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Ministry is a memoir both ugly and captivating, revealing Al Jourgensen as a man who lived a hard life his own way without making compromises. He survived prolonged drug addiction—twenty-two years of chronic heroin, cocaine, and alcohol abuse, to be more precise—before cleaning up, straightening out, and finding new reasons to live.

During his career, Jourgensen has engaged in all of the rock 'n' roll clichés regarding decadence and debauchery and invented new forms of previously unachieved nihilism. Despite this and his addictions, he created seven seminal albums, including the bonafide, hugely influential classic *The Land of Rape and Honey*, 1989's *The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste*, and 1992's blockbuster *Psalm 69: The Way to Succeed*.

Ministry imparts the epic life of Al Jourgensen, a survivor who tempted fate, beat the odds, persevered, and put the pieces back together after unraveling completely.

Ministry: The Lost Gospels According to Al Jourgensen Details

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Laurie says

Having worked in the extreme underbelly of the music industry myself, I thought I was inured to tales of debauchery, decadence, and bad decisions - but Al proves me wrong with this incredibly entertaining read. I have met quite a few of the characters in the book - his descriptions are spot-on and hilarious. He hides nothing, and yet doesn't waste our time with rationalizations of his life - relentless drugs, booze and punishingly loud music - an easy read, every page is wonderfully interesting or disgusting or simply odd. The story of the genesis of 'Jesus Built My HotRod' is typically entertaining - the incoherent Gibby Haynes added to the recording to finish the song then delivered to Warner Brothers (who expected a full album, not a single) only adds to the aural rush of the song (I had to youtube the video while reading the passage). His accounts of his time with Timothy Leary and William Burroughs are both funny and insightful.

I promoted or attended thousands of punk and metal shows back in the day - seeing the expanded Ministry lineup at the Hollywood Palladium in 1996's 'Sphinctour' remains the single greatest concert I saw in the genre.

While he doesn't really get credit, given his predilection for overdosing and passing out, Jourgenson's mad mixing skills revolutionized hard rock in the 90s. This is a great book if you love metal punk!

Rob Granniss says

Savage, brilliant, funny and I could not put it down ... Even when I desperately wanted too. I love ministry and my only minor quibble is there wasn't enough descriptions of his studio time and those mixing techniques he, ahem, appropriated from Adrian Sherwood. His recounting of his encounter with Madonna is worth the price of admission.

Edward says

As a big fan of Ministry, this book proved to be a very difficult read. It is very apparent that Al has read "The Dirt", thought "Oh, I can be more outrageous than that!" and is trying too hard to out-do Motley Crue to the point that he is laying it on far too thick. It seems that every other paragraph mentions "debauchery". There is nothing more frustrating than being told what to think when reading a book. Show, don't tell.

There is also something very tragic about this book, if Al is to be trusted. The Dirt showed that the 4 members of Motley Crue had a crazy time, but they also went through periods of personal growth and came out the other end better people. You didn't get that impression reading The Lost Gospels. It tells the tale of a self-centered man-child who becomes a rock star - making more enemies than friends along the way - and comes out the other side a self-centered man-child who is pleased to death about it.

The book is very much a testament to his selfishness. In the prologue, he talks about his daughter and abandoning her and after that, she is barely mentioned. We want to know how the relationship got back on

track, or do we assume it never did? Or does it mean - God forbid - focusing on someone else who isn't Al?

Yes, some of the anecdotes of what he got up to in the 80's/90's were funny, but they're too few and far between to be considered anything like a redeeming feature and they were all tainted with that desperate "Look! Look at me! I was crazier than Motley Crue and Ozzy combined back in the day!" There was no reward at the end of this book. Nothing gratifying. No big pay-off. No redemption. You'll close over the back cover and think you've wasted your time on an utterly pointless book.

And in a way, maybe that is the pay-off. A pointless book reflecting the life of a pointless man.

Brad says

3.75 stars.

Thirty years of a band's existence in less than 300 pages, ably pasted together by the co-author from conversations with Al Jourgensen. I laughed out loud and felt the need to quote passages to my roommates and brother. I am happy to have read the book and was pleased that it wasn't the lose-all-respect-for-the-artist horror show I expected, though there are certainly more drugs and debauchery in these pages than I can imagine. It doesn't endorse the indulgences--in the book, Al reports himself to have been clean for some years now--but it would be a lie to say it doesn't also glorify them, simply by endlessly yucking it up about that time even when Al allegedly feels it was a dark one. Don't get me wrong: the drug-crazed train wreck anecdotes are the most memorable sections of the book. But to me it seems a waste that so very little of the book is spent talking about writing, recording and playing live other than saying that the memories are fuzzy or that these creative acts suck the life out of him. When discussing the making of an album, the reader mostly gets recollections of the studio antics involving every conceivable vice. In effect, it is as if the periods in which Jourgensen was actually making music were the darkest times for him, not the overdoses and the other consequences that came from his excesses. He admits to hating a lot of things his fans love (classic Ministry albums, playing live, the recording process, most of his collaborators), but the act of trashing everything that made him who he is only goes so far with fans who value those things. And while Jourgensen would happily write off the people who most enjoy songs from the first fifteen years of his band, it seems injudicious of him to have zero appreciation that the reason his new music gets heard (or his book gets written or read) is because of the success of his earlier work. I don't think he is obligated to lie and pretend that was his favorite period, but simply skipping ahead to more mayhem instead of talking about the music 9 times out of 10 is disappointing. He says he cannot even listen to the music from certain time periods because they represent darker times to him, but this saddening statement is a little befuddling when paired with jovially recounted anecdote after anecdote of the crazy ride he was on during his decades of addiction.

About two-thirds in to the book, my experience shifted from gleefully addicted page-turning into let's-just-finish-this. This wasn't because the band's peak came in the early 90s, nor because Jourgensen's life calms down when he makes the (admirable) lifestyle choice of becoming drug sober. At some point the entertainment value of the craziness and debauchery wears thin--an appropriate story arch, but nauseating to those of us who have never envied substance addiction (and it gets gross) as well as unconvincing if you were looking for a "scared straight" program (not that I believe that was Al Jourgensen's goal). Another tiring thing is Al's general annoyance and lack of patience with most of mankind, especially his former collaborators. Paul Barker was in the band for 17 years, but his contributions are only mentioned in brief

dismissive insults...well, until the vague-but-not-vague allegations the book makes about Barker's decision to leave the band. At first it is weirdly humorous how Jourgensen befriends people who are crazier than he but it loses its sheen (e.g. He holds grudges against people who go through his food and alcohol backstage but believes himself and his friends to be lovable lunatics when they do it to others). I didn't expect Al Jourgensen to be a voice of sobering maturity, but these moments that totally lack self-awareness are honestly a little sad.

I feel I should restate that I AM glad I read this book. It is an entertaining document of the time period, though lacking lots of information that would interest fans or fellow musicians. I got to read some funny anecdotes and some train wreck anecdotes. It had a nice flow for most of the book, much thanks to what must have been a laborious task for the co-author in piecing together the chronology of all of these events. Because I mostly enjoyed myself, I can imagine myself reading this years from now when I'm feeling nostalgic for my favorite music I listened to in the 90s, but, while I'll probably still laugh a lot, I will likely feel the same disappointment in not getting more pages that focus on the music itself.

(view spoiler)

Thomas says

You have to give Al Jourgensen a bit of credit- he doesn't care what you think of him, of his music or his life. If you are not part of anything in his daily comings and goings, it doesn't matter to him. That being said, I had heard/read of his attitudes concerning these issues and he does not disappoint in this memoir. Rude, crude and terribly honest, Al tells it like it is. The debauchery, the drug abuse (holy ****!) & the music. I enjoyed the book a lot, but still find it hard to believe that the music he created in the early to mid 80's is still held with such disdain to him and his attitude towards the fans who love that era of music and came to know the band thereafter is much the same. The never ending abuse of drugs and alcohol were the hardest parts to get through. Sure, early on its a fun tale, but part of the way through the book, it was a struggle to see someone who is so talented nearly piss it all away. It is sad really, but hey- walk a mile in someone else's shoes and you see a different picture (and besides- who am I to judge his life?). *Ministry: The Lost Gospels According to Al Jourgensen* is a demented ride through musical history. I'm just glad Al is alive to tell the tale.

Bean says

This is a tough book to rate. Al has two personalities. One is likeable, one is repugnant. If you asked me if I enjoyed the book it would depend on the day and which Al I was reading about.

Lorra Fae says

Well this is a damned crazy heck of a book - normally I would take writing technique into account, but this was just too fun for me to care - I couldn't stop reading, I took every spare moment I had to read more. The debauchery is intense. How is he alive? I know that is a common question. Despite his misanthropy, you can tell Al is a hell of a guy with a good heart. The whole book felt like he was right with me telling me his story in HIS voice. It was quintessentially him, all the way.

Great rock memoir, highly recommend!

James says

Some takeaways:

- 1) Al Jourgensen has a name for the act of shoving food items partway up his ass and running backwards at someone.
- 2) That name is a "flying ham sandwich."
- 3) Al Jourgensen's autobiography includes multiple anecdotes about "flying ham sandwiches." At least one such story involves members of Metallica.

It's a wildly entertaining book, halfway between a rock memoir and an addiction memoir, saved from the

clichés of the first category by the fact that he doesn't talk that much about music, and from the clichés of second category in that he doesn't seem to have learned all that much from his mistakes.

Hell of a life he describes, in any case.

Ru says

In high school, I was thrown off of a public transit bus by the driver, because apparently I had Ministry's "Stigmata" playing too loud on my Walkman. I didn't make a big deal over the fact that he never asked me to turn it down, because it was only about a 10-minute walk home, anyway, & I could still enjoy the music during that time. That's essentially how this rock autobiography of Al Jourgensen, lead singer of Ministry, played out for me -- it was kind of a hassle to get through, but ultimately I was fine with it and enjoyed it.

I had a problem with the length of this book, but it's not as long as, say, Pete Townshend's "Who I Am" -- Townshend's book I felt like I was breezing through, and didn't want it to end. My issue with "The Lost Gospels According to Al Jourgensen" is that a lot of it feels repetitive. There are Al's versions of events, and then at times those events are corroborated by eyewitness interviews. That is literal repetition of a story. As you would have to expect, this book is rife with sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll, and that's a lot of fun, but Jourgensen was enough of a habitual junkie that his routine didn't change very much. There is relapse after relapse after relapse. It's sad, but he clearly knows what he's getting into, so as a reader you don't feel overly sympathetic. There are also political aspects to this book that are off-putting, but mostly because I strongly disagree with his point of view. Thankfully these are minimal entries.

The positives of this story are strong and numerous, thankfully. I always love hearing the "Behind The Music"-type stuff -- how bands formed, broke up, who hated who, how songs were written, etc. And there is a lot of that, including tales of the Revolting Cocks, Buck Satan, 1000 Homo DJs, and more. It's fascinating to hear Al recount stories about everyone from Steven Spielberg to Cheap Trick to Robert Plant to Rob Zombie. And, as agonizing as it must've been, this book pulls no punches about the physical destruction (literally) Al Jourgensen does to his body as a result of being an addict. Imagine losing so many teeth that you undergo an 8-hour procedure to have new ones screwed back into your jaw. It's gross, but it's fascinating. Something else I found rather humorous is the fact that one of Ministry's biggest hits, the aforementioned "Stigmata" is a song Jourgensen absolutely hates. The stories throughout the book involving people complimenting the song and Al being sick over it are really funny, as are many, many of the events in the now-lengthy career of Jourgensen.

Al Jourgensen is someone I'd probably call a musical genius. He's a smart guy, successful at virtually everything he did from childhood onward. He is not what you would expect him to be. Avid sports fan, child athlete, prolific reader, and I could probably go on. Unfortunately, that is just one side of the coin, the other side being the dark and depraved aspects of his personality that probably should have resulted in his death several times over. For that reason, it's remarkable this book even exists, but I'm really glad it does. If you're a Ministry fan, then this is a must-read.

Melanie says

As far as rock memoirs go, this is a good one. The story is told not so much as homage to excess, but as a

black and white tale of excess and its price. Because there is a price, and it's huge.

Al Jourgensen is no dummy. He doesn't try to hide the COST of the hard life he chooses to live. He has stomach ulcers, he hasn't had much of a relationship with his daughter, and he is currently a 'functional alcoholic'. One of the biggest costs of Al Jourgensen's many addictions is time. Time with his loved ones, time that he could have spent creating but he spent using. Was it worth it? You can truly tell that though he is an adventurer at heart, Uncle Al is not so sure about the price his excess demands in his current life.

Greg says

This is Al Jourgensen:

This is my 'review':

This book is part of the Book Riot, Read Harder 2018 challenge. You can see it here:
<https://bookriot.com/2017/12/15/book-...>

This is my entry for the twelfth challenge, celebrity memoir. (Does the dude from Ministry count as a celebrity? Sure in some circles, and it's everything you want in a celebrity memoir, copious amounts of drugs, many bad decisions and a metric shit ton of gossip and trash talk).

For a brief period in 1992, I liked Ministry. "Stigmata" was on some MTV, 120 Minutes tape I had bought, and I loved that song when I first heard it (Al would hate me for liking that song). I didn't really enjoy Ministry record the song was from (was in *Land of Rape and Honey*, or *A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste?* I forget, I had both and didn't enjoy either of them as records). Like some other heavy early 90's bands, like Helmet, I got really into their 'big' release for about a week and then went on to listen to other things (that would be my brief enjoyment of *Psalm 69: The Way to Succeed and the Way to Suck Eggs*).

Ministry was one of the bands I was most looking forward to seeing at Lollapalooza in 1992, but my only memory of them playing of me laying on the ground wishing that an awful headache I had would go away (I don't think it was Ministry's noise that was doing it, rather just the result of going to one of those all day stand outside concerts with a bunch of bands... I don't think I ever made it through one of those sadistic affairs without some sort of awfulness... my favorite being a day long concert / party put on by a frat in a park in Albany headlined by The Ramones right before they broke up, that time it was the amount of dust shit being put in the air had me barely able to breathe and coughing up weird shit for hours after the show... headaches and coughing up weird shit aren't normal occurrences for me).

When I got to my first day of college I think I was wearing a Ministry shirt, because I had this grand plan that I knew I wouldn't go out of my way to talk to people and make friends, but if I advertised things that other people who I might want to be friends with liked they might go out of their way to talk to me (that explains the Manic Panic Orange colored hair at the time, too). Funny thing is one of my suite-mates showed up with the same idea and was wearing a Revolting Cocks, "Beers, Steers and Queers" t-shirt (Rev Co is a side project of Ministry), so you'd like that we became super-duper friends right away (I actually thought he was weird at the time because he had the shirt tucked into a pair of pressed jeans...)

My fashion coup sort of worked, I met and was some level of friends with the fairly small group of other alternative/goth whatever the hell you want to call them kids in the Freshman class. Most of them were from Long Island, and at the tail end of 1992, most of them liked Ministry and probably by the start of the second semester no one ever mentioned Ministry again.

Aside from the few months in 1992 I never knew anyone who listened to Ministry. I was friends with people into Industrial music and I never heard them say anything about Ministry. I even lived with someone who had been a DJ of this type of music for almost 8 years and I can't remember him ever saying anything about Ministry, and he talked about music all the time. Lots about Skinny Puppy, Laibach, KMFDM and other 'similar' bands, but never anything about Ministry.

(I just lied. There was this weird industrial kid who was a freshman when I was a junior who liked Ministry, and liked their new album (at the time) *Filthpig*. He fit in even less than most of the other people I knew at Plattsburgh, I don't remember much about him except he wore ridiculous Doc's that went almost up to his knees...)

Oh, here to make my self-centered ramblings more memoir-like, there was one other kid I knew in my time at Plattsburgh who wore those boots, too. He was a freshman when I was. He wore those big silly Docs and (seriously) a beret. I talked to him a couple of times, I think he was in the process of trying to hook up with the girl I would be involved with sophomore year, so he was big on showing off how cool he was. Part of being 'cool' was selling pot out of his dorm room. That was his thing, he sold pot and wore a beret and silly docs. Plattsburgh was sort of redneck once you got outside of the college campus.

There are two paths you can take when you are a drug dealer at a school like Plattsburgh, you can sell to students or you can branch out and sell to locals (i.e.. rednecks). He choose the later and I don't know if the beret and silly boots had anything to do with it, but in the second or third week of school some redneck paid him a visit at his dorm room with a shotgun and did an Omar, relieving him of his money and marijuana.

The story gets better because he went straight to campus security to report this ruffian with a shotgun and let the campus police know that he had been the victim of a crime in which his money and his drugs had been taken from him.

The school expelled him for selling drugs out of his dorm room, but probably they figured someone too dumb to keep the drug selling details to themselves probably wasn't meeting the minimum standards of a school listed in Playboy a few years earlier as one of the best St Patrick Day party schools, and in just a couple of months be mentioned in High Times as a place with some killer bud.

Since it was 1992, he was dressed like some alternative fashion disaster and was from Long Island I'll guess he was into Ministry at the time of his expulsion (bringing it all back around)).

I've had this arc sitting around my apartment for probably about five years, and I thought it would be something entertaining and quick to read. Part of my let's try to get some of these books out of here style of choosing books.

I'm not sure if it was either fun or quick. For some reason, I could never really get into this book, and what I thought was going to be a fairly fast read was kind of a slog.

This is sort of a cross between two of my favorite music memoirs. Motley Crue's *The Dirt* and John Lydon's *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*. Take all of the decadent rock n' roll lifestyle of Motley Crue and the 'I

don't give a fuck what you think I'll still talk shit and bear grudges on people even if they have been dead since the late 70's' of Rotten's delightful life story and hate letter to Nancy. But for some reason it gets old here really fast.

I have a couple of ideas why.

The first is that the co-author was basically just transcribing Jourgensen's stories and putting only a vague order to them. Real life might not be a 'good story' with a beginning and end and growth and a nice climax and all of that shit... but here the story is basically I do fucked up things, I hate these people (insert band members, people in other bands, the record company, George W. Bush, Madonna (ok this one was genuinely funny), his fans etc), I do more fucked up things and I don't give a fuck because I don't care what anyone thinks!

The problem was that the story read like listening to a teenager is all about scaring his parents telling you about how much a degenerate fuckwad he is and how much of a nihilist he is (maybe there are teenage girls that do this, but I'm giving this honor to dumb teenage boys). So many stories read like this:

Right after I finished editing ("Jesus Built my Hotrod"), Sire got all up in my ass. They hated me to the point of viciousness, even though they had given me all this money. They became hell-bent on my destruction because they didn't have any mavericks of loose cannons on their label. They wanted controlled pop people. I was a threat to them, so they harassed me a lot. They wanted to what we had for their \$750,000. And it got to the point at which I couldn't stall them anymore. So I sent them "Jesus Built my Hotrod" because that's all we had. They were pissed. I get this phone call: "We have you \$750,000, and you send this nonsense back to us? What are we supposed to do with this?" They hated it. I was like, "Well, either double down or not, man. Cut us loose now if you want. I don't care. I have enough dope. I'm a nihilist. I don't care if I die tomorrow." So they took the bait and doubled down, which was cool because we actually got the record company to pay us \$1.5 million to make a record. But it kind of sucked because it meant we actually had to get to work. Oh yeah—and also recoup.

It gets embarrassing how many times he has himself saying to the effect, "Fuck you I'm a nihilist!"

He finishes the book by saying:

As far as my opinions in this book, I'll gladly own them. If people don't like them or disagree, I truly couldn't care fucking less—go buy some other wankers book, then.

But I think he does care, a lot, about what people think of him. It's just that he's stuck in some teenage nihilist loop that has become his whole life. And maybe that's part of the problem with the book, there is no growth, just thirty years or so of doing fucked up things. And those stories are fun, but they get tiring, especially when there is so little told about things like the albums, or how the band started, or the difficulties he went through to become famous or anything like that. These things are generally just glossed over.

While I'm not positive that the book is mostly just a transcription of Al's stories, I'm pretty certain that is essentially what this is. The co-author just sort of cobbling them together in a somewhat linear order.

Early in the book, I had a difficult time because of little pet peeves of mine. While the story is roughly linear, it's more thematic in structure. For example, there is Al's time in college and his stripper punk-rocker girlfriend. She was introducing him to all kinds of new music, but if I followed when it sounded like things were happening some of the bands she had him listen to didn't exist yet. I realized as the book went on that

Al's grip on when things happened wasn't always accurate (for example the difference in a year and the background behind how he married his second wife between her telling and him) and stories were kind of clumped together and there was some shifting back and forth with time. If you care about linear structure you kind of need to keep an eye on when records by Ministry and all the various side projects were released to know when certain things took place.

And then there are just things that I'm not sure if I believe. Like Ian Mackaye getting drunk on cheap beer while they recorded the Pailhead project. Or that Ministry's guitarist kicked River Phoenix as he was dying in front of the Rainbow Room because he thought he was just some bum on the street and needed to be kicked. Those are just a couple stories that I thought, really this happened?

Al Jourgensen is not a reliable narrator. So many facts are said to happen differently during the "Interventions" in the book (interviews that pop up here and there with other people like his step-dad, bandmates, Jello Biafra, his wife). It makes me wonder if things happened or if Al's just been telling these stories for so long that he's made them into more entertaining stories than true ones.

I didn't mean to be such a dick about this book. I feel like I'm being judgmental about the guy instead of the book, and maybe I am a little bit, but I think there is a story here that could have been better crafted... instead, the way it's written it feels too confrontational... you know like talking to a 'teenage nihilist' who is trying to shock you and then tell you he doesn't give a fuck what you think and then goes right back to making sure you see how little he cares about you by telling you over and over and over again.

One last parting observation...

They really should have left out the 'political essay' about Socialism. I agree with almost all of Jourgensen's ideas in the essay, but the problem it isn't Socialism that he's calling for, it's um, Adam Smith idealized Capitalism.

David Ball says

Once again my stroll down memory lane proves to be a slight waste of time. I loved Ministry growing up, so I was pleasantly surprised to see Jourgensen's face peering up at me at my local book shop. "Al Jourgensen? I wonder what he's up to these days?", I thought to myself. Apparently quite a bit. I'd lost interest in Ministry after Filth Pig, so I was amazed to find out that the group has gone on to make another 8 albums since. Considering he was a hard core junkie for a large part of the past twenty years, that's pretty prolific in my books. But I admit I haven't listened to any of his more recent stuff, so I cannot comment on the quality of his music. But as a writer of memoirs he's not very good. It's Al Jourgesen is great; Al Jourgesen is fucked up; Al Jourgensen is mental; Paul Barker is shit. And repeat. Ad nauseum. The man's self delusion and lack of self awareness makes pretty tedious reading. I'm happy he's come out the other side of his addictions, but I don't think he makes a very reliable witness of his life story to date.

Santino J. Rivera says

I couldn't wait to get this book. I'm not the type to read pompous rock star biographies because those books are usually fake and really lame but this was different. I consider myself a huge Ministry fan and to have a

book written by Uncle Al himself? Sign me up.

I bought this the day it came out. The lady at B&N had to get it from shipping and receiving because they hadn't put it on the shelves yet. Ha!

One of my earliest memories of Ministry is going to a club on The Hill in Boulder, CO with my friends (and band) and slam dancing with a bunch of skinheads when the song "Thieves" came on. That was brutal. And awesome.

I also remember nearly killing myself several times in high school while driving 120+ mph to "Jesus Built My Hotrod" and "Psalm 69". Good times.

This book is exactly what I expected: bad-fuckin-ass. What else would you expect from the frontman of Ministry? His stories are hilarious and I enjoyed reading this book tremendously. Jorgensen's rock n. roll stories make everything else look like ginger beer.

I will say, speaking as a publisher, this book could have used another round of editing. But then again, there's no such thing as a perfect book. From rockstars to indie authors, every book has its flaws.

Amazing read - you won't regret it.

Jeff says

A few things make me glad I read this at the bookstore instead of wasting money on it...

- 1) Al puts down everyone who helped make him famous.
- 2) Al puts down all the hit songs that helped make him famous.
- 3) If it wasn't for "the Book Club" keeping an eye on him and keeping him straight enough to make the occasional album every 3-5 years, he never would have achieved the fame he attained.
- 4) They really should have had the editor give this book a serious run-through in the grammar department and the fact-checking department.
- 5) He should have had a serious "ghost writer" working on the book instead of a fan-boy reporter.
- 6) His drug tales get old fast.

and

- 7) According to various stories from various people who talked about Al over the years, he's probably not the nice guy he makes himself out to be half the time.
- 8) He doesn't seem to realize that the years up to FILTH PIG were his most popular ever with the band and that most people don't give a rip for his heavy metal persona he's portraying now.

Larry says

What a tool! (Him or me? I read the whole thing)
