

Q&A

Eric Kretz of **Stone Temple Pilots** discusses the band's return after a seven-year hiatus, the importance of Twitter over MTV, and making one of modern rock's most anticipated albums.

Early reviews have been positive for the new album, *Stone Temple Pilots*, with one critic calling it the "record of the decade... and the masterpiece that solidifies your place among Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, and Rolling Stones." This is easily one of the most anticipated albums of the past five years. Were there any pressures put on the band during its recording?

There were pressures within the band that we put upon ourselves but there were no external pressures. It helped to have a good relationship with our label. They just let us do our thing. Other companies are very involved in the recording process and stand over your shoulders saying "We need a hit, we need a hit, we need a hit." As far as this album goes, we didn't send the label anything for nine months. We're sure they were freaking out wondering what was taking us so long.

You self-produced this album, rather than use Brendan O'Brien [producer of the band's last five studio albums]. Why?

[Brendan] was fantastic, but all of us had collected so much information about music over the years we wanted to record our stuff in our own studios. We took it upon ourselves to produce the album, which was hard. One of the biggest jobs a producer does is referee any sort of creative disputes that may arise on a song. We had to refrain from getting carried away and trying too many things with a song.

Most of the album was created separately from singer Scott Weiland. Was this hard on the writing process?

We spent about a month writing the songs when Scott was on tour for his solo record, "Happy" in *Galoshes*. When he came back we gave him songs with melody and lyric ideas. From there we performed the tracks live to make sure we had the right keys and tempos, if the songs were aggressive enough, how fast the tempo should

Photo courtesy of Chapman Baehler.



Stone Temple Pilots, from left, Robert DeLeo, Scott Weiland, Dean DeLeo, and Eric Kretz.

be...all those technical things we had to work on. It wasn't any different from other albums because over the years Scott would ask us to leave while he did his vocals. I know that when I'm recording my drums I really don't want 20 people standing around telling me to try this or put this here. It comes to a certain point where you are concentrating and it can get annoying. He was just very comfortable working on his own.

Each STP album has its own distinct sound and style, what would you consider *Stone Temple Pilots*'s?

Americana comes to mind. It's melodic with a bit of a southern-ish kind of swampy feel. Lyrically, it goes back to a Bob Dylan-type of storytelling. It's almost optimistic – at least that's what I get out of it. It gives me the image of what I got from some early Aerosmith records. It's just a great presentation of American rock.

In the past ten or so years a lot of critics were quick to write you off as a relic of the '90s. Are there any cathartic feelings here?

We learned early on not to listen to the critics. Our debut album [1992's *Core*] was our most successful album but it was punished by the critics and loved by the fans. It set the tone for a bad relationship with the rock critics of the world. By the time we did *Tiny Music*... in 1996 we started getting some accolades. It's very difficult for a new band to get signed to a major label but it is even harder for that band to be successful on that label and try to survive 18 years later and still have successes. We are really beating the odds here and hopefully the critics can latch on to that.

Has the band's dynamic changed over the past two decades?

We are a bit more mature now. We all have families. Some of the craziness that would go on backstage has calmed down quite a bit but

what we do onstage is still the same. We have a passion for what we do, and we want to energize every show and make them as great as they can be. I still get nerves before every performance but we go out there and tear it up and show the world what this band is made of.

Is the band finding itself in a different music industry since the release of your last album [2001's *Shangri-La Dee Da*]?

Not really. I'd say things are different for newer bands. When we were first signed in 1992, there were not a lot of indie labels. It was more major labels and they were so great at promoting new music and getting these bands on radio and MTV – which at that time was a huge vehicle for promoting new music. Now it is pretty much all through the internet. No one is going to spend the money to promote an artist like they did then. To break into the music industry in the '90s you had to be a really good live band and tour extensively. Today, you have to be up on your computer knowledge and know how to properly network. There is no formula or restraints on what can make it into the mainstream.

Why a self-titled album almost two decades into your career?

I think it is kind of self-explanatory. We have been through so much and we have been doing this for so long. Plus the seven year hiatus and the pitfalls of drug addictions, arrests, and canceling tours...it's saying here's where we're at right now. It's trying to simplify things as much as we can. Scott said the other day, "It is because we earned this."

-Mark Toriski

Stone Temple Pilots is on sale May 25. For more information on the band including upcoming tour dates, visit www.stonetemplepilots.com. Log onto www.gllmagazine.com to read more of this interview, as well as a review of *Stone Temple Pilots*.