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By Brad Walters.

BILLY GOULD, BASSIST WITH FAITH NO MORE, DISCUSSES THE BAND'S MUSICAL METHODS: ECLECTIC MUSIC AT ITS BEST.

The group Faith No More has proved to be something of an enigma to critics and fans alike. Their music includes the genres of rock, heavy metal and rap, somehow resulting in a smash reception on pop radio. No one is quite sure what this Bay-area band is all about, but they've become a staple on MTV and gathered fans from all areas of music.

Billy Gould, bassist with Faith No More, is part of the nucleus of the band that existed before the beginning, so to speak. "Myself, the keyboard player, Roddy Bottum, and the drummer, Mike Bordin, started out as 'Faith No Man' in 1981. I was eighteen years old then. We played clubs forever, but we never did covers. Actually, we started off as very inaccessible. We wouldn't have any changes in our songs, they would be like a skipped record that would go on forever. It kind of turned into music somehow. We were very uncompromising.

"We were young and just having fun. There was a lot of substance to that music and we were getting a lot of gratification out of it. Really, though, what we were doing then is the core of what we're doing now. We still have that musical freedom."

Jim Martin joined Faith No more as lead guitarist in 1984. Martin was leery of the band at first because of their attitude toward the role of electric guitar in their music. "We liked the power of the guitar, although guitar solos were something we were kind of scared of," Billy remembers. "A lot of our sound and where we're coming from mentally is not rock and roll with lots of guitar solos and flash. We're more a product of the late '70s and early '80s, more punk and anti-rock and roll. We're a rock band now, but it's been a natural progression as to how we ended up this way. We certainly didn't start out that way, At first, we wouldn't let Jim do and guitar solos whatsoever because it represented a lot of self indulgence we didn't feel was very necessary. We were doing our best not to be a rock and roll band."

Mike Patton's transition into Faith No More in 1989 as lead vocalist was less painful than any of the other members had anticipated. Patton had been a fan of the band's for several years. However, when he joined the band all the music for their album 'The Real Thing' had already been written, and it was up to him to provide lyrics. "That was interesting. We had a different singer before this album, so we had written all the music before we started looking for a singer. We tried out a bunch of people and they just couldn't get the hang of what we were doing. I think sometimes our music takes a few listens to get really comfortable with. Patton just jumped right on it, though. He was completely familiar with it. I think a week after he had joined the band he had written all the lyrics to the songs, which are pretty much the lyrics that are on the record now. He was a real natural, which was lucky."

Faith No More continually marvel at the acceptance they have received after their nine years of largely self-induced obscurity. Their musical eccentricity also incorporates a unique songwriting style. As explained by Gould, Faith No More songs often begin as visualizations instead of melodies. "The way we write songs comes not so much from a style, but more like a visual scene that we see in our heads. Then we try to create something that gives us the feeling of that scene. So, rather than just being songs, they also paint a picture, For instance, we had a song called ' The Edge of the World.' Before any of the parts of that song were even written, there was the basic, nonmusical idea of the song: Just imagine a sleazy cocktail lounge with a fifty year old man trying to pick upon a fourteen year old girl. Because so much of our music starts from visuals, it' s hard to pin down any one person in the band doing the same thing every time we write a song. Every song is different.

"Before Patton joined the band, we had considered taking over vocals ourselves a couple of times. But, one thing about the way we write music is that everybody kind of has their own job to do, and singing plus playing would be two jobs. We were thinking it would probably be best off to just have somebody do the one job and do it really well."

Having been in bands since age fifteen, Billy credits playing live with keeping his musical interest stimulated. He feels that many kids quit playing instruments because they get bored just sitting in their rooms practicing. However, by playing in a band Billy could see and hear how much he was improving. "It was better than lessons to me because we would write songs and play them right off. It was very exciting."

Billy' s bass rig has long consisted of Peavey gear. In fact, he credits his "much abused" Peavey gear with creating his unique sound. "Live, I' m using two of the 18" cabinets (1820s) and two of the 15"T(215s) cabinets. I keep the 15" on the ground and I put the 18" on top of them so that the 18" is right about at chest level; that way, I can turn around and stand right in front of my amp and feel this giant blast on my chest, which is great. "I also use two of the CS-1200 amps driving a TB Raxx; before that, like since 1982, I' ve always used Peavey Mark III and Mark IV bass heads through four 12"T cabinets. This sound that they have is unlike anything. It' s not like the super-efficient transistor amps where the sound is real clear and true - it kind of has personality. Since I' ve been using these amps for years, it' s hard to separate my style from the actual equipment I use, if that makes any sense. There are certain sounds that just the Peavey gear makes that are only unique to Peavey. Some of the slides and things I do sound really great, whereas if I play it on a different amplifier I don' t think it would come out so well.

"so, anyway, I have a whole style and bass sound that I' ve recorded and played around. What happened was, there came a time when I had to upgrade. That was for this next record because my speakers all had holes in them and I think I threw my amp down on the floor one day in a fit o rage. I was really worried because I

had gone to these bass stores checking out every amp they had and there was just nothing. It just wasn't doing it for me at all.

I was really concerned. I had this Peavey Mark IV head that I knew was good, but it wasn't putting out the power that I was starting to need and I just didn't know what to do. Then, we were at the MTV Music Awards and I met Lee Sklar, who is Phil Collins' bass player, and I was talking to him backstage. He was saying, 'Check out the TB Raxx, check it out!' I was kind of apprehensive about it because it's a small little rack space preamp and I was thinking that it couldn't have that sound like those old Mark IV's did. He told me to check it out, though, so I ordered one and it's great! It's perfect! It has a bite to it which is great and it's just unique. It gives my bass an incredible sound. It's cool: I kind of have my own sound by default! I'm just lucky enough to have the right equipment, I guess." Billy admits that so far he hasn't tried to make his studio rig any different from his stage rig, although it has been a couple of years since he was in the studio. "On our last record I was still using my cabinet with the punctured speakers, so I had a lot of grunt in my sound. We'll see what happens with this next record. I still have my old cabinets, but we'll see what happens with my new perfectly working speaker cabinets. It might change my sound, but I don't think it will much.

"I'm using Peavey speakers, too, which I like. I've been told to change my speakers, but I think that would take away from my sound. I want a real sound, like a real electric guitar playing through speakers, not like something coming over my stereo system. My Peavey speakers are tired and true. The real problem I think with most of the music equipment being made these days is trying to reproduce the full frequency range and the true sense. I think that's a real mistake because it takes away a lot of the natural bite and the energy you get from just plugging in a guitar and an amplifier. You know, the rush you get off the power coming out of the speakers. Otherwise what you get is, 'Oh, well, the bass sounds perfect, you can hear the wood on the neck.' I think that's the wrong way to go about making an amplifier, if you're going to be in a rock band, anyway. It's got to have an edge to it so you feel like you've got some power coming out." Faith No More is currently writing songs, in their own unique way, for the follow-up to their extremely successful last album. Music lovers everywhere can only hope that Billy Gould and his musical cohorts continue to expand the boundaries of musical genres with their distinctive sound, of which Peavey is proud to be a part!