

THE BREAKDOWN ROOM PRESENTS:

## The Making of *TRIBE* - A Queensrÿche Campaign Exclusive

By Brian J. Heaton (Kevin, make my name a link to my web site)

20 years have passed since Queensrÿche left Seattle on its first tour. That jaunt across America, in support of the band's demo *EP*, launched a whirlwind career for the five members of Queensrÿche, a journey that shows no signs of slowing down. As the band prepared to begin the support tour for *Tribe*, Queensrÿche's eighth full-length studio album due on July 22, 2003, drummer Scott Rockenfield sat down with me to talk about the making of *Tribe*, and the band's plans for the future...

BH: Good morning Scott! Let's talk a little about the initial writing period for *Tribe*, and how the band was thinking going into making the album.

**SR: Mike, Eddie, Geoff and myself started to compile ideas for *Tribe* back in the early summer of 2002. We really began focusing on the ideas in the fall and began recording the tracks in late January early February of 2003. Once we started to really focus on the musical and lyrical direction of the record, we found that it was all starting to become a very cohesive body of work.**

BH: Reports on Queensryche.com and on your label's web site, Sanctuary Records, mentioned that the writing process began in February 2002. Additionally, at one point, Michael Wilton mentioned in the summer of 2002 that the music was done, and you were all just waiting for Geoff to lay down the vocals. Did the band run into any snags that caused the album to be delayed, or is this just the norm for the Queensryche recording process?

**SR: No, not really any snags, we just wanted to make sure we had a nice theme to the record, and that the music was complimenting the direction of the theme.**

BH: The theme of this record is fairly blunt – it speaks about all the different societies in the world, current events facing them (and us), and how when we really get down to it, how we're all the same...tribe. Not surprisingly, it has a moody and somewhat dark vibe about it. Explain a bit how the band came up with the vibe for this album.

**SR: Well, Geoff had taken a motorcycle ride last year across the United States and in his travels he kept a journal of everything. He was observing a lot about what people were going through since the [Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks] and the other**

**global events such as the war in Iraq. *Tribe* is an observation about how the world is starting to come together as tribes in many different ways.**

BH: Chris DeGarmo joined the band for parts of the recording sessions. Can you clarify exactly what happened with him in terms of how he is on the record, and how the five of you got together again? Why did he leave before the sessions were completed?

**SR: Chris co-wrote and performed on three songs (“Falling Behind,” “The Art of Life,” and “Doing Fine”). When the four of us were making moves to go into the studio, Chris contacted us and said he had heard about the direction of the record and was interested in seeing if we would like to collaborate on some material for it. We liked the idea and so he came in and we ended up being involved on those three songs and a couple of other bits here and there. After Chris recorded and performed on those, he let us know that he was definitely not interesting in touring or committing to being back in a band.**

BH: Scott, the credits for *Tribe* show that Chris was also involved with the songs “Open” and “Desert Dance.” What was his role in those selections?

**SR: Michael and I had those songs written well before Chris was involved, but Chris’ input consisted on a few tidbits that we incorporated into those tunes.**

BH: Can you give us an overall view on the album as a whole? Where does it stand for you all in comparison with your back catalogue?

**SR: All the songs on *Tribe* work in conjunction with each other. We set out to compose a dynamic record that had musical and lyrical/theme ideas that complimented each other very well. We were also able to really expand ourselves as musicians and experiment with many different soundscapes. Lots of percussion and ethnic-oriented melodies and such. We had many fun days making this record.**

BH: One of the more blatant political songs on the album is “Blood.” Is it the swipe at our political leaders I think it is?

**SR: Yeah, “Blood” is somewhat a poke at the Bush Administration. I suppose that required some pretty aggressive drumming! I guess you could say that the Bush Administration is a Hells Canyon! ed. – referring to Scott’s record with Paul Speer.**

BH: *Tribe* is indeed a very dynamic record. It gets extremely heavy, and then extremely mellow, with all points in-between. “Desert Dance,” in particular, sounds like a cross between Sevendust and The Tea Party, while the title track explores some heavier rhythm than in the past.

**SR: That song (“Desert Dance”) was a fun one to finally finish. We went through many different forms before we finally came to a conclusion. I was also able to step out of the norm with this one and really explore some different percussive elements.**

**As for “Tribe,” this song is definitely rhythm driven. Michael and I wrote this last summer and really tried to focus on this part of the sound. I feel it is very TRIBE like!**

BH: For the first time in awhile, the band has incorporated orchestration back into a song. On this record, it is “Rhythm of Hope.” How did that come about?

**SR: Well this song is a tune that I had written all of the music for at home and Geoff sang on the entire thing. I decided to give credit to Eddie because of a couple of interesting musical ideas he had for it. A friend of ours from Hollywood, Tim Truman, did the orchestration. He has had a long-standing career in film and television and once he heard the song he was very enthusiastic about being the guy to compose for it. I am extremely happy that this song is included on *Tribe*.**

BH: Queensryche has always made a statement with the songs that conclude each of its records. This time around is no different, but instead of a somber mood, it concludes with a cheery song, “Doing Fine.” I would have thought the dark and moody “The Art of Life” track, particularly with its “spoken-word” style, would have closed the record. How did you all come to the decision to close the album with “Doing Fine?”

**SR: The dynamic we wanted for the record was such that “The Art of Life” is just where it is (second to last). We wanted to wrap up the record by giving the listener the feeling that “we are all going to do fine,” and that the human spirit will prevail. Both of these songs were co-written with Chris (DeGarmo). Very nice tunes.**

BH: The album runs ten tracks long, and a time of around 43 minutes. In this day and age, that is considered pretty short for a release. Why was the record so short in terms of running time?

**SR: When we really started on putting together the record, it really became just these 10 songs. That is all we felt the body of work needed to be to fit within the theme of the record.**

BH: The production of the record is arguably the best since *Promised Land*. Coincidentally, the four of you produced this album yourselves. What made you decide to do that, and how was that process?

**SR: As we have moved through our career of making records, there are times when we just definitely know what we want to do with a particular project. This was one of those times.**

BH: The writing credits on *Tribe* are spread more equally than ever before on a Queensryche release, other than *Q2k*, where you were all credited. Was it a conscious effort to have everyone contribute almost equally? In addition, there is a lack of what many consider a “traditional” guitar solo on many of the songs. Why?

**SR: As it turned out, everyone had all sorts of input for this record. We were all on the same page, as they say. As for the part about the guitar solo, I really have a difficult time with this type of question. I mean, what the hell is a “typical solo” anyway? These are songs with mode and dynamics that’s all.**

BH: On to the tour! Mike Stone (who also co-wrote one track on *Tribe*) will be handling guitar duties along with Michael. What’s the scoop on Mike?

**SR: Mike was working with us during different times of last year, and when it came time to record the record, a song we had collaborated on with Mike seemed to fit right in with the content of the record (“Losing Myself”). His background is in many different facets of music, going from the recording studio to performer, to composer. As for his standing in the band, we consider Queensryche to be just the four of us, myself, Geoff, Michael, and Eddie. We are not ready to commit to any one person. Mike is doing a great job filling in for us, and we will wait and see what the future holds!**

BH: You guys have been at this for more than 20 years. What does the future hold after the current tour with Dream Theater?

**SR: Queensryche is doing more dates across the U.S. in a traditional headlining fashion, starting in September. Then we will work out plans for a full European tour, and possibly South America. After that, there are more records to come!**