

Thursday, September 01, 2005

An Interview With Edsel Dope



Artemis recording artists Dope released their fourth studio album, "American Apathy" on July 26th. The new album again finds multi-talented frontman Edsel Dope wearing numerous creative hats. Referred to by Metal Edge as "the visionary behind one of the most explosive and underrated acts in music", Edsel ably handles the roles of lead singer, guitarist, producer, mixer and chief songwriter on "American Apathy".

Since the release of their debut album, 1999's "Felons And Revolutionaries", Dope has built a rabid fanbase through relentless touring. They have shared stages with the likes of Slipknot, Kid Rock, Powerman 5000 and Cold, and are currently on the road in support of their new album with Mushroomhead. Epiphone's Don Mitchell recently talked with Edsel from his tour bus somewhere in California:

EPI: How did you get started on your musical journey?

EDSEL: I actually started out playing drums. I lived down in South Florida and as a kid I was playing in bands with guys who were seven or eight years older than me. That was back in the 80's so it was Guns & Roses, Motley Crue, stuff like that. At some point I decided that if I was going to move forward musically, I really needed to play another instrument. Nothing wrong with drums but if I was going to succeed in meeting my goals I felt like I needed to get out from behind the kit. I bought a crappy little \$100 guitar and a little four track and started doodling around with my ideas. I'd take those influences of Guns & Roses, Motley Crue and KISS and meld them with my other influences of bands like Nine Inch Nails and Ministry and that's how I started to develop the sound of DOPE.



EPI: Did you learn to play guitar by ear or study theory with someone?

EDSEL: Totally by ear and feel. I'm really ignorant when it comes to music theory. I know if I like the way things sound but looking at the fingerboard, I couldn't tell you how it all ties together. I've spent a lot of time learning Pro Tools and those kinds of things and have spent the past few years honing my engineering and producing skills but I've never seriously studied guitar theory. I'm really thankful at this point in my career to have Virus in the band because he is incredibly musical. The guy was giving guitar lessons when he was seventeen years old and he knows what notes to play and what notes go with them. That's just not me... I'm all ear.

EPI: When you moved from drums to guitar did you have intentions of singing as well?

EDSEL: No, that kind of happened by accident. I was demoing all these songs on my little 4 track, always expecting that if I ever had a band for these songs that someone else would sing them. When I started playing them for other people everybody was very encouraging to me. They liked the sound and felt like my voice worked well for what I was trying to do. In 1997 I did my first gig as a singer. Until then, I had never played out in any other band doing anything other than playing drums.

EPI: I've heard a lot of stories about how DOPE created their own buzz in the New York clubs. What were those early days like from a business standpoint?

EDSEL: DOPE definitely started from the street. Once we had developed our sound and had three or four recorded songs we started spreading cassettes and stickers around New York City to see what kind of vibe we could get. Before we knew it, we had a following with people emailing us

and visiting our website. It was right around the time that people were just starting to get on-line and we were one step ahead of a lot of bands and really exploited the hell out of our website. We did this for a good eight to twelve months before we ever played a show! Every time Rob Zombie would come to town or Nine Inch Nails or KORN or any band that I thought the kids would like our music, we took every dime we had and made flyers and cassette tapes to hand out at these shows. Five hundred kids would be in line and we made sure that all of them got a free DOPE tape. As a result of all of this, the first show that DOPE ever played was sold out with a line of kids down the block waiting to get in.

EPI: A lot of bands would think you need to get out and play as many shows as you can to build a following but you kind of worked it backwards.

EDSEL: It made perfect sense to me. I thought, why do I want to go play a show for eight people? Let's just hone our skills in a rehearsal room and in a studio and build up this hype. If we suck, then nobody's going to come back but if we're good then we're going to have this cool thing going on. I don't think we were awesome but we didn't suck and people liked what they saw and came back. After eight or nine shows like that we were ready to sign a deal.

EPI: I have to say I am impressed with your business savvy! A lot of bands miss the whole business side and then wonder why their rockin' band fails.

EDSEL: You know, I've just always been a hustler man. When I was in sixth grade my mom gave me fifty bucks spending money for a school trip to Washington DC. I took it all to the 7/11 and bought \$50 worth of candy and then bagged it up into smaller amounts knowing that all those kids were going to want candy on the train ride to DC. I sold it to them at a jacked-up rate and ended up with \$150 in my pocket. It's no different with the band, I just wanted to find a different way to promote DOPE. My mom was a dreamer that always told me I could be whatever I wanted to be and my dad was a realist that always told me that if I worked harder than the guy next to me, I wouldn't have to get lucky. A lot of people hope to get lucky, and obviously to become a star you need a little bit of luck, but I think if you work hard and use your head you won't have to depend on luck as much as the next guy.

EPI: I know you have been producing some other bands lately. Anything exciting we should look for?

EDSEL: I'm working with a band called MAKE SHIFT ROMEO out of Fort Myers. I had been looking for band to produce that was doing something outside the metal genre and this band was perfect. When it comes to producing I really don't want to produce bands that give me any sort of the same feeling that I get from working on DOPE projects. I really want to stretch out and work on other types of music. This band is more of an all around rock band and the stuff sounds great! I'm also working with a band called SUCK OR PUNCH. They are a pop-rock act that blends sounds like Green Day and Weizer.

EPI: DOPE is sounding better than ever on American Apathy and we think it's awesome that you choose to play Epiphone.

EDSEL: I've been hooked on Epiphone since the early days. The guitar I used to track 90% of the last two DOPE records is an [Epiphone Les Paul Studio](#). It sounds killer! I can go right into a Neve console direct with it and it sounds great or I can run it through a mic'd Boogie and it sounds great. I have a [Vinnie Bass](#) that I got when they first made them years ago and I still use that thing to this day in the studio. The thing sounds amazing! I've also got a [Flamekat](#) that I use live and I just got a [Goth Explorer](#) about three months ago that I love. I think slowly but surely that Goth Explorer will



become my main guitar. I love the way it plays and it sounds great. Then I've got a few Epiphone Les Pauls and some that I've lit on fire (laughs)... but yeah, the Epiphones are always what I've played and I've never felt the need to explore other guitars because these have always worked great.



[Video: Edsel playing Epiphone](#)
("Survive" from American Apathy)

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[Video: Edsel playing Flamingo](#)
("I Am" from Group Therapy)

For more information about Edsel and his band visit www.DopeArmy.com



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