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Interview with Gary Holt of Slayer/Exodus

[Slayer](#) and [Exodus](#) are two legendary thrash bands who have survived over 30 years in music, basically influencing every heavy band that came after them. Anyone would be lucky to be part of either band's history for any reason. But in the case of guitarist Gary Holt, he has the rare ability to say he plays a big part in the story of both bands.

Andrew Stuart

Holt began his journey into the upper echelon of Thrash with Exodus, when he replaced guitarist Kirk Hammett in 1983 after Hammett left to join Metallica. His life as a member of Slayer began when their guitarist, Jeff Hanneman, needed to take time off in 2011 to have surgery on his right arm after being diagnosed with Necrotizing Soft Tissue Fasciitis (possibly caused by a spider bite). Holt, a dear friend since the early days of both bands' careers, was asked to fill in on tour until Hanneman's tragic passing in May of 2013. Wanting to push on as they believed their beloved bandmate would want them to, Slayer kept Holt on. He remains a part of the band, playing on their latest release, "Repentless" (in stores now),

and will continue to tour with them.

I spoke with Gary about how times have changed since he first started out, from how both bands have evolved personally, to how social media affects a band's image, to who is doing a good job carrying the Thrash torch. And, how it's now ok for him to admit his admiration for a few guitarists who wore just a bit more hairspray and eyeliner than he and his friends did back in the day.

Lorraine Schwartz: You have a very strong history with Slayer prior to joining. I was wondering how you feel they've evolved either musically or personally? Obviously people have grown one way or another. But do you feel overall, the guys have stayed the same?

Gary Holt: Yeah I think so. You know we toured together, played clubs together. There's 3+ decades history together as friends. We just always had a good time. I especially hung out with Jeff a lot. We probably all drank a lot you know, and hung out with everybody. We've been long, fast friends since the first day we met and Exodus destroyed their hotel room! And you know we're still friends today. Now the only difference is I play alongside these guys.

LS: Over the years I'm sure there have been misconceptions about Exodus and Slayer over the years. Has social media helped break down those myths by giving the fans more access into a band's world?

GH: I think it can go both ways. I think social media can also actually create a lot of misconceptions, because it gives a voice to

everybody. However, sometimes those voices belong to keyboard warriors. But I mean, misconceptions about the band...I don't know. We don't sit around drinking blood! The bus is a quiet place. Exodus's bus is much louder! I can't get my own group of guys to shut up!

LS: Given their reputation as being one of the loudest bands ever, it is kind of amusing that anyone in Exodus demands peace and quiet at any time!

GH: Yeah, especially when we're doing tours where I'm doing double duty and playing twice a night. I have to put on earplugs to trying get some sleep! It's a lot of loud guys all in one place.

LS: Speaking of touring, I know you were on bills quite a bit with newer bands, as you were last year with Mayhem. Is there anyone out there that you feel is successfully carrying on the Exodus/Slayer tradition in 2016?

GH: Well unfortunately with a tour like Mayhem, by the time we get in to the city, it's usually like five in the morning. Then we go to the hotel and sleep. So by the time we get to the show, we don't really get to see much and then the stages are far apart. But like Shattered Sun was on the tour. They just toured with Exodus and Testament and they're super awesome. Also Jungle Rot. I listened if I could hear, but sometimes we were a couple miles away because everything is so spread out. But there was some impressive metal going on.

LS: On the topic of admiring other bands, in a recent interview I saw you admit to being a fan of RATT. When I spoke with Tim of Clutch, he also [admitted](#) to liking their earlier stuff. What is it about that band in particular that fans of heavier stuff were attracted to as opposed to the other bands that came out of that LA glam scene?

GH: The talent! Warren DeMartini is one of the best guitar players on Earth, with some of the best riffs. His solos are incredible. So I mean, I think that's where it starts. A guy like me, who was raised since the birth of thrash metal and hair bands were like our common mutual enemies, we all secretly coveted all of George Lynch and Warren's licks! They're both phenomenal guitar players. And the bands are great because they had those guys writing such awesome stuff and they had the chops to play it. And you know, the guitar tone...everything like that was just killer. It was some super good stuff that I didn't appreciate till later in life. I always appreciated the soloing aspect. But you know, now, you listen to the opening riff of "[Lay It Down](#)", and it's just brilliant.

LS: So back to the present, the video for "Repentless" is super intense. Lots of blood, and gore, and violence. Do you have any favorite scene in the video? Or any good stories from the set?

GH: Well you know I showed up just for the day that we did the performance. So for the other parts, I wasn't there, I just saw the final stuff. But it was cool. At some point Danny Trejo comes walking in, while taking a break from shooting, and I had no idea

why he was there. I thought he just walked in, so I went all total fanboy. It was only then that someone told me, "Oh yeah, he was here yesterday shooting." I was like "Alright! No one even told me!" But it was totally cool. My favorite scene is probably when Danny Trejo is gouging the guy's eyes out!

LS: For me, any of the scenes involving the heart had me covering my eyes!

GH: *laughs* Job well done then!

You can catch Slayer on March 2nd at the Capitol Theatre with special guests Testament and Carcass. For more information on future tour dates, check out Slayer.net.

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