

music

Tom Morello and rapper Boots Riley rock and provoke with Street Sweeper Social Club

By Wade Tatangelo

It's hard to find a guitarist with a better resume than Tom Morello's. In the '90s, he conquered the rock world with Rage Against the Machine. In the '00s, he did it again with Audioslave, while also introducing his enlightening, acoustic guitar-welding alter ego, the Nightwatchman.

Street Sweeper Social Club

When: 8 p.m. May 29.
Nine Inch Nails headline
Where: Northern Island's Charter One Pavilion, 1300 S. Linn White Drive
Tickets: \$45, 877-498-8703

Now the Libertyville native emerges again with his heaviest, hard-estimating project since the early days of Rage: The guitar slinger has co-opted Boots Riley, the killer rapper from indie hip-hop heroes the Coup, for the highly incendiary Street Sweeper Social Club. The band drops its volatile, self-titled debut disc June 16. Morello, as usual, has plenty to say about his new project.

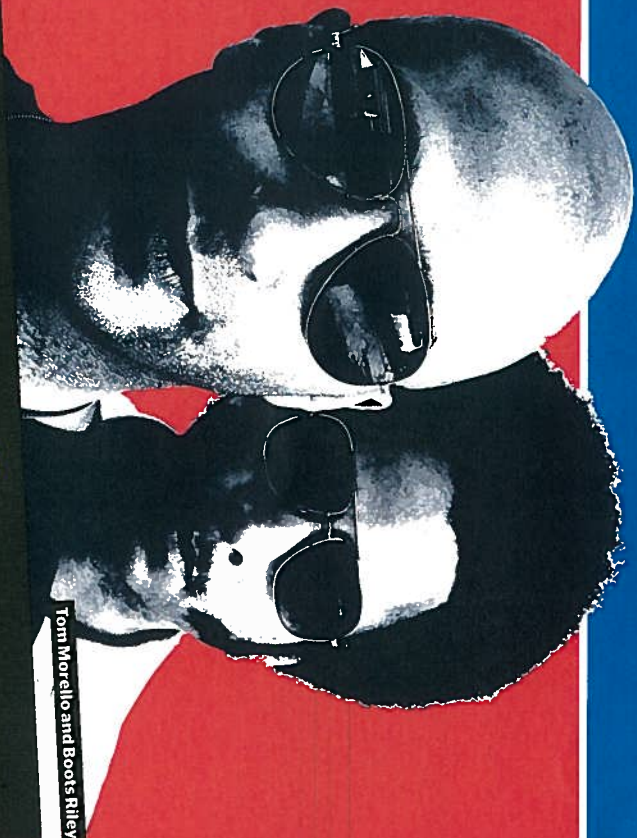
I listened to the new record last night. It made me want to take to the streets to party and riot at the same time.

[Laughs] Then our mission is complete. It's a record of revolutionary party jams and some of the hardest rocking music I've been involved with in my entire career. We're really having a great time.

How did Street Sweeper Social Club come together?

Well, this has been a project that has been brewing for a couple years now. Boots and I became acquainted back in 2003 when we were on tour together. Boots has opened for several of my Nightwatchman tours and has always been one of the first people to sign up for the various activism and benefit shows I've put together. And over the course of that time, I realized what a great rapper and lyricist and charismatic frontman he was, and really thought that the world needed to be exposed to his awesomeness.

Did you have a specific sound or political statement you wanted to make with the record?
 The idea for the record began in the days after



Tom Morello and Boots Riley

'Revolutionary,' party jams,

Audioslave broke up. I just thought: I want to do something that's rocking and fun. And Boots and I were really good friends. I didn't even give him much of a choice. I said, "We're in a band. It's called Street Sweeper. I'm going to send you the music and you're going to write the lyrics." And he was like, "All right." I sent him a cassette tape of 24 songs I had written. He picked the 11 he liked best and that's what the record became.

When you and Boots get together off stage, is it somber, political talk or...?

It's a nonstop laugh riot when we get together. That's really something I've enjoyed with Boots and the other guys in the touring band Street Sweeper Social Club. Like, I haven't had this many laughs in a real long time. We're having a real fun time. While the music is serious, it's a really fun atmosphere.

I think this is a record that Rage enthusiasts are going to just love. What do you say to those longtime fans who might be hesitant about checking this out?

What I've always tried to do is just put the music out there and whoever gravitates toward it, gravitates toward it. There were some Rage fans who didn't like Audioslave but did like the Nightwatchman. So, y'know, it's really hard to say. I know that this record has the quintessential Morello heavy guitar riffs and guitar solos strewn throughout it. And that's definitely an important part of what I do. And I produced the record as well, so I made sure to get the music as heavy and as funky as it could possibly be.

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