

SOUND

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" I LEARNED LONG AGO THAT YOU CAN'T
MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY"

- ABE CUNNINGHAM

DEFTONES



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DEFTONES

INTERVIEW

ONE ON ONE WITH ABE CUNNINGHAM

You want some honesty? Call Abe! Abe from Deftones dropped by The Sound to talk about the band's ups and downs over the years, their name, the current state of the band and their exciting new tour in support of their latest record, *Gore*. It's been over twenty years since their first record and you can catch them play songs off of their first and last album and everything in between at Mohegan Sun this August!

SOUND: I've been a Deftones fan for a while now... What do Deftones fans call themselves? Do you guys have a name for them? Like the toners are something?

ABE: We call them the most beautiful people in the world. (Laughs) No, honestly we don't. We just call them homies or friends.

SOUND: I've always loved the name Deftones... it's so simple...

ABE: I hate it. It's a fucked up name.

SOUND: Wait, really?

ABE: Yeah, but it's our name and it ain't going anywhere. It's like, man are you serious? That's our name? But you do you want to hear a funny story?

SOUND: Of course...

ABE: When we were just done with our first record, before it came out we went to the label to kick it and talk shit. The A&R guy at the time was friends with Kirk Hammett from Metallica, and Kirk knew about us cause we're from the Bay Area. And Kirk told our A&R guy that we shouldn't call ourselves Deftones, we should call ourselves Cleanser and we were like... "fuck that!" We love you Kirk, but we are not going with that name. Deftones it is!

SOUND: That's a great story. Maybe that's why Metallica brought you out on the Summer Sanitarium Tour, to make up for that awful idea...

ABE: Maybe. Wow, that tour. That was a rough one...

SOUND: You guys have done a ton of festivals and co-headlining shows lately but now you are back on the road on a full headlining tour of arenas like Mohegan Sun here in CT. Is there a different mentality that goes into a tour like this?

ABE: The whole goal is just to have a kick ass show the best we can. We come from the clubs, the smallest clubs in the world and over time and all these years we've been able to play all these places, from the smallest club with 50 people to three hundred thousand people in Rio. The goal is to go and rock, and have a kick ass fucking show. It's so much fun to play these amazing, huge European shows but it's cool to drop into a club and play for eight hundred people. I don't know that there is any difference other than just wanting to go rock it.

SOUND: You guys have the new record, *Gore*, which I am sure fans want to hear. But you also have years and years of beloved songs and records to fit in as well. How do you guys go into balancing a setlist and a touring catalog when you have a new record out?

ABE: I think we're in a fairly cool and unique position. Even with the fact that we can play the new music and people are still down to hear it. We're not going to play the whole record. It's cool to have eight or so records of material to make a setlist that maybe varies from the night before. I learned long ago that you can't please everyone. We take songs off and it pisses some people off but you can't keep everyone happy. Will drop in some new stuff and then maybe two weeks later we'll pop some different new stuff in, it's really just a big pot of stew. We try to keep it fun and exciting.

SOUND: Speaking of playing an entire record, it's really cool to see all these iconic rock albums from the 90's hitting their 20th anniversaries. To celebrate that, a lot of bands have been playing shows where they run these albums straight through, and it's awesome cause you get to hear a ton of songs you might never have heard live otherwise, cause they never really made it onto a tour. Last year KoRn played their debut album straight through here in NYC and the year before

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that Offspring was doing Smash. Have you guys talked about doing any of those shows since you're coming up on the 20th anniversary of a lot of your major albums and have hit some already?

ABE: Not really talking too much about it but we've done them before. Four or five years ago we did like three nights in Vancouver where we played a record each night. This past year we played *Around the Fur* in its entirety. We played all those songs before but it is cool to do the homework and study and learn all the songs. That's actually what I'm doing tonight, laundry and studying tonight and then I fly to Nashville for a couple weeks of rehearsals. I'm doing a lot of studying, there's a lot of shit to learn.

SOUND: Would also be cool if bands didn't have to wait until albums turned 20 to do these shows too. Why not just do them right out of the gate to introduce people to the album?

ABE: Yeah when you're fresh out of the studio, you better know those songs!

SOUND: I remember what I would consider to be the apex of your guys' popularity and you can tell me if you agree. It was when *White Pony* came out and you guys did an in-store appearance at the now defunct Virgin Megastore in New York City. The line was longer than you would see for a Britney Spears or a Jay-Z at the time. I got there several hours early and it wasn't even early enough. Do you remember that?

ABE: I remember that vividly! We played *Letterman* the next night. That was an amazing time. That used to be pretty common though. We used to do that kind of stuff all the time, in store appearances and performances. We actually just played in Amoeba Records in LA recently.

SOUND: See that stuff still happens in LA but New York, we lost it man.

ABE: Yeah, that's true. It's sad.

SOUND: That period, with MTV TRL, was surreal because you had hard rock acts like Deftones on the same platform as Backstreet Boys and these other mainstream pop acts. Rock was truly intertwined with the mainstream like we haven't seen since. Is it weird to compare today and the successes that you and other bands have had since, with that period? Is it a gift and a curse because it was such an enigma of a boom period for everyone as far as pop culture relevance was concerned that all the success in the world that a band might have is always going to be judged up against that by comparison?

ABE: It's a trippy thing. Everyone these days comments on shit all day long. People are just so used to that. But man, just cause you can, doesn't mean you should. It's just the way we are as a society these days. Everyone comments on things all day long. It's funny man. That was a great time. Backstreet Boys fans listening to Deftones. And then of course, things change too. That was a great time for many things but that doesn't mean they can't be great tomorrow, it's just different.

SOUND: How are you guys as a unit today?

ABE: Man, we've all changed so much. We've all had families for many years. We have so much fun. We have lived through so many ups and downs, rock and roll clichés, I don't even have to name them, deaths, drugs, ups and downs, all these things. Having lived through all that and come out on the other side and appreciate that we are still able to do it. I mean, yeah, when we're in the studio, we bicker and fight but that's always how it's been. We have a great time together after all these years. It's a unique and special position to be in, and something we really appreciate. We love each other, man. A lot of laughter, a lot of shit talking too, but we love each other. That's what being brothers is all about.

LIVE: SUNDAY, AUGUST 7TH

WHERE: MOHEGAN SUN ARENA

WORDS: SCOTT YAGER

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