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# KISS

Gene Simmons talks about the legendary band reaching The End Of The Road

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**BENT MUFFBANGER**, are a metal/hard rock outfit from Lyndonville, VT. They have a new ten track CD out now called 'Validation' which runs in at just over thirty-five minutes long and is the bands third release. The band are actually based around the talents of multi-instrumentalist Carl Sheperd.



Right now it is overcast in Lyndonville, no rain, just clouds. It is early afternoon, and Carl Sheperd has been in the studio all day working on a new song for the next album. "I'm always working, always writing. My day usually starts in the morning reviewing yesterday's tracks and ends with realizing its time to turn on some lights," he says. Sheperd does not eat much when he is working on a new album. "I pretty much sit down in the studio with a cup of coffee and get to work. I'll stop for more coffee, there's always time for more coffee, but otherwise there isn't much more going on. Today for lunch I stopped and had a sandwich and a glass of milk. Dinner is cooking, BBQ beef in the slow cooker, and it smells great," he smiles. Carl started playing trumpet in grade school, picking up a guitar in his teens. In high school he started a band and began writing and recording my own songs on a

boombox. In college I continued to play trumpet and guitar while playing in a few different bands. Since then it's been a cycle of on again off again playing bass and guitar in bands and writing his own material. "I've played in many bands across northern Vermont, and even released a couple of albums before taking some time off. Now I've decided to take some time for myself and have been fortunate enough to really focus on my writing and produce music that I'd want to listen to," he expresses. "Validation" wasn't going to be an album. "This past winter I had written seventy songs and pulled some of the heavier tracks together for a friend. Once it was all together and I saw how much people liked it, I decided to release it as an album," he explains to me. "It's not all 'metal' but is a collection of some of my harder, louder songs. It's a nod to the eighties hard rock and metal bands that I grew up playing along to. They just don't make music like that anymore, and I wanted to make great music like what I grew up listening to." What makes 'Validation' different from Sheperd's other work is that it's much heavier and primarily electric guitar based. His other albums all feature more acoustic guitar. "I don't think I pulled out the acoustic once on any of these tracks. I started with louder, more 'metal' sounding drum tracks as well. This is an album to crank in the car. While my other albums are also great cranked, they are a little more mainstream," he enthuses. Sheperd grew up listening to the music of the sixties and seventies: The Beatles, The Stones, and The Who all of which are huge influences in a lot of his music. It also find inspiration in many songwriters, Harry Neilsson

and Brian Wilson immediately come to mind. The inspirations behind this album are obviously more seventies and eighties hard rock and metal bands," he tells me. "grew up listening to Ozzy, Judas Priest and the like and that totally comes through on this album."



Sheperd does not have many interests other than writing and playing music. "My wife and I love to travel. We drove across the country twice last year and went to at least seven different amusement parks. I was able to cross a few things off my bucket list, like stopping in Cleveland, Ohio to see the Rock-n-roll Hall of Fame, or seeing Mount Rushmore in South Dakota and driving through Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming," he says. "Another one was driving Route 66 from Chicago, Illinois to the Santa Monica Pier in California. I've also made a few trips down to Disney World in Florida the past couple of years, everyone loves Disney World. The highlight of our most recent trip was seeing Steely Dan in Tampa, Florida. It's not out of the norm for us to just pick up and drive to another state to go to an amusement park either, we both love roller coasters." Bent Muffbanger as mentioned is one person who is just one man writing, performing, and recording in at home studio. "I feel like I've got everyone fooled on my

albums, when you hear the layering of guitars or the vocals harmonies, you need to realize it's all just me," he smiles.



The highlight of 'Validation' for Sheperd isn't any one song, it's how well it's been received. "I really had no idea that out of all my releases this would be the most popular one, this totally surprised me. It's by far the most streamed on Spotify and iTunes, and a favourite of all my Facebook followers. I put this together as an afterthought, and it's gotten the most attention so far. In fact, it's inspired me to do another metal album that is being released as we speak," he says with spirit. Sheperd has played in bands for many years and he really enjoying working on his own. "Now, being primarily a studio recording artist, I don't have plans for going out on the road, though if the right people come around and are interested, I'd happily consider touring." 'Validation' was recorded in his home studio, in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. It was entirely recorded, mixed and mastered by Carl on a Boss br1600 digital multi-track recorder. No fancy computer editing on this one. "The songs on this were pulled from a period of three months where I was writing a new song every day. I'd start in the morning working with a drum track and end the day with a completed song," he explains to me.

'Validation' was the third release out of a large catalogue of music that's already on other CDs. "I've just released my seventh album, 'Vindication', that is another metal album as well as a more acoustic and piano based album, LoveStruck. I think it makes me a better musician to try my hand at different genres. I've recently updated my recording set up and have been experimenting with using new technology while keeping to my signature sound. I'm excited to use the computer to record, edit and mix my music, it lets me put out a better-quality product. Besides writing more music, my main focus is on getting people to hear what I've already produced. The music industry has changed a lot in the past twenty years, so I'm learning to navigate the new world of music on the



internet. With so many people able to just sit at a computer and write, the internet is full of bad music, so breaking through the muck is a challenge. Finding an audience is a challenge. I know it might be a bit late for me to be breaking into it, but I write great songs and I will keep working on getting them heard. Once the right person hears them, who knows what could happen," concludes Carl, bringing an end to our conversation.

'Validation' is available for digital download at CDBaby, Amazon, and iTunes and streaming through Spotify, Apple music, Amazon MP3, YouTube music, and iheartradio. Check Bent Muffbanger out at <http://bentmuffbanger.com/validation/> <http://store.cdbaby.com/cd/bentmuffbanger4/>