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# Today Is The Day Hope Their Day Has Arrived; Plus Metallica, Ozzfest & More, In Metal File

**Axis of Eden 'has some pretty brain-concussion-causing moments,' frontman Steve Austin says.**

By Chris Harris and Jon Wiederhorn

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If nothing else, Today Is the Day are an excellent breeding ground for up-and-coming musicians. Mastodon guitarist Bill Kelliher and drummer Brann Dailor played on Today Is the Day's 1999 album, *In the Eyes of God* — with Kelliher on bass — and Lamb of God guitarist Mark Morton guested on 2002's *Sadness Will Prevail*. Also, former Esoteric drummer Marshall Kilpatrick rocked with the Nashville noise-metal group between 2001 and 2003.

But with Today Is the Day's upcoming album, *Axis of Eden* (scheduled for September 18), frontman Steve Austin hopes his band will finally be able to break out of the underground and spread its chaotic music and message to a larger audience.

"It seems to me like a lot of people are finding out about us through these other bands, and they're going, 'Wow, this seems like a seminal thing. I wonder what this sh--s about?' " Austin explained. "So, maybe they'll check out our new record, which, in my opinion, is the best ... thing we've ever done. And, hopefully, it will blow these people away and open a new dimension for them."

Austin, who just finished mixing *Axis of Eden*, says the new material is eclectic and intense, incorporating elements of extreme metal, psychedelia and even world music. "No song is like the last, and it's a crazy sonic journey," Austin said. "It's really hard to pin down or describe, but I love it because it's like a big, wild art project."

*Axis of Eden* will be the first Today Is the Day album since 2004's *Kiss the Pig*, and a lot has happened in those three years. The group has been through four drummers: Mike Rosswog (ex-Circle of Dead Children), who played on *Kiss the Pig*, quit because he didn't want to tour; Jeff Lohrber played in the group for eight months but left in November 2005 because of "personal and music differences with Austin"; and Graham Leduc stayed just long enough to record demos for *Axis of Eden* before taking off. However, it's the band's newest drummer, Derek Roddy (ex-Hate Eternal, Malevolent Creation), who really has Austin jazzed.

"He does some of the most extreme and inventive extreme playing I've ever heard," Austin said. "His style is his own and you can't pin him down to one genre of music. He's so super-versatile it blows my mind and allows us to do things musically we previously couldn't do. And he's so dedicated. When he first contacted me, I said, 'Do you want to hear a copy of the songs before you commit to doing it?' and he said, 'No, are you kidding me? We're doing this. I'm down. I'm not just gonna play in the studio. I love Today Is the Day and I want to make it clear that I'm in this band and doing sh-- with you.' And I was like, 'Damn, that's exactly what I need.' "

Austin started writing songs for *Axis of Eden* three years ago and began tracking late last year. By January, the album was mostly finished, and he has spent the last seven months fine-tuning the songs, which include "No Lung Baby," "Free at Last," "If You Want Peace, Prepare for War" and "IED." While Today Is the Day delved into politics on *Kiss the Pig*, the new record is an even more scathing indictment of modern society and the current administration.


"This album definitely has a military and militant feeling to it," he said. "I'm just trying to expose what's really going on right now with planet Earth. The title is obviously a play on the term 'axis of evil,' and it's a reference to the religious right in America and




Today Is The Day's Steve Austin  
Photo: Wade Gosselin

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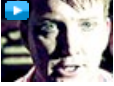
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the power and control they have over things that are going on within government."

For Austin, the jarring rhythmic changes, schizophrenic style shifts and overall intensity of *Axis of Eden* is a reflection not only of the turbulence and volatility he sees domestically and internationally, but also of the radical mood swings he undergoes on a daily basis.

"This album has some pretty brain-concussion-causing moments," he said. "It's disturbing but yet lulling at the same time, and that's because, pretty much, that's my life. It seems to run at either extreme highs or extreme lows. Even though things are good in the Austin camp, I still feel like we, as a family, are still fighting the struggle every day against 'The Man' and everything that's going on in the world. It seems like it never ends, but you've just gotta stay at the forefront and be honest and true with what you're doing and not give up the fight."

Having fulfilled Today Is the Day's contract with Relapse Records, Austin will release *Axis of Eden* on SuperNova Records, the label he launched in October. On August 7, the label will precede the new record with numerous releases: a reissue of the band's 1994 album, *Willpower*; a live DVD from the *Willpower* tour; a self-titled live DVD from a 1996 concert in New York; and an album by Austin and bassist Chris Debari's punk side project Taipan. Also that day, SuperNova will release the self-titled debut by New Jersey band Diesel Theory. Albums by SuperNova's other bands, Christine and Defcon 4, will follow, and on September 13 in Boston, the label will launch a tour featuring Today Is the Day, Taipan, Christine and Defcon 4. Dates are scheduled through October 16 in Nashville.

Even if Today Is the Day don't break into the mainstream with their new release, judging by the tour plans, Austin might have a promising future as a crafty label man. "Taipan's going to open the show and play a 25-minute punk-rock set, because we really want people to see Christine and Defcon 4," Austin said. "So, if people go, 'Hey, I gotta check out Taipan,' they'll already be there and they have to see the other two bands as well."

The rest of the week's metal news:

We all know **Metallica** have been busy working on their next album with producer **Rick Rubin** (**Red Hot Chili Peppers**, **Slayer**), but little has been revealed about the thrash icons' first collection of new songs since 2003's *St. Anger*. But at least one dude outside the band has heard some of the fresh stuff: **Velvet Revolver's Matt Sorum**. In a recent RollingStone.com interview, Sorum said his good pal **Lars Ulrich** has played him some of the new songs. "I turned and looked at him and I said, 'Master that sh-- and put it out.' It's ridiculous," Sorum said. "The demos were sick. Eight-minute songs, all these tempo changes, crazy fast. It's like, 'Dude, don't get slower when you get older, but don't get faster!?' How are you going to play this live?' I dig it. I'm really excited for them." ...

There's a whole heap of Ozzfest news to report this week. First off, **Mondo Generator**, the band fronted by former **Queens of the Stone Age** bassist **Nick Oliveri**, has dropped off the trek, citing "matters beyond the band's control." While he didn't get into specifics, Oliveri said in a statement that, "We tried everything in our power to make things work so that we could remain on tour, but it is impossible for us to continue touring at this time." He apologized for letting down the fans and thanked the Osbournes for giving the Generator a slot on the second-stage bill. Meanwhile, a broken-down bus prevented **Nile** from performing during Ozzfest's Tuesday stop in Phoenix. The band rejoined the tour Thursday in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Lastly, Warped Tour organizer Kevin Lyman has aired his feelings about the trek's free tickets, telling *The Kansas City Star*, "It allowed **Ozzy Osbourne** to get one more paycheck out of [Ozzfest], to be 100 percent honest." Lyman didn't hold back, going on to comment about tour founder Sharon Osbourne: "[She's] a smart person, but basically that's what it is. It's a ploy, straight-up. ... She was struggling to put [together a bill] because she keeps charging more and more and selling less and less tickets. The attendance of that tour has been dropping for many years, and she keeps having to spend more on the talent to get people to the shows." ...

**Slayer's Kerry King** plans to relaunch his clothing line, KFK Industries, but with a new name: KFK Ministries. He plans to release several T-shirts, stickers and skullcaps through the company. In related news, Slayer's entire catalogue will be reissued sometime in the near future, through Sony BMG's Legacy imprint. There's no word yet on when those LPs will be in stores, or what new material they might feature. ... Swedish metal merchants **Soilwork** have titled their next studio offering *Sworn to a Great Divide*. The October set, the vocals for which were produced by **Strapping Young Lad** mastermind **Devin Townsend**, will feature 11 tracks, including "Breeding Thorns," "I, Vermin" and "As the Sleeper Awakes." ... A severe neck prolapse that is causing numbing in his right arm has sidelined **Dimmu Borgir** drummer **Hellhammer**, who will miss the band's upcoming European festival appearances. Hellhammer is expected to seek treatment, which may involve surgery,



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