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IN ATTENDANCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN FAMIGLIETTI OF HEALTH AT CLOAK & DAGGER DUSK TIL DAWN FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 26, 2018 | ELIZABETH RHODES | LEAVE A COMMENT |

interview : Elizabeth Rhodes photographer : **Tyler Curtis**

How would you describe HEALTH for someone who hasn't gotten into you guys yet?

John Famiglietti : Shit, I don't know. You don't have to describe it anymore, you can just give someone a Spotify link.

Okay, so what would be on that Spotify playlist?

JF : I don't know, I'm drawing a blank. Whatever are our top played songs.

I'd guess one of your current top played songs is "Stonefist"?

JF : Yeah, I guess that would be. You know, I guess I would give them "Death Magic" because that would be the most recent, you know, current HEALTH.

How did you guys get started? How long ago was it? I know you've been a band for quite a long time.

JF : We've been a band for ten years.

Did you start in LA?

JF : Yeah, we've been in LA the whole time.

It's interesting that HEALTH occupies a musical space that seems to defy genres; a hard, noisy, dark, resonant sound that is hard to categorize. I'm curious to know how you guys think about it.

JF : Yeah, I guess it's a good and it's also a bad thing. It helps you stay around, you don't seem dated or lame. But also, it definitely limits your ability to get bigger because it's not "sounds like" or "on this playlist" or whatever. It can be challenging too.

And that begs the question of "what is the end game" of being a creative, to get "big"? Success is always what you want. You want to be able to live off of what you do.

JF : Yeah, of course. I mean, we've been living off it, it's a great lifestyle but it's a fucking broke-ass lifestyle. It's good, I wouldn't trade it for anything, and yeah of course you want to do better, you want people to be able to hear your music.



HEALTH at the Cloak & Dagger From Dusk til Dawn Festival at The Globe Theatre and The Tower on Friday, October 21st 2017 in Los Angeles

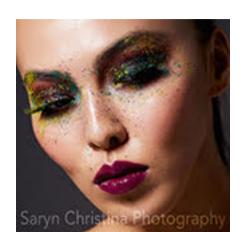
Who do you see in the audience at your live shows? Was the crowd that saw you play during Cloak & Dagger festival the type of crowd that usually goes to your shows?

JF : No, I would not consider us normally to be a goth band kind of thing. Cloak & Dagger is its own thing, very eclectic. I go to Cloak & Dagger's actual party night/club night a lot... and yeah, it's cool, sort of like dark goth-ish music with a lot of other stuff in there too, so it's pretty eclectic. So we fit in with the Cloak & Dagger festival but I would never consider us a fucking goth band or industrial band. But you know, there's just a crossover.



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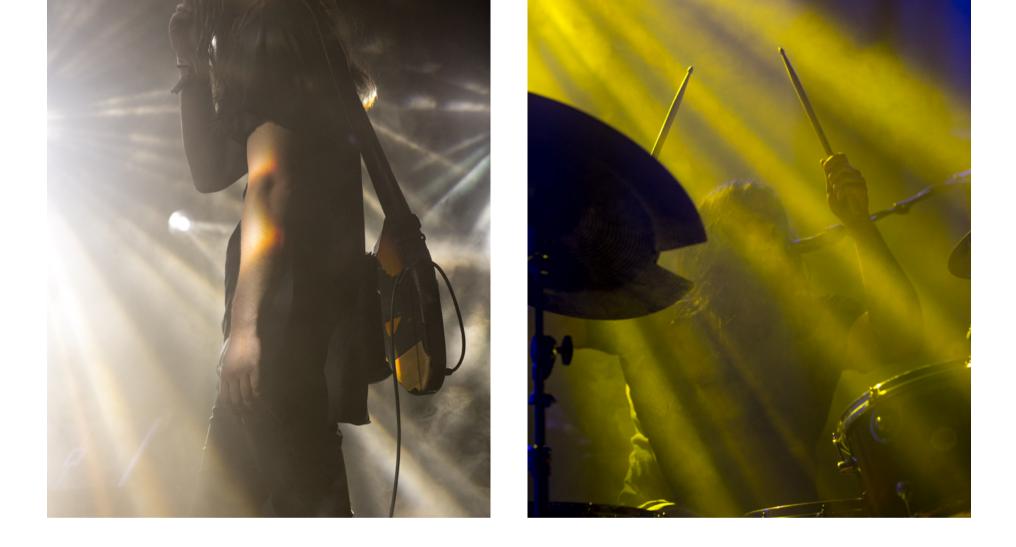


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So how did you hook up with Cloak & Dagger and its founders Adam Bravin and Michael Patterson? How did HEALTH come to be on the list for Cloak & Dagger fest?

JF : I met Adam recently but Adam was a fan and he really wanted us to play. Also, I'm friends with the guys from Restless Nights who are pretty much the source of what's going on in L.A. and those are my good buds from way back. I know Michael Patterson because we worked together before.

Do you know Michael from when you guys opened for Nine Inch Nails a few years back?

JF : In 2008, yeah.

It's funny how everything really comes back to who you know: someone wants to support someone they consider a fellow creative and so cool things happen when people just open up, extend a hand and say "you should really be part of this and it would be a good thing for you". I was in the audience at Cloak & Dagger festival and you guys sounded amazing live. It was so interesting to watch the crowd because there were people that I could tell knew the songs and there were people who were just aghast, you know, they had the expression of "what the hell is happening" experiencing this deep bass, pounding drums –and "what is going on with that soft voice", you know? How to describe the vocals, I don't know what adjective I would use, but it's in contrast to a lot of the heaviness of the music.

JF : Yeah it is soft, soft vocals. I think it was a really amazing lineup, good vibes, and we really wanted to be exposed to a lot of the people that would go to that thing and would probably like us so were pretty crazy exposed to those people.

All of your recent studio tracks sound so full and dark and I keep using that word 'resonant' because it definitely sounds like the percussion and the bass just fill my ears. I can feel the bass whenever I'm listening to your stuff. Before seeing HEALTH perform I was wondering how you guys would translate this live. How does that work? Your recent work really combines both electronic and organic sounds so how do you do all of that, translate it for a live performance?

JF : I guess it's nothing too crazy, it took a while for us to [transition]... We used to be a more standard rock band but now we're definitely majority electronic, but yeah, I don't know. It works, you know some things work some things don't, some songs you try it live they just suck.

So are you triggering anything while you're playing bass?

JF : Yeah, I have all the controls right there and I have a big rack behind me with everything. I have a little setup next to my pedal boards and all that stuff, I have a, whatever you call it, a controller where I'm queuing everything.

What were some of your favorite acts that you saw during the course of the two nights at the festival?

JF : I mean Ho9909 (Horror) is my favorite L.A. band right now. I saw this band I've never heard of before called GLAARE in the basement at Cloak & Dagger festival and I really liked them. And then my favorite probably is because I mean I've never seen them live, Lust for Youth... really love them. And up close... they're all great bands.

It was such an eclectic mix and to have Jesus and Mary Chain playing before TR/ST the first night, that's a very interesting lineup. So you've got the people attending this festival who were there for Jesus and Mary Chain, and some must have considered, "I guess I'll stay for this band that I don't know called TR/ST or maybe I've heard them a little bit before", and then you know... They really dig it. JF : Yeah, that's what I've heard, the people are loving TR/ST.



For many fans the latest full length album "Death Magic" was a major 'in' to your

band. I think I initially heard "Stonefist" on Sirius XM and it caught my attention. JF : Yeah, Sirius XM was really awesome, really supportive.

Why does *Death Magic* sound different than previous HEALTH albums?

JF : Yeah, totally, we were in a sort of growing pains period, the band wasn't super happy so we got a little dysfunctional, we kind of had to figure out how to do the new way we were going to do the band. And now, this is whatever you want to call it, "Death Magic" on is a new era of HEALTH where we're predominantly an electronic band.

Yeah, that seems to be the biggest shift and I think the production quality of *Death Magic* is great. How did you hook up with the production team to do that? Or have you been working with the same people to make records?

JF : No, that was a hard thing. Our first record was completely self-recorded, our second record we felt was just a disaster. It's actually being reworked with a guy in the studio. With the track on the Atomic Blonde soundtrack, this time we were pretty set on finding a way to keep our identity in the work, we were going to convert the majority to electronic music and getting it to sound right, getting it to work right, there were growing pains. We worked with another producer and got a record deal through that and they had some issues with the change, so eventually we found this guy Lars... who is the guy that really cracked the code for us, he does a lot of the indie bands... He is actually an amazing producer and he also mixes the records, has a big hand in it. So we did that magic with him, we did the single batch "Death Magic" on Disco III with him, and we're doing that new record with him and one or two other collaborators.

When will new material will be coming out?

JF : 2018. We have enough songs for an album now.

I like to ask creatives about the impact of where you live and the culture that you live in, how that influences the way you live your life as a creative and how you create. So what do you think it is about LA, how has that influenced you and the band as a whole? I know I'm talking to you, an individual that's part of a group but how do you think that where you've chosen to make this music has impacted the music?

JF : Oh, I'm sure, I mean, you know from the beginning of the band we... for a base, just to play The Smell [a non-profit music venue in Los Angeles] and we wanted to be the best band at The Smell and that's how we worked our shit out. So that's why that [first] album is like that, it's meant to be played in those spaces. We're always responsive to certain things and that's why we went to electronic. So now yes where we live and our lifestyle kind of shows, but also, it's the fucking internet, you know, what people listen to right now or what brings it at the moment. I don't know, LA is comfortable, I don't have my ear to the ground like I used to where I was constantly into Smell or whatever. I have a studio in my basement, so it's comfortable.

Where do you like to hang out these days? What places do you go that inspire you or even generate curiosity to check out what's happening, people watch, anything?

JF : Anything, but you just kinda gotta go out. I don't do this much anymore, but I sometimes go to warehouse parties and stuff, but you know, inspiration is just random, so just like being drunk in a bar and it hits you, and you Shazam some things, write down some ideas. You get some kind of stuff and you write it down and it's great. Or you just watch some fucking movie or something. It's always something weird.

What are you really into right now, musically? What stuff is being played the most for you right now?

JF : I think the next real paradigm shift is that I keep listening to Spotify and it's definitely affected me, which is weird, and a lot of things are coming out and you don't get through the playlists. I listen to a ton of, what I guess you would call the younger Soundcloud rap the kids, a lot of that. Always checking for stuff that gets kind of hyped or whatever on the internet just to see. I've been cruising random playlists on Spotify to see kind of what people are into nowadays. Always listen to a bunch of old shit that I've always liked, you know, heavy metal or whatever. And then, there was something else I was thinking. Oh...

Oh, the new Blade Runner soundtrack?

JF : Yeah.

That gives me a lot of insight into what's going on in your head when you're making music.

JF : Yeah, you'll hear the new record, there's a lot of those influences. There's some of the hip hop beats and shit. But it still very much always sounds like us.

Do you think it'll be the first half of the year or the second half that the next album will come out?

JF : I would assume first, but who knows? We're finishing up the process now.

Do you have a name for the album yet?

JF : No. We had one with a working title, the Noriega Playlist but it's too much of a stupid joke, it's too funny, so no we don't really have one. We're just temporarily calling it Volume 4, this is the fourth, like Black Sabbath.

Thank you so much for your time, I appreciate it. And keep making music, there's people out there really enjoying it and I'm one of them.

JF : Okay, thank you!

-Elizabeth Rhodes		
Elizabeth Rhodes is the Associate Editor of Auxiliary. Based in Los Angeles, she is a writer, DJ, modern mystic, and astrology junkie.		
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