

STAIN'D'S JON WYSOCKI

# REDISCOVERING THE RAW

Over the last decade, Staind has established itself as one of hard rock's most successful bands. Relentless touring and full-throttle performances have earned the Massachusetts quartet a fanatical live following, while tuneful, slickly produced songs such as "Been a While" and "Outside" have become huge radio-fueled hits.

Now, Staind is revisiting the rawer sound of their earlier days. They're holed up in their Western Massachusetts studio with producer Johnny K. (3 Doors Down, Disturbed) to work on a follow-up to 2005's *Chapter V*, their last album of new material.

"It's hard to put a label on the direction, though it feels like we're going back to our first record," says drummer Jon Wysocki. "The new music has a heavier vibe. I haven't heard anything that sounds like 'Outside' and 'Been a While,' with clean, crispy-sounding guitars and slick production. We're going to try to keep it raw this time."

According to Wysocki, who's played with the group since its inception, the band is modifying their arranging process. "The way we've always done it," says Jon, "is that Mike Mushok, our guitar player, comes up with an idea, which gets shaped by our vocalist, Aaron Lewis. Then we meet and work out our parts together, figuring what goes into the verse, what goes into the chorus, and so on. We each have our own little recorders at rehearsal, and we take things home to work on. But this time we didn't get together as a band before we got together with the producer in the studio. We've been recording everything since Day 1, listening back as we go along. We're probably going to get a few more arrangements down, and then start tracking drums."

Another change is Wysocki's drum kit. A recent convert to Yamaha drums, Jon is recording with a silver-sparkle Oak Custom kit. "I wanted to try something different, so I talked to Joe Testa at Yamaha Drums, who was awesome. I told him how I like to tune the heads tight, and how I want to hear the attack of the head, but also some warmth. He suggested this kit, and I love it. We haven't started seriously tweaking the drum sounds for the album yet, but here in the room they sound amazing, so I know we have a great starting point."

Wysocki's kit has 10", 12", 16", and 18" toms and a 24" x 17" bass drum. "Oak has the warmth of maple, but with more loudness and brightness," notes Jon. "I'm also changing over from a 22" kick. This one sounds a lot bigger, but it's got the punch of a 22". I'm mainly using Yamaha's Steve Jordan 13" x 6 1/2" signature snare. I tune it high, too. It's got the depth of a standard-sized snare, but the attack of a piccolo. I love piccolos, but they can get to be too much across a whole record or a whole show."

Jon's penchant for high-tuned drums is partly a matter of taste, and partly necessity. "The guys tune down," he explains. "The guitars and basses are so low that I need a sound that doesn't add mush. I try to keep my sound as present as possible. However, they're using more standard-tuned guitars this time around, so there may be a place for some lower toms as well. But I've always loved that high-tuned sound, the same way I've always liked little cymbal splashes and bell-of-the-ride inflections, at least if they're done tastefully." He pauses, then chuckles. "I'm not saying I've always done it tastefully, but I do like that approach."

That sonic recipe has simmered for a long time. Jon started playing at age five when his dad bought him his first kit. "I used to come home from school, go downstairs, and play 'til my folks got home from work. I'd put in my eight-track tapes and play along. Kiss. The Beatles. Zeppelin. Michael Jackson. Earth, Wind & Fire." Later Wysocki was inspired by Stewart Copeland, Jeff Porcaro, and Alex Van Halen. "I love John Bonham, too," he adds. "But who doesn't?"

Staind hopes their still-untitled album will be released by Spring. "We're in here working our butts off," laughs Jon. "You want to make sure your parts are right, because you have to live with the results forever. That's why we spend a lot of time arranging, weeding, and coming up with final arrangements. As long as I'm happy listening back to what I played, I'm good!"

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