just need to or want to was far more important than anything else. That was a huge lesson."

Tool have now been at this game for 34 years, and there is no act in heavy music that is more formidable, with a deep catalogue of songs featuring muscle and strange emotional resonance. It took creative friction to get there, and lasting commitment to keep it going. For all the disagreements that have emerged about their pace of music-making, audiences seem thankful for the mind-expanding, genre-redefining sounds they have already created and continue to perform live.

None of Tool's members have expressed any doubt about their intentions to create more new music. They each have other projects and the normal distractions in life, but they are never better than when they convene on a stage as Tool. And with a fresh body of work to fuel them, as they stand beneath the seven-pointed heptagram star that hangs overhead, Tool still sound like a band of the future. **H**

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