



Venusian rockers Valient Thorr touched down to rock our planet on Warped Tour this summer. It may not be clear whether they've come from the past or the future, but one thing is absolutely certain, they've come to Rock. Dripping with sweat, Valient Himself, took some time to talk with us about the serious business of Rock and Roll as a catalyst, overcoming fear, and the absence of beards in Washington.

You said something during the show that was part of the inspiration for us when we started PEEL magazine, that you don't have to do the stupid jobs people say you have to do. That you can follow your dreams. How did you get inspired to follow your dreams?

I just felt like everybody in this whole Earth, and my Earth family always sacrificed their dreams for their family or maybe something else that was really important, but they never gave it up just to see what would happen. I feel like a lot of the world is guilt tripped into doing what they end up doing. So after grad school I taught at East Carolina University for a year. And then to get the band off into the stratosphere I was a sixth grade teacher. I was a sub first, and then I did some home ec shit and then I ended up teaching sixth graders. There were some of these kids who had never been told they could do anything, you know. I mean, you had some of the richest kids in the world, and some were autistic, and then you had kids whose parents were spending their money on crack instead of paying rent. I was like, damn man, these kids are hating it, they're stuck in these last chance programs where people are treating them like nothing's ever gonna change for them. If you actually talked to these kids like somebody you wanted to know instead of treating them like they're worthless, you'd gain their trust by being real with them. Not just going through the motions because you've been an adult teacher for 18 years. If you just be real with somebody, they'll be real with you. I used to curse sometimes in front of them, and they didn't tell on me, because they thought, "Wow, this guy's being honest". I decided, I'm not going to do this anymore, I'm going to do what I'm telling them which is to do their dreams. They

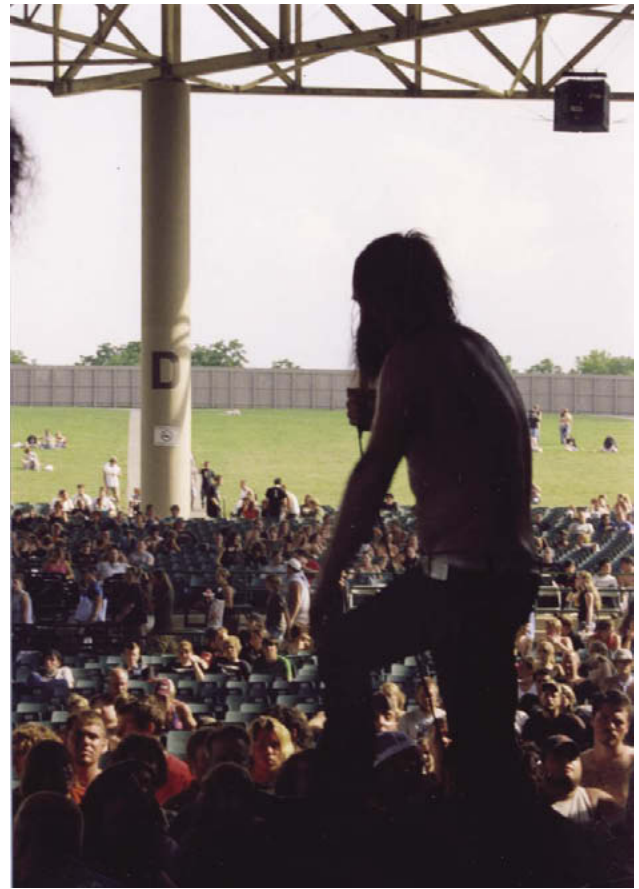
can do anything they want, so I can do what I want. So I split. But I feel like I'm still teaching. Instead of a classroom where I've got like 200 kids every 180 days now I got fuckin' thousands of kids a day. If you think of a head as fertile soil and your ideas are seeds, even if there's two kids out there I'm still gonna say the same shit as if there was 2,000. I feel like the dream of your magazine is my dream, I think it's everybody's dream, but you can make it a reality.

One of our goals with PEEL is to encourage people to take control of their environment, and to filter the messages being pounded into them by mass media. We're trying to be an alternate voice like you.

The difference is, whether you take control of your destiny or whether you just leave shit up to fate. They are the two parallel lines along the ultimate Timeline. You know, we're talking about history here, not just the history of the world, but everybody's personal history. That's how relationships are created, that's why we do the things we do. That's why we act the way we do, why we like what we like, and all that shit.

How long have you been doing the band?

Nine years, well six seriously. We left everything 17 and a half months ago and we haven't stopped. That's when we got rid of all houses, all storage units, everything. We're free. The only bill I have is a phone bill. I mean we have outside Earth people we care about, but most don't understand. I don't know. There's different schools of thought and mine is that we are animals. We're no better than the animals, we're no better than each other. If you feel like you gotta do something, then that's what you do. It ain't like somebody's calling me to do it. It's like me saying, "I fuckin' gotta do this, or I don't care about living anymore". I'm not gonna live the way it was put forward to me and shown how to live. You can do whatever you want. Everybody can. It's not just, "Hey man, we're privileged, we're dudes, we can do it, or we're white, we can do it, or we're straight, we can do it". It's like,



“Fuckin’ you’re a human, get off your ass and do whatever you want”. If you’re in a situation where you can’t then you gotta get out of that situation. You should fuckin’ split is what I said. You might piss a lot of people off and you get guilt tripped hard, but what do you do? Would I go back? Hell no! I did a bunch of little bullshit jobs and a couple of fun ones cause I was sick of the ridiculous ones, but nothing beats what you’re here to do. There’s some sick lyrics, “There’s never enough time to do things you wanna do once you find them”, Jim Croce, but that’s horseshit. I mean it’s true, but he wasn’t willing to give up the guilt and I am. I won’t let anything hold me back.

Do you think fear is one of the things that holds people back?

Fear runs the United States. The whole world’s not like this. Even if you haven’t been out of the United States you can tell. Just look around. Fear controls everything here. If you weren’t scared to get out of your town, you wouldn’t be stuck in your town, if you weren’t scared to get off your continent, you wouldn’t be stuck on the continent, if you weren’t scared to travel somewhere and check it out, you would’ve already done it. All the ideas that are based on other places that you haven’t been or just from what you heard about it or saw on TV, which is all horseshit, you never experienced it yourself, that’s just somebody else’s reality you’re buying into. I have to see pretty much everything for myself. If it seems like I’m gonna be stoked on it, I check it out. If it seems like horseshit then I won’t check it out. If I miss out on stuff, I mean, nobody’s perfect. I say definitely don’t be scared to check out stuff that you’re curious about. Curiosity killed the cat, but a cat’s got nine lives so fuck it.

You left your old world behind, and now you’re a part of a different world, the record industry, do you want to talk about that world?

Yeah, I mean I guess you’d say we made agreements with dudes to get our albums out there and that’s helped out a lot. You have to have distribution for your message or something you create. But then, are you creating something digestible, something that they’re gonna plug it for five minutes then kids are gonna swallow it and shit it back out,

or are you making art? Are you making something that you want to be a part of history. Do want to make something that’s gonna last beyond your own lifetime? I wanna make a piece of art that lasts beyond my own lifetime. So that’s where my business lies. Outside of that, when I say YOU can do it, YOU can do it. YOU can, meaning I don’t have a manager, the band doesn’t have a manager, we don’t have a booking agent, I do it all myself. It’s not that hard, it’s fuckin’ frustrating, but you can do it. And you can do it and play with radical bands. Look at who’s on this tour. It’s killer. It’s absolutely bonkers that I can call somebody from my previous Earth life, a parent or old girlfriend or whatever and be like, “Check it out, I’m going on tour with fuckin’ Joan Jett after Warped Tour’s over”. And they’re like, “What? Are you kidding?”, and you can feel good that you hooked that up yourself.

When people are amazed and ask how you can do it, how do you respond to that?

You’ve just gotta be in control of your destiny. When they ask that question, it’s like, “What the fuck do you do?”, and they say this and that, and I’m like, “Well, how did you do that?”. You just gotta go balls to the wall, you can’t miss out on opportunities. If it’s there and it presents itself you just gotta try. Just get used to the idea that it might or might not work, but it ain’t gonna happen if you don’t even try. Sometimes it’s hard when things don’t work out, but then sometimes it’s like, BAM! jackpot!

When you perform, it’s amazing, you seem to have no fear, you just put it all out there. Is that a big element fueling your performance?

I can’t even jump off a high dive because of an accident in 10th grade, but I’ll jump from twice as high into a crowd of people that could drop me where I’d kill myself. Why is that? It’s because of my association with it. These kids are out there, and I can see it in their eyes, they want something, they want to hear it, but nobody’s trying to tell them they can do it, they want some reassurance. When you’re up there and you see it in their eyes and they’re fuckin’ stoked, you know that they’ll take care of you because you represent what they believe in. I’m not

saying I'm gonna be everybody's hero, but everybody wants something to believe in. I think that real rock and roll is and always has been a catalyst for that. It always will be something that greases the wheels. If you're doing something and you're sweating that hard then that effort realized. That's your effort put forth and if you weren't sweating and you're running that hard then the machine would break. When I'm sweatin' and it's goin' and the kids are there it happens, and I'm not scared of anything. I don't even care if I do die, because I've said everything I've got to say up to that point. It's a kind of euphoria. It's almost like slow motion in a movie, the adrenaline's pumping, you feel it, the crowd feels it, the time signatures are flowing, and it's almost like we CAN do anything. You don't want it to end. That feeling is crazier than any drug.

You still teach with your music, but have you learned anything from your fans?

It's like when I was teaching figure drawing class, sometimes the teacher learns from the students. They might have a different perspective. It's all about experience. If this kid's seen some shit that I've never seen before and he's telling it to me, I might go, "Oh yeah, that's another fuckin' way of looking at it, and you were right, and I've been clouded to it." If you'll keep your mind open for that, it really can't do any harm. You can't be faulted for trying to understand that other perspective.

Do you have any thoughts about schools cutting funding for art and music?

There's so many shady business dealings that go on especially now the way everything's connected, I mean everything, you know. I'm talking about like fast food, and the weather report, to the way they stock grocery stores. It all is controlled. When they say they have to cut programs to fund something else over here, but then they'll distract you with a weird news program, like they've got pictures of North Korea from 2001 and they might blow up fuckin' Alaska. Meanwhile they're signing some legislation that gays can't get married in Virginia or Rhode Island. It's like all these wedge issues that push us all apart from each other instead of coming together on real issues that we really do fuckin' care about. They get us to fight about this shit that shouldn't even be each other's business when there's whole countries bombing and killing each other. And it's all just so they can line their fat fuckin' pockets and keep their family bloodlines going into the ends of the earth, and they don't even realize that they're killing the earth.

Do you ever feel like the struggle is well...

Futile? No way. Not at all. Because when one dude can make as many people as we make happy every day, and like all these bands do, it only takes a few more to get together and really take it to the streets. And before it gets too too bad, I feel like something crazy could like, you know, nobody's gonna put up with this shit forever. If they did something drastic like reinstating the draft, that would be the best thing that could happen for the anti-war movement. Or imposed martial law, because momma's don't want their babies to grow up to be cowboys. That's just a true fact. It's fucked up how, you think all the religious freaks or Christians or whatever are on your side, but then they try to take their babies off to war and all of a sudden it swings back the other way and you've got these hoighty toity mom's on the other side. And these bitches might get out in the street and fight. I don't know. It's just so big to talk about I could go on all day.

It is getting pretty heavy. To lighten it up do you want to tell us about the funniest or craziest thing that's happened to you while touring?

Aw, hell, I don't know. I hope it keeps getting crazier. I don't think the craziest stuff I've seen has happened to us because as a band we keep it pretty mellow because we go every single fuckin' day, we can't really stray from the path. I mean we have fun, we go see killer bands play. We like to go off and do our own thing. We've been living in an RV for months, and I don't want to say it's monotonous, we like to go see flicks together. We like to stay clean and take showers. Washing my hair is like my favorite pastime. I did see one thing that's was pretty crazy not too long ago in Texas. There were all these thrash bands down there that we're betting each other on shots, raising the stakes, and it got to this one guy drinking beer from a ball goblet. (You'll have to ask Valient himself about the ball goblet story, because we can't

do it justice here.) I was just like, man, you are the master. You win, brother. (laughter)

If you can call that winning?

I'd like to go down on register saying I was not in that contest.

Can you tell us about your look? Long beards are pretty rare these days.

I know, it's weird. People used to have beards all the time. You know where nobody has beards? Washington DC. No beards. My girlfriend lived in Washington CD, and every time I'd go there, I'm like the little handicapped kid, just totally standing out in the crowd. And I'm like where the fuck are all the beards in Washington DC? I used to have this job where they we're like, "Herbie, your sideburns are getting a little long", and I had heard that shit before, and I was just like, fuck this. And they were like, "Excuse me?", and I was just like there comes a time in a man's life where he needs to make his own decisions about his facial hair. So you guys can deal with it or fuck off. And they couldn't deal with it so they fucked off and I never looked back.

For further transmissions from Venus visit: www.valientthorr.com

