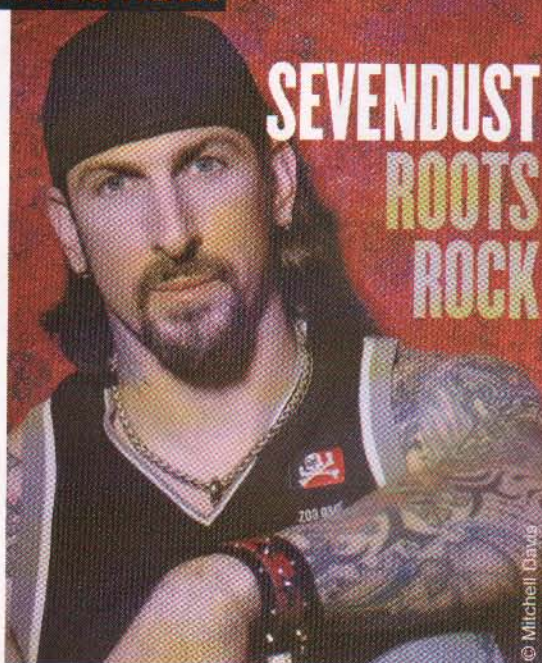


STYLE FILE

Guitar Profiles, News & Reviews

HARD ROCK



© Mitchell Davis

Guitars: Gibson
Epiphone Les Pauls,
JC-LP Customs

Pickups: Gibson
"Double-Dipped"
Customs, EMG HZ

Strings: Dean Markley

Picks: Dunlop Jazz III

Amps: Randall RM
100s and V-Max,
Randall 4x12 cabs

Effects: Lexicon MPX
G2, Drawmer DS201
Dunl Gate

Sevendust have come full circle. Their latest album, *Alpha* (7Bros./Asylum), is a return to the Atlanta group's hard-rock roots. "Everyone I've played it for says it sounds like it fits between the first record [*Sevendust*] and our second, *Home*," says guitarist John Connolly. "I think [our old record label] misunderstood what kind of band we were at our core."

The band had success sporting their melodic side, but it wasn't fulfilling their inner metalhead. The relationship with their old label, T.V.T., had run its course and the band was eager to strike out on their own. "You work your whole life to get a record deal, and then once you get into the record deal, you realize, 'I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to get out of this record deal,'" says Connolly with a laugh. "It's beautiful to finally be at the point where we can pick our own songs, our own singles, and how we want to market this thing. We're not used to it. Now when we say what we want to do, everyone says 'OK.'"

While writing and recording *Alpha*, Connolly loaded up his iPod with his own riffs and the four albums that he and fellow guitarist Sonny Mayo consider their essentials: Metallica's *Master of Puppets* and ...*And Justice for All*, and Pantera's *Vulgar Display of Power* and *Official Live: 101 Proof*.

"Those records were more responsible for me becoming a musician and a guitar player than any other records," admits Connolly. "So, I said, 'S—t, maybe I should listen to my idols, my influences, those who made me want to do this in the first place.'"

Getting back in touch with their roots made the writing and recording a quick, easy process for the group. Connolly estimates he already has 25 potential tunes for the next album. "There isn't a four-minute song on the machine, but there are riffs just waiting. I've got them on my cellphone, on the 16-track, everywhere," he says.

But the Sevendust secret ingredient may just be the fact that Connolly grew up a drummer and, therefore, intuitively knows how to translate his ideas beyond that of the standard guitar player. "[Drummer] Morgan [Rose] and I have always locked in. When we started making music together, it wasn't the drummer doing one thing and the guitars going in another direction. My right hand and his right foot locked in together. He became the drummer who wanted to do everything that I was physically doing on the guitar. I became the guitar player who wanted to do everything he was doing on the kickdrum. It's the heavy-metal Morse code."

—ROB O'CONNOR