



3D COVER FEATURE

CYNIC'S SECOND COMING

SEAN REINERT TALKS ABOUT CYNIC'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN

INTERVIEW BY GUS RIOS / IAN MACDONALD

SDM: To set the scene here, I would first like to ask you to talk about what it was like recording Death "Human"...

Sean: Well for me it was a two sided experience. The first side being the wide eyed inexperienced, "green" young man completely going from the shallow water straight into the deep ocean. At the time it was my first "real" recording session. I had been in the studio many times before recording demos but not a record that was on a big record label with worldwide distribution and a built in audience. I was a very nervous 19 year old needless to say:) I certainly remember the voice in my head before going to sleep some nights asking myself, "am I good enough" "can I really do this". Ultimately in the end and to my surprise the whole recording process was very effortless, fun, extremely creative and all ahead of schedule. I think I had 5 days to track drums and

would say "just rip it up man, do you thing metal-borther" in his californian surfer tone. Of course having the impeccable Morrisound Studios to record in with the incomparable Scott Burns at the desk made the process even more enjoyable.

SDM: Now, can you take us back in your mind to what Cynic was dealing with releasing Focus. Were you nervous about the release, the new style, RRR, acceptance etc...? I mean, there's no way you could have known how large of an impact this album would have on people, especially drummers, so talking about your expectations before the release is interesting to us.

Sean: I think we were very positive and excited about the release of FOCUS. We had high hopes actually. Roadrunner was definitely concerned about our "commercial" appeal (or rather lack there of), but we knew we had a strong record and fully believed in the music. We spent so many hours rehearsing and flushing out the material that we were absolutely confident about the release. We were surprised that it took people as long as it did to catch on to what we were doing. Some people got it right away, but the bigger audience has come later. I think the audiences over time have become smarter and more open to different styles, which would explain so many people going back to FOCUS. As for the impact, I would have never guessed. It amazes me how many people have said that FOCUS pointed them in a certain direction be it in their playing or life-path. That is a humbling experience and perhaps the best compliment. Drum wise I'm honored again. It's a really great feeling to hear that someone not only understands what you do musically, but sometimes they even get inspired to take it a step further. I get that both from FOCUS and certainly from HUMAN. Again, strange to think how that record (HUMAN) impacted the extreme music scene.

SDM: Did you ever think there would be a second release, after RRR let you go?

Sean: I always said I would never say "NEVER" when people would ask me if Cynic would play live again. I thought it was very unlikely that's for sure. After the festival shows in 2007 it was obvious to Paul and I. The energy generated after the reunion tour last summer was immeasurable. We came back so charged that there was really no question weather or not we would write more material. The sequence of how the songs came together and the immediate interest from Seasons of Mist really paved the first part of the road to the new release "Traced In Air". The universe has a very interesting and unique way of letting you know when you are on the right path or not. The inspiration for these new pieces was purely in the spirit born out of "spirit" that is CYNIC. That spirit being, the total surrender to the material. It's all about serving the song. Getting comfortable stepping outside of your-self and your comfort zone and at the same time playing with in your limits. It's a strange balancing act. We really had a good time recording "Traced In Air" as well. Warren (Riker) is an A monster engineer and really great with abstract concepts when it comes describing sound-scapes. You can

I did it in three (a very loose and relaxed 3 days). The big lesson there for me (well there were many) was not to doubt myself. I knew what I could do, and just did it. I could have rolled the doubt around in my head constantly until I actually believed I wouldn't have a good performance and fulfill that self-destructive thought.

The flipside to that was how relaxed everything was. By the time we went to record HUMAN Paul and I had already spent so much time with Chuck (touring, rehearsing, demoing, relaxing etc.) that the usually stressful environment that is the studio was completely bypassed. I remember a very fun and creative atmosphere. We even had our own words and language by then. Chuck had just gone through a period of cleaning up the messes of bad management, sloppy finances and defiant bandmembers. He was ready to trust and have fun again. He was very positive and child-like. This made for a perfect studio experience. He really allowed me as a player to serve his riffs in way I don't think he had previously. I would ask him what he thought I should do in certain parts and he

ON MY TENTH BIRTHDAY MY MOM BOUGHT ME A SNARE DRUM AND SOME LESSONS

and the balance of the tracks it just didn't fit into the framework. Again it's a fine line of making a decision not to put something in vs leaving something out.

SDM: What's the general vibe amongst you, Masvidal & Malone? What was the decision maker for Shawn to return to the project?

Sean: Well there had been a tremendous gap in communication between Malone and Paul and I. He sent us an email at the last minute that said "if you guys need someone for the new record I'm on board". We kind of tossed it around and thought it would be nice to have the same rhythm section as Focus even though we already had a few people in mind (including current bass player Robin Zielhorst). We knew that Shawn was already familiar with the Cynic vocabulary and the fans would appreciate his participation.

SDM: Over the years you have done quite a few different projects. Which would you say had the most impact on you as a drummer and how?

Sean: I think it's almost impossible to single anyone particular project out really. I think the thing that is paramount in the quest for musical and life knowledge is to try new things and put yourself in unfamiliar situations. Sometimes the best comes out of you when you least expect it. The unknown has new potential. So I've always tried to do stuff that challenges me in some way. I think the time I have spent away from drum chair has helped me tremendously. All the time spent writing and producing music. Getting into the details. That has made me a much smarter player. It sounds cliché, but sometimes it's really what you don't play that makes the difference in a piece of music. I sent a ton of time with Aeon Spoke playing very slow tempos. To me they are more difficult to execute than playing double bass at 220. Making that slow tempo feel good...wow! To be honest I think I didn't play double bass from 1998-2003. I went to kick, snare, hi hat and ride cymbal. Slowly adding a tom, a cymbal. Back to basics. That all really helps ironically for more layered complicated music.

SDM: Can you talk a bit about the differences in your gear from 1993 - 2008? Has it improved your performance / abilities?

Sean: I think the biggest difference in my set up is that I play one kick drum and a double pedal. Other than that it's just the drum and cymbal companies that has changed! I used to play Tama Camco pedals but have been using their Iron Cobra since 2003. I'm proudly endorsing Sabian cymbals, SONOR

drums and Grindstix drumsticks. All companies have gone above and beyond in supporting me and my drum needs. I still use my DrumKat as a Midi controller, but have used my SPD-s as well as my iPod for samples. I think the thing that has been the most help to me is the ability to play and rehearse to tracks. I have 3 protocols rigs at the moment. One in my home studio, one at my drum room and my mbox. The ability to record and monitor my playing is priceless to me!

SDM: Can you kind of walk us through a typical practice session?

Sean: It really depends on what my goal is. Usually starting off just doing body stretching. Then I sit at the kit and play doubles with the feet and play various stickings with my hands over the top just to get loose and warm. I have a few routines that get me warm that range from long continuous playing at medium-fast tempos to running sprints (playing a half time feel for a certain number of measures and then double time for the same amount). With that routine I get warm in about 45 minutes. It's a little less if I have access to a decent practice pad and it's not too cold in the dressing room. After the warm up I move into what ever I'm working on. If it's music for a live show I usually try and run the set like it's a live situation which means with out stopping even if I make a mistake. If I'm working on technique I'll get into the repetitive practice by breaking down what I'm working on and slowly building it up until I'm executing it well.

SDM: How and when did you decide to play drums?

Sean: Well it's a long and winding road. I asked my mother at age 4 if I could play the french horn after seeing swan lake (Pyotr Tchaikovsky). Instead of watching the ballet from my seat, I sat with my legs dangling over the orchestra pit, eying all the musicians. I pretty much didn't see one moment of dancing during the entire performance. I told my mother that I wanted to play the french horn. She did not buy me one but when I turned seven years old and after many begging sessions, my mother bought me and my sister an upright piano. Although Patti had little interest, I continued to study, practice and excel on my first percussion instrument. I studied continuously for 3 years until the urge to play drums was too strong so again after many a begging session my teacher gave me a pair of drumsticks and said, "play something". To his surprise he was quite impressed and told my mother "the kid has rhythm, you should get him some drums". On my tenth birthday my mom bought me a snare drum and a some lessons. My mom said if I practiced and showed improvement she would buy me the rest of the drum-set. Well six months later I had my first five piece drum-set! Drums made sense to me. There are similar independence challenges between the piano and the drums in regards to splitting your limbs etc. I remember the first drum lesson I had I was already keeping time to a Police song. My teacher brought his parents in to see me play because he couldn't believe I was already keeping time on the kit. It was very natural to me.

tell him you want the transition of the song to go from "flying through the cosmos....to a dark forest with elf's all around" and he would say, "totally get it, let's throw up a mic in the bathroom and record some toms, then I'm going to run e'm through a transient designer", fun stuff!!!! I learned a ton from watching his mic set-up and signal path. Recording is such an art as well.

SDM: After RR released Cynic from the label, what was the talk amongst the band like?

Sean: By the time we were released from RR we had been long broken up. We were released from RR in 1998 I believe. That was part of the reason the Portal project had a premature death. RR wouldn't let Paul and I free so it kind of got messy when looking for a record deal. We had really been through the ringer with a bad contract from RR. Ultimately none of us ever saw a penny from RR what wasn't spent on equipment or record budget. It was a really bad taste in all of our mouths. Jason was so disenchanted that he moved to Oregon to run a tile company. Paul went to Los Angeles to attend G.I.T. and I went to the University of Miami for composition and theory. It was the big split. Everyone was going their own direction, finding their path. Ultimately all of us with the exception of Jason went on to further our musical studies. It makes sense really, when you spend so much time really focusing on one particular thing you can burn out. It makes it especially hard when you have to generate your income from that one thing. Business is the necessary evil.

SDM: How much fun was the Cynic reunion tour this past summer and how much of a part did it play in the decision to record again?

Sean: It was a blast. It was a lot of hard work but worth every second! It was truly the spark that led to the new record. The fans were so supportive. I was a real eye opener to how many people appreciate Cynic. We had some really great shows. It was the energy we were left with after the tour that led to the new material. So many people enjoyed the new song "Evolutionary Sleeper" that we dove right into more new music when we got back. This past summer we got to play 4 new songs and the fans were really into them. I think the Cynic fans are going to be very happy with the new CD.

SDM: Will there be another Cynic instrumental track?

Sean: There isn't an instrumental on this record. Although the intro has very little vocals it's not 100% instrumental. We thought about it, but when we weighed in all the songs

SDM: What was your early education like? Private lessons, particular books, etc?

Sean: Well I studied with David Toledo for 3 years. We studied reading and technique. We broke down Police songs, Led Zeppelin songs, Rush songs. When I was 13 and met Paul I stopped the lessons and just focused on songs and rehearsing with Kobold (our first band). When I was 15 years old I heard about a new performing arts high school opening in Miami that was by audition only. I went back to David Toledo to brush up on my reading for a few months and nailed my audition. So I spent my junior and senior years of highschool at New World School of the Arts. It was the first year of the school and soo new that it didn't even have it's own campus yet. We were sprinkled in to the Miami Dade Community College downtown campus. That was a tremendous learning experience and some really long days. School started at 7:30 AM and got out at 3:45PM. The first half of the day was academics and the second half was your discipline. Tons of homework and even more practice. I had everything from music theory, piano, wind ensemble, jazz combo, music and computers, sight singing and ear training, private lessons. It was a lot of responsibility but a great training ground. All the kids were very creative and focused. I still have many friends that I keep in touch with. At NWSA studied with Pete Webster. He was head of the percussion department at MDCC (Miami Dade Community College). I got a lot of lessons from my fellow students as well. Everyone there was so amazingly talented and driven. After high school and in between all the touring and recording for Death and Cynic, I attended Miami Dade Community College continuing my drum studies with Pete Webster while studying theory and sound engineering. MDCC has the best music program of any community college in the country. I think I pretty much took every single music course they offered before transferring to the University of Miami School of Music. At UM I studied with Lou Abbot, Harry Hawthorne and Fred Wickstrom. Most of my time at UM was spent writing though as my major was in composition and music theory with a minor in performance. I figured I had already spent plenty of time playing and it was time to hone in on the writing side of things. In 1998 when I moved to Los Angeles I attended UCLA's film scoring program under film score genius Stephen Scott Smalley. I think that is where I would eventually like to end up (film and TV music). As for important books there are several that have really shaped my playing. The Louie Bellson "Modern Reading in 4/4" is wonderful for beginners learning to read rhythm. Stick Control is an absolute must! The brother book to Stick Control, "Accents and Rebounds" is really great too. The book that really opened things up for my kit playing was Gary Chesters' "New Breed". The concepts in that book are so thorough and efficient. It did wonders for my left foot and left hand. I also got a lot of mileage from David Garibaldi's

"Future Sounds", his treatment of two sound level playing and para-diddles is explored very clearly. John Rileys' "The Art of Bop Drumming" is amazing as well. His exercises are very well thought out and the history he gives is really enlightening (as is the listening guide he gives). I also enjoyed some of the Gary Chaffee "linear" and "polymetric" stuff. Obviously there is all the music that I listened to and played to. That is just as helpful as the books are!

SDM: Who are some your inspirations, and what are you currently listening to?

Sean: Many, many inspirations. Growing up my drumming inspirations were Stewart Copeland, Neil Peart, John Bonham, Alex Van Halen and Terry Bozzio. When I was about 13 I started to get exposed to some fusion guys like Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl. At that time I was also getting into more extreme styles like thrash and hardcore so I had a real diverse musical palate even when I was young. I'd come home from school and play to Exodus' "bonded by blood" and then Henry Mancini's greatest hits, and then Houses of the Holy. I think the guys that I got the most inspiration and knowledge from are Vinnie, Terry and Gary. Terry has such a "perfect" straight feel to me, not a lot of push not a lot of pull, right in the middle. I did a ton of transcribing of him with Zappa and Missing Persons. That record "Spring Session M" is a drum book in and of it's self. I think I transcribed every note he played on that record. Vinne is just to me the most diverse drummer on the planet. I have NEVER heard him play a bad note. He owns every single style he plays (which is every style). Vinnies playing on Allan Holdsworth's "Secrets" is to this day the best drum performance on record (in my opinion). Gary's playing is always fresh to me. His approach to his grooves has always attracted me like a mosquito to that purple lamp. He has a bombastic abandon when he plays (reminds me of a Tony Williams), yet plays with such a sophisticated rhythmic and melodic sense. The Holdsworth record "ATAVACHRON" blew me away. Big open toms, washy cymbals and synthaxe. It sounds new to me when I listen to it today. His playing on Level 42's "Staring At The Sun" is really amazing. Some other players that have really inspired me are: Steve Smith, Bill Stewart, Peter Erskine, Rayford Griffin, Dave Miranda, Bill Berg, Max Roach, Dennis Chambers, Chris Coleman, Joe Morello, Cliff Almond, Joey Barron, the list really goes on and on!

My listening is pretty much all over the place as well. I've been so nose to the grindstone lately with my practicing and recording and touring that I have not picked up much new music. I listen to a lot of classical stuff. The Beethoven symphonies always charge me as does Stravinsky with his atonal sketches. Listen to a lot of John Coltrane too, love Elvins' playing. Some singer songwriters as well. I have been writing songs for several years now and really appreciate the craft of a well written song. I love film music as well Ennio Morricone is one of my favorite composers as is Jerry Goldsmith (RIP).

SDM: What are some of the things that you are incorporating into Cynic's music that may be new concepts to you, or posed somekind of a challenge?

Sean: Well I'm more in control of my left foot these days. When I play double bass I lead with my left foot. I also play the hi hat with my left foot at the same time (I hit both pedals with my left foot). I also play with my hi hat pedal on the inside of my double pedal (this helps with playing both at the same time as well as puts the hi hat closer to my snare). I've really honed in on my left foot over the past year. I think my playing on this new release is very mature. I didn't play "for the sake of" playing. I really focussed on supporting the riffs and the dynamic curve of each piece. I tried to bring in some rhythmic "themes" through out. There are some "drum" moments, but I think the technicality or skill will be weighed in the overall work. I really feel this record is one whole song vs. eight. I think the challenge is always knowing when to walk away. Not to over think. Get to a healthy balance with neurosis is you will:) You can over work something, but at the same time you need to constantly tend to it. Usually for me the challenges come from the business side of things vs. the musical.

HOW COULD I?

In this groove I have explored the idea of keeping an ostinato (repeating pattern) figure with the ride and hi hat foot while playing a linear counter rhythm with the left hand and kick. I would suggest getting comfortable playing the ride and hi hat pattern first by them selves(audio example #1). Then learn the left hand and kick drum part by them selves(audio example #2). The easiest way I have found to combine the two is to play the ride and hi hat pattern, then one by one, slowly add in notes from the left hand/kick drum part. Start playing the full groove (audio example #3) at a slow tempo and gradually increase. (good advice for learning any exercise!)

Have fun and experiment with your own ostinatos and counter rhythms!

TEXTURES (BASS SOLO GROOVE)

In this groove I use a trick that is great for making 4/4 grooves "feel" like they are in an and odd meter. I divided the bar of 4/4 into sixteenth notes. Instead of keeping them in 4 groups of 4 I group them in two groups of 5 and one group of 6 (5/5/6). This creates the "un-easy" feeling even though we are still in common time. First learn the grouping by playing it on the hi hat (audio example #4) using a hand to hand sticking and then the alternate sticking (see kit tab). Then practice the full groove (audio example #5) slowly at first gradually building up speed. *Audio example #6 is the groove up to speed with some variations*

Have fun and experiment with your own groupings!