

# Veterans of metal lay low

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In 1984, Anthrax burst onto the thrash metal scene with their debut album, *Fistful of Metal*, on Megaforce Records. Over the years, they have established themselves as innovators and legends backed by a legion of dedicated fans the worldwide.

In 2004, Anthrax put out two albums, *Music of Mass Destruction* and *The Greater of Two Evils*, on Sanctuary Records that were both compilations of familiar songs. Meanwhile, they were touring in support of their most recent studio album, *We've Come For You All*, released in May 2003, also on Sanctuary Records. By the sheer strength of this powerful new release, Anthrax has been on tour for the past 18 months since the album's debut.

Now on break from touring and doing commentary on various shows such as VH-1's popular "I love the 90s" series, guitarist Scott Ian talked about the band, books, and the possibility of Joey Vera being a permanent replacement for longtime bassist Frank Bello.

Ian said that the band has nothing planned this winter other than playing a few dates starting at the end of February.

"We stopped touring around Halloween after being out on tour for 18 months," said Ian. "We're just on a break now until later this winter when we get together to start working on new material."

Ian welcomed the success of *We've Come For You All*, which

enabled them to be on the road for such a length of time.

"Everything went really well for us on tour after us not having a record out for five years," said Ian. "It definitely brought us back to a level we hadn't been at in a long time."

In their 21-year career, Anthrax has put out 18 albums. Ian discussed how the band has grown over the years.

"We've just grown as musicians and songwriters," said Ian. "It just all sounds like Anthrax to me. It's something I don't necessarily think about, but I definitely think we have gotten much better. We just do what we do," he said. He added that although *Fistful of Metal* sounds nothing like *Among the Living*, which also sounds nothing like *The Sound of White Noise*, "it's all Anthrax."

Ian explained that throughout the band's career, all of their albums are significant and he cannot pin point a certain album as a personal favorite.

"It's all relevant," said Ian. "I guess I favor the last record only because it's the most current and freshest in my mind from all of our touring."

From the mid-90s into the new millennium, hip-hop/metal created a new consciousness in pop culture. Bands like Korn and Limp Bizkit were credited as originators of the genre, and just like every style that comes to the attention of mainstream America: it had already been done before.

In 1987, Anthrax put out the classic EP, *I'M The Man*, in which the title track found the band members taking turns rapping over their usual thrash guitar

sound. In 1991, Anthrax released *Attack of the Killer B's*. For this one, Anthrax teamed up with rap super group Public Enemy for the hugely popular song *Bring the Noise*. They also did a new version of *I'M The Man* to signify a bridge to their previous work and what they were currently doing with Public Enemy.

Anthrax has never received any credit for being innovators or early influences on the hip-hop/metal genre that gained momentum ten years after the studio release of *I'M The Man*.

"I don't care," says Ian. "It doesn't mean anything to me. We just do what we do. It really doesn't matter. I mean, obviously I think what we did with Public Enemy certainly had an influence on that genre of music that came out after that, but it doesn't matter to me whether or not we get credit for it."

In April 2004, Joey Vera (*Armored Saint*, *Fates Warning*) began filling in for longtime bassist Frank Bello. Vera has been consistently playing with the band since Bello's departure. This leads many fans to wonder if Vera is indeed going to be a permanent replacement.

"We haven't gone that far yet," said Ian. "We're just going to enjoy our time off and take it from there. Joey's great. He stepped in when we were in a situation where we were kind of stuck. He's filled in for us amazingly and we couldn't have asked for anything better."

When pressed to make an official statement concerning the departure of Bello, Ian stated clearly that Bello is not necessar-



Photo courtesy of www.anthrax.com

From left, Anthrax is Rob Caggiano, lead guitar, Charlie Benante, drums and guitar, John Bush, vocals, Joey Vera, bass, and Scott Ian, rhythm guitar and vocals.

ily out of the band.

"It's just a separation that needed to happen," said Ian. "The door with Frankie isn't closed. Maybe it will continue this way, maybe it won't. It's just something we really don't know yet."

Over the past two years, Scott Ian's face has popped up on several cable shows in which he offers up commentary on topics such as the greatest metal bands of all time or past and present pop culture trivia. His most notable television appearance is on VH-1's addictive "I Love the 90s" series.

"Yeah, it's fun," said Ian on his recent barrage of TV spots. "It's something that's really easy to do and I kind of enjoy doing it

because I have a really super head for trivial knowledge. That's why I always get the phone calls asking me if I want to come in and do more."

Aside from metal, Ian listed early punk bands as huge musical influences.

"I am into all kinds of punk," said Ian, "British stuff like The Sex Pistols, The Clash, Discharge, The Exploited, and GBH. I was really into the bands that came from the New York Hardcore scene like Agnostic Front, The Cro Mags, and Murphy's Law." He also said, "I was a big fan of the Misfits and we actually got to tour with them in '96 and '97 when they first reunited."

Ian said that he loves to read

and counts Stephen King as one of his all-time favorite authors.

"I read a lot," said Ian. "I collect all of Stephen King's first and limited editions. I'm also into Charles Bukowski, Hunter S. Thompson, and The Lord of the Ring series."

With no signs of stopping, Anthrax is planning to put together new material this spring and will be playing more dates in the end of February. Check out any of VH-1 or MTV's countdowns or pop culture trivia shows and you will be sure to see Scott Ian. To find out what the current scoop is on the band go to [www.anthrax.com](http://www.anthrax.com).

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