



MINISTRY'S AL JOURGENSEN AND MIKE SCACCIA BLUDGEON BROTHERS

When guitarist Mike Scaccia heard Al Jourgensen's groundbreaking industrial rock band Ministry in 1986, it was love at first stun. "They blew me away," recalls Scaccia. "I'd come from a punk and metal background, and what Al was doing was like nothing I'd ever heard."

Two years later, the two were working together. Before long, Scaccia's previous band, Rigor Mortis, had folded, and Mike had joined Ministry. And today, as they prepare for a new Ministry album, their collaboration remains just as combusive.

Jourgensen explains the partnership: "We suit each other's weaknesses and strengths. Mike is the technician, and I'm the ideas guy. Obviously, I can play some technical things, and Mike has ideas, too. But he is so strong as a technician, whereas I'm more of a broad-strokes guy."

Much of their musical effort goes into finding ways to make their guitars sound huge in a context where everything sounds huge. Unlike many rock players, who must compete

for space only with bass and drums, Jourgensen and Scaccia must grapple with those instruments as well as dense layers of synths, samples, and machine beats.

"It's hard making the guitars sound heavy in the context of so much other mayhem," notes Jourgensen. "It's a lot of work finding an EQ spectrum for the guitars. There's no specific process—it's different on every song, depending on the amount of external noises."

"It depends where you want the song to go," adds Scaccia. "There are many different approaches to making a part sound big in the studio. It involves micing, the gear you use, how you play. I try everything at my disposal: different guitars, amps, processors, and distortion boxes. I try never to stick to one basic sound."

Considering the monumental sound of Ministry's guitars, it may be surprising to hear that the band rarely reinforces their riffs with more than two tracks. "Usually there's just a right-



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channel guitar and left-channel guitar," explains Jourgensen. "They double each other, usually with a different guitar and amp setting on each side. If there's a lead, we just pan it up the center."

Another surprise: While they occasionally drop their low E strings to D, Al and Mike rarely lower their entire tunings. "We don't go down to C, where these nü metal guys like to spend their time," says Al. "On the other hand, we double all the guitar parts with a bass synth playing just a straight square wave or triangle wave, an octave below the guitars. We only add a little of it—it's more of a texture than an obvious part, but it fills out the bottom."

There's a final component to the Ministry guitar sound: the Yamaha SG1000, a classic '70s solidbody since reissued by the company. "That guitar is us, period," says Jourgensen. "It's so big, you only need two tracks. There's an absolute chunk to the SG1000. You can hear every scrape, and you get all the lowest lows and highest highs. It's a really raw sound." Ministry's axes are customized with black finishes and custom pickups.

Jourgensen and Scaccia share a longstanding passion for another raw sound: vintage country music. "Basically," says Al, "all I listen to is old country: Ferlin Husky, George Jones, Buck Owens." Adds Mike, "I listen to Buck Owens, Johnny Cash, and old bluegrass on a daily basis, and I've always been a huge Chet Atkins fan."

Jourgensen has good news and bad news for Ministry fans. First, the good: "We're starting the new album in two weeks. It's going to be called *The Last Sucker*. We're going to play it completely live in the studio, and record it live. We've done parts of records like that before, but never an entire album. The style is very guitar-based, very metal. We'll just turn the amp up to 11, and let it fly."

And the bad news? Al says it will be the band's last studio album. "My career is winding down from fronting a band to producing other bands. I'd like to give other bands the knowledge I've gained over 25 years of making mistakes. I want to be inspired by new things and new people and let them have a shot at it. That's why we set up our record label, Thirteenth Planet. I'm going to be a label guy." He chuckles. "Only without the smarminess and sleaziness."