



TOOL

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Thirteen long years after we last heard a new Tool album, the band finally open up about one of the most secretive, hyped and eagerly anticipated records in metal history. What took so long?

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Tracking down the new Tool album is like a military operation. We know there will be one, but we don't know when, so we lie in wait looking for a private message in our in-boxes and decoding teasers on social media. One day, we get the signal and are summoned to

their record company's plush offices, accessed through an unmarked glass door. We sign a non-disclosure agreement, hand over our phones, and settle into a meeting room that's being monitored by CCTV.

Only then are we permitted to hear the album, at ear-splitting, brain-spinning, heart-shuddering volume – apparently at the band's request. No title or tracklisting are provided. We return three weeks later to hear it again with the extra intel.

Bassist Justin Chancellor is tickled when we tell him about the secrecy, but is grateful to the suits all the same. "Really?!" he chuckles, in a proper, friendly, down-to-earth London way. And then, "The people that work for us are trying to fulfil our best intentions, and not ruin the surprise. You know like when you buy a secretive birthday present for your wife? You hide it in the garage, you wrap it up, and you try not to spill the beans. On the day, you want it to be full impact."

That day is August 30, when all the fans' birthdays will come at once. They will finally be able to hear *Fear Inoculum* – Tool's fifth album, and their first in 13 years. Such is the anticipation, there's a whole subgenre of memes about waiting for it, featuring the likes of *The X-Files*' 'I Want To Believe' slogan and an elderly version of Beavis and Butt-Head. As an old-school band of a certain level, Tool rarely give interviews or post updates, so every quote or scrap of information is dissected at length. There's potential here to make people happy and sell a shitload of records.

But there may be other, more serious reasons for the security; Tool have a pool of obsessives who have directed their frustration about the delays at frontman Maynard James Keenan. As the face of the band, they hold him responsible.

"I felt bad for him, and he even told me he was getting death threats from these idiots out there," sighs drummer Danny Carey, whose insane

Tool (left to right): Danny Carey, Justin Chancellor, Adam Jones, Maynard James Keenan

beats are the lynchpin of Tool's distinctive, mesmeric sound. "They just have no idea what our work ethic is. These things don't happen, man. There's no other record that's going to sound like this Tool record. What you hear is what you get, and what you get is what it takes to get it done. And it's not an easy process."

We're talking to Danny over the phone on a Friday afternoon, as he sits inside Tool's Hollywood rehearsal space, their ground zero, surrounded by his "toys" – modular synthesisers and a mixing console that once belonged to late funk pioneer Rick James.

He moved there during 1989, living in one half and renting the other to local bands. It was here that he ending up jamming with creative misfit Maynard James Keenan, special-effects-artist-turned-guitarist Adam Jones and original bassist Paul D'Armour, stepping up to the plate because they couldn't find a drummer.

Inside, the foursome would spend hours experimenting with their polyrhythmic music, pushing the boundaries of 90s alt-metal and dropping acid together. They wrote 1992's confrontational EP *Opiate* and refined their sound for the following year's debut full-length *Undertow*, which launched them into the mainstream.

We end up speaking to Justin the day after Danny, at his own home studio on the outskirts of LA "in the middle of nowhere". He built the house with his wife, and it's his own personal paradise where he can blast music as loudly as he wants. But when he moved from the UK to LA to replace Paul D'Armour in 1995, as a fresh-faced 25-year-old, he crashed on the practice room floor.



TOOL

"I used to wake up in my sleeping bag and hear Danny jamming with his amazing jazz friends," recalls Justin. "I'd walk in and say, 'Hi, I'm Justin!' and then the guys from Tool would show up, and we'd start writing music. It's a pretty intense place for me. We've never let it go and we've written everything there."

For the uninitiated, "everything" means 1996's *Aenima*, a triple-platinum album that explored Jungian psychology. It means 2001's psychedelic *Lateralus*, a deep-dive into sacred geometry that interrogates the notion of what it means to be human and our connection with nature and the divine. It means 2006's *10,000 Days*, a more personal endeavour that paid tribute to Maynard's late mother, Judith Marie, who passed away 10,000 days after a brain aneurysm left her paralysed.

Now converted into a studio, Tool's rehearsal room is a dark, windowless bunker where Justin, Danny and Adam

spent three gruelling years writing *Fear Inoculum*. It almost broke them. Many times, they thought about quitting.

"I was ready to split up and go, 'Well if you guys can't commit to this, I'm just going to play with other people,'" Danny says wearily.

They arrived at the space after a turbulent few years. Riffs had been coming out of them during the five-year stint touring *10,000 Days*, but they don't write well on the road. They took a break for a couple of years, doing small runs here and there, during which time Danny and Adam had kids

"MAYNARD WAS GETTING DEATH THREATS FROM THESE IDIOTS"

DANNY CAREY

and the band were embroiled in a distracting, thorny, much-publicised multimillion-dollar lawsuit with their insurance company. It wasn't until around 2013/2014 that they were able to properly focus on writing.

For that three-year period, they wrote solidly from 1pm-5pm, Monday to Thursday, recording "crazy jams," before heading home to listen to them and attempting to make the pieces fit. Danny remembers *Pneuma*'s riff, a hooky, six-note progression, as an early breakthrough, along with the sinuous intro to *Invincible*. They scrutinised everything, binning whatever failed to meet their dizzyingly high standards.

The band put this down to a democratic approach that means they all have to be happy with the output. If they're not, they can't move on. Guitarist Adam Jones in particular is known as a self-confessed perfectionist who lives by the mantra, 'It's not good when it's done, it's done when it's good.'

For jazz aficionado Danny, content with jamming or improvising and sticking with the results, this is excruciating. "Everything Adam does has to be completely composed, and very thought-out, and he'll take many, many takes to dial it in absolutely perfect," he explains.

Then we hear the smile breaking through in his voice, the 6' 5" drummer coming across like a gentle giant. "But the end result I completely adore, so I believe in his work method, even though it drives me nuts. I hate it! I can't be around when he's doing it, because I just start melting down."

"Sometimes I thought we were nearly there," says Justin, with the air of a man who's been into battle and lived to tell the tale. "We'd written an album or we had some songs that were cool, and then we'd dump the whole lot and start again. It was devastating."

Let that sink in. While fans were glued to their computers and phones, frantically searching for any hint of new music, commenting on Reddit threads and Photoshopping memes, Tool were writing and trashing entire albums' worth of material.

Danny eventually half-delivered on his threats, temporarily going off and collaborating with other bands, releasing *Incite* with American jam band Volto! in 2013, and forming aquatic comedy metal band Legend Of The Seagullmen with Mastodon's Brent Hinds among others. They released their self-titled debut in 2018, its straight-up groove and seafaring lyrics a world away from Tool's intricate compositions.

The band powered through the pain, alternating between writing and playing in the States to pay the bills. Sometimes they didn't believe in the record and were ready to give up. Then they would rethink their approach, dream up new material and become re-energised. "The end of it was amazing," smiles Justin. "It fucking sounds stupid to say, but the last three years of it were really uplifting. Probably the grey hairs in my beard speak for us all!"

It was Justin, down-to-earth and candid, who eventually set a cut-off point and forced them into the studio. In early 2018, they started tracking



with returning producer Joe Barresi. "Other people weren't quite ready and I wasn't ready myself, but I thought, 'You know what? We've just got to lean forward right now.' Especially after 12 years, you don't even know if anyone cares any more."

Meanwhile, Maynard had been occupying himself. Over in Arizona, he had been tending to his vineyards, harvesting the grapes and turning them into wine at his own Caduceus

"WE'D WRITE AN ALBUM AND THEN DUMP IT. IT WAS DEVASTATING"

JUSTIN CHANCELLOR

Cellars. He made multiple albums with side-project Puscifer, most recently 2015's *Money Shot*, and had taken it on tour – complete with a troupe of lucha libre wrestlers. Last year, he and Billy Howerdel teamed up to release *Eat The*

Elephant – A Perfect Circle's first record in 14 years.

Though he's Tool's best-known personality and bears the burden of public accountability, he has little to do with the songs until they're approaching their finished form, preferring to leave a distinctive imprint without going back and forth for revisions. "When Maynard commits, he wants to commit to a final product," explains Danny. "He really doesn't like to have to change it after he's committed emotionally to something. I don't blame him for that at all."

He is also notoriously private when it comes to Tool's affairs. Though he's enthused to us about jumpstarting the Arizona wine industry and the sociopolitical themes of *A Perfect Circle*'s recent output, we're not granted an audience with him to chat about *Fear Inoculum*. So it's up to Justin to explain the concept behind the title, the meaning of which suggests vaccinating against your worries.

"It means immunising yourself against the things that make you afraid," confirms Justin. "As you grow



Yes, these are really the promo pics they sent us. Some things never change...

older, you wanna learn, you wanna change, you wanna evolve, and you don't want to live in fear. The fear of dying, fear of everything. Fear is the mindkiller, you know?"

What have been the biggest fears of Tool's past?

"I can't speak for everybody, but I guess it would be: do you have anything left to give? What's your purpose? When you're getting older, you think about what you have to offer, and what's the point of your life. We are all musicians, and we're not really good musicians. But we have this gracious gift that has been bestowed on us, and we don't want to disappoint. So I guess our biggest fear would be, just giving up."

It's strange to hear him being self-deprecating, especially given the reverential atmosphere surrounding the band and their quantifiable success. "I'm not self-deprecating really... I think it's an accident. The chemistry

and the alchemy of this band, we're very lucky to have fallen together."

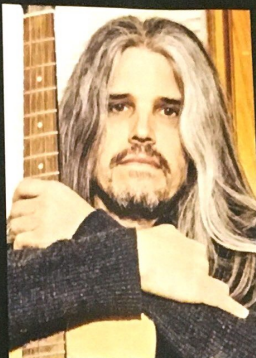
Danny is more direct about the title: it's a message about ignoring those critics who've continuously scrutinised the quartet.

"We were kind of feeling like we were growing into our next level as a band, making progress in the way we composed, and just not giving a shit any more about what anybody thinks. Kind of conquering our fears about critics and whatnot!" he explains. "The *Fear Inoculum* thing was, 'get rid of the fear and don't worry about it', especially after we had taken so long, because we knew we were going to take heat."

On May 1, 2019, Maynard tweeted his own sarcastic meme. It featured an old band picture with a thought bubble coming out of his head, reading: "Feelin Cute. Might play some new material on this upcoming tour. idk." It was

"KIRK HAMMETT HELPED MY PLAYING"

Tool guitarist Adam Jones reveals how he keeps in creative shape



With so many years since Tool's last release, how would you say you've evolved as a guitarist since 2006?

Adam Jones: "That's a good question! I've definitely been practising more than ever. Since the last record came out, when I meet a guitarist I like, I'll ask them what they do to warm up or what do they do to stay good. Most of them show me a technique or a stretch – or maybe a practice idea. The last time I saw Kirk Hammett,

I asked and he sent me a video of this forwards/backwards run going up and down the neck of the guitar, and it really helped my playing a lot. Instead of doing something like just trying to learn the lead in *Master Of Puppets*."

You've always taken influence from places outside of the guitar world – art, film, science. Was there anything like that that had an impact on your writing on this record?

"It's honestly all such a blur. I try to be like a sponge and vulnerable, and I try to ask a lot of questions and learn. I also try to look at the world – the keyword being 'try' – in a more forgiving way. When I watch a movie, I pretend I'm 12, because when I was 12 I liked everything. So many people are so jaded about everything and I try to avoid that. I just try to do that with the arts and music in general, and when I hear something, I ask myself what influences came in when someone was creating it and I acknowledge that a player might not be Eddie Van Halen, but they're good and they're good in their own unique way. I try to pick up on that and try to think from my chest instead of from my head."

It's quite funny to hear that a forgiving gaze is the key for you, considering how legendary Tool's perfectionism is

"I don't know if I was the first person to say it, but I always thought it as a kid and I still think: It's not good when it's done, it's done when it's good. That's how we go about what we do."



Honestly we don't even
know whose house this is

accompanied by his recurring hashtag, taking the piss out of nagging fans: #whileyouwerewhiningwewereworking. The internet revved into overdrive.

Four days later, they stood onstage at Jacksonville's Welcome To Rockville festival and aired *Descending* with lyrics for the first time, a black pyramid image looming behind Danny's kit while red and yellow lights pierced the gloom. They debuted *Invincible*, with its multiple false endings. These were rapturous moments for fans, and vulnerable ones for Justin.

"THEN I LOOKED OVER AT MAYNARD AND I JUST FLIPPED HIM OFF"

JUSTIN CHANCELLOR

"It was literally like standing in front of thousands of people without any clothes on, and playing a new song that no one's ever heard before, and trying to pull it off and seeing if it fits in with all your tried and trusted greats," he says, anxiousness creeping into his voice even now. "That was a leap of faith, you know what I mean? And it's not that amazing, I will be self-deprecating again. But you know what is amazing, is that there were tons of people having a great time and enjoying it."

A month later, their first European tour in 12 years kicked off at Berlin's Mercedes-Benz Arena on June 2, and *Metal Hammer* were there to see the show – a visual feast featuring screens, trippy projections and eye-frying lasers. For all of Tool's perceived seriousness and mammoth studio

sessions, it was obvious the guys were having fun.

During *Invincible*, Justin could be seen doing a little dance – something he brings up today. During the first few minutes, there's no bass part, so he devised a routine where he would start pointing at a different member of the crowd on each drum beat, causing everyone to clap. What happened next is an affectionate glimpse into Tool's dynamic.

"One day during the tour, Maynard's like, 'Excuse me, Jus, can I have a quick word with you?' And I was like, 'Oh no, I'm in trouble.' And he goes, 'Can I ask you a favour? You know in *Invincible*, can you not get the crowd to clap during that part? Because it really throws me off!' The next night, I didn't do the pointing thing, and it was hard for me. I'm like, 'What am I going to do, I'll just stand in the shadows and be quiet.' And guess what? They all clapped

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anyway! They're literally clapping a polyrhythm! And I looked over at him and I just flipped him off."

One of the most striking features of their new production is the giant, seven-pointed, illuminated star suspended from the ceiling. *Fear Inoculum* has a weird relationship with the number seven; there are rhythms where they explore 7/4 or 7/3, and a riff they count in 21, which they count as three rounds of seven.

"Well, one of the songs ended up in seven, just out of the riffs we were coming up with, so it was sort of subliminal, I suppose, at the very infantile stages of writing," explains Danny, who's long been Tool's resident numerology/occult scholar. "But if you go from six to seven, it's more of an insightful progression, just in the number sequence. Anybody could draw a six-sided star, but to draw a seven-sided star, you have to come from a different place."

We're left pondering this seriously cryptic explanation long after the interview ends.

Tool are no longer the same band that innocently gelled in Danny's practice room. They have evolved from the outspoken immediacy of *Opiate*, through philosophy, involved time signatures and increasing track lengths; *Fear Inoculum* is a labyrinthine prog odyssey with a runtime of more than 80 minutes. The songs undulate meditatively, and long instrumental passages wind between MJK's vocals.

Justin pragmatically insists they're "not prog rock, we're not categorisable," but there's no denying these songs take time and effort to digest. In 2019, that's a big ask, especially since Tool aren't on streaming services at the time of going to press, meaning a whole generation of heavy music fans are growing up without them. There's a line on *Invincible* about a 'warrior, struggling to remain relevant'. We ask Danny whether he's worried about Tool remaining relevant.

"I have a hard time finding validity in a lot of things I hear now," he says carefully. "Part of it is that you get old, and I've kind of heard everything!

Ha ha ha! I really didn't know if we were gonna still be accepted, because especially doing this route, we went the opposite way even more, like making a shorter song 10 minutes long, and realising, 'Oh man, is anyone even gonna buy this?' But I think people are starved for a truly alternative band."

The sold-out arenas indicate he's right. So does that continuing secrecy around this most protected of bands. Our interview with Danny is only confirmed on the day, and our time with Justin the day before. The calls are monitored and we're only allowed 30 minutes with each bandmember – barely enough time to scratch the surface of this industrious and life-changing 13-year period. We're not permitted to shoot the band, instead relying on photos they submit to us at the last minute. In short, it's Tool's world and we're just living in it.

Change, or at least more forward motion, might be on the horizon. Danny says *Fear Inoculum* is the final part of a five-album deal, leaving them as "free agents" with more motivation. "My hope is we get in and knock out another record. We have tons of riffs and jams and things. It's not going to take 12 years, or if it does, I'll probably be so old I can't pick up my sticks any more!"

He laughs, but there's gravity to his words; the oldest in the band, he turned 58 this year, and will be 71 if the band undertake another comparable cycle. But that's for future Tool to worry about. What really shines through is the band's gratitude for getting *Fear Inoculum* out. Before we hang up with Justin, he tells us of his plan to toast his achievement, and another interview completed, by unwinding with a celebratory beer.

"It was our living breath, to get this done. It was basically everything that was us, and I'm really proud that we actually stuck with it," he confesses. "And it's a little bit lame, because it's just music. But for us, it's everything we aspire to be. People believe in us. Not many bands get the support from enough people to actually encourage you to go through with it."

"The morale in our band is better than it's been in ages," adds Danny. "I think it's such a relief giving birth to this record, that now we're like happy parents, and we're feeling giddy."

Even if we have to wait anxiously outside the delivery room door until 2032, we've got a hell of a lot of music to enjoy in the meantime. **H**

FEAR INOCULUM WILL BE OUT ON AUGUST 30 VIA MUSIC FOR NATIONS



GREY MATTER

We get inside the head of renowned artist and longtime Tool collaborator Alex Grey

When did you start to discover your own style?

Alex Grey: "In high school when I was 17 years old and found Michelangelo, Dali and Tchelitchew, they opened some kind of doorway to the visionary worlds for me. When I got to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, my roommate, Richard Moss, introduced me to the work of [German artist] Mati Klarwein, one of the greatest psychedelic visionary painters, beloved by Miles Davis, Santana, Warhol and Jimi Hendrix. That opened me up to the world of the Viennese Fantastic Realists like Ernst Fuchs and then I found H.R. Giger's [1977 book] *Necronomicon*. So by the age of 21, in 1975, I was making visionary paintings based on psychedelic experiences."

How did your time at Harvard Medical School inform your work?

"I photographed some remarkable teratological [abnormally physically developed] specimens in the anatomical museum there and spent some time in the basement in a morgue, literally the underworld, preparing bodies for anatomy class. It imbued a profound respect around the subject of mortality and a lifelong fascination with the beauty and sacredness of the body at every level of cell, organ, fibre, and sinew. How consciousness resides in each of our bodies is a profound mystery, as is the passing away of that connection with the body. Buddha said the greatest teacher is Death. Death should shake us into realising the precious temporariness of our time on Earth."

When did you first try psychedelics, what was it like, and how did it impact your art?

"I was a 21-year-old, deeply depressed atheist performance artist. Waking up in the morning on the last day of art

school, I dared God to show me a reason not to kill myself. Later that afternoon I was saying goodbye to my art professor, and a classmate, Allyson, drove by and invited us to her end-of-the-year art school party happening that night. On Allyson's couch, I had my first LSD journey on May 30, 1975. Behind closed eyes, I was spiralling through an inner tunnel of awareness, a 'rebirth canal'. I was in the dark, going toward the light. The light was infinite love and divine wisdom, it felt like God was revealed through a visionary symbol. The Polar Unity Spiral [Alex's name for this curling space going from black to white] showed me that the opposites were connected by all the shades of grey. Grey brought the opposites together, and that was what I wanted to do with my art. So, I decided to change my name. Allyson knew the experience of God contact. We fell in love and have been together ever since that night."

Why do you think the flaming eye is so important to Tool fans?

"It is a symbol developed in my work since the 1980s as a symbol of heightened consciousness. In the *Lateralus* album, I used the flaming eye at the creative power centres of the hand, heart, throat and third eye of the singing anatomical figure. Adam seemed to recognise the logo-like quality and utility of the symbol. Soon enough, fans sent pictures of some amazing flaming eye tattoos on every part of the body."

What's the most challenging commission that you've done?

"The Net of Being was a painting based on an ayahuasca vision in 2002. I had been working on it for years when Adam saw it and wanted to use it for 10,000 Days. This painting was not a commission, but it was probably my most challenging vision to realise."

Alex Grey in 2006 with Albert Hofmann, the Swiss scientist best known for his research into LSD



What's the latest news on your art space, the Chapel Of Sacred Mirrors?

"Chapel of Sacred Mirrors, CoSM, was co-founded with my beloved artist wife, Allyson. CoSM became a non-profit in 1996 and an Art Church in 2008, a place for community to explore creativity as a spiritual practice. CoSM is now building Entheon, a 12,000-square-foot, three-storey Sanctuary of Visionary Art. Inside Entheon there will be a Tool Shrine."

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