



**Three years after forming, the rude, crude, hard working and harder rocking saviours of arena rock, BIG COCK, are back with their excellent new album 'Motherload'. Die hard fan James Gaden called up guitarist Dave Henzerling to compare sizes...**

After congratulating Dave on the new album I ask him to briefly summarize all that's happened since the bands formation for those who aren't as aware as I am, because I have been a fan since their first record.

"Well, it's interesting" he replies, "because obviously, there has been a void over the last number of years of traditional hard rock bands. That's not to say I don't like modern music and the kind of music that has come out in the last ten to fifteen years, I like some of it a lot, but what I miss is that there is no diversity in the types of rock music that the public is able to get from major labels. We come from a traditional hard rock background, we grew up with Bon Scott era AC/DC, David Lee Roth era Van Halen, Ronnie Montrose, you know, all the great stuff from the late seventies onwards. Robert Mason, our singer, came from Lynch Mob and had played with Cry Of Love, and I came from King Kobra (under the name David Michael Phillips) and had been with Lizzy Borden and Keel, so we're not strangers to these roots. But what we wanted was to put together a group that would play the kind of music we wanted to do. Whether it is popular or not is not the issue, I think the world needs this kind of music. And this kind of music done right, which is what we try to do.

"We were very excited to have a chance to play this kind of music on our own terms, and not give a hoot as to watering anything down when it came to the lyrics, the band name, anything. We just thought the entire package, thematically, worked really well."

And with the recruitment of lifelong friends John Covington on drums and Colby on bass, Big Cock arrived. I agree with Dave's idea - I get dozens of bands on Myspace sending me friend requests and sometimes I just don't have time to check them all out. But that day when my inbox read 'Big Cock want to be your friend' it made me laugh. When I went to their profile, the second thing was as soon as I heard a bit of the first track, it sounded like the stuff I grew up with, what I loved and what I wish was still mainstream now. I tell Dave I think his band keep up the tradition of how it should be done, playing what they love and not selling out to try and fit in a particular market to get your records heard - something that can be said of most of the bands we feature here in Fireworks.

"Well the problem is James," Dave says, "people like yourself and rock fans who like this kind of music, and I think there are quite a few out there, all over the world, they are just not being served by any major labels. Even here in the United States, they just don't play this kind of stuff on the radio. That leads me to my biggest joke, which is a few times I've been told 'Whoa, Big Cock? We're never going to be able to play this on the radio' and my answer is always 'You weren't going to play it anyway, so who cares?' Basically why try to tone us down if you weren't going to put us out there? We're kind of giving them the finger!" he laughs.

And deservedly so. I mention the speed that the band produce the albums, without really losing the quality. I like all three albums equally, and they've released one a year which is fast compared to a lot of acts.

"Yeah, the goal for the band is to put out an album a year, because that's what they did in the old days."

That being said, I ask Dave if the band has a set writing process when they go into a studio?

"I'm a pretty prolific writer," he replies. "I've been writing songs most of my life and I have a pretty substantial back catalogue of stuff I did with my previous bands. I'm writing new stuff all the time and I have a mass of cassette tapes, DAT tapes and CD's that I continually find ideas on, as well as writing new music. When I started the group, I knew we probably had enough material for four to six albums ready to go before we even started drawing from other sources. We sometimes work with stuff we found lying around, or sometimes we'll just write brand new stuff. We get together and it has to pass the vote between us. And the way things are with technology nowadays, it's a lot easier to put something together than it was in the olden days. We have access to some good equipment and some great places to work, so logistically it's not a problem to get things done. That being said, plan on seeing another record from us next year."

Sounds good to me! The other thing that struck me was the production on the records - the group haven't tried to polish it. I think they sound like a rock record should sound.

"Again, that's because we do it the old way," Dave explains. "It's like an early Van Halen record. We're pretty stripped down, it just guitar, bass and drums. We don't double or triple track the guitars or the vocals. It's pretty much Robert singing, me playing guitar, and when it's time for a lead break there's no rhythm guitar. It's pretty much how you would hear us live, but the key to that is also making sure you structure your songs so that they can work in that kind of format. You can't really decide to do a song that's going to have a really heavy feel and retain that even through a guitar solo if you're only using the one guitar - you'd be shooting yourself in the foot."

The first track on the new album, 'Get A Load of Me', has everything I would expect from the guys, but one of the songs that really jumped out at me was 'Don't Ask Me To Be Faithful', which is a ballad. The reason that surprised me so much was they had a ballad on each of the other albums, but they were more humorous, like on 'Hard To Swallow' from the first CD. Yet with this one, even though the sentiment is still within the realms of what Big Cock write about, I thought the actual way the ballad was delivered was tremendous. I thought Robert's vocal was fantastic. I expected it to be more tongue in cheek but I thought the delivery was superb.

"Thank you - our whole goal for that one was to make Elton John proud," Dave laughs. "We all, believe it or not, we come from a pop background - especially Robert and myself. I like heavy music too and I like to merge the two, because if you can do it right, you can make what would otherwise be a heavy song really commercially appealing. That's another reason why we like to keep our songs fairly short.

"Sometimes we've been criticised for keeping the songs short because somebody might say 'Yeah, you've

got ten or twelve songs on there but the whole record is only just over thirty minutes long'. They make it sound like they aren't getting enough minutes of music, but it takes just as much time, money, effort and production to make a three minute song as it does a six minute song."

Exactly, and nobody wants music for the sake of spanning out space on a record. Van Halen's first record is only thirty five minutes long, and more recently Paul Stanley's 'Live To Win' was shorter still, but it made no difference, both are still excellent records - quality instead of quantity.

I mention I've heard comments that some of Big Cock's stuff was a bit one dimensional, but I like that fact that I know I'm going to get good, old fashioned good time hard rock from them, the same way I'd know what to expect from bands like AC/DC or Motorhead.

"One dimensional suggests to me that a group is a one trick pony," Dave replies. "They do a certain type of thing and that's it. I think we have a certain style but that doesn't stop us from doing other kinds of songs if we want."

Precisely, they definitely have a certain sound and lyrical style that is easily identified as their own, but when you examine other tracks like 'Scottsdale Girls' or 'Let's Make Love' from the second record, that's nothing like any of the other material the band have done, yet they pull it off just as well. There's more variation there than anything I ever heard from AC/DC.

"We actually had some other songs for this new record... we cut eighteen songs, and then voted it down to the eleven that made the album, but there were a couple more like 'Scottsdale Girls' that were more poppy and not so much like our other stuff. There was another ballad too, but we picked the ones on the record because we felt those eleven fit a certain theme, and putting the others in made it a little confusing. We did a bunch of different things, but we picked these songs because, and I hope you'll agree with me, we wanted the album to be like an old school album orientated rock record where it's like you wanted to hear every song on the album, it's not like there's two or three standout songs and the rest just filler. You'll listen to it and you'll maybe like track three the best first time you hear it, but the second play you might like seven a bit more, and you treat the album as a whole, y'know?"

That's exactly what happened to me on repeated listens. But the same can be said for the albums, because I thought this was their best record when I first heard it, but then I played all three of the albums back to back one day and now I think each one is as strong as the others, which I think is a testament to the quality of the group.

Going back to the first album, it says on the website that they've repackaged it with a fold out insert and everything, along with a bonus track. I ask because I've got the original, which just came in a cardboard sleeve, so I was wondering about the bonus and the reason for this?

"The bonus is a song called 'Rock & Rollaholic' which we cut for the second album," reveals Dave, "but it didn't fit too well, so we've made it a bonus for the first album. There's an interesting story about why we first issued the album in the cardboard sleeve - when we first put the band together, you often get the press, especially in Europe, hear about guys like myself and many others, who've been in bands before and are continually moving on throughout their career, you often get 'Oh, it's Robert from Lynch Mob, and Dave from King Kobra...' and they've judged you before they've heard you. So we issued the first CD in that sleeve and as you know, there's no pictures, it doesn't say who is in the band, nothing but the song names. And that was the whole point - we said 'Let's do what we want, play the songs we want, call ourselves what we want and throw it out and see if people find it.' There was no fanfare, I didn't do any press, there was no announcement, I literally set up a Myspace page, made it available through CDbaby.com, and went back to what I was doing before. And what happened was people such as yourself found us. By the time the second album was out, people knew who we were so we decided to repackage the first album and add some pictures and stuff. The cat was out of the bag by then."

It's obviously working for them because I know they did a video for 'Real Man' taken from the second record and put it on Youtube and when I looked before the in-

terview it had been viewed 233,000 times!

"I know," says Dave, who is truly astounded. "I can't believe that, it's so amazing."

So that leads me to ask are they doing any videos for anything on the new album?

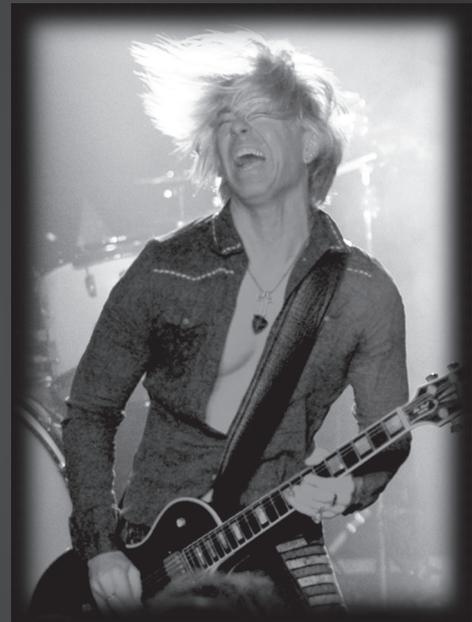
"Yeah, we've shot one for 'Built For Speed'," he replies, and by the time this interview was transcribed, it was up on Youtube. "I've got some other sites who are going to carry it too, so fingers crossed. I think you'll like it, it's a fun video."

I lament that I miss the glory days of really good rock videos.

"Well the problem is most of the rock bands who used to do that aren't on a major label anymore and haven't got the financial backing. Videos are a thing that you can't really cut corners with, they simply cost money.

"For this band to succeed, it's not gonna be the kind of thing where a major label is going to turn up all of a sudden and say 'I wanna sign you guys'. What we're doing is trying to establish a catalogue over a number of years and show somebody that we're professional, we've been putting out records for years and making money from them. We want to show them that we can establish a cohesive and workable business model - if it's going to happen for us at all, that's the way it will work."

I add that a lot of the bands who are on major labels complain that the label isn't doing enough anyway,



because they're behind the times, they haven't embraced Youtube, iTunes, Myspace and all the other stuff which helps get your music known. The musical landscape has changed too much for that.

"That's right," Dave agrees. "The main way you used to be able to reach people was through MTV and the radio. Without that, you can't reach the audience you'd like to. The internet helps with that, but there's still lots of people out there who don't know that bands they would probably be really into even exist.

"To be honest, from my perspective, I think you guys in the UK, and people in Europe generally are more susceptible to new rock music than they are in the States."

I've had similar comments from other American artists. You go to places like Finland and they have lots of new acts coming out and many of them will be rock bands. Here in England though, I explain we tend to be like the US regarding the mainstream, because everything is dedicated to Pop Idol, The X Factor and numerous other dreadful reality shows.

"Unfortunately, and I hate to blame it on you, I think the UK spearheaded the crappy musical reality TV thing long before the US!" Dave laughs.

Indeed - it's all Simon Cowell's fault, let's blame him. The only thing in his favour is he got David Hasselhoff back onto prime time telly with America's Got Talent - otherwise I would happily watch him burn!

After laughing at my genuine love for The Hoff, Dave

says, "Well, I'm so happy that there are magazines like Fireworks and people out there who are still into rock. At the end of a lot of interviews what they say is 'Do you have any last words?' and I always say look, if you like this music, go out and support it. These guys can't do it forever and make no money. There's a lot of great bands out there but they can't live on if they aren't making the money to survive. You've got to go out and support them - buy a t-shirt, buy a CD, spread the word!"

Regarding spreading the word, I was looking at the band's official website to refresh myself, and in their electronic press kit there is a list of 'demands' printed up in the form of a rider for any shows Big Cock perform. It included such absurdities as baby oil, 4 x bottles Cristal champagne, 10+ girls backstage (18-21 yrs. old, please, unless they're hot MILFs) and my personal favourite, one magician in clown make-up (should be able to make balloon animals).

There are numerous others demands too, before an afterthought tacked on at the end asking for instruments and microphones to be able to play the show. It really made me laugh and has the tongue in cheek rock band arrogance that also drew me to them.

Dave is laughing the second I mention it.

"We had fun writing that, and you may as well enjoy it if you're going to do this. It's not easy but it should be fun. We've all been around the block and the whole point of this band, as you can see from the music I hope, is we're trying to put out good music and have a good time doing it. When I was young I'd put on my favourite band and drive down the street and it would be the soundtrack to my summer vacation. That's what music rarely is today, y'know? So we're trying to bring that back. So many bands are heavy and screaming, or they sing about how much they hate their dad... I happen to have had a good family upbringing so I don't have anything to complain about!"

Me too - I would much rather listen to songs about girls than 'I hate my dad, we're all in trouble thanks to global warming, the end is nigh' and that kind of thing.

"Oh God, like you get Eddie Vedder complaining about the President - I have to turn it off, I can't get through that stuff."

I remember Gene Simmons once saying what right do bands have to force their political views onto people? He said you wouldn't hire a plumber and then sit and listen to him explain to you what's wrong with the world, you'd tell him to shut the fuck up and plumb!

Anyway, I digress... one other thing I saw on the bands website was some bootleg footage. It was cool to watch and I ask Dave if he'd thought about a DVD, or is that logistically not an option?

"At some point yeah, but you really have to culminate a whole lot of footage and edit it together... it's not part of the plan right now but once we have a decent archive of stuff we definitely will."

Apart from a new CD next year, what else is in store for Big Cock?

"We'd love to get out on the road properly - we'd really like to come to the UK. These days though we'd have to get on a couple of big festivals and then add some dates in between to make it work - touring is just so unbelievably expensive, and without major label support it's very difficult to be on the road. We play shows as often as we can here when it's smart and financially feasible but I'm slobbering at the idea of getting over to a European audience."

I'd like to see that too. I've got a friend in the US who saw Big Cock open for Ian Gillan and she hadn't heard the records but was very impressed - she said she remembered they were tight and had an AC/DC vibe. Again, that went back to the name - she couldn't remember any of the songs off hand, but as soon as I said I was talking to Big Cock, she remembered them straight away because she said the merchandise and the t-shirts - once seen, never forgotten!

"That's fantastic," Dave says happily. "It's been a pleasure talking to you James, I'm so thankful you like the new record and I'm going to try not to disappoint you in the future! Let's spread the word and make rock what it was, and what it needs to be again!"

Well said, and I am comfortable enough in my heterosexuality to loudly proclaim I love Big Cock!