

COVER STORY

LUCKY 13

After a seemingly interminable wait of 13 years, **TOOL** return this month with **FEAR INOCULUM**, their most challenging, epic work yet. And with it, predictably, comes a lot of questions. **DANNY CAREY** and **JUSTIN CHANCELLOR** separate the fact from the fiction...

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Can I ask you something?" interjects Justin Chancellor in his bass, unsmilingly. "It's a weird award... How long should the album have taken?"

The question Kerrang! has had of Tool's bassist, on behalf of fans worldwide, has been waiting for Fear Inoculum quite as long as he's been waiting for the forthcoming fifth album, which is, without question, worth what it is – as sprawling as it is densely composed, enigmatic yet a cryptic, primal and beautiful. In short, then, it's the most Tool album they've ever made, and it's brilliant. At almost 90 minutes it's far from short, though, and almost too much to process on first listen. There are many entry points or answers. It's also an album somewhat out of time because of the stocky, square-jawed format, and it asks much of listeners in an age when less demanding options are a step away.

It's also an album that has taken 13 years to arrive as the follow-up to 2006's 10,000 Days.

It's clear from this conversation that Fear Inoculum has been made by four men who are separate adults and whose voices continue to coalesce into something magical, despite any differences they might have. It's particularly Adam and drummer Danny Carey, for instance, that there's been a chat about not leaving it so long between records next time, and you get a very different reply.

"There hasn't but I do think we should do it because I'm not getting any younger," says Danny in a drawl as hulking as his 6ft 5in frame. "The drums need to be attacked in a certain way for it to sound like Tool, so it's going to have to involve much more of a risk next time. I hope we do another."

"I hope we don't," murmur Justin. "What a waste." He laughs the diabolical. Welcome to an interview with one of the world's most serious bands – which, as is obvious, is very serious at all. Sat in a loft studio in the heart of Los Angeles, the duo both wearing a pair of jeans, shooting the shit in their telephone – cracking beers, cracking wise and, especially in Justin's case, heckling one another at any opportunity.

"It's been a long time since after the release of 10,000 Days, and we're not the same band, talking the question of the album's approach," says Danny. "I just want to see each other for a little while."

"Quite a long while," adds Justin. "We were trying to come up with something and enjoy

being around each other, and sometimes it fell apart. We went home and said, 'I don't want to see you until we play that festival'."

"And we did, and we did it live," adds Danny. Tool were sued over artwork credits, which snowballed into a multi-million-dollar action when the band were subsequently sued by their insurers over technicalities in the case. They countered suit and eventually won. "And

Jim Henson Company Lot originally built by Charlie Chaplin, not only for its brilliant drum room but also its musical history, which sees the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Wonder and Police. He's more comfortable letting his kit do the talking than his mouth, which, he suggests, is the cause of frustration at drum dinks where he needs to make sure people like both. He is, however, patient with all lines of enquiry and as a fastidious with his answers as his playing. "I'm not afraid of his craft, in fact, that on Fear Inoculum's instrumental track Chocoalte Chip Trip, he nailed his fan base," he relates, sitting down in one take while everyone else was sent out for lunch. And while that title might sound tongue in cheek, it serves two serious purposes. First, it's the name of his band, Billy Cobham, the Panamanian American jazz drummer who worked with Miles Davis, and whose death in 2012 marked the close of the young Danny's life. Secondly, along with Fear Inoculum's two other tracks, it's a song of inoculation (parody an angst-filled atmosphere) and Mockingbird (a strange closer that sounds like a bird call, with a bit of an avian of distressed birds); it provides a sonic palette clearance between epic tracks Danny's now known dyes are "big band" chez.

"By cutting some lobes on them, it gives us all the opportunity to be writing in a better mood to catch our breath before we go into another 13-minute extravaganza," the drummer says. "It's not that it's a last resort; it's that on this record I wanted it to be the same tempo as the rest of it."

"All these other songs are written with the idea of this or that, but our only concern is where we meet," adds Danny of what sets Tool apart. "When we get on stage, we're not thinking about anything else."

us,

that's what it goes.

Four years ago when we were looking at this, I wanted to try to do a record that was one giant song."

"I never asked what we were," Englishman Justin, who's been an opposite to Danny, creatively. A composer at heart, he and guitarist Adam Jones were forever tinkering with Fear Inoculum's tracks – a task he relishes, says Danny, "because the other band members fucking crasy". Justin still kindly refers to himself as "the new guy" despite being part of Tool for 21 of the 29 years. He's been taking about the band's "dark architecture", tending to take the piss to mitigate his discomfort with this part of the process. So when Danny says that responses to descending and invading the studio were often "colder" (which most tool tour had), "renewed his faith", Justin adds... "in Jesus Christ." When the drummer suggests a new 10-minute-plus song doesn't necessarily mean a 10-hour session, they seem more like half an hour.

This subversive sense of humour undoubtedly bonds Justin and Tool frontman



It's hard to believe Adam had a nervous breakdown when he started on Fear Inoculum

"NO-ONE TELLS US WHAT TO DO BECAUSE WE'RE SO HARD ON EACH OTHER"

BARRY CHASEY

then we started working. We spent a good, solid five years on it, like on all the other Tool records. You could say it's dictated 13 years, because there's nothing wrong with that."

Danny Carey carries the laid-back air of a gentle giant, which made his earlier career as a drummer for Ministry look like an explosive. A musician first and foremost, he chose to record his parts for Fear Inoculum at Henson Recording Studios, part of the



TOOL'S GOLD...

Revisiting an epic back catalogue of albums...

UNDEROW (****)

While it doesn't quite reflect the heights they reached at their height, the band's debut never ceases to have all of the elements in place: technical skill, an understanding of dynamics and, in "Rains for Rebar," brilliant songs. It's also the only Tool record to be at #1 on the *Billboard* 200 chart. Plus, it's the one to common track on playing guitars.

KRIMINA (****)

It's doing no disservice to Underow that its follow-up was a single flop forward, upward and outward. In open-to-the-right, Tool had a breakthrough that provided a doorway to a new level of artistry informed by the work of Sufi psychonaut Carl Jung. As title-track, which find Maynard within a Cartesian grid and into the ocean, sooty and scorched from the singer's soul, not, comedian Bill Hicks, who died in 1994. In 1995, the song was a GRAMMY Award for Best Metal Performance.

LATERALUS (****)

Tool's most popular prog-oriented space odyssey is their third LP, which is rechristened in the 75th-anniversary running time. It's co-produced by David Borrill, who worked on *Rhino*, Lateralus stands as a fan favorite. In 2002, the track "Bleeding" earned the band a GRAMMY for Best Metal Performance category – yet it's far from the album's best moment. Listen to the dimly-bla-hs of "Parabola" an off-tread for a mind-bending opus.

10,000 DAYS (****)

Maynard's first solo effort, *10,000 Days*, died in 2003. For the last 22 years – or 10,000 days – of her life she had no personal projects. That's a tribute. She tracks "Wings For Mario" Parts 1 and 2, from the centerpiece on an album that doesn't quite match up to the rest of the disc, largely because it's a little too hard to be like it. Who it's a little bit, on "The Pot and Right" it is, the two, the three, the four, the five, the six, the seven, they got. Tool's not his album in itself, yet it's a pointer to everyone else's greatest effort.



Maynard James Keenan
My personal favorite song
I'm not looking forward to landing on the road

Maynard James Keenan, who's absent today but never far from the consciousness of the day, is still in the game. *Moderately* was the *The Joe Rogan Experience*, the popular podcast of the comedian and mixed martial arts commentator, to give his cents on the band's dynamics.

"Everythings a fucking committee meeting and it always gets shut down," Maynard says. "If you want to get successful, you think you're right about everything and you're pretty sure. I am right and you are wrong. We do what we do and we're successful because of me, not because of you." It's not that he's bad, but there's a cynicism of, "Well, this and I've always got my way and that's why we're successful, because I don't compromise, I don't give in." I'm the same way. I'm totally the same way."

When Maynard talks, the KILOFEST crowd in March, he attributes his "contrarian wing" to his Irishian heritage. This is the man who, in 2018, dressed himself as an "Armed Snowflake," after all, and who announced the title of an album fans have awaited since 2014 via an Instagram post he shared during Rogan's podcast – a message that concluded, with some understatement: "Thanks for your patience."

Last year Maynard also likened himself to Jack Nicholson's bumbling character in *Candy As It Gets*: "I open my mouth in the wrong way, but I want to be a better man. I just can't help myself. I'm like him, like Tourettes," he explained, confirming a degree of verbiatility that puts him in stark contrast to Adam Jones, who such an enigma he makes Maynard look like David Lee Roth by comparison.

Adam clearly likes to monkey around too, though. Notably when a fan asks him in Portland, Oregon, about the progress of the record, Adam replied, "It'd done and it's coming out tomorrow." Sadly, in the fan's headspace, he didn't hear the "just kidding" following he had in the "just kidding" following he had in the "just kidding."

The music press naturally went into overdrive.

Somehow so, in fact, the band issued a statement to dispel the record-delivering

One of the unexpected things about Tool more recently is that, despite as logical such a private entity, there have been moments where they appear to air their laundry in public. In June, Maynard, who has a Twitter account, took to Twitter to question the band's continued absence from streaming services. Please, Maynard, keep #TOOL as relevant and as accessible as possible. The world needs an answer that's both absolutely deaf and, on one level at least, completely true.

Caduceus Cellars, was taken enough with the sentiment to name it in his own inimitable style. "I hope it's the best wine in the world."

If anyone in today's interview is vehemently opposed to streaming, they're in no hurry to put the boot in. In fact, Danny and Justin enthusiastically let KI in on the secret world

It's a benefit of this
to have a lot of
people talking
about it

"Fucking lousy Skynet played before us in Florida recently," he laughs. "It's a good time."

There's no secret to being a band since 1994, lousy Skynet has long been on streaming services, averaging more than 10 million monthly listeners on Spotify, for example.

"We signed a deal with them," Danny says.

"Fucking Danny," he got to this point where to accomplish what he wanted, we had to negotiate the whole digital domain. And we had already missed out on a huge facet of that as it was then. It was a wake-up call. It was a culture shock for us, but it's necessary that has to be done if you want to reach people worldwide."

"I don't mind the streaming thing," continues Danny. "The one thing that's disappointing to me is that it's in the shorter attention span. I don't think that leaves much room for people like us, that want to convey a sense of knowledge of music that's more like reading a book than listening to a commercial. This was what I wanted to do with the album, an experience you can dig into for 80 to 90 minutes. But I don't know how many people are willing to do that. When I was a kid I bought records and played them from beginning to end. That's what I grew up on, so that's what I'm still doing."

"Wait until you see the new CD package," adds Justin. "It's going to blow your fucking mind!"

With Maynard James Keenan last speaking to Kerrang!, he was on tour with Tool (2018's *Eat The Elephant* arrived 14 years after their previous effort, *Æmida*). And while the T word was strictly off the table that day, Maynard continues on fan scrutiny in "the age of entitlement": "we equally, if not more, applicable to Tool."

"Some things are subjective, and some things aren't," Maynard says. "People's desire for precision with knowing what's behind the music and the people that make it. 'Some things are logical I take a step back, take away all the guitar solos stuff and the idiosyncrasies and look at the music practically and you'll come up with an answer that's fucking reasonable.'

"I understand that curiosity," a Danny more forthrightly. "I do believe I'm mad not being able to know more about Pink Floyd when I was a little kid. But that's the great thing – there was this mystery behind it, and I'm not gonna take that away and take the piss out of it by saying, 'This is this.' Because then, what's



"IT'S APPLYING THE IDEA THAT YOU CAN IMMUNISE YOURSELF AGAINST FEARS AND A LACK OF HOPE"

JUSTIN CHARRON

now known, Tool's back catalogue becoming increasingly difficult to buy due to Fear Inclusion's release. Ask them what they were as any trepidation returning to a landscape in which music, and the way it's consumed, is changing. "It gives me a sense of security," says Maynard, who primarily uses social media to promote his Arizona winery,

