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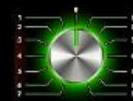
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## **INTERVIEW WITH SYSTEM OF A DOWN BEFORE THEIR SUPPORT SLOT AT BLACK SABBATH'S FINAL GIG AT BIRMINGHAM NEC, 22ND DECEMBER 1999 - FULL MOON. PRESENT SERGE (VOCALS), DARREN (GUITAR) AND JOHN (DRUMS)**



**So how come no new material for so long?**

S- For so long???...it's because we haven't been given any time to write it, we've just been touring non-stop forever, it's good though we're just refining everything

D- We do have some new stuff, we did Chicken Soup last night (Astoria gig). We have some more songs they're just not ready yet

J- We're not prepared to compromise ourselves, when we're happy that it's perfect we'll release it, hopefully there'll be a new

album late summer but we're hardly off, not even for Xmas we're straight back out next year with Incubus, Puya and Mr Bungle, that's gonna be so weird having Mike Patten open for us, I'm a massive Faith No More fan, the last album's brilliant, my favourite so I'm really excited about the whole thing

S- We weren't even off before we came here, just before we left, we were doing a video for our NEW single, Spiders

We loved Suggestions in the club

D- Yeah we really like that, we'll probably release another single off that album so maybe it'll be that one

So Rick Rubin's going to produce the new album?

D- Yeah because he's the head of our label and he did a great job of the last one, so he may as well do this, right?

S- There's a number of reasons we chose him again and we all admire everything he's worked on ever

D- Yeah Slayer

J- RHCP's last album, I think that's something special, he's just a cool guy who brings out the best in people

Why did you pick Snowblind to cover, obviously last summer you did the Ozzfest across the states, are you big Sabbath fans?

S- Yeah we are very honoured to be playing with them, Snowblind was the obvious choice for us, it's a fantastic song and I think we've done it in our style

D- We do other covers y'know, Berlin and I don't think most people even realise it is and I think that's

how it should be

D- Did you know we used to be in a band called Snowblind, me and Serge, years ago, we've been together six or seven years in total now

S- Oh (groans) is it that long? I was the keyboard player, my first instrument!

D- He used to be the keyboard player and I was the singer, that's how we met, then we were in a band called Soil for a while then we became System

J- I was the late comer but maybe on the next album we'll all switch again and I can be the singer!!!  
(laughs)

Have any of you had real jobs in your life?

S- I had a software company, very respectable

J- I sold comic books, it was something I loved, it's like drumming it was my hobby and I loved it so much I took it to the next level

D- I never managed to keep a job for more than a couple of months, I delivered little trampolines to kids parties for a while that was fun, real dead end stuff, in-between I'd just cop out and live off my mom

How old are you ?

D- I'm 26, Serge is 32 and John's 27

How come you came on to Carmine Burana last night instead of your usual intro?

S- (laughing) Ah you noticed, it was kind of a joke, it's what Ozzy used to come on to when he was a solo artist, we lost our intro. tape and so it was kind of a tribute to use that, we're a bit worried to use it tonight (at Sabbath's final gig) in case he thinks we're trying to upstage him or something but it's meant very respectfully and it's an awesome piece of music

You make a lot of your Armenian heritage were any of you born there?

S- No we were all born in America except for Darren and he came here a long time ago, we are all very aware of our roots though but we've also seen the American system's cultural side so I guess we can see both ways y'know, that makes us the way we are

Do you think the majority of fans, some of whom are very young, see the political subtext?

S- I think it's a two way street, if you lay out a lavish meal on a huge table, different people will choose to pick up different food, some will pick meat, some salad, some fish, and that's what I think our fans do, they'll all see different parts of it, so yes I think some will, some won't or at least not immediately but it's all there on the table. We strive to create a balance though, we want it to be fun but we also want it to have meaning

D- It's a big part of it us wanting it to be fun, the system wants you to lay down and be quiet, we want you to jump around, feel like anything's possible and have a great time at our live shows, if you're in the middle of a crowd watching a band you don't feel part of the system you're free and if people recognise that then that's what we're about. We're really all quite quiet in real life, sitting here now talking to you, I'd feel so uncomfortable stripping naked and running around but in front of a bunch of people, I feel the energy and just do whatever I want to do, throw myself into the crowd invite the kids on-stage too, anything! When I was younger I'd have been so happy to have seen like, Iron Maiden and if they'd said "who knows the words to Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner? come up and sing it with us" I would have been like "Fuck yeah" and straight up there. It's not about us and them, it's just about having fun and I think those kids on stage last night felt the unity, they all felt involved. It's just about levels, when I shout "who likes to smoke hash?" that's all some of them will remember but in the same way, some will remember Serge's political comments and pick up on that

S- Live it's just like a wave of energy and we all just get caught in it and allow ourselves to be thrown around by it, there's a very spiritual side to SOAD which I feel is more accessible live but I try and concentrate on achieving a balance between the serious side and the fun side, it's a very powerful midpoint where the two intertwine and I put all my effort into reaching it

You got your shoe back then, Darren?

S- What?

D- Last night I jumped into the crowd at the end and they stole my shoe, so I climbed back on stage and appealed for it because I've only got one pair with me, seriously, and some kind hearted fan threw it back John were you trying to jump over the balcony?

J- Err yeah but my manager stopped me physically, I was talked down

D- Man no one knew you were up there, they were all looking at the stage, that would have been bad if they hadn't caught you

J- That's what I mean though, it's just the energy thing, it's not contrived, like during the third song I'll jump off the balcony, we just do whatever feels right, we do all kinds of shit, just go with the flow.

What's the worse thing that ever happened to you on tour?

D- Having our equipment stolen, all my guitars, I'd had them for years and some of them were presents so it was like a sentimental thing

S- And loads of special stuff that we couldn't replace yeah that really sucked

D- Also this year hearing about the death of our friend Lynne Strait (Snot) while we were out touring ourselves. We'd played with them loads and going out on stage that night thinking about it and how I was never going to play alongside him again

Hopes for 2000?

D- I hope everyone wakes up and realises what they're doing to the world but I find that extremely unlikely, open your eyes and stop ripping down trees and destroying stuff

J- I'll go along with that, make sure you're not too busy talking to be listening

S- We should make sure we're not feeding our children at the expense of the extinction of our grandchildren