

# TIGERTAILZ

## Tigertailz Interview with AOR legend and glam gongist Matt Blakout



1) When you appeared from out of nowhere on the Tigertailz drum stool in 2005 - like some kind of glam ninja - many of the band's fans would have been unfamiliar with you, but you have been in the 'Tailz circle for many years....

Yes, very true. I've been aware of who the members are and I've known them individually for many years. I first met Jay back in around 92/93 at Metro's in Newport and soon after became friends with the legendary Steve C Bright, who was then in City Kidds. Many years after that I was playing in City Kidds so obviously got to know the rest of the band and we played football on a Sunday - except for Kim who I've not seen do anything too physical. I then lived with Mikey who now manages Tigertailz and makes all my dreams come true.

2) Your recruitment seemed to give the band a real kickstart.

I can't take the credit for that I'm afraid, as I don't know what was going on in the band before I joined. I think with me they felt like a unit and, not to be detrimental to previous drummers, everything just locked together and it felt very equal - that is, I felt an equal part. I brought something to the band and that's what makes a band, the sum of it's parts.

3) You appear to be very fan-friendly with frequent message board posts and updates making you a virtual stepping stone between band and fan. How important do you view this?

Very important to the point where it can't be understated. A band is indeed the figurehead of all the thousands that stand behind it. Without the people behind it, it becomes nothing. When we did the recent dates with Ace Frehley, I always felt it was important to include myself in the mix. I'll speak to anybody and I always like to hear feedback, which is mostly very positive about the band. I've spoken to some fantastic people who are as passionate about Tigertailz as I am myself and that is very important. It always amazes me how some people are switched on and you've got to give people their credit.

4) It must be pleasing for all concerned that the band now appear to be on good terms with former drummer Ace Finchum?

You mean Ace Pistolero? Ace is a good guy. I think with the passing of Pepsi and Ace being at the funeral, there were a lot of bridges mended and people had the opportunity to break the long silence. I know that Ace means no harm to anyone. Unfortunately, the circles he's moved in have meant it wasn't possible to be open and to be an active friend of Ace's - not anything to do with our side of things, but the pressure that Ace was under. We'll be meeting up with Ace at the Hard Rock Hell festival so it'll be a pleasure to see him again and good luck to him with his new band.

5) Given the animosity that once existed between two versions of Tigertailz and two sets of fans, it must have been both comforting and satisfying to see everyone, even the worst

offenders, coming together to pay tribute to Pepsi?

Definitely. I think that when someone who is close to you dies it puts everything into perspective. You are not on the planet long so you should make your time here as pleasurable as possible. Ace Frehley said it best the other day when he told everyone to look after each other - and that includes our little friends.

6) All 'Tailz fans have their own personal Pepsi memories and stories. Tell us, as both a friend and a bandmate, one story that completely sums up The Boy.

I can't give you any definitive answer here. The Boy was the most creative person I ever met. Talented is a word which has been diluted because it's been used too often but, talent is what the Boy was full of. He always had bags of confidence and, like myself, was never a 'down' person. When we were alone, we would have our deep chats about life, relationships and all sorts of complicated, no answer subjects. He often said he and I were very alike and I believed that also. You know how big Robbin Crosby from Ratt used to appear? Larger than life? Well, the Boy was always like that to me. Jay described him as Glam Rock Royalty which just about sums him up. He will always remain the bass player in Tigertailz. He never left.

7) You must be pleased at how well the hardcore fans have taken to Glenn 'Nailz' Quinn, another long-term friend of the band who has proved to be invaluable amid difficult circumstances?

Indeed. Nailz goes back a long way with everyone in this band, though he didn't always look as he does now. You know, I can remember playing football with him and he actually broke his wrist - I think when he was in goal! He's just the loveliest guy you could ever meet and so, so talented. His guitar abilities are fantastic, let alone his bass and he's written some fantastic songs in the past. Yes indeed, we're very lucky to know Glen Nailz. I broke down in my van once and he had an AA card, but somehow I had it, so I had to pretend to be him when the police showed up.

8) Vocalist Suzi Chunk has been something of a revelation since working on the 'Thrill Pistol' album. How did she become involved and will she continue to shake the foundations at future Tigertailz gigs?

Suzi's more rock 'n' roll than any of us! I think the theory behind Suzi on stage is just to add that 'live dynamic' to the vocals, nothing more than that. Simply something we wanted to try and it's good, so why change that? You know how bands and fads change and perceptions change to things, so we'll just have to see what the future holds for us and Miss Chunk.

9) I can't believe we have gone this far without really mentioning your support slots at the Ace Frehley UK shows! For a lifelong Kiss fan this must have been incredible?

Supporting Ace Friggin' Frehley? Certainly! You know, I told him that I grew up with him, even though he never knew. It's about as good as it can get in someone's career to be close to the heroes that motivated them to listen to music in the first place. He's a guy you can't help but love. Watching his Astoria show was just a very magical moment, magical magical. I was there, in the VIP section, watching Ace Frehley for the second time and loving every minute of it. It's the stuff of dreams. I think maybe the only thing that could top it is playing with Kiss themselves - oh yes, we're doing that, aren't we!!!

10) A very subtle segue there, sir! Tigertailz are confirmed for the Kobetasonik Festival in

Bilbao this coming June with Kiss!

Friggin' dreams do come true after all, but sorry - there isn't a Santa. Also Saxon on the bill, don't forget.

11) Since joining Tigertailz you have been lucky enough to have played some huge shows with some true rock legends - what have been the highlights?

When I joined Tigertailz, Pepsi asked me what I expected and wanted to achieve. I told him straight that all I wanted to do was to play some good shows. Never in my wildest dreams would I ever have thought I would end up sharing hotels and stages with my heroes and people I love and respect. Talking to Nikki Sixx and dealing with John Sykes, Matt Sorum, Slash, my good friend Marco Mendoza - meeting Twisted Sister, Whitesnake, Ace Frehley, I could just go on and on. Honestly, every day is a highlight. Godz of Metal in Italy must be the highlight as far as gigs go. Playing two feet away from Tommy Lee's kit and playing with them and Velvet Revolver, well, it's serious stuff. If it all ended today then I would have surpassed my dreams certainly - but the rollercoaster just doesn't end. It's like drinking a fantastic Californian Zinfandel and the bottle never gets empty!

12) Although the Ace Frehley shows and the confirmation of various gigs for the remainder of 2008 have gotten Tigertailz fans giddy, there was a deliberate period of apparent inactivity following the Y&T tour. In reality, a number of projects were being worked on. Is there anything you can tell us and, yes, I am digging for an exclusive!!

There's always stuff going on. We're heavily involved in supporting cancer research due to the circumstances with the Boy, so we will hopefully have a product that will raise money and awareness for the cause. I think, as we all get older, it affects more and more of us as we all seem to know someone who's had cancer. My father also died of cancer so we're fully behind supporting these people. Hopefully, we'll have some news soon but it's still a project in motion at the moment

13) Having your name on a drumstick. That's pretty much the top of the mountain for a drummer, right?

Ha! Yes, I think I've peaked! What can you say about that! It took me a whole week to write my name on them all!!! I've put one in a box right next to my Tommy Lee and Fred Coury drumstick collection!!!

14) For all technically obsessed fans who have never had a girlfriend, what kind of set up are you currently using?

(Laughs) They just keep on coming, don't they?! Excellent question for any drummer.....

I use Premier Black Shadow with twin 24" bass drums for the Tailz live situation. Though I used a Tama Rockstar DX Kit for the Thrill Pistol Album, again with a 24" bass drum. I've recently been fortunate enough to be endorsed by Paiste UK and I'm looking at endorsing a drum manufacturer within the next couple of months. Oh, and I use DW pedals.

15) I didn't see a gong get mentioned there. That can't be right because I know how you champion the use of the shiny talisman of rock drummers. Just how important is a good gong in a drummer's arsenal?

Gongs are very, very important. In fact, you cannot understate the presence of a gong. When I go to a show, first thing I look for is the presence of a gong behind the drum kit and what

size it is. Obviously, having a gong there is the first thing, but then if it's a big gong I consider the show to be a full on event. If no gong, then it's just another gig for me. The gong I use actually belonged to a very, very famous drummer who always said that the importance and presence of the gong at a rockshow could not be overstated.

16) Who, in your opinion, is a Gong God and which modern artiste is carrying the torch for gongists worldwide?

I only see Matt Sorum with a gong these days. I don't think Eric Singer uses one, but I do know that Alex Van Halen still relies heavily on the gong in his arsenal. So it would have to be Alex.

17) We can't continue with all this drum chatter without giving a shout out to the oft-ridiculed yet hauntingly seductive cowbell.

Oh, don't start me on cowbells.....

18) On a serious note, if I am looking to buy a live album - whether it be Judas Priest - 'Unleashed In The East' or Thor - 'Live In Detroit' - the first thing I look for is not the price, not the tracklisting, not the cover art, but if there is a drum solo. It is a cross I have to bear. What would you say is the greatest drum solo ever?

I'm actually not a fan of the drum solo, would you believe? If I go to a show and see a solo, it's a big turn off. I'm sure people would rather hear two more songs. I think for me it would have to be the Peter Criss solo from Kiss Alive 2. It's short, for one, and it's just got so much vibe going on and fits perfectly with the song. Drum solos are basically so the band can catch their breath for a couple of minutes. Tommy Lee has probably topped the 'solo spot' performance though, hasn't he?

19) Due to the fact that we are brothers from a different mother, I have been lucky enough to hear some of the unreleased tracks from the Tigertailz vault, including some unused Pepsi Tate penned material. Will any of these songs ever see the light of day?

Yes, there's some really great stuff that Pepsi did. I prefer a lot of his demos to the stuff that actually gets released sometimes. We'll have to see if we get a chance to record some of it. There's always so much stuff. We could probably do three albums worth of just the Boy's songs. There are a couple I certainly think we should record and we speak about this all the time. There's always a lot of stuff that gets forgotten and Kim and Jay are always writing new material. It becomes difficult to fit it all in.

20) Sharing stages with Kiss, Whitesnake, Dio, Europe, Saxon, Thin Lizzy - a horrible time is morphing into something special. Triumph through adversity?

You forget Journey in that! Velvet Revolver, Motley Crue, Scorpions, Twisted Sister, Alice Cooper.....

Every day I'm thankful and I don't mean like Peter Criss thankful. I'm happy to be here. I've more than fulfilled my dreams and I've done that because I'm part of a fantastic team that includes Mikey, our manager. We've been very, very fortunate to have shared stages with my heroes. As you say, the dream just keeps on getting better. We toured with Ace Frehley, did a fantastic show at the Astoria in London and now we'll play with Kiss in Spain and special guests to Whitesnake and Europe in Italy this summer. When I joined, Pepsi asked me what I

hoped to achieve from the band and I'll thank him everyday for helping me achieve those things. It's wonderful to be thankful for the things you've achieved and to be happy for the things that people around you achieve. But we couldn't do any of it without all those people standing behind us, willing us on.

***Matt Blakout was speaking to Gaz E aka Rudy St Randy***