

OVERKILL

The image is the cover art for the album 'The Electric Age' by the band Overkill. At the top, the band's name 'OVERKILL' is written in a stylized, metallic, jagged font. Below the name, a central focus is a human skull with glowing orange-red eyes, set within a circular opening of a dark, industrial machine. The machine has various bolts, screws, and grates. Two bright, jagged lightning bolts strike down from the top corners, framing the central skull. The overall color palette is dark with greenish-blue highlights from the lightning and the skull's glow.

The Electric Age is the sixteenth album by Overkill and it will see the light of day late march 2012, to create some excitement for the album we have spoken to Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth about this album but also about what almost killed the band and why ice hockey is much more fun than the music and a lot more.



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PHOTOS: PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS
PUBLISHED ON 12/3-2012

The playoffs or as Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth says, the second season of the NHL is closing in when I am talking to him and he explains that he is a fan of the New Jersey Devils being a New Jersey resident that comes naturally but also that the team is one likeable team, especially since Brodeur joined the team. For you who have no idea what I am talking about, use the invention called internet and look it up. So why do I bring this up? Why not? but it is because Bobby explains that he'd

rather talk about hockey than his music due to the repetition that often comes up in the interviews and he had been doing a few of those already.

It is necessary with all this promotion though, he explains and if people are excited still after fifteen albums, he is excited as well.

- I mean that we have sixteen records and people still have interest, to me that's amazing. So it is obviously a contemporary presentation that's been rooted in our past and that it has value in 2012 means more to me than having value in the past.

But with all this promotion, is it work or can it be something fun?

Bobby explains that it depends and that play the music and the creation of the music is never work but that promotion can feel like work sometimes as it can be repetitions with questions at times. But every now and then something unique comes through those questions and surprises him.

- had a guy ask me recently: "do you feel that the respect that Overkill receives from the scene is based on the respect that Overkill has for the scene?" I said I've never thought of such a thing but I suppose we do have respect for the scene.

It is a scene that Overkill has

been part of for nearly three decades and doing promotional interviews is still not always boring and sometimes he is pleasantly surprised by how the interviews turn out, something he did tell me at the end of our conversation that I did ask some different question so it was interesting, or at least so he said.

The Electric Age

"The Electric Age" is the name of the coming album by Overkill, it is their sixteenth studio album. It is an album from a band that is at a unique spot right now, from a band with a high level of energy at the moment, energy that

Bobby explains comes from a fine chemistry between the members of the band. It is an energy that he reckons comes from changes around the "Immortalis" album in 2007 when new drummer Ron Lipnicki became the latest member to join the band.

- Since that album until now there seems to be a very positive type of aggression, we're able to play with a chip on our shoulder like we have something to prove. But that only lends itself to good results and I think "The Electric Age" has got that power pack type feel, that positive aggression with a chip on the shoulder.

Bobby reckons that this chip

might come from the competition or from the new versus old school, but whatever the reason he thinks that the results are great. Hallowed have yet to receive the album from Nuclear Blast so none of our reviewers can comment on that statement, Nuclear Blast. But one of the creators of the album is at least grande in his wording about it.

- think that "The Electric Age" has that which we think is important and that's energy and contemporary presentation, value in the present day.

As "The Electric Age" is the new "baby" Bobby has a hard time comparing it to any of the earlier



albums as his head is so wrapped around this new album but reckons that this album is timed correctly. At least the last two albums by Overkill has been timed correctly Bobby reckons and also that the scene is very healthy at the moment.

- I think that had this record been released in 1995 for instance it might have been overlooked because the scene was not very healthy back then. I think that in 2012 we find ourselves in a situation where people crave this type of an approach to the music.

The comparison to the older

record with regards to production can see that this album has a more expensive sound according to Bobby and D.D. (Verni, Bass), it has a bigger production where the guitars are both bigger and sleeker and it has a wall of sound.

- But there's a great separation that takes any other instrument into the mix but that mix is now a wall with regards to the separation, I think that's unique with regards to a thrash record.

As Overkill has the luxury of using D.D.'s studio they have the luxury of time and the ability to remain in the studio until they

are satisfied and that is a principle that Overkill follow, not to leave the studio before they are satisfied with what they have achieved. Therefore it is not that far fetched to believe that they are satisfied with the album which Bobby explains that they are. He doesn't know where it stands in comparison with the earlier albums but as they have a good principle they can focus on the details nowadays.

- I am very happy with the way it turned out because I think that with us as producers of the record, this becomes a project

where we can look into the small details. I remember in the old days when you used to lease a studio and had 28 days to record and ten days to mix and that was it, so if it wasn't done it wasn't done. Now we have that luxury of going back and go over and re-check things.

And they have taken their time with this album, around eight months to be more precise. That is the amount of time they have used to assemble songs, record demos and all of that. They started with the drum tracks as far back as June and then they have

been letting it develop while always making sure that they have been playing live in between sessions because if you can bring that live feel into the album it becomes a sort of X Factor that can make the result something really special.

- If you can't, you loose something. If we're playing festivals for instance in between recording sessions I think it really adds to what the final feel of the record is going to be and this record has that kind of hopping aggressive in your face, could be on the stage type feel and I think

that that is always necessary for an Overkill presentation.

Interest and Touring

The day before the interview Nuclear Blast leaked the song *Electric Rattlesnake* so now the interest for the album is starting to build, before that Bobby explains that he has had no idea how the interest for the album has been other than the one from the press and media. And so far they have heard mostly positive things towards the followup to "Ironbound" which Bobby reckons was accepted as quite a successful album both in

terms of reviews and how it was accepted by the scene.

- I think from when I talk to people that "The Electric Age" is seen as the next logical step, it is not "Ironbound", it is a different record but it still has quite an impact with it.

In april Overkill will hit the road for a US tour on which they will have company with Diamond Plate and God Forbid as well as Suidakra. In april and may this tour will happen and then during the summer there will be festivals in Europe amongst others
W a c k e n
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Tuska, they will be doing approximately ten festivals in Europe, and a European tour is planned for september. According to Bobby a European tour is necessary and they are trying to come over to Europe at least once for each album and it is still great to go one tour after all these years.

- I've been doing it for so long, it is such a part of me, it's engrained it's almost like eating, sleeping and breathing. It's funny we all have families, wives and children, it's like when your on the road you miss being home but I never miss it when I am

on stage, never, and when I am home I miss being on the road so it is kind of a confused issue.

And neither is the travelling a problem, as that is something Bobby likes doing and that is a thing he shares with his wife so even when he is not touring he goes places. And as he has a European wife he goes to Europe when visiting family as well so for him the travelling is never and issue, it is a necessity but it is always exciting.

- 26 years I've been touring and

last year was my first time in Australia and certain South American cities, Lima in Peru for instance. So this still becomes very exciting to be able to say that there's still places I haven't seen yet, places where I haven't gone and that's really awesome.

Close to three decades is a long time to be creative and to do one thing, sure music isn't your everyday job and Bobby says that what keeps him motivated is that it doesn't feel like work.

- My niece asked me once: "hey



what do you really do for a living uncle Bobby?" and I said that what I do is actually to avoid manual labour, that's what I do.

To avoid manual labour is of course the best kind of motivation I can think of, with that as a motivation it is probably possible to keep going forever. Bobby also explains that working in music was what he dreamed of doing and that when you make a dream come true, you don't piss on that dream. After all it is a dream that has given him almost everything he has.

- I am sitting for instance in the house that touring and working gave me and I just passed my wife in the hall with our beauti-

ful dog and I've met my wife on the road and started another business and this business gave us that business and it all started with those first shows back in 1986 that we've done in Europe with Anthrax and it's come all the way to 2012.

And for Bobby it is never a problem with motivation, when some band might complain over being on the road for extended periods of time and says that they are just longing to get home, he says that he would gladly take those shows and do them for these bands if they do not want them. So that might be something to think of if you are a band and tired of extended touring, let

Overkill and Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth finish the tour for you.

- I think its how you perceive it and I don't perceive it as a problem but more of a blessing and something positive.

History vs Today

When touching on the subject of history with looking at the amount of time the band has actually been going, what has changed over the years? what is the difference between the Overkill of the past and the Overkill of today? According to Bobby the main difference is that back in the early days they didn't know what they were doing, it was all chaos.

- There were demos that had

come out that preceded this band's forming but there was no rules just chaos and there was something really charming about that chaos.

At this time there were several separate and completely independent from each others scenes happening within the thrash metal, it was a scene on the US west coast mostly known for those from the San Francisco Bay Area with bands like Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer and all of those, there was also a scene at the US east coast where Overkill are from, but there were also bands emerging in Germany with influential bands like Kreator, Sodom and Destruction. Also the Speed

Metal in Canada with for instance Exciter or Anvil so there were many things happening in the genre and many different scenes and styles that were working independently of one another, just at the same time. Then after time this chaos has stabilised and become a more controlled kind of chaos where bands now probably knows more what they are doing and that according to Bobby is more powerful than just chaos.

The fans over this period of time seems to have grown in numbers but not through the mass but rather through the generations over the circa three generations that is the span of the music of Overkill and also the genre.

- There's still guys following us that are wearing a T-shirt from the first record "Feel the Fire" and the shirt doesn't fit anymore and it's no longer black it's grey and the guy has no hair and he's got a twenty year old daughter and a seventeen year old son and he brings them to an Overkill show because they like metal too and they like Overkill.

This, Bobby thinks, is something unique that it appeals to the families and that this also shows that there is value in their music and that the value comes from purity which is something people always seems to appreciate.

- I think that one of the most unique things I have ever seen



OVERKILL

was when I was doing a show in New Jersey that was sold out. It was what is called an "all age show" and it was in a place that normally served alcohol but did not for this show so this gave the opportunity to make it all ages. The smoke came out and we played the first song and then the smoke cleared and I could see through a little bit of smoke to the barricade and I could see this little body clinging on to the barricade with two big arms around this little body so that nobody would smash in. And after the show I realised that it was a little girl, I was outside the bus and it was her and her father came up to me and said hello would I take a picture with his daughter and I said sure. I asked her "how old are you?" and she said ten and I said "you're ten, is this your first concert?" and she said "no, I've seen Anthrax, I've seen Type O' Negative" and I thought holy shit, I guess it is a family affair.

This is something that Bobby reckons is both very cool but also unique, something that you probably will not see anywhere else.

Evolving & Adapting

More changes than just band members, the construction of fans and how the scene has changed from chaos to something more controlled of course has happened over these years. One of these things is the musical change of Overkill, if you follow them from record to record the changes mig-

ht appear rather small but if you look over the course of the entire career these changes are quite noticeable according to Bobby. They always try to evolve their music and are not afraid to try new things, and always looking to learn new things.

- You know, a man stops learning, he stops progressing and then it might just be at that what we were as opposed to what we are. But I'll try things differently on the records every time with my voice, every time, if it is suggested to me or I learn it from another singer I'm gonna try it and I think that's the difference between what was and what is and if we continuously try to live in the present that's where the changes come from.

It also comes from them not having the fear of someone exclaiming that they aren't Overkill because of something new they try, because they always are and that is how it's going to be Bobby explains but they always have to try new things and evolve in their music to avoid repeating the same thing over and over.

- What's the sense of releasing a record that is nice but your best record was in 1990, that to me is not exciting.

As some of you may know, music is a business, at least selling music creating albums and such is an expensive endeavour and for Overkill who has been part of this business for 25 years or so the stakes are higher than they might

be for other bands. This because the band is managing themselves and they have to book the right tour, pick the right cover art, the right crew guys and more, Bobby explains that 98% of all Overkill presentations come across their desk.

- I think that we have a higher stake in it and that's how we learn the music business and probably adapt to what changes over this 25-year period.

Speaking of adapting to changes and new times, internet is a new thing, what about that? Has the advent of internet as a musical promotor/distributor helped Overkill?

- It almost killed it!

- You could watch revenues drop during a twelve month period of sixty percent based on the download. And we could hear "this is one of your best records" but then why isn't it selling?

The business end to it is no good then, sales has decreased for everyone and Bobby explains that when he and Overkill was selling 150'000 copies of a record in the 90s, it wasn't impressive at all and now 150'000 copies gives you all sorts of privileges and a band selling 60'000 copies today is heralded as a band that can chart at a high level and when Overkill was selling 150'000 copies in 1990 they didn't even chart at anything close to a high level so the change in sells and revenues is quite big says Bobby.

But the internet is not all bad, it

Overkill are:
Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth - Lead vocals
Dave Linsk - Lead guitar,
Derek "The Skull" Tailer - R. guitar,
D.D. Verni - Bass
Ron Lipnicki - Drums



Overkill Discography:

Feel the Fire (1985)
Taking Over (1987)
Under The Influence (1988)
The Years of Decay (1989)
Horrorscope (1991)

I Hear Black (1993)
W.F.O. (1994)
The Killing Kind (1996)
From the Underground and Below (1997)
Necroshine (1999)

Bloodletting (2000)
Killbox 13 (2003)
ReliXIV (2005)
Immortalis (2007)
Ironbound (2010)
The Electric Age (2012)



is a bit of a double edged sword with one side of it making it very difficult to survive financially but it can also be used as a tool they can use to remain in the public eye as much as possible and as they are a band that is already established they have better possibilities to get tours and those kinds of things. For Bobby it is just a question of evolving and adapting because if you don't you will die.

- I think of the internet as a dou-

ble edged sword, it is not the revenues of the 1990s anymore but that's just the way it is and I have to accept that and be able to adapt to the situation. What we do with the internet is to use it to promote us on a higher level.

As with regards to using the technology to interact with fans and the likes Bobby explains that the band has always been reachable and they have met and interacted with the fans in relation to shows and such always anyway.

- I think the interaction has always been part of the charm that this band has had with regards to how we've been perceived by the scene and how we perceive the scene as part of it asking people how they are and how they liked the show. I've met a lot of good people over the years and kept in touch with some, great friends and people that actually come and visit me that I have met through shows whether they be journalists or fans that I've met over

time and they hang out by the bus and they bring their wives and their kids now and they send me emails. If they are in New Jersey they stop by and that's what it's about for me, it's not about some kind of a separation as you know I've never been better than anybody. It's true, as soon as I start thinking I am I have sunken real low, haven't I?

And with that I just want to remind you that The Electric Age is up for release the 27th of march

2012 in the US and European release on march 30th. Be sure to buy the album and show the band that the sales of the 90s can still be achieved today, and with that we thank Bobby "Blitz" Ellsworth for taking his time to answer our questions.

Overkill on the web:

<http://wreckingcrew.com>
<http://www.myspace.com/overkill>
<http://is.gd/44dGJ5> - on NB
<http://www.lastfm.de/music/overkill>

For a little Trivia, the name of the bat that is the mascot of Overkill is Chaly, you see him on the first spread in this article.