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20

QUESTIONS WITH

*Jenn
Kathreen*

Exclusive Coverage

ACIDIC

GAMES REVIEWED

SKYRIM

DAWNGUARD



Linkin Park

Living Things



Nas

Life Is Good



August 2012

Going Green

Has Never Looked So Good!!!

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6

Jenn Kathreen

August Cover Model

20 Questions with Jenn

Photography by Andrew Gates

Make-up and hair by Petra Levitt

14

All Access

The Latest Albums Reviewed

Albums Reviewed:

Linkin Park

Living Things

By Dan Sinclair

Nas

Life is Good

By Jeremy Weeden

18

All Access Spotlight

Artists/Bands Featured:

Aesop Rock, Frank Ocean and A Hero A Fake

By Daniel Sinclair, Jeremy Weeden and

Nicolas Bates

22

Live & Loud

Live Show Reviews

Featured Artists/Shows:

Exclusive coverage of

Acidic live at the Troubadour

By Dan Sinclair and Nicolas Bates

24

Coming Up

Models To Keep An Eye On

Featured Model:

Lauren La Carriere

Fullerton, CA

Dianne Kwon

Los Angeles, CA

32

Game On

The Latest Games Reviewed

Games Reviewed:

Dawguard

By Josh Schilling

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD

By Jesse Seilhan

On The Cover

Photo by Andrew Gates

Make-up and hair by Petra Levitt

This Page

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20 QUESTIONS

Get To Know Your Cover Model

Jenn Kathreen

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up and hair by Petra Levitt

*J*enn Kathreen hails from Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Her family moved to California when she was just seven years old. As a youth Jennifer always fantasized about being as glamorous as the supermodels who graced the catwalk. She began modeling for a local clothing company in Los Angeles just after high school but took a break to pursue and obtain a Bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism. After graduation Jenn realized the job market for her field of expertise was lacking in opportunity so she put on her modeling shoes and went to work on making a career out of it. Jenn has dabbled in quite a few areas when it comes to modeling: glamour, promotional and commercial print; but her favorite by far is fashion, both catalog and runway. Her ultimate goal would be to work on a major ad campaign with Victoria's Secret or Guess. With Jenn's personality and charm we are sure that she has many more dreams that will be realized.



20 QUESTIONS

Your cover Model Cont'd



20 QUESTIONS

1. What's your Ethnicity?

Caucasian (French-Canadian, Scandinavian, English and Irish).

2. What's your zodiac sign?

Cancer

3. Where are you from originally?

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

4. What did you like most about growing up in Vancouver, B.C., Canada?

I love the people in Vancouver and the surroundings are just breathtaking. When I go back home I feel like I can just breath. I often get lost in the serenity. Canadians are super down-to-earth and easy going. I make friends really easily everywhere, but it was much easier getting close to people in Vancouver. It was really difficult finding legit good-girl friends here in LA. I am not your typical catty, jealous, insecure girl, especially in this industry. I am comfortable with who I am and I am extremely trustworthy and just nice to everyone. I have a good group of girlfriends now. I've never had a problem making guy friends though...anywhere.

5. What kind of mischief did you get into growing up?

How much time do you have? I was a bit wild growing up. I was completely boy crazy and had many guy friends growing up who got into trouble. I think I missed my entire senior year. [laugh] I was really in to racing, surfing and really anything that gave me an adrenaline rush. After high school, I did a 180 and focused 100% on school.

6. What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

That's a tough one. I flew to London by myself, not knowing anyone and stayed for a year. My mother went to London after graduating college on holiday and never came back. She met my father there and ended up moving to Canada with him (where he's from). I wasn't having much luck here in the states, so I thought I'd give it a try. I wasn't as fortunate...or maybe I was.

7. What's your favorite hobby and why?

I love to write. Whether it is a journal, a novel or an article for a newspaper (or a longwinded text message). [laugh] I love the freedom it allows me to express myself. Unlike most women, I have difficulty at times vocalizing how I feel and writing is my outlet, my salvation.

8. What's your guilty pleasure?

Shopping! It is an outlet for me to blow off some steam and just relax and feel like a princess for

a day. [smile] I am also a closet romance-novel junkie (aka porn for girls).

9. Who do you admire?

My mother. She is the strongest person I know and is my biggest supporter. I get my strength, intelligence, sense of adventure, passion and sense of humor from her (and my big boobs).

10. What's one of your personal goals?

To do a lot more travelling and visit every Disneyland in the world. [smile] I also want to complete my PhD and officially become a doctor so I can take care of my family.

11. What do guys compliment you on the most?

Next to my looks, my sense of humor. I get that I am "entertaining" A LOT. I lure guys in with my sex appeal and win them over with my sense of humor. [laugh]

12. What's your favorite body part on yourself?

My tiny waist. [smile]

13. What's your least favorite body part on yourself?

Probably my bum, as I don't really have one.

14. What do you look for in a guy?

A great sense of humor is a must. Someone who doesn't take life too seriously. Sensitivity... Capability of being romantic. Someone who appreciates family. A great listener. Someone who can let loose and have FUN.

15. What's the first thing you notice about a guy?

Hair color. I love dark hair on a guy...and nice eyes.

16. What's your ideal first date?

Lots of laughter with some type of food involved (I love to eat). A touch of romance and lots of flirting. An amazing first kiss that leaves me wanting more.

17. What turns you on?

Accents (especially British), chivalry, respect, animal lovers, tattoos, a guy with an edge, a shaved chest. [wink]

18. What turns you off?

Narcissism, selfishness, negative/disrespectful attitudes, smokers and too much body hair. And guys who claim they're not gay yet dress like it. [laugh]

19. What's your biggest pet peeve?

Obnoxious chewing and animal cruelty.

20. Who's your celebrity pass?

Robert Pattinson and Stephen Moyer.

RM

20 QUESTIONS

Your Cover Model Cont'd



20 QUESTIONS

Your Cover Model Cont'd



20 QUESTIONS
Your Cover Model Cont'd

“A touch of
romance
and lots of
flirting.”

20 QUESTIONS

Your Cover Model Cont'd



STATS:

Birthday: June 28

Height: 5'5"

Weight: 105 lbs.

Measurements: 32D-22-30

See more of Jenn at
[Twitter.com/beachbunnyjenn](https://twitter.com/beachbunnyjenn)

ALL ACCESS

The Latest Albums Reviewed

5th Times a Charm?

Phot by James Minchin
Written by Dan Sinclair

Linkin Park is back with their fifth studio album, *Living Things*. The album was produced by Rick Rubin and the band's co-lead vocalist, Mike Shinoda. On the album Mike is joined by the whole gang: Chester Bennington taking care of the rest of the vocals, Brad Delson on guitar and keyboards, Dave "Phoenix" Farrell manning bass, Rob Bourdon banging the drums and, of course, DJ Joe Hahn sampling and scratching away.

"Lost in the Echo" kicks off with Shinoda trying to bust some rhymes over well-layered and produced dance beats with his buddy Chester joining him to half-sing and half-scream the chorus. It's the same familiar combination that made the band famous and/or infamous over a decade ago.

Bennington takes center stage, manning both the verses and the chorus on the next track, "In My Remains." Like many of the band's songs that heavily feature the skinny singer with the big lungs, it sounds like a heavier version of a Backstreet Boys song. It's a formula that has worked well for the band for years and continues to do so.

Keyboards take over for a more almost-industrial intro on "Burn It Down." Chester sings the catchy chorus: "We're building it up to burn it down/We can't wait to burn it to the ground." Every Linkin Park album has at least one anthem the kids will sing on the back of the bus on the way to school and "Burn It Down" is that song from *Living Things*.

While "Burn It Down" features a little rapping from Shinoda, the next song, "Lies Greed Misery," features a lot. It also, unfortunately, features a pretty annoying screaming chorus from Bennington and I wouldn't be surprised if even the most loyal Linkin Parkers skip this one. But Chester does tone it down on the (relatively speaking) slower next song, "I'll Be Gone."

Then comes track five, and I have to stop and check my iPod to make sure I am still in fact listening to a Linkin Park album. The band somehow pulls off something amazing on "Castle of Glass," which may be their best bit of song writing they've ever pulled off. It's Mike Shinoda, not Chester Bennington, singing (yes, I said singing) the melodic



verses and chorus over this mounting, rhythmic, poppy combination of *actual* guitar, bass and drums, with only minimal electronics. It's a nice, refreshing change of pace on the album.

Next, we have a pretty hardcore punk-esque song, "Victimized," that feels out of place sandwiched between two slower, more melodic tracks. It's as if the band just shoved it in there in fear that some of their fans would call them pussies. "Roads Untraveled" is one of those slow songs, featuring plenty of "oh's" and "whoa's," but not much else. It's followed by a less-impressive vocal sampling from Shinoda on "Skin to Bone." He then attempts to incorporate some sort of Jamaican reggae/rock sound to his flow on "Until It Breaks."

"Tinfoil" is a completely instrumental track, composed of piano over some pretty cool, layered beats. It's a wonderful showcase of what Linkin Park can do when it focuses on the music part of making music, as opposed to just coming up with loud, catchy choruses and silly raps. This leads into the final song, "Powerless": a sound electronic, boy band-esque, power ballad featuring the best Linkin Park has to offer.

While one can sincerely applaud Linkin Park for taking some chances with a few isolated tracks on *Living Things*, overall, the album is nothing more than another set of songs randomly stuck together by a popular band with an all-too familiar sound. The people who dislike Linkin Park will continue to hate. Music fans looking for a new sound will look elsewhere. Sure, the fans of Linkin Park will buy it and love it, but even they will forget it completely once their next favorite band puts out a new record. It just is what it is and, in the end, none of it will really matter. Linkin Park will put out another album, just like this one, in two years or so, and we'll do it all again.

Artist: Linkin Park
Album: Living Things
Website: LinkinPark.com

★★★★★
Label: Warner Bros/Machine Shop
Release Date: June 20, 2012

ALL ACCESS
The Album Reviews Cont'd



The Good Life

Written by Jeremy Weeden

Nas is obviously no longer feeling as though “life’s a bitch, then you die.” He has gotten out of an unhappy marriage and he is even friends with his longtime nemesis Jay-Z, so it’s no wonder his latest album is titled *Life’s Good*. Nas is one of the most respected rap artists in hip-hop and has been since his classic debut album, *Illmatic* (which dropped in 1994). Throughout a storied career that has featured many ups and downs, Nas always managed to rise to the top. Left for dead after many critics panned *Nastradamus*, he reissued a claim on hip-hop’s throne with *Stillmatic*, and *Life’s Good* should have a similar effect in placing Nas back on top of the game.

Life’s Good is an excellent blend of the retro and current rap sound. Nas walks the fine line between keeping the sound he is known for and staying true to that while attempting not to sound dated and old. Nas is able to effortlessly blend what he has always done musically with the current hip-hop sound, and the results are outstanding. The No I.D. produced “Loco-Motive” is a good example of this. Featuring longtime collaborator Large Professor over a classic ‘90s era-styled beat, Nas spits lyrical jewels like, “I know you think my life good ‘cuz my diamond piece/But life been good since I started finding peace.” Nas ends the line with a shout out to the seemingly forgotten segment of hip-hop fans that helped make rap the huge industry it is today by declaring, “This is for my trapped-in-the-‘90s niggas.” That helps to set the stage for a classic album from Nas that will be equally enjoyed by old school and new school rap fans.

One of the things that helps to make *Life’s Good* so complete sounding is the album’s production. Rappers used to have a producer or producers they used that knew their sound and would craft beats with that person’s rap style in mind. When rap really hit the mainstream and became about the bottom line, rappers started to go with whatever producers were making hits for someone else. This led to many rappers using beats that did not necessarily compliment their flow, resulting in a lackluster song. Nas is one of the greatest rappers line for line, but this same problem has hindered some of his albums in the past. On *Life’s Good* that will not be an issue. Legendary producer No I.D. and longtime Nas collaborator Salaam Remi produce the majority of the album. Swizz Beatz, J.U.S.T.I.C.E. League and Buckwild each produce one of the three songs not produced by No I.D. or Remi. This leads to a cohesion not typically found on rap albums presently.

Lyricaly Nas shows he is still on top of his game and able to put words together in a fashion that only he can. On “Accident Murderers,” a thought-provoking track featuring current hip-hop heavyweight (literally and figuratively) Rick Ross, Nas is more than able to hold his own and outshine the boss with lyrics like, “Shooters, I knew them when they was babies, I used to test them/Make ‘em throw up they hands, choke ‘em out playing in wrestling/Watch ‘em grow to a man, I see them now they reppin’/ But they cold-blooded, homie, wondering where the respect went?” The track “Daughters” finds Nas lamenting over how some of his decisions he has made regarding women have affected his daughter as she grows up and is now looking for love. “Reach Out” is another standout track featuring Mary J. Blige on the hook that showcases Nas over a classic Isaac Hayes-sampled boom-bap beat.

More soulful, poetic tracks like “Stay” or “Cherrywine” featuring the late Amy Winehouse could only have been made successfully by Nas. Over low-key tracks where the music is secondary, Nas keeps you enthralled and into the song with his poignant lyricism. If the album has a misstep, it is the Swizz Beatz-produced “Summer on Smash.” While not a bad song, and far better than some of Nas’s past attempts to make a party/club song, it just does not fit amongst the other songs.

Artist: Nas

Album: Life is Good

Website: NasirJones.com

★★★★★

Label: Def Jam

Release Date: July 17, 2012

ALL ACCESS SPOTLIGHT

Written by Daniel Sinclair, Jeremy Weeden and Nicolas Bates

Facebook.com/AesopRockWins



Aesop Rock, *Skelethon*

Skelethon is the sixth full-length album from alternative hip-hop artist and producer Ian Matthias Bavitz, better known as the one and only Aesop Rock. This album is the first following a five-year hiatus and is the first released on the Rhymesayers' label. Aesop Rock is an underground hip-hop legend with his roots going all the way back to the New York scene back in the late 1990s. He skips the time most of today's so-called "hip hop artists" spend on creating that hook that the radios will play ad nauseam, and instead focuses his attention on what was originally much more important in the art form of rap — the flow of the verse.

The complex, rhyming freestyle-sounding lyrics laid down over the steady, mesmerizing beats are the focus here on *Skelethon*. "Leisureflow" starts the album the right way with Aesop's widely ranging, yet rhythmically satisfying words bouncing over some addicting drums, before moving you on to the superb singles "ZZZ Top" and "Zero Dark Hour." Other highlights of the album include an appearance by the Moldy Peaches' Kimya Dawson on "Crow 1" and Aesop's anti-vegetable anthem "Grace." Now, put on those headphones and start moving your body the way it was meant to flow.

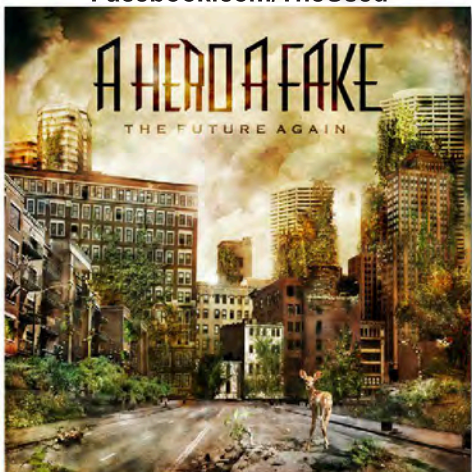
Facebook.com/FrankOcean

Frank Ocean, *Channel Orange*

Frank Ocean may have been mostly known for his haunting hook on track "No Church in the Wild," or his Independence Day proclamation that his first love was a man, but he soon will be known only for his musical talents, first prominently displayed on his critically acclaimed mixtape, *Nostalgic Ultra*. With his debut album, *Channel Orange*, Frank Ocean takes soul and r&b music to the next level while staying true to the roots of the genre. An excellent songwriter, Frank Ocean is able to capture familiar emotions and topics in a new way for the younger generation of r&b listeners. Older lovers of the genre will hear touches of Prince, Marvin Gaye and other soul greats sprinkled throughout the album, as Frank is very in-tune with the history of r&b and this influence is shown throughout the album. Standout tracks on the album include the ten-minute masterpiece "Pyramids," which goes from a fast-paced track with the story taking place in ancient Egypt, to a modern-day tale of a Las Vegas prostitute on the strip. Another is "Crack Rock," in which Ocean tackles social issues with the sad tale of a crack addict who goes from hot, blond girlfriends to no longer being invited to his family's events. *Channel Orange* is one of the best r&b albums in recent memory and sure to skyrocket Frank Ocean to the top of the genre.



Facebook.com/TheUsed

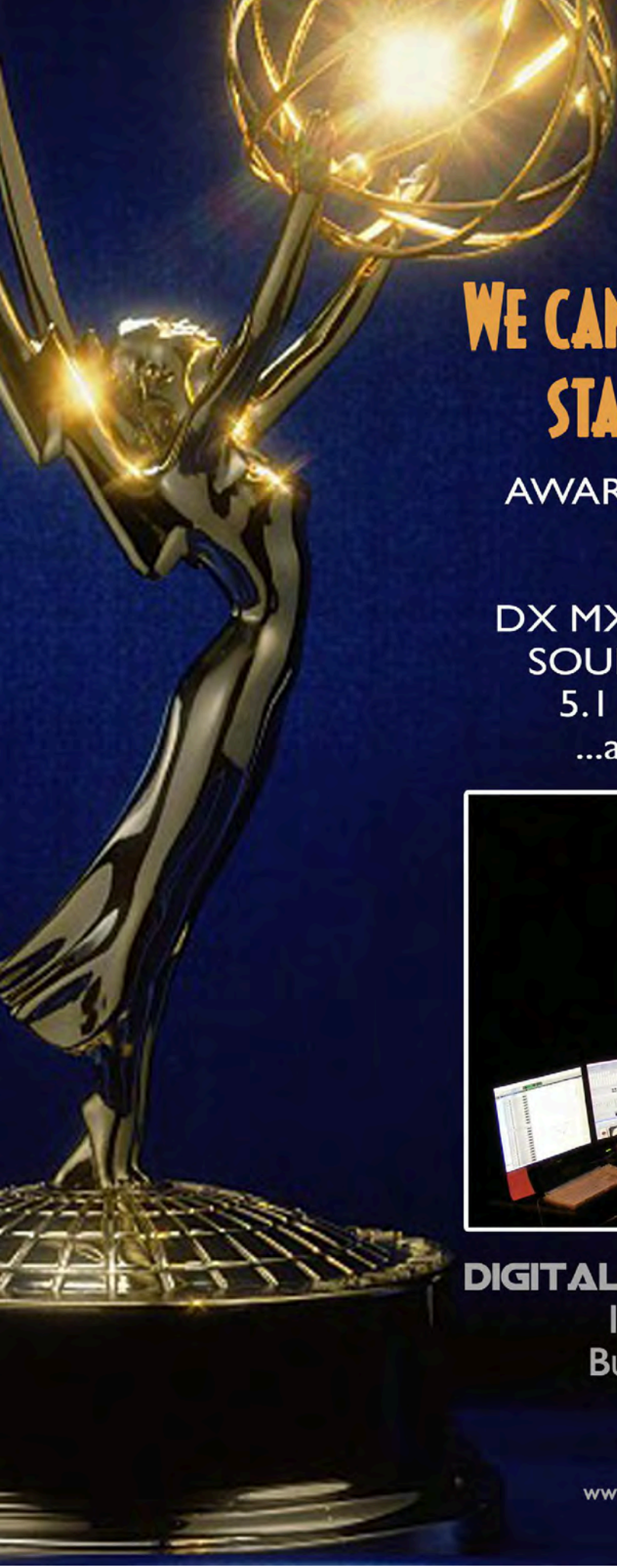


A Hero A Fake, *The Future Again*

Victory Records' A Hero A Fake have released their third full-length album, *The Future Again*. Touted as a metalcore band, A Hero A Fake really mix it up with this collection of songs. While nothing is truly groundbreaking on *The Future Again*, the album is a mix-up of styles for folks who are in to the heavier side of new music.

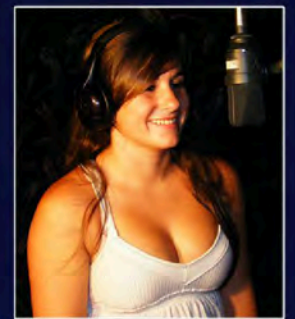
"Mechanical Heart"—the first track on the album—is of the more technical, syncopated variety, and throws in synths toward the end for a little spin. Singer Justin Brown can effortlessly go from a talk-sing to full metal growl, as heard in "Port Hole." Track "Wildfires" may just be the most stereotypical metalcore-sounding track, complete with a heavy, simple breakdown to make the kids throw the blows.

What really stands out about A Hero A Fake is how effortlessly they can go from a technical metal riff, to a djent riff, to a downright, straight metalcore sound. For fans of The Devil Wears Prada and As I Lay Dying.



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LIVE & LOUD

The Live Show Reviews

Acidic

Photos by Nicolas Bates
Written by Dan Sinclair

Attention ladies and gentlemen: tonight's performance by Acidic will not be your typical rock show. That's right, folks, it's apparently friends and family night here at the Troubadour. There are teenage girls taking pictures of themselves in front of the stage and holding homemade signs requesting their favorite songs like they're at a Justin Beiber concert. There are couples in their fifties and sixties dressed to the nine standing in front of pierced, tattered and tattooed punk rock kids. Someone's grandma is drinking beer out of a plastic cup. There is no standard age, style or dress code here tonight in West Hollywood, and yet no one seems to feel even a bit out of place (save the writer).

Acidic takes the stage to loud cheers from the younger crowd and some light golf claps from their elders. Did no one tell mom how to behave at a rock show? Frontman Michael Gossard stands center stage, holding a guitar and sporting what I can only assume is his signature look of a dark button-down shirt (based on the few pictures I've seen of him prior to the show). To his left is the long-haired bass player Ted Dubrawski, and to his right, the shaved head of Michael Thompson on the other guitar. Drummer Matt Whitaker sits behind them.

Fresh off a tour opening for Candlebox, Acidic is very happy to be back here in their hometown of Los Angeles, according to Gossard. After announcing this bit of news, his confidence seems to grow somewhere right in the middle of "not a shy guy" and "cocky." I'm not sure if it's because he saw me writing or because all the teenage girls are snapping his picture for which he's only more than willing to strike a pose, but he seems to feel very proud to be the man center stage.

Acidic starts off the night by playing three new songs — "Only One," "Scrambled Eggs" and "Pirate Eyes" — all of which will be on their upcoming album. The album will be their third after their previous indie releases, *Iconic Dreams* (2007) and *Getting Lucky* (2010). Acidic's sound is a nice, clean mix of poppy punk and old school rock with some pretty heavy riffs. Though the sound for the most part comes off as very radio-friendly at times, these guys aren't afraid to rock out. Gossard can really wail with his vocals at times and the band is full of energy. They move all over the stage, enjoying every minute of every song they play.

"Retrograde" seems to get the teenage girls all excited. I hear some screams and the signs go up again.

The moms and dads bob their heads and sing along. Three annoying weird kids try to start a mosh pit, but it's rather pathetic. They push each other around pretty hard and knock over others that don't even know what a mosh pit is. I see one of the Moms run. Two of the guys seem to realize how sad they look and relinquish their slam dancing dreams quite easy. The most annoying of the three does not get the message and continues to try and push people for the next three songs before someone knocks him down and he finally gives up.


At one point Gossard leaves the stage and wanders around the crowd. He lets some of his friends sing into his microphone and then he high fives or chest bumps some others. Here's the perfect chance for annoying kid to have someone to mosh with...but no. He seems too scared and cowers back when Gossard comes near.

Acidic does a pretty heavy version of the Beatles' "Come Together," and they have a song supporting the troops called "The Brave," which they played after another crowd favorite, "Uninspired."


The final song of the night was "Strata Red," and it couldn't have come at a better time since it looked like much of the older folks in the crowd were ready for bed. Gossard travels the crowd again for the final song and Thompson holds his guitar into the audience for all to play. It was a short set due to the plethora of other bands Acidic had play with them, but they gave every song their all and all the fans loved it, from mom and dad to bro and sis to annoying mosh kid.

Venue: Troubadour
Website: AcidicBand.com


Date: July 12, 2012
City: West Hollywood, CA



Michael Gossard



Ted Dibravski



Michael Thompson

COMING UP

Models To Keep An Eye On

Lauren La Carriere

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Petra Levitt

L

Lauren La Carriere is an exotic blend of Middle Eastern, Hispanic and Polish heritage, and is from Orange County, CA. As a youth she had always dreamt of being a model, but never thought she would actually be doing it as a real job. When she turned 18 she figured she would try her hand at modeling. Lauren got her start doing promotional modeling for a few automotive companies at different car shows. Although she is fairly new to the industry, Lauren has made quite a splash, landing magazine features. Her ultimate goals are to land a few covers and eventually wants to cross over to modeling for music videos. Along with her modeling you can also find Lauren in the ring as a ring girl for the Respect in The Cage fights. Lauren definitely has the looks and stamina to go all the way; let's see if we can keep pace.



COMING UP
Models To Keep An Eye On Cont'd





THE STATS

Birthday:
October 27

Zodiac Sign:
Scorpio

Measurements:
32C-24-34

Height:
5'3"

Weight:
110 lb.

Ethnicity:
I am Middle Eastern (Lebanese and Syrian), Polish and Hispanic.

Hometown:
Fullerton, CA

Turn Ons:
Humbleness, generosity and chocolate covered strawberries.

Turn Offs:
Liars, immaturity, and when I am not a priority over your friends.

Ideal first date:
I am traditional, so dinner and movie is perfect for me.

Guilty Pleasure:
Junk food and lots of it; chips, ice cream...you name it!

Pet Peeves:
I hate when people assume I am dumb and not qualified enough for a professional position just because of the way I look. It really bothers me.

Celebrity Pass:
I haven't had one since I was 13. You kind of get over the whole celebrity-crush thing after your teenager years are over. But, at that time, I loved Anthony Kiedis from the Red Hot Chili Peppers. I never liked the typical boy band kind of guy, ...Always preferred them a little rough around the edges. [laugh]

See more of Lauren at
[Facebook.com/ModelLaurenLaCarriere](https://www.facebook.com/ModelLaurenLaCarriere)

COMING UP
Models To Keep An Eye On Cont'd



Diianne

Kwon

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up by Monique Vasquez
Hair by Monique Vasquez
and April Pan

A decorative flourish consisting of several overlapping, stylized loops in a pinkish-red color, positioned to the left of the main text block.

Diianne Kwon was born in South Korea, but moved to the United States at the age of three. Her parents were both in the military, so they traveled quite a bit. They finally settled in Los Angeles, CA where she was raised by her grandmother. Diianne wasn't one for the spotlight at first, but then she saw her sister excel at acting and took an interest. At age 16 she entered her first modeling contest, Miss Hawaiian Tropics, and was immediately hooked. Since then she has been featured in a music video, been on TV and even in films. Diianne plans to continue her modeling and acting in hopes of landing a lead role. It's a hard climb to the top, but with legs like hers, she's bound to make it look easy.

COMING UP

Models To Keep An Eye On Cont'd





THE STATS

Birthday:
October 23

Zodiac Sign:
This is a difficult question because I was born on October 23, which is right on the cusp of Libra and Scorpio. I consider myself a bit of both. I am strong minded like a Scorpio, but also very sensitive and friendly like a Libra.

Measurements:
34C-24-33

Height:
5'0"

Weight:
108 lb.

Ethnicity:
I was born in South Korea, but lived in the U.S. since the age of five or six. I consider myself American-Korean.

Hometown:
Los Angeles, CA

Turn Ons:
Many things turn me on: confidence, talent and also forearms. I've got a thing for well-developed, hairy, manly forearms!

Turn Offs:
Insecurity, men who flash thier wallets and loud, belligerent men.

Guilty Pleasure:
Frozen yogurt! It's not healthy or lowfat the way I build mine at Yogurt Land! I top mine with nuts, cookie crumbs, marshmallow syrup and bunch of other stuff I shouldn't be eating!

Pet Peeves:
White lint on black clothing! I can't help but stare and stare and I always pick them off of others. It drives me nuts if a guy is talking to me and all I can think of is the lint on him!

Celebrity Pass:
It's gotta be Johnny Depp! He is hot, talented and I hear he is awesome to work with!

See more of Dianne at
[Facebook.com/Dianne.Kwon](https://www.facebook.com/Dianne.Kwon)

GAME ON

The Latest Games Reviewed

HOWL, SUCK...OR BOTH?

Written by Josh Schilling

Dawnguard is the first major expansion for the critically acclaimed *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. What is it that made me so eager to return to this world after roughly 170 hours of questin', slashin', thievin', wanderin', spellin' and mud crabbin'? Well I know it wasn't for the flawless, error free game play, that's for sure. I had a moment during my Tamriel adventures when a glitch almost made me give up my game-playing days for good, but I endured. For a game with so many weird and frustrating moments, it speaks a great deal that even with these flaws it is still one of the best games I have ever played.

So *Dawnguard* came calling and I answered enthusiastically. The greatest thing about this game is the freedom it allows you to do pretty much whatever you want. Sometimes you lose a little bit of focus by wanting to walk around, sell off some items, or find out what's in that cave over there. After starting the game and doing a bit of gratuitous side-tracking, I focused myself into traveling to the *Dawnguard* fortress to get this new adventure underway.

What unfolded was a rather lengthy quest that challenges you with a major decision: Do you become a vampire lord and join in with the other blood suckers or do you remain true to the *Dawnguard* by utilizing your nifty werewolf powers to fight the pesky vampires? Your choice will lead you deep into the respective faction and you will fight to uncover the vampire's plans to knock out the sun so they can finally traipse around at all hours of the day. Whichever decision you make, the story and gameplay are basically the same with a few dialogue differences. With that, your actions in the *Dawnguard* expansion main quest can sometimes seem a bit forced as the same story line tries to toe the line between the vampire and *Dawnguard* sides, but nit-picking aside, it's still a fulfilling ride.

There are other interesting things that come with the *Dawnguard* expansion that really add to the overall world of *Skyrim*. By becoming a vampire lord, you can morph into a grotesque, floating beast that can suck the life out of hordes of enemies. In fact, some of my most outstanding moments involve saving the game, then going ape-shit in a random city. After the glorious carnage, you just utilize the Omega 13-esque "Load Previous Save" and all is well again. The *Dawnguard* expansion also gives you additional weapons, spells, and a new shout to play around with as you explore additional settings including a quest-line foray into Oblivion.

For a non-multiplayer game, keeping things fresh by injecting expansions is a commendable (and profitable) thing by Bethesda, but if you're a PC player, you already have a nearly endless array of user generated mods so *Dawnguard* might not seem as much of a necessity as it would to console jockeys. Still, it's almost a no-brainer to grab this expansion. \$20 for 20+ hours of new gameplay in one of the greatest games in recent memory should be a rewarding experience for fan boys and casual *Skyrimmers* alike. With or without this expansion, *Skyrim* is a nearly endless game, but *Dawnguard* adds some interesting flavor even with the sometimes maddening bugs.

Game Title: *Dawnguard*

Producer: Bethesda Softworks

Platform: PS3, Xbox 360 and PC

Website: ElderScrolls.com/skyrim/add-ons/

★★★★★

Ratings: Mature

Genre: Fantasy

Release Date: June 26, 2012



SKYRIM
DAWNGUARD

GAME ON

The Game Reviews COND'T'D



Skate or DIE!

Written by Jesse Seilhan

Tony Hawk Pro Skater HD is a remake in a series that has nearly two dozen releases but without a true sequel in years. If you grew up in the 90's and played sports games, chances are that the *Tony Hawk* franchise holds a special place in your heart. Coming home from school was a thing of joy when pro skaters from around the world were pulling off sick maneuvers and complicated grinds with a simple press of the finger and flick of the wrist. For nearly a decade, nobody could dethrone the king of extreme sports videogames, until EA released *Skate* and showed what innovative controls and a new camera angle could do. Flash-forward to 2012 and now we have really zero skateboarding franchises, barely any extreme sports games, and little hope for the future. This title brings back the old memories, but seems to tamper with them just enough to still yearn for the good old days.

Two things make a skateboarding game great: controls and level design. While it is not the job of Robomodo to redo the locales of past games, it is their job to pick quality levels. With Warehouse, School 2, and Mall, they nailed it. With some of the others, however, the frustration of completing difficult tasks rises after years of dormancy. But with only seven levels to choose from, replayability is not extremely high. As for the controls, they, at least, feel nearly spot-on. Anyone without a proper d-pad on their controller may disagree, but pulling off 1080s and Darkslides was as easy (or difficult) as it was ten years ago. Some of the timing-sensitive moments can be a bit frustrating, but that's the whole point of a sports game: risk versus reward. The graphics were given a slight upgrade, but not quite on the level of some other HD remakes. The meat of the game is the same as it always is, so enjoy collecting the letters in SKATE, hidden DVDs, and jumping over magic homeless folk.

Music and community are as fundamental to the skateboarding culture as wheels and wood. The *Tony Hawk* series featured one of most robust and renowned soundtracks of all-time, including the very best of punk, metal, and hip-hop from years gone by. Due to licensing issues, not all of the original soundtracks could be restored, but with only a dozen tracks to listen to, it feels like a sliver of the potential output. The lack of original music isn't as much of a bummer as the just lack of overall music. When you dive deep and give this game a spin for two hours or more, you're bound to hear the entire soundtrack three or four times. As for community, the time-honored split-screen gameplay has vanished and four-player online multiplayer has filled the gap. Online modes gives players a run at graffiti and trick attack, staples of the series, but without a buddy sitting next to you that you're able to punch right before they pull off a special move, the charm is a bit lost. With paid DLC on the horizon, maybe the added levels and revert move will give this game more life, but until then, I'd suggest dusting off a copy of the originals and giving those a spin.

Game Title: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD

Producer: Activision

Platform: PS3, Xbox 360 and Windows

Website: [Facebook.com/TonyHawksProSkaterHD](https://www.facebook.com/TonyHawksProSkaterHD)

★★★★★

Ratings: Teen

Genre: Extreme Sports

Release Date: July 18, 2012



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