



WORDS BY SARAH ROWLAND PHOTO JUSTIN LYONS

**W**hat do GWAR, the Trailer Park Boys and the intergalactic cock rock quintet a.k.a. Valient Thorr have in common? They all insist on being interviewed in character. So when Concrete caught up with Valient Thorr's frontman, he was quite adamant that we not use his 'Earth Alias' Herbie. Instead, he wants to be known simply as Valient Himself. Fair enough. Herbie, after all, doesn't exactly conjure up images of a balls-out, boogie rocker from another planet. Ergo, for the purposes of our little Q&A sesh, I play along.

According to the band's sci-fi bio, these extraterrestrial scientists-turned-rock 'n' rollers originated from Burlatia, which is located in the three rivers inside the planet Venus. After their spacecraft crash landed in D.C. in '57, they hightailed it to North Carolina to flee the feds as well as Walt Disney.

Though riveting, their backstory doesn't really explain why the lyrics on their latest album *Legend of the World* are so politically charged, specifically the Bush-bashing gem "Exit Strategy."

"We have a vested interest in this planet," explains Himself, who's calling from his Lake Tahoe motel room. "This is where we have to live. We don't have the technology to go back from where we're from and we don't even fucking know if it's still there anymore because it's not like we're in contact with them anymore. I definitely wouldn't call it fate—we don't let fate willy-nilly pull us along that way. But some sort of destiny stuck us here. So for now, we're basically earthlings."

And they've adapted to their new home with relative ease (though there were some awkward mating moments when they realized earth groupies don't have quite as many tentacles as Burlatia babes). They've also made good use of their time here, building up a solid following by putting on sick shows night after night for almost two years straight. It's only now that they've taken a one-month break to write new material.

But then it's back to their mission, which is to turn every one on to the only music that counts.

"I love rock 'n' roll more than anything else in the world," says Himself rather dreamily. "Rock 'n' roll beyond any other genre, especially at its fever-pitch, can grease the wheels of the human machine. It makes you sweat; it makes you get wet."

Exactly how much perspiration are we talking here?

"Here's the weird thing: I sweat so much, I can drink my own sweat," admits Himself. "I know people get grossed out by that. But the thing is if you sweat every single day like we do, your sweat is pure. You know like when little rocks are all jagged in the river and then after thousands of years they turn into really smooth beautiful gems—that's what my sweat's like: smooth beautiful gems." Along with his political beefs, Himself is also somewhat concerned about the increase of obesity in North America. The solution? Again, he manages to bring it back to his favourite subject—no, not Venusian pussy—the devil's music.

"If you don't listen to rock 'n' roll, if you don't move, if you don't do some sort of extracurricular activity, you sit on the couch, eating chips and turn fat," says Himself. "Rock 'n' roll is definitely not the only tool—there's obviously skateboarding and snowboarding. But I think that rock 'n' roll is the most universal because you don't need a lot of abilities to produce sweat from earth rock n roll."

It turns out that not even Venusians are immune to the pressures of show biz. Since *Legend of the World* has been getting killer reviews from Coast to Coast, Himself admits it can be a bit taxing trying to be all things to all people.

"We have a lot of really good friends in every single place we play," says Himself. "In some places where we're the biggest like say when we go back to North Carolina and play, the crowds are gigantic, but I know everybody personally and I can't give everybody the time that they all

deserve."

This, unfortunately, has led to some hellish bouts of unbridled panic.

"I used to laugh at people for saying that they had anxiety attacks," says Himself. "I used to say, 'Oh that's just horseshit.' I used to go by the belief that life in all its forms is sort of like a roller coaster: it's either way up or way down and you got to see yourself through it." Not anymore.

"I definitely underestimated the amount of stress that can be caused by that kind of anxiety attack. I find myself getting easily overwhelmed by our good fortune coz I don't want anybody to think that we're not grateful for what has happened. But it definitely gets overwhelming at times."

It's hard to believe, but it was only four years ago that Himself and his hairy vested bandmates—guitarists Eidan Thorr and Odinn Thorr, bassist Nitewolf and drummer Lucian Thorr—started pumping out their '70s-style fury. Before that, Himself tried blending in with the human race by posing as a sixth grade school teacher. When asked if rocking out on stage was harder than getting 11-year-olds to memorize state capitals, he didn't hesitate to answer: "Hell yeah! I still feel like I'm teaching. But instead of 200 kids every day, I teach 500 to 2000, or sometimes when we play big old crazy Warped Tour shows 10,000 kids daily!"

As for forming allies with other extraterrestrial musicians trapped on Terra, Himself is not so sure if GWAR and Valient Thorr would make a good mix.

"Oderus is known for trying to kill lots of people but those are people on Earth," says Himself. "We're about positive vibrations. I don't really like a lot of killing. But I am down to get gnarly and I know they like to get gnarly, so we'll just have to see what he thinks. There may be an intergalactic battle here on earth—who knows?"

Remember you read it here first.