

HOW I WROTE A HIT SINGLE!

Shinedown "45"

Brent Smith and Jasin Todd of Shinedown reveal how they wrote, recorded and played "45," the hit single from the band's debut, *Leave a Whisper*.

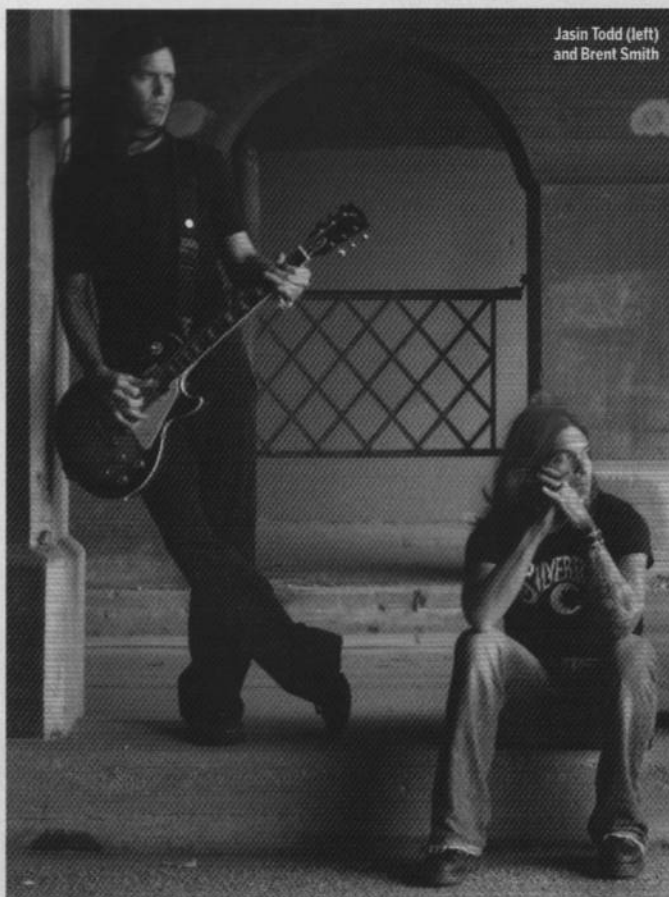
Interview by **ANDY ALEDORT**
Photograph by **NICK BERARD**

The Inspiration

BRENT SMITH The writing for this song began with the chorus melody, and everything else followed from there. It started one day when our producer, Tony Battaglia, and I were putting together the demos for the album. He said, "Have you got anything else?" I said, "Well, not really...but I have this little melody." And I sang him the chorus of the song, lyrics and all, just as it is on the record. He loved it, and we wrote the rest of the music around that chorus part.

People ask me what the lyrics mean. To me, the line "Staring down the barrel of a 45" is a metaphor for staring at the world, and how blunt, tragic and hurtful it can be. The phrase that follows, "Swimming through the ashes of another life," is a reflection on everything you've done in your past. The next line, "No real reason to accept the way that things have changed," has been misconstrued as hopeless. What I mean by that line is that one should not give up on oneself and accept something less in life. I'm acknowledging the way things are, but I'm not backing down because of it.

JASIN TODD The song is in a slow, waltz-style 12/8 meter, something that you never hear on the radio anymore. The last thing I can remember like that is Pink Floyd's "Shine on You Crazy Diamond." My main musical inspiration for this feel was the Beatles' "I Want You (She's So Heavy)," from *Abbey Road*.



Jasin Todd (left) and Brent Smith

The Recording

SMITH The main parts of the song were recorded in Sanford, Florida, near Orlando. We worked at Tony's home studio, which is located practically in the middle of a swamp. I recorded all the vocals in his garage, where it was about 104 degrees and humid, with the smell of gasoline from Tony's lawnmower hanging in the air. I think the fact that it wasn't a big, fancy stu-

dio had a lot to do with the vibe we captured on the recording. I didn't want to sugarcoat it; I sang it as directly as I possibly could.

TODD We cut this track just as you hear it. We did it before we had our record deal, and we used all of our old, shitty equipment. Most of

the guitar parts were played on a Gibson ES-335 from the Seventies, and I used one of my Eighties Les Paul Standards played through little Fender amps. We used whatever was lying around Tony's house. It's just those two guitars on the entire track, plus a Taylor acoustic.

After we got our deal, we went out to L.A. and did a huge version of the song—I laid down about 56 guitar tracks—but the record company said, "Nah, we'll stick with the original."

How to Play "45"

TODD The song opens with a clean electric guitar playing arpeggiated open chords [FIGURE 1, *Gtr. 1*]. This guitar is joined by another [Gtr. 2] that sustains a Cmaj7 chord.

The verse part [FIGURE 2] begins the same way, but I add a quick hammer-pull lick [bar 1, beat four] that I borrowed from Led Zepelin's "Over the Hills and Far Away." In the next bar, the chords change from Csus2 to Csus2#4. As this part is repeated, an overdubbed guitar adds some harmonics and single-note fills. These are random licks that I play differently every time we perform the song live.

At the pre-chorus [FIGURE 3], the acoustic rhythm guitar [Gtr. 3] enters, and I strum straight eighth notes, using all downstrokes, throughout the section. The elec-

tric guitar part [Gtr. 1] begins very sparsely; in the second half of the section [bars 3 and 4] it's joined by another electric guitar [Gtr. 2]. The two guitar parts consist of, first, arpeg-



giating an Am strumming G chords, adding note accents on beats of this s

During the 4], the acoustic down a "bed" ming while the sustained chords the low fifth of the D5 and C5 we call them " because they s second half of arpeggiated chordic [Gtr. 2] an octave figures à la Pink Floyd 3] ends the se sonant-sounding that lurks back

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Why "45"

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TODD It's not a m it's more of a cla and, thank God, coming back now waltz-groove on which is unheard days. Plus, the ly deep, and the m pelling, too. Put together and you It's great to look audience and see ing up cell phone friends can hear

giating an Am chord and then strumming G and Bsus4/F# chords, adding heavy eighth-note accents on the last two beats of this section.

During the chorus [FIGURE 4], the acoustic guitar lays down a "bed" of steady strumming while the electric add sustained chords; when we put the low fifth on the bottom of the D5 and C5 chords like this, we call them "roast beef" chords because they sound so fat! In the second half of the section, I play arpeggiated chords on one electric [Gtr. 2] and sliding strummed octave figures on another [Gtr. 1], à la Pink Floyd. The acoustic [Gtr. 3] ends the section with a real dissonant-sounding chord [Am7/6] that lurks back there in the mix.

The bridge [FIGURE 5] begins with more "roast beef" power chords; in the second half of the section [bars 3 and 4], I switch to arpeggios that are similar to those in the verse figure, and I then end the section with accented C5 power chords.

During the outro, when we get into the "She's So Heavy" jam, Tony kicked on a Fender Vibratone [a rotating speaker effect similar to a Leslie] while we were playing live in the studio. Tony's an old-school guy; he's worked on Keith Richards' records, and he's great at capturing a natural vibe.

Why "45" Is a Hit

SMITH After watching the popularity of the song grow over the past eight months, I think it's safe to say the song connects with people because of its sincerity. We tried to make the song as powerful and as honest as we could, and I think the listener can hear it. I always point the microphone toward the audience during the chorus, and it's amazing how loud the fans sing the lines back at us; we can really feel the connection.

TODD It's not a nu-metal song; it's more of a classic rock tune and, thank God, that sound is coming back now. We put a waltz-groove on rock radio, which is unheard of these days. Plus, the lyrics are so deep, and the music is compelling, too. Put the two together and you have a hit. It's great to look out into the audience and see people holding up cell phones so their friends can hear it too. ■

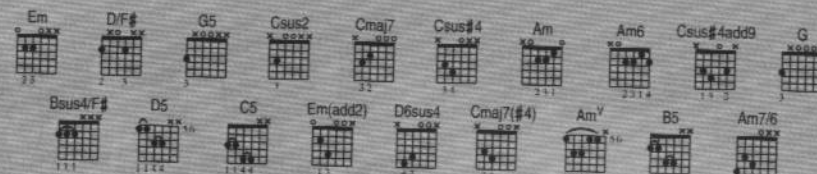


FIGURE 1 intro (0:00-0:10)

Slowly ♩ = 50

Gtr. 1 (clean elec.) let ring throughout

Em D/F# G5 Csus2 Csus#4

Gtr. 2 (clean elec.) Cmaj7

FIGURE 2 verse (0:10-0:36)

Gtr. 1 Em D/F# G5 Csus2 Csus#4add9 (play 3 times)

FIGURE 3 pre-chorus (0:38-0:57)

Gtr. 3 Am Am6 Em

Gtr. 1 Am Am6 G Bsus4/F#

Gtrs. 1 and 2 let ring

FIGURE 4 chorus (0:51-1:18)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 Em D5 C5

Gtr. 3 Rhy. Fig. 1 Dsus2 Cmaj7 end Rhy. Fig. 1

Em(add2) D6(sus4) Cmaj7(#4) Am

Gtr. 1 Gtr. 2 Am7/6 Gtr. 3

FIGURE 5 Bridge (2:20)

Gtrs. 1-3 C5 BS C5 BS

Gtr. 1 Em D/F# G N.C.(C5) Em Dsus4/F# C5

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