



RISE AGAINST

*Interview by: Josh Pierson
Photos: Alan Ralph*

There are few punk bands out there nowadays that play punk rock the way it was originally intended to speak out and be heard, whether it be political or just supporting an idea to better serve the "people." Rise Against hasn't had many hurdles in its 10 year existence, unless you call finding a new label that will support you and pay you even better than the last label a hurdle. They were signed in 2001 to Fat Wreck Chords, and then quickly jumped into stardom and signed to their first major - Dreamworks, shortly after leaving to sign with an even bigger major - Interscope.

Sitting down with the newest member of the band, guitarist Zach Blair really shed some light on the kind of band that Rise Against is and always has been. They are a band that grew up idolizing bands like Bad Religion, X, The Germs, and many others; bands that were and still are a staple of the Punk Rock world, just putting their opinions and concerns out there for the world to hear, and possibly gain awareness. Rise Against has been able to gain fans in all genres due to the originality of their music, and being able to keep fans interested.

Growing up in one of the havens for new metal, the Northeast, it was tough for me to grab a hold of the ideals of the punk rock world, and the sound as well. But the second I heard Rise Against for the first time I was hooked because their lyrics grabbed me and made me want to keep listening. And after really looking into them, I realized that this band was much more than just your average punk rock band, but a band that stands for their beliefs and hopefully someday be heard on causes. As well as just plain rock your world.

As I was sitting there talking with Zach in the heat of the summer - July 7th, 2009, I realized that I really was talking to a very sincere, and smart, punk rocker:

Besides the Whaleman Foundation, what other current organizations are you supporting?

Iraq veterans against the war, U.S. Veterans that have been to Iraq and seen it. They have great stories to tell, some with lost limbs, and just veterans that have suffered through the war.

How's the Rancid Tour going so far?

So good; we owe so much to Rancid. They made punk rock viable and respected, which was a blessing and a curse, and made punk rock mainstream. And now with an influx of new punk rock bands, it keeps you on your toes.

You've been on three different labels in the last nine years. Why, and which has been the best?

We've been fortunate that all the labels have genuinely given a shit about the band. We've worked with a lot of really fantastic people. I personally have worked with Fat Wreck Chords for fifteen years, and when Rise Against came out, they were the right label for the right time.

Do you ever look at unsigned bands and try to help them out in their endeavors?

I'm from Austin, TX and there's a great core of bands from there, so I'm very fortunate, and we actually brought out my friends, the River Boat Gamblers, on the first half of the tour.

If you could tour with anyone in the world, who would it be?

Collectively I would have to say Bad Religion.

Who are some of your main influences?

We're all in our 30's, so we learned punk rock from bands like X and The Germs, who weren't fast and weren't attached to any style or look in punk rock. We're influenced by the whole realm though.

Your lyrics seem genuinely positive. Is that a conscious effort when writing the new albums?

Yes and no. We're all so happy to be in this band. It's the greatest thing in the world. Shit is good, you know what I mean? But there's extreme responsibility; we try to talk about issues in the world, and not to judge people.

For people that have never seen your live show, what would you say to them to drive them to go see you guys?

That you're not just going to see four guys playing. We really want you to go away with something. We have booths setup in the halls at the venues, we have people from P.E.T.A. handing out pamphlets. We want you to be entertained, and hopefully get people to speak up, and think about things.

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