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WHERE ARE THEY NOW? SCREAM

Formed in 1981 within the initial sparks of the Washington DC hardcore punk explosion, **Scream** originally disbanded in 1990 when then drummer Dave Grohl joined Nirvana. The band have reunited several times over the years but following the release of their 'Complete Control Sessions' EP in 2011, which saw the return of the original line-up, they have finally released their hugely anticipated new album 'DC Special'. James Sherry catches up with frontman Pete Stahl to find out what it is that makes DC so special.



PHOTO: DIONA MAVIS

The new album 'DC Special' really celebrates the inspirational Washington DC music scene and features contributions from many of its key players, including Dave Grohl, Ian MacKaye (Dischord Records, Minor Threat, Fugazi), Brian Baker (Dag Nasty, Bad Religion), Amy Pickering (Fire Party), Joe Lally (Fugazi), Darryl Jenifer (Bad Brains) and many more. When you started making the album, was the intention to really commemorate the musical scene you come from?

"Although I live in California, we were on tour when Scream had an implosion and that's when Dave joined Nirvana and me and my brother Franz ended up staying in California, which is when we started the band Wool together. Scream has always been the foundation of our musical career and growth so whenever we would go home to DC to visit parents and stuff, we'd all get together and play music. We would always go back to the source. Back to the banks of the Potomac River, we come from that water that runs through DC."

From the very start, it felt like the environment of DC was always reflected in the music.

"The one thing that we really wanted to celebrate with this new album was our community, which shaped us and shaped our band. The water from the Potomac River is really important because the people that came over and settled in modern America, the colonists, they brought with them music. They founded the areas in Virginia where we come from, and brought music from Ireland, England, and Holland etc and they started forming communities up the rivers from the Atlantic Ocean, and DC is right in that pocket. That's where it all started and spread from there. Actually, the first touring band in America was a DC band and it was a marching band called The John Phillips Sousa Band in the eighteen hundreds and they went to Europe and went on tour. DC has a rich tradition of music that's kinda rootsy, which is one of the reasons why it's such a unique area.

"As far as the punk scene goes, that really influenced us. It's a small community, shaped by another community of other kinds

of roots music, soul, and Go-go funk music – and that's what makes up the DC sound. With this new record we really wanted to celebrate our community and create new music that drives us forward, but also kinda looks back."

It's true that all of the different music that Scream absorbed from the start can be heard in the band's unique sound. What were the main bands and sounds that influenced you at the start?

"We were inspired by all the great ska and reggae that came out of the UK like The Specials, Madness, The Members. And from our area, obviously the Bad Brains who gave us our first show in DC. We travelled together in my van up to New York to play CBGBs, they put us in their studio up in Newark, they were seriously lifting us up. The Bad Brains taught us so much about dynamics, space, and power in music."

It's fair to say that Dave Grohl's involvement in the band certainly exposed Scream's music to many people who might not have otherwise heard it. Despite his huge fame these days, it must be nice that he returned to his roots for this new album.

"That's always a catch 22 situation because we don't want to ride on his coattails and he's such a huge star, there's no way around it and people are always going to ask and talk about him, and that's fine and that's just the way it is. We try to be respectful."

Sadly, the year that marks the arrival of 'DC Special', also saw the tragic passing of original Scream drummer Kent Stax.

"He'd been sick for a long time, but that still doesn't prepare you for when it actually happens. We played a show a couple of weeks before he passed and I was hoping that he was gonna make it, because even just before that if we played in DC, he'd sit in with us. Even when he was really sick, he was still playing music. He went out that way. He kept playing until he couldn't stand up anymore." **VR**

'DC Special' is out now on Dischord Records