



**Hailing from Jefferson City, Missouri, Shaman's Harvest saw their independent single, 'Dragonfly', sell over 150,000 copies, spurring album sales into the tens of thousands as the Youtube video attracted over 2 million views. Their music has been in TV and films and now the band have signed up with Mascot for the release of their excellent album, 'Smokin' Hearts & Broken Guns'. James Gaden talked to vocalist Nathan Hunt.**

**All your previous records were on the label Tribal, which was your own independent label, wasn't it?**

Yeah, that was just our way to bullshit our way through. Our song 'Dragonfly' is what made things take off, it was a kinda grass roots thing, a lot of people from the industry didn't like the song... or us! But people just kept calling into radio stations and it took off from there.

**It was featured in the film 'Legendary', which was a WWE Films release starring WWE Superstar John Cena and Danny Glover. Was 'Dragonfly' a hit before the film, or was it the film that pushed it?**

The film definitely gave it longevity. It was already out there beforehand and had actually started to fizzle out, but once it was used in the movie, it gave it another couple of weeks in the Billboard charts.

**How did it end up in the film – did you pitch it, or did the studio come to you?**

We had done a couple of songs for WWE wrestlers beforehand, providing music for Drew McIntyre and Wade Barrett. Jim Johnson is the music director over there and he also writes the film scores for the movies WWE Films put out. He called and wanted to know if he could use 'Dragonfly'. Err, yeah! (laughs) We had just been recording songs he had written for the wrestlers, so for him to want one of ours was a pretty cool moment. We all grew up watching wrestling. Way back in the 80s, I was a Hulkamania, loved the Ultimate Warrior, the Bushwackers, those were my guys. So to be able to contribute music to it now is cool.

**So with that exposure, is that why you are signing with Mascot as oppose to continuing to do it yourselves?**

We had struggled to maintain our independence for a long time. We worked really hard and there's a level that you just can't reach, I don't care what you do or how hard you work, there's a level you can't get to

without some connections. What I like about Mascot is they have got some legitimate artists – they've got a lot of great Blues players, but they also have Black Label Society, who are all a bunch of bad asses! To be in with a company like that is just a bonus and I don't feel like we're selling out or any of that shit. Also, they're willing to push Europe, which was really hard for us to get into on our own.

**I always have the impression that they aren't a label who interferes in the creative process either.**

Yeah, they let us be, man, they let us do our thing. That's rare in this day in age, they aren't looking over your shoulder, micro managing, a lot of labels want to do that. Some of them want somebody in the studio, giving the okay to everything you record. It's a pain in the ass!

**I was sent 'Country As Fuck' as a taster to see if Shaman's Harvest might be my thing – I absolutely loved it!**

(Laughs) I can't believe that's the one you were sent! (laughs) It started out as a kind of a joke, talking about people from where we live in Missouri. We're all a bunch of southern country boys, so we figured we should write about what we actually know about for once!

**I loved 'Dirty Diana' too. It's always difficult doing something by someone as revered as Michael Jackson, but I thought it sounded great in a Rock format.**

I think he intended it to have been in that format, I think he did his best to make it that way without cranking it up. We initially started that before he died. It's a song we all listen to on the road – we all have our playlists and that's on everybody's. We thought why the hell not? The things some people have done to Michael Jackson songs, we thought we'd give it a shot and if it doesn't make the record, it doesn't make the record. But it has kind of a swampy sass to it. It's one of the few songs on the record which just happened, there's some live stuff on there, it was all done relaxed because

if we didn't like it, we wouldn't use it. Being relaxed often helps songs turn out the best.

**You had quite a shock before the album started, because you got cancer.**

Yeah – I came down with malignant throat cancer while we were doing the record. I had one tumour removed from my lymph node and the rest had to be taken out with radiation, jumping back and forth between studio and treatment. That was a pretty tough deal. Really, it was just getting in the way of making the record, it was a real pain in the ass!

**Getting cancer is bad enough, for a singer to have got it in his throat of all places... that must have really hit hard.**

Yeah, it was the worst place for me, but you know, all I did was not focus on that, focus on what I was working on. The hardest part was not being physically able to do my job. My mentality was there, but after treatment, some of those takes, it might be the 50<sup>th</sup> take before we'd start getting something decent. My throat would close up and usually I can work my way around something or fight through it, but this was a whole different animal. It was pissing me off. I'm cancer free now, all clear and ready to go, hit the road and kick some ass.

**Was all the material written before this happened to you, or did this influence some of the songs?**

It was smack dab in the middle, and we would go in a studio and write that same day, so it definitely influenced some songs. The anger in some of them came from there. It's weird - you know how there are specific stages of grief? That's how some of the later songs were; each dealing with a different stage.

**The album finishes with a new version of 'Dragonfly'. Was it tough to redo the track which is your most successful?**

No, we were all pretty much ready to do something new with it. We have plenty of songs that, if they became hits, I'd be sick of singing. But 'Dragonfly' is made up of increasing degrees of intensity. It's not a verse-chorus-verse-chorus cheesy pop number. So for us, it was a bit of a treat to mix it up a bit. We plan on playing 'Dragonfly' for another ten years hopefully!