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Meat Loaf goes Back into Hell

Meat Loaf doesn't judge his album sales in terms of the number of platinum discs that he's been awarded.

"We've sold a lot of records," he says, "but as a percentage of all the people on earth it's very small." It is perhaps the only way to retain some perspective.

The raw statistics are astonishing. 1993's *Bat Out of Hell II* shifted 15 million copies. Its predecessor was bought by 34 million people and remained in the UK album chart for over nine years.

Bat Out of Hell III: The Monster is Loose was finally released in the autumn. It's little surprise that Meat Loaf felt intense pressure during its creation.



"People think doing a *Bat Out of Hell* record is just a marketing tool," he says. "Doing a *Bat Out of Hell* album is the equivalent of walking barefoot down a street of broken glass. It's really difficult."

Further complications arose when Meat Loaf fell out with long-time collaborator Jim Steinman. Steinman both wrote and produced the first two *Bat* records, but had only minimal involvement in the trilogy's final instalment.

"My relationship with Jim Steinman is like that of any couple that's been together a long time," explains Meat Loaf. "You're going to have arguments over picking up your socks off the floor."

On the edge

With Steinman out of the picture, Meat Loaf focused on producing an "edgier" record. He collaborated with a diverse range of musicians, from Queen guitarist Brian May to Mötley Crue bassist Nikki Sixx.

But he rarely pays attention to the work of other artists when creating a new album. "Before we went in to record, I didn't listen to anybody apart from Boz Scaggs a little bit."

It's been an eventful 12 months for the 58-year-old – and not only because of the release of *Bat III*.

In October, his plane nearly crashed at Stansted when the landing gear failed to operate. Almost as terrifying was the celebrity golf tournament he took part in alongside Alice Cooper, Chris Evans and Bruce Forsyth.

"It became a three day Ant and Dec reality show," he says. "The camaraderie was really great but I don't think any of us actually realised what we were getting ourselves into."

Meat Loaf also found time to play Jack Black's dad in the recent Tenacious D movie *The Pick of Destiny*. He's appeared in a total of 43 films, ranging from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* to *Fight Club*.

"I always have fun doing movies," he says. If he were forced to choose between them, he would even pick acting over singing.

The reason? "You can't sing when you're sick. So you're constantly walking down the street and if somebody sneezes or if you hear a sniffle you go, 'Oh God!'"

TV hell

Aside from germs, Meat Loaf's other great fear is of performing live on television. "I can perform in front of 20,000 people and I'll be OK because it's anonymous.

"But I have enormous TV performance anxiety beyond your wildest imagination."

It's given him considerable respect for contestants on shows like *The X Factor*. "I may not be a huge fan of these talent contests but I'm a huge fan of the artists who are able to get on TV and do as well as they do. Because I freak."

It's been a busy time for the Loaf, and 2007 is shaping up to be just as jam-packed. His world tour for *Bat Out of Hell III*, which reaches the UK in May, consists of 112 shows.

And, yes, he will be performing *I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)*. "When people ask me how many times I've sung it, my reply is: not enough."

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