

# ALTP

#257  
DECEMBER 2009

ALTERNATIVE PRESS®



#BXNDG1Z \*\*\*\*\*GAR-RT 101\*\*C-029  
#03008360/1# ALTP XXXX  
|||.....|||  
ALTP  
ANDREW STRIETHAL  
EAST WEST ILG  
24TH FL  
1290 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS  
NEW YORK NY 10104-0101  
P0435

## FEATURES

### 900 CARTEL

Cartel are back in action with a new album on a new label, so we recruited All Time Low joker Alex Gaskarth to get us the lowdown.

### 944 JEFFREE STAR

The internet's first fierce 'n' fab superstar is loved equally by old-school punks and straight kids from the suburbs. You got a problem with that, bitches?

## SECTIONS

### 26 INCOMING

## WIRETAPPING

32 OP-ED: Switchfoot's Jon Foreman

34 AP POLL

36 NEW RELEASES & IN THE STUDIO

### 38 AP:DIY

Featuring advice and inside information from EYES SET TO KILL, A SKYLIT DRIVE and more.

### 448 AP RECOMMENDS

BLESSTHEFALL, BORN OF OSIRIS, COBRA SKULLS and more.

### 55 AP STYLE

### 59 SCREENING

Starring ALEX MERAZ

### 107 REVIEWS

THE AP RECORD STORE is giving major thanks this month for new releases from THE ALMOST, TEGAN AND SARA, DEAD TO ME, ATREYU, FLYLEAF, JOHN NOLAN, BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME, EVERY AVENUE, THE FLAMING LIPS, BUILT TO SPILL, PELICAN, SLAYER, THE SWELL SEASON and more.

### 128 10 ESSENTIAL AP SPINE GREMLINS REVEALED

## FIND IT AT ALTPRESS.COM FALL BALL 2009

AP's very first fall tour wraps up this month, but that doesn't mean the dance is over. Relive your memories with the Academy Is..., Mayday Parade, Set Your Goals, the Secret Handshake and You Me At Six with exclusive photos, video and more at [ALTPRESS.COM/THEAPT0UR](http://ALTPRESS.COM/THEAPT0UR). (Make sure to follow us on Twitter, too: @theaptour)

## EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!

Don't forget to swing by [ALTPRESS.COM/FEATURES](http://ALTPRESS.COM/FEATURES) to check out additional content for the stories in this issue, plus loads of other exclusive interviews, slide shows and streaming music.

# 944

JEFFREE STAR: DAVE HILL



# THE *Skirt* LOCKER

**JEFFREE STAR** is here, he's queer and he's come for your scene. Get bruised to it.

STORY: JASON PETTIGREW // PHOTOS: DAVE HILL

supporting himself by hustling cosmetology jobs for celebrities and actors on adult-video sets to becoming internet royalty via MySpace. Since then, he's become an iconic figure in the eyes of folks as diverse as teenage girls rockin' Decaydance swag and straight-laced high school quarterbacks. The appeal of *Beauty Killer*—a bacchanal of electronic beats ranging from house music to electro-pop to nü-crunk action, propelling Star's fierce 'n' flaming takes on everything from designer names, elective surgery and plenty of sex—helped the album land the No. 2 position on *Billboard's* Heatseekers chart.

"I usually see 90 percent girls at every show," he says. "It's transformed into something like, 'Oooh, Jeffree's like my Barbie. Every girl wants to have pink hair and cool makeup and a Chanel purse. I guess.' He pauses for a moment. "Maybe not every girl," he starts to laugh, "but most of them!"

**A straight-A student** from Orange County, Star was raised by his grandparents as his parents struggled with alcoholism (his father died from the condition when Jeffree was 8). As a result of seeing what it did to his family, he's never dabbled in drugs or drink. ("Once I like something—tattoos, makeup, music—I'm obsessed forever. No meth pipes or alcohol for me!") During his high-school years, when everyone in his age group pursued the typical teen fare of sports, skateboarding and doing drugs, Starr began exploring the contents of his mother's makeup case, books, music and, naturally, the possibilities of the internet. He uploaded photos and journal entries to prototype social networking sites and began gaining traction for his striking looks and no-holds-barred ramblings. He got in on the ground floor in the early days of MySpace, and his ascent as the site's largest personality has been well publicized. (Over 1.3 million friends and counting.)

It wasn't long before Star started dabbling in music, turning his MySpace profile into a music page with sound files of electronic dance tracks he had recorded. He says

that the support given to him by America's pop-punk and emo communities was by virtue of him hitting the clubs, being seen at shows and making friends (both virtual and literal) within the scene.

"There was also the gossip," he quickly adds. "'Is Jeffree dating Davey Havok? Why is he always at My Chemical Romance shows? He's so crazy.' And then the haters amplified it more: 'Why is my favorite band friends with this faggot?' It's the same rumors and gossip that no one can get over. I think that everyone else thinks I take myself too seriously, when it's the exact opposite."

Alex Cho, a former editor at the Los Angeles-based gay culture magazine, *Frontiers*, witnessed firsthand the cultural impact Star was making outside the sexuality clubhouse. "[His show] was this weird, ecstatic moment of gender-crossing and performance that we thought was really crazy and new," Cho recalls. On the recommendation of a friend, he attended Star's first show, which took place at an all-ages venue in an Anaheim, California, strip mall in 2006. "[There was a] really crazy mix of alternative kids, really flaming queers and—what really struck me—a crazy Orange County establishment set of kids. Someone actually came on the PA at one point and said, 'Someone's mom's BMW is blocking the driveway,'" he says, laughing. "This was his first live performance ever—the only way people knew him was from MySpace." The show sealed the deal, and Cho gave Star his first magazine cover in August that year.

"[The whole experience] was something very new; very queer, but at the same time, not gay like we knew it before," Cho explains. "We thought what he was doing was unique. Perhaps people from a new generation tend to view sexuality as something a little bit more unlabeled. With the attitude of, 'I can get behind that guy because he's kind of amazing and crazy.' And he is pretty savvy: Not just anyone could've put together the handmade fame machine that he did."

During this past summer's Warped Tour, veteran punk acts like NOFX and Bad Religion took Star under

## Jeffree Star is, quite literally, hot.

The 23-year-old pop-culture icon just returned to his North Hollywood home from an in-store appearance at a local Hot Topic where he launched three new shirts to promote his debut full-length, *Beauty Killer*. The raging wildfires are not only spreading fly-ash around Los Angeles making it hard to breathe, they've jacked the temperatures well past 100 degrees. When asked if he's concerned about the condition of his makeup, he shrugs it off.

"I don't have a wrinkle on my face," beams Star. "I posted on Twitter the other day that my birthday was coming up. Some of the people who responded were like, 'I thought you were 30,' and some of them thought I was 16. People are crazy."

In a mere four years, the Makeup Artist Formerly Known As Jeffrey Steinger went from



written by drummer Samantha Maloney (Hole, Eagles Of Death Metal), with some lyrical input from Jessicka Addams, lead singer of L.A. nu-gaze popsters Scarling, a longtime friend of Star. Ben Weinman, guitarist/CEO of the Dillinger Escape Plan, met Star four years ago and began working with him in an administrative role, using his industry contacts so Star could monetize his notoriety. After putting crucial plans in place (including JS's lucrative Tunecore account and a deal with BandMerch, the first step toward getting him into Hot Topic stores), Weinman's services were no longer needed. Maloney allegedly hasn't received compensation for her work, although Star says that's being addressed now. (Maloney declined AP's request for an interview.)

"I may have facilitated [things], but his ability to sell himself is unbeatable," says Weinman. "The marketing was all him. To me, Jeffree was exciting because he was the new-media star—the future of media, where you do your own thing and succeed on your own terms. But he wanted what he didn't have; he wanted to be a pop singer and be signed to Jive or Warner Bros. or be out on tour with Lady Gaga. As a tastemaker, Jeffree Star is extremely valuable. But he didn't want to focus on that."

"I've had a lot of relationships," says Star about the people from the early days of his music career. "A lot of people aren't going to see eye-to-eye or get along. When you're not really anything and people are helping you, when things blow up, people get greedy. I don't want to talk shit about these people because they were good friends. It is what it is."

What's interesting about the comments made by Star's former associates is that they don't come from a place of smack-talking revenge—which says something about their commitment to his cause.

"Jeffree has a knack for finding talented people," says Addams. "He knows what works, and he has the charisma. But there's no need to burn bridges and treat people who stood by him like shit so he can be 'fierce.' I think the reason why he initially surrounded himself with people like Ben and I is because we actually really cared about him. I don't know if he had that before, and I don't know if he was able to understand what that meant."

"[Maloney, Weinman and Addams] were from earlier in my life when I didn't know how to work the business, when you're really young and stupid," Star resigns. "I think all of those people *think* they helped me out more than they did. They think it's a monumental thing, but it's really not. I don't want to sound bitchy, but I don't want to talk about those people. I guess they did help somewhat, but it was going to happen, regardless."

**Whether they came naturally** (or if he willed them into effect by chanting "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall" over a ritual of hot pink candles and a burning pile of Joan Crawford publicity photos), things *are* happening for Jeffree Star. His immediate event horizon includes more touring in support of *Beauty Killer*; a possible digital-only release of an EP of remixes of his track "Prisoner" (Star describes the project as "Slayer meets Britney Spears"); as well as

the development of a reality TV show and a fragrance line. Diversification is the new "punk," and though Star came up to prominence via the cultural zeitgeist of new technology and the internet, that same culture is also responsible for many a performer's demise via over-saturation. He bristles when asked what he thinks he'll be doing in 10 years: Sorry, haters, it's not because he doesn't have an answer.

"I hate that question," he says, punctuating his response with a deep sigh. "Everyone asks that. 'What are you going to look like in 20 years? What are you going to do with your life?'"

That's not the question. We may safely assume you won't end up in a cubicle farm.

"I honestly don't think that far ahead," he says. "Everybody's been saying for the past three years that I'm going to disappear, and I'm still here. We'll see: It could be a year, it could be 10. Regardless, I'm an amazing writer; I've secretly written things for bands. So, let's see: Co-writing, doing music and being a makeup artist will last forever."

And looking fierce for the cameras.

"Absolutely. So many people just focus on one thing, you know?" **ALT**

their wings, suggesting he should park his tour bus next to theirs and walk away from the "kids table" mentality of some of the other acts. "That dude is punk!" testifies NOFX's Fat Mike, via e-mail. "He was the most outspoken, freaky-looking, bitchy, obnoxious, troublemaker, coolest and sluttiest person on the Warped Tour. Where he goes, trouble follows. That's where I wanna be."

Despite this downright utopian groundswell of support from suburban teens and grizzled punk veterans, not everybody was down with either Star's sassy attitude or electronic dance music. Some bands on Warped took stage time to bemoan the state of the tour, calling out Star (usually alongside other electronics-based acts like Brokencyde and Millionaires) for the usual crimes against music and for, well, being a freak.

"It was cool," says Star. "[Those veteran bands] were like my new parents for the summer. Any time some band started drama, they'd go and fix it somehow. And those [instigators] never looked me in the eyes again. [Laughs.] I got harassed more at Warped Tour than I ever did at high school. There were

some violent incidents on that tour: In New Mexico, I was doing a signing and someone sprayed me in the face with water and pushed me, so I Tazed him to the floor and kicked him in the back of the head."

"He was getting in fights with some screamo bands and he needed to be around some adults," Mike remembers. "Not that he was *totally* innocent; that dude can talk hella shit and sometimes people lash out at him. The truth is that a lot of these younger bands just can't deal with queers so well—especially the Christian bands. I think the real problem is that they try to keep their distance from Jeffree 'cause they're afraid of getting a boner if he gets too close."

**In the early days of his career**, boners weren't raised, but hopes certainly were. Star's quick rise was hastened by a number of people crucial to putting the machinations in place on his behalf. Several of the songs Star first issued on his MySpace page (later ending up on his debut EP, 2007's *Plastic Surgery Slumber Party*) were