



ALLIED FORCES

The Metal Allegiance supergroup returns to rock our world.
Bassist Mark Menghi checks in

Everyone loves a supergroup, not least in heavy metal world, so when Metal Allegiance formed back in 2014 with members of major names in the world of unsociably loud music, they received a warm welcome. The brainchild of bassist and long-time music industry 'face' Mark Menghi, MA also featured ex-Dream Theater drummer extraordinaire Mike Portnoy, Megadeth bassist David Ellefson, Testament guitarist Alex Skolnick and guest vocalists from the great and the good. A self-titled album appeared in 2015, followed by the *Fallen Heroes* EP in '16, and now a second full-length titled *Volume II - Power Drunk Majesty* is on the way featuring another host of celebs on the mic.

"This record has been a true labour of love - really fine-tuned and crafted," says Menghi. "When Alex Skolnick and I first got together, I suggested to him that we needed a clear direction. All of those guys are in amazing thrash metal bands and so for some of the songs, that was the obvious direction to go in."

As with the first MA album, Menghi is one of two bassists on the new record, the other being the almost terrifyingly skilled David Ellefson. "There's a big difference between my playing and Dave's playing - I'm all fingers, he's a pick player," explains Menghi. "You can hear the different styles, but it really works. That's the beauty of having a core band with the same drummer and guitar player on every song. Even though Dave and I go on and off with bass, it still sounds cohesive. He's on four songs, I'm on six. We had two writing sessions, one with each of us. As for the singers, like the first record, the song dictated who was going to sing."

Gear-wise, Menghi stuck with a tried-and-tested setup, he tells us. "I used all vintage stuff this time, including my old red P-Bass, which never leaves my side. Dave used it on the first album, and now he yells at me when I

bring it out on the road! I've had offers of gear endorsements from various bass companies, which is very kind of them, and I do in fact have a great deal with Ampeg for amps, but I just can't get away from my Fender. I always think to myself 'I'm going to leave it in the studio and sign up with this company' but at the last second I just back off. It's like a third arm for me. I like what I like, and that bass has the MA tone for me."

"The amp I used on the new album was a 1967 Ampeg B15; I used a Kickport drum mic as a bass mic on a 15" cab. For some of my dirty tones, I used a very old Morley wah pedal, one that Cliff Burton actually used back in his early days in Metallica."

Wait, we say - the actual one used by the late, great Burton? "Yes!" he says, understandably starstruck. "I became close with Cliff's family and I played his new signature Aria bass with his father Ray last year. Ray asked me to play the bass and I literally started crying! That bass is very hot, with lots of mids and high end. Very gainy, and just very Cliff-sounding."

He adds: "Ray and I hung out the entire night together. I guess they're fans of what we do, flying the flag for Cliff. The crazy part was, when we were playing Metallica's 'Disposable Heroes', which has time signature changes within it and was my first introduction to that style of thrash metal, Ray was sitting there right on stage with me."

So what's next for our man? "We're releasing the new album on September 7 and we're having a release party in New York the night before," he says. "Then we're off to South America and we're working on a full-fledged tour in the UK and Europe after that. We've been getting a lot of messages coming out of the UK asking us when we're coming over, but as you know, Metal Allegiance is a scheduling challenge because of everyone's other commitments. We'll do our best!" ■

Volume II - Power Drunk Majesty is out in September on Nuclear Blast. Info: <http://metalallegiance.com>.