

**“WE STARTED A MUSICAL** style, we started a revolution, we changed the guitar world and how it’s played, and we changed the world. The bands I played in have influenced the world. I love you all for it. Thank you for everything.”

So there we have it. Megadeth, one quarter of what for many years we’ve called ‘The Big Four’ of thrash alongside Metallica, Slayer, and Anthrax, are calling it a day. Not immediately. Not on any precise date. But according to the band’s leader, founder, and only original member – guitarist and vocalist Dave Mustaine – this is definitely it. There’s one final album, ‘Megadeth’, that will have just been released by the time you read this, and an accompanying tour that will stretch on for an indeterminate period of time. Of course it’s easy to be cynical about these announcements of rock bands hanging up their instruments. We’ve seen such tactics used numerous times as a means to boost concert ticket sales. But here’s Dave chatting to me from his home in Nashville, and he’s doubling down on the statement originally delivered by the band’s hitherto non-verbal mascot Vic Rattlehead via a surprisingly expensive-looking video announcement in August of last year.

“It’s taken half a year for the record to come out, and then we’re going to tour it for about three years,” he tells me. “I’ll be almost 70 by then, and although I’ve aged pretty well that doesn’t mean that it’s not difficult for me.”

Dave’s maths is little bit off there. The man from La Mesa, California, turned 64 last September, so after a three-year touring cycle he’ll still only be 67 years old. But we get the point. He’s had more than his fair share of health issues over the years, including a nasty battle with throat cancer back in 2019. And if Megadeth really is coming to an end, then Mustaine is absolutely going out on his own terms. ‘Megadeth’ is an album that makes no bones about being unashamedly traditional thrash metal, the musical style Mustaine rightfully claims to have had a major hand in inventing.

“Everybody who’s playing these days has their guitars tuned so low that you can’t hear the notes,” he tells me, barely disguising his contempt. “So it’s more of a percussive sound, right? Everything’s *duh duh duh duh duh*. What the f\*ck man? Tune your guitar and let’s *hear* what you’re doing.”

Mustaine’s put his money where his mouth is on ‘Megadeth’, an album full of highly audible guitar solos that rattle around your speakers with gay abandon. Dave shares the workload with new guitarist Teemu Mäntysaari, who replaced Kiko Loureiro in September of 2023, and he seems to be enjoying himself.



“Oddly enough,” he tells me, “I kind of get the feeling that we’re going to be part of a renaissance of heavy music with this album. When we were last playing live I’d say to the audience, ‘I’ve got a question for you. How many people are here for their first Megadeath concert?’ I’d see a lot of hands go up. And then I asked the second question. ‘How many of you have heard our new song, ‘Tipping Point’ [from the final album but released as a teaser back in October of last year].’ And even more hands go up. People are really loving on this.”

So let’s do our bit to share the love even more, shall we Dave?

#### WHAT WAS IT THAT PUSHED YOU TO MAKE THE DECISION – A DECISION THAT CERTAINLY SOUNDS

#### FINAL – THAT THIS IS IT FOR MEGADETH?

“Well as everyone knows there have been health issues. I’ve got stuff going on in my back as a result of my neck getting broken [supposedly by an overzealous chiropractor sometime in the noughties], and I got my neck fused together with a metal plate. I’ve got arthritis in my neck, tons of sh\*t going on there, actually. I’m having issues with my back because I’ve got a broken bone there. Plus I’ve got an injury to my hand. If you look at my palm there’s a line that goes across that’s a result of what they call Dupuytren contracture [an abnormal thickening of the skin in the palm of

the hand that over time can cause one or more fingers to curl or pull in toward the palm]. That’s going to keep bringing a finger down to the point where I’m going to need surgery to continue playing. So what with all of this going on, one day when I was making the new record I said to my management, ‘I’m having a really hard time doing this. I think this really is going to be the last studio album.’ I figured that I needed to say something to somebody. And then there was that whole other side of things, basically the travel. Travelling and being away from family is the worst. Think about this. I’ve missed anniversaries, I’ve missed birthdays, I’ve missed births, and I’ve missed deaths and funerals. Those are the significant things in your life, and while I’m very grateful for the fact that my family has always understood that, I still would have liked to be there.”

#### DID THE FACT THAT THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO RELY ON MEGADETH TO BE A WORKING ENTITY TO PUT BREAD ON THEIR TABLE – BAND MEMBERS, CREW, PROMOTERS, MANAGEMENT – GIVE YOU PAUSE FOR THOUGHT?

“I guess it would have done if everybody wasn’t getting taken care of while we all work together. I’ve never been

shy to give credit where credit’s due, and I make sure to compensate my crew and other people who work with Megadeth fairly. And of course, the success that the band has had is a whole other way of paying people, because that not only goes into your esteem bank, but it also goes onto your resumé. Having your name next to something that’s successful is never a bad thing. If you’ve produced Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’, people are going to take that seriously on a CV even if they’re not fans of Jacko. A lot of times people only have that to go on. I think people who’ve been associated with me are associated with a guy who doesn’t take any sh\*t, so if you’re there then it’s a really good thing, a good feather in your cap, a good arrow in your quiver.”

#### YOU’VE HAD A LITTLE TIME FOR YOUR DECISION TO SINK IN. SO HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW?

“It’s definitely been bittersweet, but it’s also absolutely the right thing to do, because I have that thing going on with my hand and it’s progressive. If that changes and I can keep playing, then f\*ck, of course I’d like there to be a different outcome. But I’ve been playing a long time, and I’ve already lived a lot longer than I thought I would. Pushing 70 is kind of up there. I do know a few guys in our genre of music who are older than I am, I guess. Some wear it well, and some don’t.”

#### IT’S NO SECRET THAT YOU’VE HAD YOUR PROBLEMS IN THE PAST WITH HARD DRUGS. LOOKING BACK AT THE GUY THAT YOU ONCE WERE, DO YOU THINK THAT DAVE COULD HAVE FORESEEN THE LONGEVITY YOU’VE HAD?

“F\*ck no. You know what, Howard? There were times when I didn’t think I’d live through the weekend! It was a very ‘fly by the seat of your pants’ existence. But do you know something? It’s ended up being a lot of performances, a hell of a lot of shows. I just got a document sent to us from our publicists saying they’d worked out that Megadeth has played over 3000 shows. They had them all listed. I started browsing through the list and thought to myself, ‘God, I remember *all* of these places, and a lot of times I found that I remembered the stuff that went on there, the antics that happened, the good stuff *and* the bad stuff.”

#### IS IT A BLESSING OR A CURSE THAT YOU REMEMBER IT ALL SO WELL?

“I think it’s a blessing. There are great moments that we all get to experience from as far back as we can

remember right through to the present. And the reason we remember them is because they were emotional moments that we had. And good or bad, we were meant to learn from those episodes. I believe that whatever you learn, if you learn it as intensely as you would if you were going to *teach* it, then you learn it better. And if what you were learning was stuff that made your life better, then I’m sure you’d want to share that with somebody. But I absolutely don’t offer advice unless I get asked.”

#### IS THAT BECAUSE YOU FEEL THAT IF YOU GIVE ADVICE YOU’RE SOMEHOW GOING TO MANIPULATE SOMEONE ELSE’S LIFE STORY?

“OK, let’s put it this way. Let’s pretend somebody ends up meeting me. I don’t *know* that they’re going to meet me, but they meet me. Now they have an impression of who I am, but I don’t know anything about them.

And they have a preconceived idea of what’s going to take place at the meeting: maybe they’ll get a job, maybe they can give me their music, it could be anything. First off, that meeting is going to be awkward, right? And then if in that meeting somebody asks me for advice, well if I’m really honest I know f\*ck all about them. And why would I give somebody advice if I don’t know them? The advice would have no context. Now if they wanted me to tell them what I did, well sure.

Especially because

all of that is pretty well documented. But I think that’s the best way for me to do things. Unsolicited advice is just playing God.”

#### I WON’T ASK FOR ADVICE THEN, DAVE. BUT DO TELL ME THIS. DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT A SLIDING DOORS MOMENT WHERE YOU DON’T LEAVE METALLICA IN APRIL OF 1983?

“Not anymore, no. Why? Because that feud kind of ended a while ago. Every once in a while someone will turn up and try to stir the pot by saying something or other. More often than not it’s either false or something that’s deep, deep in the past. And I focus on the fact that I did something very special by being part of two very successful bands. Pulling that off twice is very rare. Think about all the people who’ve ever left a band and then went on to be successful doing something else. You’ve got Paul McCartney when he left The Beatles. You’ve got Ozzy after he left Sabbath. And Sting when he left The Police. So it does happen, but it’s more often something that happens after supergroups. Metallica wasn’t a supergroup when I left. And to be honest, back then



The line-up that recorded the first two albums. L-R: Chris Poland (guitar), Dave Mustaine (vocals and guitar), Gar Samuelson (drums), Dave Ellefson (bass)

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