

INTERVIEW WITH TONY CAMPOS FROM STATIC-X
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Eleven years after “Cult of Static” and four years after Wayne Static’s demise the band returned with their latest output “Project Regeneration Vol. 1”. I had a chance to talk about it with Tony Campos, the mastermind behind the band’s triumphant return. Here’s what he had to say about the new and the old face of STATIC-X.

Tony, it’s been 20 years since the release of "Wisconsin Death Trip". A landmark album among the wave of new metal artists back then. How did that happen?

Well, I don't know. It wasn't like we were aiming to top everyone else. We were just fucking trying to do something different.

It wasn’t like a competition with other bands?

No, it wasn't. We were just trying to find our sound and our language, you know. We were going through various ideas. When we first started playing, we were more a grungy kind of alternative thing you. It was heavy and more metal, maybe like BLACK FLAG. Anyway, one day Wayne came into the rehearsal room with his drum machine and he was like: “check this out”. When I heard the drum tracks and the riff I was blown away. It was like MINISTRY but punchier. So, we got on with the program and started to have fun with it. That's how "Wisconsin Death Trip" was born.

Yeah. I remember that when I first heard of STATIC-X the sound was so different. I think that what made you stand out among other artists that emerged in the late 90s was that it was very straightforward and heavy. And the groove was also something you could hear right away.

Well, yeah. For me, what I saw as the main difference between us and a lot of nu-metal bands was the hip-hop influences. For many other bands that were around this was their core. For us, it wasn't even a consideration. We didn’t even think about adding that stuff. We were more into the electronic stuff that was popular at the time. Also, the soundtrack

for the movie Spawn had a big influence on us. You know, the mix between the industrial, electronic, and heavy metal. That was what made us whole.

You weren't cutting corners since hip-hop popularity exploded in the mid-'90s right after grunge was slowly fading away and metal wasn't the genre that could fill up stadiums and so on.

Yeah, hip-hop was everywhere but it just wasn't for us.

You went your path and had quite a good run until 2010-2011. Could you tell us more about what happened? What broke the band?

The band fell apart, you know, at the end of 2009. At that point, Wayne was using a lot of different drugs. That changed the dynamic between the two of us. He was changed and decided to go solo, and I decided to look for other work.

Was there beef between the two of you?

Not particularly, but we just couldn't work together since we grew apart from each other. The last tour wasn't a very pleasant experience, to put it mildly, so that was what split the band for good.

But then again you had a great run with the band till 2009...

Yeah, I mean 10+ years was a long period. We were signing contracts, making music, touring. It was great. Most bands don't last for more the 5-6 years... For me, when I think about being in a band, it's all about embracing that for what it is and enjoying it to the full. (laugh)

There was a long hiatus and 2 years ago STATIC-X returned to the spotlight. And here we are. You have a new record out "Project Regeneration Vol. 1" and you're back on track! An excellent record for all the old fans but also something that will get you new fans. The whole album feels like a love letter to Wayne Static and his persona. Was this the intention? Are you making amends with Wayne?

Thank you. The main idea behind this record was to put out Wayne's work out there. The songs that were never released. The ideas that were never fully realised. I wanted people to remember Wayne from time before the drugs as a creative individual that had a great passion for music. Unfortunately, Wayne and I never got to sort our differences. His addiction ended up costing him his life. It's a pity that he never got sober and distanced himself from the people that had bad influence on him. But the record is to show you Wayne in a different light.

Could you tell me how did you come up with the idea to dig through the archives and record some new sounds as well?

When I started going through Wayne's archives, the record was something that I wasn't thinking about in the first place. But as I discovered more, and more I realized that Wayne never got a send-off that he truly deserved. There was a show after his passing, but I didn't go there. I wasn't even invited! And from what I've heard, it wasn't that good. Wayne deserved better. Some time has passed, I went back, and I listened to some of his demos and reached the other guys. I asked them like "you guys want to finish the songs that Wayne left behind"? That's how it all started.

So, were there any ready-made songs that you could just polish and release?

Not really. The demos that Wayne left behind were only like a riff or two and programmed drums. Perhaps it's strange, but in a way, it all felt like I was almost working with Wayne again. It's exactly how he would bring ideas in the rehearsal room. He had a guitar riff or two and a drum machine program. That's kind of what we had on the tape. So, it was bare-bones, but it was how we worked back in those days. There was a lot of stuff that was damaged. That we were only able to recover vocal tracks so we had to write all music underneath from scratch. That was challenging, but because we were already in that vibe in spirit having worked in the earlier stuff it made it a little bit easier to write music felt like STATIC-X again.

The songs were from which period? The early 2000s?

No, the first demos that I found were recorded by Wayne in the last years of his life. Then there were three tracks that we recovered from the recording session for the "Start a War" album. And these were from the mid-2000s. The later demos we recovered were an enigma. We didn't know when they were recorded. But I suspect that that stuff was recorded sometime between "Shadow Zone" and "Start a War".

Ok, but did you know earlier that he had some collection of songs or song ideas?

No, these were found later. I had no idea that he had this stuff. We were looking for our old live backing tracks and this all came as a surprise. A very pleasant surprise I might add.

The new album sounds massive. Could you elaborate on how you achieved to have this sound and feel of the late '90s combined with modern production? It sounds like the regeneration of STATIC-X.

Well you know, using modern production techniques and equipment will always make the sound different from what we did 20 years ago. But we wanted to recapture the vibe, you know? The spirit, the essence of what it was like playing with Koichi, Kenny, and Wayne. This sounds a little more updated than the record from 20 years ago but we purposely wanted to recapture the vibe the spirit, the essence of the first record. Look who's producing "Project Regeneration"... It's Ulrich Wild who also helped us define our sound back in the '90s.

I noticed that and that's brilliant. Did you work remotely on the record or did it the old-fashioned way? I mean sitting in the rehearsal room and jamming together?

We did it a few times, but you know Kenny lives in Illinois. So, it was more of just training ideas back and forth. But a few times we did jam together, and the vibe came very quick like especially like older songs like from "Wisconsin..." and the "Machine".

Have you felt that Wayne has never left the room?

Yeah, sure. It all came back to us very quickly.

I never had a chance to catch you guys live. I've seen your latest performances with the new vocalist. new performances with a new vocalist, standing vocalist, for me, when the

regarding Static X for me the cannibal killers was like ultimate experience captured on the DVD but then again how do you feel when you get on the stage 20 years later with the new singer how this how do you cope with that is this catharsis, tell me about that, how do you feel on the stage right now

It's a bittersweet experience, to be honest. There was a show where I was like "fuck, we shouldn't be here and having Xer0 there". But when I saw the silhouette of the Wayne with the hair and all it made it feel a little better. More familiar.

I've seen a lot of negative comments about Xer0 impersonating Wayne on stage. For some people, it's just too much. But then again you have Ronny James Dio as a hologram touring worldwide... With you, there is flesh and blood on stage. It's like a ritual when a man takes another man's face, skin, and becomes him. It feels empowering. It can be shocking. But it's also ground-breaking...

Yes, we thought about the hologram, and that idea got shut down very quickly, You know, the thing that made STATIC-X fun for us was the energy and interaction between the four guys on stage. You just don't get that with the hologram. So, we knew it had to be somebody there. And I can understand that some people have a problem with it. I've spoken with many fans that weren't happy about it. They got very defensive of Wayne.

Today people can be oversensitive...

That's true.

I mean that many people nowadays get easily offended. Do you think it's because they care about Wayne's legacy?

Yes, sure. Listen, there are always people like that but I've spoken with a lot of fans about it and many of them were extremely happy about it. As for the other fans, they're not shit-talking. I think their opinion comes from a genuine concern and feeling that they have to defend Wayne because his music meant so much to them. And I can understand that motivation too.

I think that you're doing him justice on stage.

Me too. I think that the guys who didn't like the idea in the beginning once they figured out that our hearts are in the right place and his family has given their blessing to do that then you know we can come around.

So Tony, masks off, is Edsel Dope Xer0 or not?

[laughs] That's the rumour I've heard. And I also heard that it could be Dino (Cazares of BRUJERIA) if he had surgery or something. [laughs] But who he is remains a mystery.

I could ask him directly, but he doesn't do interviews, right?

Right.

That's a shame... Anyway. The COVID-19 19 pandemic has changed the world. How has it changed your plans?

Well, we were going to do the whole tour this year but we couldn't because of the virus. And I don't know when we will return to touring. This sucks.

So, what are you guys up to now?

The whole situation gives us more time to work on "Project Regeneration Vol. 2". We also have other projects in the works. For example, I also have some stuff to do with ASESINO.

There's a new ASESINO record coming up?

Yeah! We're working on it. I'm not going to say when it's coming out but we're working on it. [laughs] I finished vocals and bass on one song. I'm writing lyrics for the second song so...

...it's going to take a while...

[laughs] Yeah. But you know Dino moved recently and he's also a busy man so it's going to take some time until we finish it.

You seem like a busy man as well. I wanted to ask how do you feel about doing what you do. You've been rocking the stage for quite some time and yet you still have that energy when I've seen STATIC-X like twenty years ago. How do you stay so... vital?

Well, I mean I just love what I do man. I love playing music. I love playing bass. I love metal and I'm very lucky that I've gotten to play with some of my favourite bands, some of my favourite musicians. It's like a kid's dream that comes true. It's easy to stay enthusiastic when you just can be yourself and hang out with your friends. It doesn't feel like work. I would be doing this shit even if I wasn't get paid. you know [laughs]

I can't deny that. What are your ideas and thoughts on the upcoming Volume 2?

The goal is to keep it consistent. There's still a lot of recording with Wayne's vocals that we are working with. And so, the new material comes along nicely. Our main idea is to play both albums back to back and they will sound like one record.

Is there a release date for it?

No, not yet. We had to delay the first one several times and pissed out fans and I don't want to do it again [laughs] I'm not going to say when it's out. It's out when it's out.