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Interview: Guitarist Jerry Horton talks past and future of Papa Roach

[Papa Roach](#) kicked down the doors of Rock over a decade ago with their record "[Infest](#)", playing a new brand of music that mixed punk, metal and hip hop. Though back then they were grouped in under the "Nu-Metal" tag along with peers like P.O.D. and Linkin Park, over the years they've proved to be much more diverse than people initially expected. Churning out hits like "Scars", "...To Be Loved", "Lifeline" and "Kick In The Teeth", the California natives have proven that they can still keep up with mainstream rock acts without losing their edge. Their live show is always the talk of the town they just rocked, and thanks to relentless touring, they've won legions of fans all over the world.





Papa Roach live at the Oakdale Theatre

Lorraine Schwartz

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Recently I sat down with guitarist Jerry Horton to discuss the past and future of [Papa Roach](#). We covered lessons learned from their sophomore effort "[Lovehatetragedy](#)", an album which is celebrating it's 10th anniversary this year and was a humbling experience for the band after the massive success of "Infest", as well as details about what fans can expect with their next album, currently titled "The Connection", which is due out October 2nd.

After you finish reading, click [here](#) to check out my slideshow from Papa Roach's live performances last week at Oakdale Theatre and Crocodile Rock Cafe.

During the recording process for "The Connection", your bassist Tobin (Esperance) mentioned that you found inspiration from bands you saw at your hometown club Ace of Spades. Which bands stood out to you?

Thrice was a great show. We also saw Mute Math there, which was a really cool experience. I had never seen them before, just videos

of them. But they really put a lot of thought into the whole show. They're all multi-instrumental, so it's not just about "This guy plays guitar, that guy plays bass." It's whatever sound feels right for the part of the song, whether it's a keyboard or an organ or any other type of thing. It was really cool to see everybody stretching out. They were just really tight, and it was really inspiring. They have a way with nuances in the music that made us want to work harder on all that little stuff in between.

Were there any other outside musical influences for this record?

Tobin's listening to a lot of electronic music like Dubstep and stuff. There was a little bit of influence from that but we wanted to incorporate it in a way that wasn't obvious and wasn't like we were trying to say "Hey look! We're cool too cus we can do THIS." We based some of the tempos on some of the dance music. As far as that goes, it was more "What's the tempo that people can jump at?" We do have some electronics in the songs and that kinda thing. But it doesn't take over. It's stuff to add little bits here and there; it's not like we're just standing there while the electronic part just goes on.

You worked with producer/writer/musician James Michael of Sixx A.M. again. What does he bring to the table for you guys?

He helped with the lyrics. If he had a melody in mind, he would suggest different melodies for the music and that kind of stuff. He's a musician, so to have that input helped our creative process. It wasn't just "Hmm...I don't like that. You guys need to figure something else out."

Is that kind of vague feedback something you've had to work with before?

Well, not with David Bendeth, because he's an insane musician. But before that, the responses would be kinda like a head tilt and "Hm. I dunno." And then we would sort of have to figure it out on our own. Which, I guess in some ways is good. But to have James' specific feedback makes for a more positive experience.

Was there anything you set out to accomplish or avoid on this new record?

Well #1 thing was avoid Dubstep. There is one little piece. That was John Feldman. He produced most of the Used records and is the singer for Goldfinger. We went down to L.A. to write a couple more songs for the record and he was one of the guys we went to see. He's like a real high energy guy. He was all "YEAH! Let's do THIS!" At first we were a little wary of it, but it sounds cool and isn't too overdone.

How do you know you can trust the person? Is it just a gut feeling?

Totally. There was one person that we worked with in L.A., that from the first half hour I knew that it was not going to be good. We ended up having to work for that person for a few days, but I knew nothing was really going to come out of it.

As far as the visuals for the album, you're working with [Android Jones](#). His artwork is very different from the direction you've gone in the past graphic design-wise. How did this relationship

come about? Can you give us any details about what the cover might look like?

I was just looking at a website that featured artists. I think it's called "Colossal." They feature artists that use all different media. I was just flipping through it and I saw this image that really struck me. We've never really had artwork that's nice to look at.

Can you expand on that? I mean, in comparison to previous albums I guess the obvious difference is his work is more complex visually, whereas before the graphics were very simplistic.

Yeah. The last couple of records it's been really simple and sorta no brainer stuff. But we'd been putting so much thought into this record, that it just seemed that it would be a shame to not have the visual aspect be reflective of the music. We wanted wanted the musical change and the addition of electronics to be represented. But unfortunately I can't really tell you what it's gonna look like. I will say that it's not a complete departure from his style, but not as mystical.

OK so we've talked about your upcoming album, now let's talk about a past record: It's been ten years since Lovehatetragedy has been released. In retrospect, what does that album mean to the band now? Were there any experiences during the recording or promotion of that record that you still draw from now?

There were a lot of things. There were things that we learned as far as writing songs and little things that really aren't that interesting to anybody but a musician. I think that was a really crazy time in our

career. It was really experimental. We were sort of coming off of the wave of success, and I guess maybe felt we could do no wrong. It was a very self-indulgent record in that we didn't really care what anybody thought about it. WE loved the songs.

Well they're great songs that's why.

They're very, very different from the first record.

It was definitely more melodic than Infest.

But it was also very dark. It set the stage for experimenting with our style, though we had been experimenting even before that. We would do something and then we would really stretch out. Then we'd hone in on what it is we liked about that. Then reel back a little bit, and then on the next one, really stretch out. It's sort of... I don't want to use the word 'organic' because that word was really overused.

"Fearless" maybe?

Yeah. That's sorta how we really approach most records. I mean, we know what we are, and we know what we are to people.

What do you think you are to people?

Not anything in the philosophical sense, just that we know the things that make us "us", as far as the music part of it is concerned. It really has to come from us to sound like "us." I mean, we've had experiences over the last 3 or 4 years where we've had outside writers come in and present songs to us. They'd be cool songs, but not "us." So we've just learned over the years that we have to trust ourselves and be confident in what we do. We've learned,

especially from Lovehatetragedy years, that we're gonna lose some fans and we're gonna gain some fans. We've had a few drop off that were really attached to the first record and that's OK. But we're on a journey and we're staying true to ourselves. We're taking outside influences, but not so much that we're turning into something else.

In regards to your live show, the new trend is to play a whole album's worth of stuff. Have you guys thought of doing something like that?

I'd like to do that. People have their favorite songs and they're not all on one record, so you're going to disappoint some people. But I think that would be cool. It would just be a matter of picking the right record.

Your concerts are so tight and you definitely have your live show on lock. Do you ever think about really changing it up and doing an epically long set or adding an acoustic break in the middle as a breather?

Well. There are a lot of factors that go into making a set. An acoustic break would be cool, but it's not necessarily a breather for Jacoby, since he'd have to sing more and has to sing harder.

That's true. Jacoby really is one of the hardest working frontmen you'll see. Vocally and physically.

Yeah, with everything. That's the thing. When we're doing a full headlining set, we'll probably throw some new songs in there. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that we kinda get tired of some of the songs. So we just wait until we have some new songs

and just replace songs with those. I know people wanna hear the old stuff, but we almost need to change the old stuff to make it exciting for us.

To bring up the Lovehatetragedy era again, I remember that you had various set lists night to night. Some bands I've seen don't even use a setlist. I don't know if that means they're crazy?

Well no. I think after that Lovehatetragedy tour, we'd learned that having minimal amount of space between songs is the best because we don't want to let that energy really lull down. We've seen bands where they'll take a little break, have a little bit of water and come back like "*sigh* OK let's go!" It's a really short amount of time, but it feels like forever. That has some bearing on how long the setlist is. If we did leave spaces, it probably would be an hour and a half. We'll have transitions that go between every song and we have a pace that we keep. I do think maybe we should work on finding a part of the set where we can slow down, but it's just hard.

Papa Roach will be on tour with the Rockstar Energy Drink Uproar Festival this Summer, hitting PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel, NJ on August 24th. For more info, check the festival's official [site](#).