

TONY MACALPINE

Tony MacAlpine is without a shadow of a doubt one of the most admired rock guitarists out there and has a long list of delightful releases, both solo and with bands such as Planet X, Tribe of Fire, DAB or M.A.R.S., but to the majority of the readers he may be better known for being part of Steve Vai's touring band, The Breed. It was there when we noticed the amazing team he formed with bass virtuoso Billy Sheehan (of Tallas, David Lee Roth and Mr. Big fame) and drum maniac Virgil Donati (Planet X, Ring of Fire and Soul Sirkus amongst many others). In 2007 the trio joined forces again, this time under the name of Devil's Slingshot to release the instrumental wonder that is 'Clinophobia'. With the occasion of this venture, Mónica Castedo-López met the guitarist the afternoon of their London show in October in support of this release at the CC Club, a show where, not surprisingly, 95% of the audience was male musicians and where songs from Devil's Slingshot as well as from each one of their members' solo albums were played. Despite his astonishing level of musical talent, MacAlpine is also a natural comedian and he kindly and humorously answered the following questions whilst Billy was warming up in the corner.

I'd like to clarify from the outset whether the Devil's Slingshot is a one-off project or is intended to stay as a band?

The Devil's Slingshot is a band and was formed about a year ago with the involvement of Billy Sheehan and Virgil Donati. The idea was to form an instrumental trio in which we have a lot of creative freedom to go out and do some of the things that we enjoyed in the past. We just have a new record that is on sale now called 'Clinophobia' and on this tour we are supporting that and having some fun playing again.

Judging by the amount of albums and tours the three of you have shared - perhaps the most notorious being part of The Breed, Steve Vai's touring band - the birth of this project comes as no surprise. I guess it came out naturally. Can you give me an insight into the creation of it?

Virgil and I have more experience other than playing in The Breed. We played together for years in a band called Planet X. I played with Virgil for years in his solo band and he's played with me in my solo band. We also played together in a band called CAB. Billy and I played together on my very first instrumental record called 'Edge Of Insanity', so it goes way back. And in Steve Vai's family we found ourselves all together again, but really that's not the reason that the band happened. It was long after that.

How were the recording and writing processes structured?

Virgil and I were involved in a tour with a French artist named Michel Polnareff. We were doing that tour for about a year and we wrote the majority of the songs on that tour. We recorded the songs on that tour too with protocols and were sending files to LA to Billy and he would record his bass parts. It was a meeting place somewhere on the internet. From there we sent all the mixes to Australia where it was mixed by a friend of ours, Steve Scanlon. It was a real test of modern recording processes without anybody having to be in the same studio.

I would imagine that Billy would contribute to the writing, however this has not been the case...

It's just based on his time. He was really involved with his tour and his record and Virgil and I were together doing this tour so it was only logical that we'd write some things together, which we did and that's how it worked.

It becomes apparent that you three really enjoyed playing together whilst playing in Vai's band. But with Devil's Slingshot being your own project you had the chance to make the music and arrangements you really wanted without anyone dictating your direction.

I was accustomed to touring with my instrumental projects and other serious bands, so we knew what it was all about. It was important for us to get together and be able to create something that we could express in our own direction. It was something that we looked forward to because the dynamic of the band is interesting. Virgil on drums brought so much to modern drumming and Billy is a consummate pinnacle of what modern bass is, so it was something to explore.

How was it working with Steve Vai and are we going to see that again?

You never know what's going to happen in this business, but Steve is a great friend. I've known him since the early 90s and he's a wonderful guy. He's a great friend of Billy's too. He's a very unique player and a very insightful person. He really gets you focused and I've learned so much about the business working with him because we worked so closely together and I had to emulate a lot of his solos and do double guitar lines, so it was really interesting to be able to work with him.

In your eyes, how does this album differ from your solo material?

It's different from my solo material because we are all writing songs together and I wrote my solo material by myself. This is a view that's open to suggestions and time signatures. Even though Billy wasn't a writer on that he was very involved crucially on the way the bass parts would be laid down, because he would get them and change the way the things lied down.

Would you say the heaviest songs are written by Virgil?

So to speak. It's probably because people think key wise, minor keys sound heavier, but 'Ballade de Bastille' [written by MacAlpine] is a very powerful ballad that we play, but he usually writes darker stuff. He did that in Planet X also.

I am curious to know what the title of the album, 'Clinophobia', means. Fear of what exactly?

Fear of sleeping, fear of beds. It's a play-on between

nothingness and reality. We decided it was something cool as we've been working so hard on the record. We decided on 'Clinophobia' because we weren't really sleeping very much.

'Clinophobia' is an all instrumental album. Do you ever feel the need to include a lyrical song?

No, it's an instrumental band. I love singers but this is an instrumental project. If we wanted a singer we would have got one [laughs]. People always respond in shock that there isn't a singer. You never know, I might sing on the next record, but I don't think so. The focus is really instrumental. This is the first record and we really had to come out and tour to find out what we could do and what worked and what didn't work instrumentally. We'll be able to really go in on the next record and take our creativity to another level, which is always important.

With the calibre of musicianship in the band and the music direction the band takes, it is no shock that most of your audience (as it was on the last tour) would be musicians. Do you find it satisfying to play to impress them?

Every time I play, personally and I probably am speaking for the rest of the other guys, I try to give them the most. It's really not a matter of trying to impress somebody, it's a matter of portraying what is on the record and it's having a standard of expression that I like to uphold. And it's always exciting to play music in front of people. The natural side of musical aggression comes out. You get more creative and things like that occur. It wouldn't matter even if it was all women. But it would be fun to do a concert for an all girls crowd. I don't think my girlfriend would like that but it would be fun [laughs].

What advice would you give to the kids that come to your gigs and check everything you do?

That's a tough one. I'm not a teacher and I'm not one for that whole analytical approach. I just really try to give people their money's worth. In the beginning it was kind of hard to pull these songs off, now it's second nature. I think it's most important if you are a musician that wants to play. It's definitely important to be able to play those kind of things in public because you have an experience of practising in a studio but a separate experience is going out and performing in a live format. That's its own demon.

Between the three of you there is a vast amount of albums out in which you are the main stars but also contributors and all of you are musicians in high demand and thus very busy. How do you manage to do everything you do? And how do you enjoy guesting for other fellow musicians?

You just do it. You go from one tour to another, you work a lot in your hotel room, on the tour bus and are constantly writing. That's fun because you're able to do it when you can do it and keeps you busy and it keeps your mind focused. I think it's better than sitting around. I enjoy it. I think these guys enjoy it too. Virgil loves it and Billy plays all the time. It looks like a drug [laughs].

On a personal level now, you always come across as a calm, down-to-earth guy that has stayed out of drugs and booze. Is this really the case?

Haha! Clearly you haven't met my friends over here! [laughs]. No, I love beer and I love wine but I don't do any drugs now. I have to get up in the morning and play and I'm not crazy. It'd be like being incapacitated and I don't like being out of control. I just like a few glasses of wine and after the sixth shot of vodka I have enough [laughs]. No! I'm kidding!

It is also striking that the keyboards on the album are minimal, you being a trained pianist.

There are some keyboard inserts in certain lines but there are no keyboard solos. The keyboards are not prominent because we wanted this to be a realistic trio sound.

How did you find juggling with both instruments whilst playing live with Steve Vai?

It's nothing extraordinary for me as it's something that I've always done. For my very first band I started playing guitar and keyboards. That was my beginning. Keyboards was my first instrument, so it's quite normal.



LAURA KAYE

Interview by Nicky Baldrian

Would you miss not playing keyboards live?

Just playing guitar? It's fine. In Michel's band I played no keyboards. It was two guitar players and two bass players. I don't miss it. I'm happy with it.

You last toured in September 06 with the same line-up, but then it was advertised as your solo tour. Was it the Devil's Slingshot?

It actually was but it wasn't built that way. That was a misconception. They still keep doing it. There are some adverts saying it's me in France and my buddies. That's not what it is.

'Collection - The Shrapnel Years' was your last released album and this was a compilation. Have you got any new solo albums in the pipeline?

Well, 'Collection' was something that the record company put out with some of the songs that I did, but there was no new artistic expression. I haven't had an actual record since 2001. I've been so busy working with so many bands as we've mentioned that I really had no desire or time to do an instrumental record. You have to do something like that when you feel you really have something to say. I was so involved with CAB, we had a Grammy nominated record, I was writing some movie stuff... You can only spread yourself so thin. I don't really like to do a record and not be able to tour and support it. But after this tour is over, CAB goes on a tour of India and after that I'm working on my next instrumental solo record. And I'll probably bill that as Devil's Slingshot when I come out on tour [laughs].

You've worked with Billy Sheehan for many years, in fact since your solo debut album 'Edge Of Insanity' back in 1986. Is he the perfect match for your musical creations?

Yeah, I've worked with so many great bass players like the ones on my next solo record. But he's a great player and innovative. He plays guitar lines like a guitar player. It's like having another guitar player and bass player. And he plays a lot of solos, as you will see tonight. It's really amazing.

What is happening with Planet X? Are there any plans for a new album?

I'm done. I'm not in Planet X anymore. I hung out my space suit [laughs].

The project M.A.R.S. in 1986 was another one of many, but we would like to see the exceptional line-up again, Rudy Sarzo, Tommy Aldridge and Rob Rock.

That was just a one off record that we did years and years ago. I don't think that's ever going to happen. If it didn't happen back in the day, it's not going to happen now. We did the record as a project and we wanted to do something as a band, but everybody started to get calls in different directions. I got a solo deal with Polygram and they ended up in Whitesnake. We never toured.

You are quite keen to work with other guitarists, either as a keyboard player or a guitar player. Examples are your credits in albums by Vinnie Moore and Steve Vai. It could hurt other musicians' ego to accept this position. What is your saying in the matter?

I really don't know. Everybody is probably from a different point of view. I'm used to working with classical musicians from my exposure playing classical music. I don't see anything that would make me not want to explore playing with other players. I think that is an amazing thing to do to work with other players. It's a lot of fun. I've got the best position than most people that never have the opportunity or get the chance to work with people that closely. I enjoy it.

With such an extensive catalogue, what do you view as your greatest achievement to date?

I don't know. I think just to do what I do for a living is an amazing achievement. And having people appreciate what you do is something cool. There's no monetary pull I'm trying to start. If it happens, that's nice, it's well deserved. But the main thing is just to be able to wake up every day and do what you do. And to have people appreciate what you do is a gift in itself alongside what people might consider about the stuff.

Out of New York is the incredible Laura Kaye. Her new CD is what fans of high-octane hard rock will want to hear. 'Shake off the Gravity' is just awesome, filled with fantastic hooky songs like the catchy 'Complicated World' (about the tragic events of 9/11), the funky soul n' rock swagger of 'Deep Breath' and the fiery almost jam based cover of Humble Pie's 'Hot And Nasty' which all hit you hard with powerful vocals and playing. There are guests on the album including Mark Wood, Joe Franco and Al Pitrelli. This is a massive album, so I decided to pin Laura down to discuss, well ... everything and anything.

So Laura, why did you want to be Steven Tyler?

Well yeah I wanted to be him but I also wanted to be with him, what girl didn't? Anyway, the first time I ever saw Aerosmith in concert was at Madison Square Garden in NYC where my seats were on the floor and I had to stand on a chair 'cause I'm so damn short. What grabbed me by my throat was that pure animal, balls to the wall heat emanating from this crazy guy on the stage. The raw power of his voice and the excessive passion of his delivery shook me to my core. I was determined to channel that kind of energy into my own performances.

Tell me about the recording of 'Shake Off The Gravity'?

Mark Wood produced it and shredded all over it. A lot of the vocals and all of Mark's violins were recorded at our home studio. It was great to just belt one out whenever I felt like it during the course of any day. I was actually having painful root canal work done during a lot of the vocal sessions and I channeled a lot of the hatred I was feeling towards my dentist into the takes. So the little extra edge you hear is from the painkillers wearing off [laughs].

Reading your journals you seem to have a very spiritual side, how does this influence your song writing?

You caught me! Spiritual yes, religious no. I believe we all need to pay attention to how our reverberations affect the web - not the internet, the real web - spiders connecting us all, and in 'Hands Across the Ocean' from my 'Sanctuary' CD I sing in my own 'spider language' elaborating on that. Mark's Dad had the best comment after 9/11, his response was: 'De-struction, Con-struction.' Think about that. Whether on a global or a personal level, we are all subject to destructive energy. It's what we do with it as individuals and as a collective body that matters. Are we victims or survivors? 'Slice of Life' talks about that too, making a choice to live optimistically and positively. And the title track 'Shake Off the Gravity' is about my Mom who passed away about 12 years ago and how the realization hit me that if there's rarely a day that goes by when I'm not thinking about her, doesn't that mean that she's here with me now? It's a very happy uplifting song though so don't let the subject matter fool you.

Why did you cover Humble Pies 'Hot N' Nasty'?

Ah!! The very first concert I ever saw was a group called Humble Pie, and this little teeny guy named Steve Marriott was singing so loud that he actually put the mike down on the stage and sang louder than the band. He blew my head off and I was all the way up in the balcony. This was another pivotal moment for me because that performance is what made me really want to become a singer. Like Tyler, I thought if I could sing with that kind of power well there'd be no stopping me. And the truth has always been for me that the louder I sing the better I feel. One guitarist I know dubbed me 'leatherlungs'. I kinda liked that, haha. 'Hot n' Nasty' was such an obvious choice for me because it is such a hot and nasty song and I had a blast wrapping my voice around it.

And why Aerosmith's 'Nobody's Fault? An unusual choice wouldn't you say? And has Steven Tyler heard it, and if so what did he say?

'Nobody's Fault' has always been one of my favorite Aerosmith songs, it's so freakin' heavy and it's so different from their other stuff. It's hard to pick an 'obscure' Aerosmith tune so I went with one that had the hardest edge I could find and I really feel I made it my own while giving props to the guys who wrote it. In the original there's some awesome effects going on that lead into the song itself. I chose to create a demented multi-tracked 'Laura choir' and slammed into it that way. This was a great tune to sing. I had the incredible opportunity to meet and hang with all the guys in Aerosmith not too long ago and I handed my CD to Tyler. This was such a cool thing because it completed an artistic circle for me. I mean, here's this band, and Tyler in particular, whose performances I've inhaled over the years and I got to not only personally thank him for that but also share a little of my music as well. I have no clue if he listened to it but man I hope he did and I hope he approved because I had a great time ripping my voice to shreds on it. Brad Whitford co-wrote that song and it's just perfect. When we were mastering the record at Sony Studios in NY, we played it so loud through their 20-foot tall speakers that I thought my head would explode, just exactly the feeling I was looking for.

And how did the cover of Zep's 'Black Dog' come about?

Again, here's a band that's hard to cover because they are so prevalent in our collective consciousness, so I chose it because of its sexiness and heat and Mark Wood orchestrated the hell out of it. Our 'Black Dog' even has French horns and trumpets!! Plant always melted me and I floated away on the musical ground they broke. When we do it live, we do it as part of a medley which we call Zep/Queen/King. One of these days, we'll release the live version cos it smokes.

How did you and Mark Wood hook up?

Good story, that! Mark and I were big on the New York music scene at around the same time and we'd heard of each other but never really met. The bass player in my band at the time happened to also be the bass player in his band and one night talked me into coming to one of their shows. The



introduction backstage was rushed and chaotic but I found a good spot near the front of the stage during their performance and Mark and I started at each other for the entire set. I think I was wearing a skintight, low-cut shiny satin electric blue dress – which clearly caught his eye – and he was wearing these jeans with holes in very strategic places, which clearly caught mine. After the show we flirted heavily; he gave me his phone number and told me to call him some time. I waited three whole days and then met up with him at a local recording studio which happened to be deserted except for Mark. Your readers can use their filthy imaginations with what transpired that fateful evening and Mark and I have been together ever since. Mark is without a doubt the most uniquely talented and creative person I've ever met and what he's doing with the electric violin is staggeringly cool. Marrying him was the best decision I ever made, especially since we have an 11-year old son Elijah who is already on his way to becoming one of the most smokin' drummers on the planet! He even joins us onstage from time to time and his fan club will soon be bigger than ours.

How was it getting to meet and work with James Brown?

A true highlight of my career and one of the nicest people I've ever worked with. It was during the MTV Video Music Awards back in 2002 at Radio City Music Hall in NYC and I was part of a vocal group called New Voices of Freedom. We were hired to perform during a good part of the opening segment of the show with Jimmy Fallon (from the TV show Saturday Night Live) and James Brown was supposed to be a surprise part of the segment, busting in on Jimmy Fallon and then singing and screaming and dancing his way through the finale of the bit. During the rehearsals, James Brown's entourage arrived first and warned all of us to (a) only call him Mr. Brown and (b) stay the hell out of his way. A short time later, Mr. Brown walks in and comes right up to all of us, friendly and warm

and approachable as can be and I took out my little camera and went right up to him and asked for a pic. He grabbed me close for the shot, looked me up and down, nodded approvingly and said that he was glad his wife wasn't around 'cause she'd kill him and he was just as sweet as could be. The rehearsals were incredible, his performance was incredible and what an amazing experience that was. Truly the Godfather of Soul and well deserves his legendary status.

How did you get Al Pitrelli, Joe Franco and your other guests to appear on the album?

They're my buddies!! We just called and asked and they said yes, easy as that. Al was un-freakin-believable. He did his tracks at his home studio and just shredded the crap out of everything – it was amazing to watch him work and he came up with stuff that just blew my mind. He is a ridiculously incredible musician on every level and Mark and I just sat in awe watching him play, like being in the presence of rock royalty. His wife Jane Mangini played keyboards on 'Hot 'n Nasty' and she's another one, pounds the living daylight out of her keyboards – listen to her parts in that tune, they'll blow your mind. Jane and I listened to the track after she laid down her parts and blasted it so the walls shook and danced around the room like crazy people – of course, the wine helped, haha.

We recorded Al and Jane at their place during a weekend stay, at the same time Mark played violin on some of Jane's tracks for the CD 'Doyle's Brunch' with her band O'2L.

Joe Franco has to be one of the most entertaining drummers to watch – he makes the best faces when he plays and just inhabits the groove of whatever he's playing. He is such a heavy hitter and such a melodic drummer simultaneously – his interplay with my vocals is perfect and his approach to everything was masterful. And he's a great guy. We recorded a lot of stuff at his studio in NY, Beatstreet, and mixed the whole CD there as well. A real drummer's studio and that's why the drums

on the 'Gravity' CD have such bite.

How long have you been singing?

Well my Dad used to sing around the house and he had a gorgeous voice and I guess the inspiration came from him. He became ill when I was 13 and passed away when I had just turned 17, and my coping mechanisms were singing as loud as humanly possible and writing angst-ridden poetry. I used to lay on the floor of my room, turn the stereo up to 10 and sing at 11. I've been singing seriously since I was in my mid teens and was in 3 bands simultaneously at 17 years old. My Mom used to cut out ads from the local paper for performance opportunities and I had my first gig at a local park where I met a bunch of crazy much older hippie musicians who I hung out with for a while, eventually following them to a town in upstate New York where we made music (among other things that shall not be mentioned) constantly.

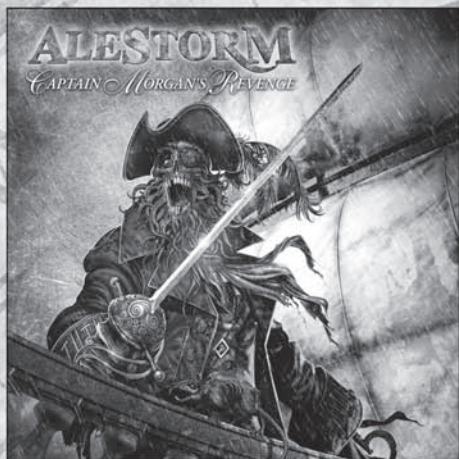
Are you touring at the moment?

Yes. We're opening for Steve Vai during a handful of his east coast dates here in the US. I'm psyched about that, I'm a huge Vai fan. And then Mark goes off to tour with Trans-Siberian Orchestra for two months and then we're solidly booked for the first 6 months of 2008 performing in conjunction with our 'Electrify Your Strings' series of music ed programs. We bring in the band, The Mark Wood Experience, and basically create rock orchestras at schools and universities wherever we go using student string players, choirs, and garage band kids.

Finally what would you like to say to the fans?

Thank you, thank you, thank you! I'm glad you're liking what I'm doing and I promise the new CD won't be too far away – and we'll try for even more special guests this time. Oh, and to quote another of my musical heroes Patti Smith 'People have the power'. Oh yeah baby, oh yeah.

www.myspace.com/laurakayemusic



SCOTTISH PIRATE METAL! A MUST-HAVE FOR FANS OF KORPIKLAANI AND TURISAS!

ON TOUR WITH TURISAS!

- 01.03.08 - NORTHAMPTON, SOUNDHAUS
- 02.03.08 - SHEFFIELD, CORPORATION
- 03.03.08 - ABERDEEN, MOSHULU
- 04.03.08 - EDINBURGH, STUDIO 24
- 05.03.08 - LIVERPOOL, ACADEMY 2
- 06.03.08 - NORWICH, WATERFRONT
- 07.03.08 - PETERBOROUGH, PARK
- 08.03.08 - LEEDS, COCKPIT
- 10.03.08 - EXETER, CAVERN
- 11.03.08 - CARDIFF, CLUB IFOR BACH
- 12.03.08 - SOUTHAMPTON, THE BROOK
- 13.03.08 - LONDON, ELECTRIC BALLROOM
- 14.03.08 - BRIGHTON, CONCORDE 2

ALESTORM
CAPTAIN MORGAN'S REVENGE
IN STORES NOW!



ISOLE
BLISS OF SOLITUDE
SWEDISH EPIC DOOM METAL FOR FANS OF COUNT RAVEN, SOLITUDE AETERNUS, AND CANDLEMASS!

IN STORES NOW!



DRACONIAN
TURNING SEASON WITHIN
TRAGIC AND BEAUTIFUL SWEDISH GOTHIC DOOM METAL FULL OF LONGING AND DRAMA.

RELEASE DATE: 03.03.2008



STUCK MOJO
SOUTHERN BORN KILLERS
CROSSOVER METAL AND DIRTY SOUTHERN ROCK WITH KILLER HOOK-LINES, HEAVY GROOVES & MONSTER RIFFS!

INCLUDES 3 UNRELEASED BONUS TRACKS!
RELEASE DATE: 03.03.2008



ATROCITY
WERK 80 II
SWEDISH EPIC DOOM METAL FOR FANS OF COUNT RAVEN, SOLITUDE AETERNUS, AND CANDLEMASS!

ALSO AVAILABLE AS A LTD. EDITION DIGIPACK INCL. BONUS TRACK & AS A DELUXE EDITION INCL. ALL THE HITS OF BOTH WERK 80 ALBUMS IN A SPECIAL PACKAGING
RELEASE DATE: 03.03.2008

STUCK MOJO ON TOUR: 11.03. MANCHESTER/ACADEMY 3 12.03. NOTTINGHAM/JUNKTION 7 13.03. LONDON/UNDERWORLD

AVAILABLE AT:
PLAY.COM



TOP PRICES, AN EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND THE FASTEST DELIVERY MAKE US THE EUROPEAN METAL MAILORDER! ORDER ONLINE TODAY AND RECEIVE A FREE 16-TRACK COMPILATION CD FEATURING A PREVIEW OF THE LATEST FROM NAPALM RECORDS: WWW.NAPALMRECORDS.COM

Distributed by:
SHELISHOCK DISTRIBUTION
Tel: +44 208 800 8110
Fax: +44 208 800 8140
www.shelishock.co.uk