

Thursday, April 01, 2004

Exclusive Interview With SUGARCULT



Formed in 1998 in Santa Barbara, CA, [Sugarcult](#) set out to work with the following ingredients: 4 guys, 3 chords, 2 guitars and 1 van. Armed with a batch of energized songs, the band toured the west coast generating a healthy buzz, selling their two indie records and homemade t-shirts out of the back of their van.

In Spring 2001, after signing with Ultimatum Music, Sugarcult entered Rumbo Studios in Los Angeles to record their debut album with producer Matt Wallace (the Replacements, Faith No More). The album, titled, "Start Static", was released on August 21, 2001 (and was recorded in the same room as Guns 'n' Roses "Appetite For Destruction" and No Doubt's "Tragic Kingdom"). As of April 2003, "Start Static" has sold more than 250,000 copies and climbing!!

Sugarcult have been on the road since Summer 2001, doing what they love best, playing lots and lots of shows. The band played the Vans Warped Tour in 2001 and 2002, on the second stage on the Blink 182 - New Found Glory Tour, and have done entire US Tours with Reel Big Fish, Goldfinger, Good Charlotte, Unwritten Law, Less Than Jake and The Ataris. The band has also played a ton

of radio station festivals around the country, at the Decibel Music Conference in Trinidad, West Indies and at the Lifebeat / MTV Music Video Awards Pre-Party in New York City with The Hives and Jimmy Eat World.

Recently, Epiphone rep Will Jones had the chance to chat with Tim Pagnotta (Vocals, Guitar, Songwriter) and Marco 72 (Guitar).

EPI: How did you get started on guitar?

Tim: Who wouldn't want to play electric guitar?? My parents were really cool and didn't make me play piano or violin, so they were cool with me when my brother and I started playing drums. I took up guitar so we could jam. I got my first electric when I was 17,

an Epiphone [Sheraton](#), which I still play! I moved out of the house to Santa Barbara and started writing songs and learned more chords to use in my songwriting. I then started a band called Sugarcult... this band is the only one I've ever been in. We just kept plugging away...no



Tim with his Epiphone Sheraton-II

big story, just plugging away with lots of adventures along the way. I got the Sheraton at Guitar Center and my dad told me that if I didn't learn how to play it he would take it, because he played guitar. That Epiphone is still one of my workhorse guitars and I still play it every night. You develop a relationship with your first guitar...most of my friends played a Les Paul or an SG...I just thought that a hollowbody really looked more rock and roll...you know in the movie Back to the Future...Marty McFly jamming on that red Dot just looked so cool! So, I just wanted something different. These days I notice more players with hollowbodies.

Marko: I was like every other kid, I wanted to be either a rock star or an astronaut and guitars are easier to get your hands on than a rocket ship. Eventually I got my hands on my first acoustic guitar out of the trash. I



Marco 72 with his Epi DOT.

remember jumping up and down on my mom's bed looking at myself in the mirror. The guitar flew out of my hands and through the window and that was the end of that one. In junior high I was totally obsessed with music, so I got back into playing guitar and I got a really shitty one from someone at school for \$40. That's when I learned you shouldn't start out on a shitty guitar. I tell kids I see to get something that plays nice and stays in tune. That shitty one I had was a nylon string and it's hard to play heavy metal like Iron Maiden or even Motley Crue on a classical guitar. I finally got my first electric and I'd roll my little practice amp on my skateboard along with my guitar down to whoever's house who had a drum set and we'd jam. In 8th or 9th grade I'd stay home on either Friday or Saturday night and the other one I'd go out. As soon as I could play bar chords and new a few tricks I started a band. We played punk rock mostly...instead

of Iron Maiden, punk rock was just easier. When I was 15 we started playing shows in people's driveways and backyards. I eventually switched to bass and played bass in tons of different bands. Now I've come full circle with Sugarcult, a guitar player turned bass player, turned guitar player.

EPI: Who were your guitar influences?

Marko: I'd say my main guitar influences were Rick Nielson with Cheap Trick, Ace Frehley from KISS and Angus young from AC/DC. I remember thinking that looks like a cool thing to do...when you're six, you don't care how he arpeggiates his chords, you just know that his sound is f___ing rad! I'd hang out and see local musicians in Santa Barbara playing music and you realize it's something you could really do. Another big influence was Chris Shiflet I remember he was a 14 year old guitar prodigy playing Randy Rhodes leads giving me inspiration. Angus Young and Ace don't give a f___ what I sound like, it's the guys you are hangin' out with who listen to you. I played with Chris all through high school and now he's the lead guitarist for the Foo Fighters...one of the most successful bands out there. Our drummer Ben taught me a lot...I came in to the band with a bass player's attitude...less is more...not just trying to shred as much as I could...that's what they liked about me.

Tim: Guitar players and musicians that have influenced me are Elvis Costello, Nirvana, Green Day, the Clash...everything influences me a little. Elvis Costello is my songwriting influence, the Police, the Cars, other bands from the punk

rock era...Blondie, the Pretenders. Chris Shiflet from Foo Fighters, Billy Joe from Green Day...Quinn from the Used, John Davis from Superdrag...my all time favorite is the Edge from U2.

EPI: Tell me about your experience with Epiphone.

Tim: I love Epiphone! I can play any guitar I want...I really like them. I feel like the construction of the guitars is really bad ass. They sound good! We record with Epiphone and play Epiphone live. We worked with a producer on our last record who wanted us to have other guitars in the studio. We used an [Epiphone Les Paul](#) for every rhythm track in the session.

On the new record I used a white [Elitist Les Paul Custom](#). I think Epiphone's are made really well. I own 12 different Epiphone's, all different types...I never have any problems. I do have a few other guitars, but Epiphone has stuck with the band from the beginning. Some of the best times of my life I had an Epiphone in my hand. I believe it brought me this far...so why change?



Tim with his Elitist LP Custom

Marko: Epiphone and Sugarcult go hand in hand. They were the first company to take a chance on us...we were doing shows around Santa Barbara and Cara Hogan saw something in our band. We needed some good gear and at the time couldn't afford anything fancy. When we recorded Start Static, our producers rented us some high-dollar vintage Gibson's and Fender's, but we ended up using our Epiphone's on 90% or more of the album. When you record all that matters is the sound and does it stay in tune and the Epiphone's got the job done. We've Gone crazy with Epiphone...if it ain't broke don't fix it...we enjoy playing Epiphone, they work and stay in tune. We've noticed a lot of other successful bands getting into Epiphone lately. We're really into the new Elitist stuff. We used one on every song on our new album.

EPI: What advice do you have for the guys just getting started?

Marko: Get a good guitar to start out on. You can find guitars for \$40 or \$140, but they won't play well and they will just leave you feeling frustrated. Spend a little more and get something better you can play when you start a band. You can get a great Epiphone for \$400-\$600...something like a Les Paul or 335 style. Also play with other people as much as possible. It will encourage you to

practice and get better. ..and buy a Ramones record...or buy a Sugarcult record...the guitar playing is really easy! (Laughs)

Tim: When you get started you mimic other musicians. Find out what makes them great...the sound...the songwriting...focus on the feeling the band relates. I'm a person of limited playing ability and limited singing ability but I have found a way to make music work for me...others can too. Just play what you feel and don't worry about natural ability.

EPI: So, at what point did you realize that girls liked musicians?

Tim: Early on I realized you don't have to be Joe jock to have a bunch of girlfriends! Sometimes it can be a problem...like when several girls show up at the same show expecting the same thing...so as soon as the show is over I disappear...we call that move "pulling a Houdini"...I remember not long ago I had a couple of girls visiting the same show, who had both driven a couple of hundred miles to see me. I was hiding out in my dressing room bathroom with one of them when one of the guys in my band busted in the dressing room yelling "Look who I brought to see you!" He had brought the other girl into my dressing room to see me. So here I was trapped in the bathroom with the first girl, trying to explain to her why another girl was waiting out side and not get slapped. I finally got on my cell phone and had my tour manager come and get the other girl out of the dressing room with some lame excuse so I could escape. We don't really have a nickname for that move, except maybe just "being an asshole!"

For more information on Sugarcult and alist of tour dates, visit them on-line at www.sugarcult.com.

