



SDM OFFBEAT

JOSHUA CRAIG

OUT OF THIS WORLD TALENT!



BY: NOEL SMART

SDM: How did you manage to hook up David Ellefson for The Alien Blakk? What can you tell us about the new album entitled “Bekoming”?

Joshua: I met Dave at a NAMM show (a music trade show not open to the general public) in Anaheim about six or seven years ago. The new album, “Bekoming”, is about me finally dealing with my grief that I had been putting aside for such a long time over the loss of my father.

SDM: How long did you have to record it?

Joshua: The recording process was about two days for bass, two days for drums, and two days for all rhythm guitars. It was another two years or so off and on to add the acoustic guitars, effected parts, vocals, and guest musicians. I then decided to add a few more songs, so that took on a life of its own as well, with a lot more time involved.

SDM: Tell us about the guest appearance of the one and only Mark Hamill (Star Wars’ Luke Skywalker); how did that come about?

Joshua: The guest appearance with Mark Hamill came about as we were talking about a way to work together on an approach with a song I had been working on and this was what we came up with -- a story about what I felt my father may say to me at this point in my life (thirteen years after his passing) and then a few questions he may want to know the answers to.

SDM: Tell us about the picture of you and Carrie Fisher from her play “Wishful Drinking”. How did that come about?

Joshua: I was in New York attending her one-woman show and was called up randomly from the audience as she needed a male to accommodate her with a portion of her play. It was a cool situation where we both had fun and I was then referred to throughout the second act. It was cool because we both wore Princess Leia hairdo ear muffs to look like the hair style she had in Star Wars (as the skit was based on the movie), and I got to perform a skit with her in front of a sold-out crowd on Broadway, kiss her, and take pics with her. I told her during the curtain close that I had worked with Mark (Hamill) and she thought that was cool. She also gave me a pair of leopard-covered S&M handcuffs.

SDM: What’s it like working with members from bands such as CKY, Flotsam and Jetsam, and Megadeth?

Joshua: They are all cool. They are musicians who have vision and want their approach to be their best. All of those guys are friends and dig The Alien Blakk, so we had a kick-ass time working with each other.

SDM: How does Kevin Talley (Daath) fit into the Bekoming scheme of things?

Joshua: Kevin replaced Chris Adler. Chris was the originally intended drummer for the situation, but it was not meant to be at that point in time. Chris is an amazing person in all walks of life and I appreciate him, so who knows about the future.

SDM: Tell us about playing with Ray Herrera from Fear Factory.

Joshua: I played with Ray when FF was in a downswing and Dino was just ousted. We started a band and it was more of a rock situation with some cool atmosphere. That was a while ago. We did video game music and other production stuff as well as me having him come in for some session stuff I was producing. Ray’s a cool cat.

SDM: What can you tell us about your new book, “Advanced Lead Guitar Concepts: Mindset & Theologies In Improvisation”?

Joshua: Advanced Lead Guitar Concepts: Mindset & Theologies In Improvisation is a book on how each side of the brain works separately and then as one to assist you with the commitment of your optimal musical approach. It’s about the thought process and the actual outcome of what is in your head. It is about 150 pages and had a DVD and CD with many examples that can be based on any instrument.

SDM: What is your approach to writing music for video games like Mech Assault, Splatterhouse, Need For Speed 2, Growlanser, et cetera? How does it differ from writing for a band, if at all?

Joshua: My approach to writing for video games is more restrictive as there is a company with a board of individuals approving your music and tearing it apart musically and mix-wise, so it takes on a life of its own. My own music is whatever I feel works best for me. I get paid for video game music; my own music, people steal. I need them both for my creative outlets and my financial freedom.

SDM: How were you approached to audition for Guns N’ Roses?

Joshua: By a very awesome phone call.

SDM: Why did you do “Runnin’ Down a Dream” by Tom Petty? Did you know that song is actually influenced by the late/great Del Shannon?

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Joshua: I always felt drawn to that song and had a few ideas on arrangement and approach. I think it was done with heart and was successful. I did not know that, but I reworked a bit of it to fit the scheme and storyline of the album; cool info, thanks!

SDM: What made you choose Black Sabbath's Snowblind?

Joshua: Snowblind has been a live staple for The Alien Blakk for years, so we did it as it is done live. The song in its entirety and then an elongated improv section with adlibbing and effects. It was also cool to do it as a duet with A.K. from Flotsam.

SDM: Now that Dave is back with Megadeth, do you think he will have the time to do both bands? Have you ever met Dave Mustaine?

Joshua: Dave is playing with me on April 6th at the in-store for our release, and we are then going to do a European run later this year when his other commitments are done. I have met him, yes.

SDM: Is it true that you worked with all of the following people: Rob Halford, Xzibit, Motograter, Dr. Dre, members of Metallica, Fear Factory, Testament, KISS, White Zombie, Whitesnake, CKY, Flotsam & Jetsam, Earshot, Adema, Soulfly, Methods Of Mayhem, Stuck Mojo, Powerman 5000, Death, and Cypress Hill, to name a few... who has been the most interesting, and how?

Joshua: Yes, I have. The most interesting? Well, all of the artists I have had the pleasure to work with have been amazing. Rob was a totally cool co-write situation, and Motograter was fun and lasted a cool ten minutes that I will never be allowed to live down! [laughing] The Robert Trujillo connection was that I played on a Metallica tribute that he was on with Dave Lombardo, and a guy from St. I called in A.K. to sing on the track; Robert and I had known each-other, but that session was one where we were not in the same room at the same time. Battery was the track. All the guys I have had the pleasure to work with have been awesome.

SDM: Bekoming took three full years to compose and record. Are you glad that it is finally coming out?

Joshua: Honestly, after all that, I am just glad it is over with! I paid so much for it that it is likely I will not make the money back, but I have thoroughly enjoyed the ride.

SDM: Is it fair to say that The Alien Blakk is shred/progressive metal?

Joshua: No. It is more experimental. I probably shred on a total of one minute of the seventy-eight on the record, so I have no idea what the collective is, just music. Progressive, sure, on some of it, but there are regular tunes on there as well.

SDM: What can you tell us about The Alien Blakk's first album, "Modes of Alienation"?

Joshua: "Modes of Alienation" is an experiment in sound as an instrumental landscape. It had its own process and spans from death metal to Latin jazz to classical to acoustically arranged walls of sound. A lot and very digestible as well, once heard a time or two.

SDM: On the new album, Bekoming, what made you choose Glen Robinson to mix the new CD, who recorded bands like Voivod and Annihilator?

Joshua: He had a cool approach to experimental music in metal and he did what I needed to have done.

SDM: Who are some of your non-metal influences, and some of your metal influences?

Joshua: Slash, Dave Matthews, Tori Amos for non-metal, and Metallica, Slayer, and Machine Head for metal. All ass-kicking in their own approach.

SDM: Can you tell us about your music instructing? Do you give private lessons?

Joshua: I give private one-on-one lessons to advanced players in Scottsdale, Arizona a couple of days per month when I am not travelling. I also give lessons world-wide through a memory card or mini-DV tape with a student's needs. They are very planned out and very specific to that particular player's needs. I can be contacted through www.thealienblakk.com for that situation.

SDM: What music did you compose for MTV?

Joshua: Punk'd, Next, Celebrity Fit Club, and others which I cannot remember at present.

SDM: What else do you have lined up for the rest of 2010, if there is even a second left in your existing schedule?

Joshua: I am composing for ten to fifteen new video game titles, writing a new book, doing a new record in Italy over the summer, designing a new signature guitar, doing a six-week clinic tour, doing three more instructional DVDs, teaching, doing three separate two to three week tours with The Alien Blakk and then that's it until November.