



# SINNERS & SAINTS

PETER STEELE AND **TYPE O NEGATIVE**  
COME BACK FROM THE DEAD—OR AT LEAST  
JAIL AND REHAB—TO UNVEIL THEIR LATEST  
ALBUM WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM RASPUTIN

story by j.bennett || photos by robin laananen





**Karma Chameleon:**  
Steele lurks amongst the  
sweet leaves

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I've got a lot of enemies. I'm sort of an eyesore to people [who] would be glad to have me done in. But... try and do it!

—GRIGORY EFIMOVICH RASPUTIN,  
Fall 1915, a year before his murder

I went from playing in bars to being behind them. And now I have gold, platinum and criminal records.

—PETER STEELE,  
January 23, 2007

HE WALLACE CIVIC CENTER, FITCHBURG, MA, DECEMBER 2, 1994.

Type O Negative are riding bitch on a bill with Godflesh and Danzig. Six-foot-eight vocalist/bassist Peter Steele swills red wine from a bottle onstage. Instead of a guitar strap, he's got a thick steel chain slung over his shoulder. He's muscular, confident, and supporting 1993's *Bloody Kisses* and its goth-skewering breakthrough hit "Black No. 1," he's arguably at the top of his game. Up near the front, just out of hearing range, an impatient and possibly shitfaced Danzig fan yells something between songs. "I'll be walking around in the audience during Danzig's set," Steele replies. "If any of you have anything you'd like to say to me, I have a mouthful of hot cum for you."

Fast forward 12 years, and at first you might be inclined to think that not much has changed. On the sixth floor of the Bel Age Hotel in West Hollywood, Steele drinks merlot from a long-stemmed glass. Type O have just completed a string of shows at the House of Blues in Anaheim, and Steele and keyboardist/producer Josh Silver are sticking around a few extra days, doing interviews to promote Type O Negative's latest album, *Dead Again*. But Pete doesn't look so good. For one, the muscles have gone soft. He seems vaguely uneasy, his wry sense of humor tempered by the distinct strains of regret. He's wearing an ancient New York Jets football jersey with ill-fitting forest green sweatpants, white socks and nondescript black athletic shoes. As he talks about *Dead Again*—with its photograph of Rasputin on the cover, its songs about drug addiction and despair—it quickly becomes clear why the album took four years to make. "To be honest with you, there were some personal problems within the band," he says. "Josh lost his father, I lost my mother... then there was rehab, jail, hospitals, getting divorced... You have to work around these things."

Steele declines to say who got divorced, but

he readily admits that the rehab/jail/hospital part of Type O's misery spree was all him: Rehab for cocaine and alcohol addiction. Preceded by a stint in the psych ward at Kings County Hospital. And culminating in a 30-day sabbatical in a not-so-deluxe suite at Rikers Island for, well ... it's probably better if Steele explains. "I did something violent," he says. "It was, of course, concerning a woman—someone I was with for a while chose to be unfaithful and I settled it like a Neanderthal. And I had to suffer the consequences for it, so that was a setback."

As was rehab, the explanation for which comes out in one lengthy stream-of-consciousness-style jag: "I was never really into drugs, but I started to use cocaine when I was about 35," Steele explains. "I'm 45 now, so that's pretty embarrassing. I should've known better, but I get offered things from time to time and people think because, you know, my line of work, that it's dangerous for me to be out there touring. But listen, I have 10

phone numbers memorized that when I'm home, I can get coke in 10 fuckin' minutes. When I'm on tour, I don't know who the fuck I'm buying from, and you know, I don't wanna chase this white devil for the rest of my life. I'm not gonna say that I'm totally recovered, and that's what the song 'Dead Again' happens to be about. It's about fucking up. As you see, I still drink. The other stuff is pretty much a part of my past, but you get three or four months under your belt and then, you know, somebody breaks out

a line or what-the-fuck-have-you, and it's like, 'OK, just one line.' Yeah, right. Then you're gone for a week. And I feel like I'm killing myself every time I do it. But I'm trying to learn from my mistakes, and I wrote that song hoping that our fans would get something out of it, because I feel it's better to learn from someone else's mistakes than your own. It's like you're getting a free ticket, man—use it. I fucked up, and I don't want you to go through it. There's no rehabilitation going on in jail, either—it's just all the animals in the fuckin' zoo thrown together. It's true what they say about institutions—hospitals, jail—the last stop is the morgue. And I'm really not ready for that."



#### THE BOOK OF STEELE

Born Peter Ratajczyk on January 4, 1962, Steele is a veteran among veterans. After playing in a small-time Brooklyn metal band called Fallout as a teenager with childhood friend and future Type O keyboardist/producer Josh Silver, he spent the '80s hauling trash for the New York City Parks Department and slugging it out with recently reformed thrash bashers Carnivore before erecting the storied goth/doom quad-rangle that would eventually become Type O Negative with Silver, guitarist Kenny Hickey and future Life of Agony drummer Sal Abruscato. The band was originally called Subzero, and then, believe it or not, Repulsion. "We actually played a show as Repulsion," Silver recalls. "I have

*Origin of the Feces: Not Live at Brighton Beach* ("That photographer deserves a medal," Silver says, "and a scuba mask") and then, even more famously, appeared in a nine-page *Playgirl* spread in 1995, cock in hand, with a come-hither look that probably beckoned more dudes than ladies, however unintentionally. "I really exploited myself," Steele says today. "I don't like pornography for the same reason I don't like sports—they both involve balls, and I'd rather be doing it than watching it. The whole *Playgirl* thing was just an attention-getter for the band. I didn't realize I was gonna get nine pages and a centerfold and a cover. All of a sudden it was like, 'Great—what am I gonna tell my mother?' And I don't like the fact that people think that I

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—PETER STEELE

a bunch of cassettes at home—green ones—that say 'Repulsion' on them that contain the material that eventually became [Type O's 1991 full-length debut] *Slow, Deep and Hard*. This little label called Earache said they had a band called Repulsion and told us, 'Change your name or we'll sue you.' We told them not to bother." After a brief stint as Nu Minority, they finally—and mercifully—settled on Type O Negative. "When we break up, I'm putting those tapes on eBay," Silver laughs. "Gotta make a living, you know?"

In 1992, Steele famously spread his ass cheeks for the cover of Type O's fake live album, *The*

think I'm beautiful or that I have to show it off because it's big or it's fuckin' great. It was a joke, you know? I even asked if it could be scratch 'n' sniff or if they could make it pop up like a Hallmark card. You know, 'Can you throw 3-D glasses in there?' But it was a challenge. They sent me previous issues of the magazine, and after thumbing through kinda quickly, I noticed that all these guys posed flaccid. I agreed to do it on the condition that I would be hard. They were like, 'You really think you can do that?' I said, 'Just send the check. You keep your end up and I'll keep my end up.'"

#### PROFITS OF DOOM

Top-loaded for speed and continuing a trend that began with 2003's *Life Is Killing Me*, the first three tracks on *Dead Again* might strike longtime Type O fans as some of the fastest songs the band has ever recorded. "I wouldn't say that, but maybe this album is a little different because we used [drummer] Johnny [Kelly] live as opposed to a drum machine," Silver offers. "Had we used a drum machine, I think Peter would've made the stuff a lot slower, but when you're playing with a real drummer, you tend to speed up, which isn't necessarily a bad thing."

Despite the band's history of heavily detuned covers (Seals & Crofts' "Summer Breeze," Neil Young's "Cinnamon Girl," a Beatles medley, "Angry Inch" from the Broadway rock opera *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*), *Dead Again* is the first all-originals Type O album since *Slow, Deep and Hard*. "We tried a cover, but it just wasn't working," Silver admits, though he declines to name the song. "When we do a cover, we make it Type O. Our covers sound nothing like the originals, and even though this one didn't sound like the original, it just wasn't happening. Besides, the album was already 77 minutes long, so it probably wouldn't have fit, anyway."

*Dead Again's* original title was *Profits of Doom*, which is also the name of the album's third track. "I didn't love that title," Silver admits. "I thought it was a little Manowar-ish. Not that we don't belong with Manowar—but even for us, that's a little much. It just bugged me. I'm not saying *Dead Again* is a piece of genius, but it's appropriate. In this business, you die a thousand deaths, and that's where the Rasputin imagery comes in—they say he couldn't be killed. And Peter is a big Rasputin fan."

Born in Siberia on January 10 of the Julian Calendar, 1869, Grigory Rasputin was a charismatic, highly controversial, self-proclaimed "starets" or holy man, who wielded a considerable degree of influence over the last czar and empress of Russia (the Romanovs) in the years leading up to the October Revolution. He also had his way with many of St. Petersburg's society matrons, even bringing three women home to meet his wife after fucking at least one of them China-sideways on the train back to Siberia. *London Sunday Times* correspondent Brian Moynahan sums the starets up thusly in his excellent 1997 biography, *Rasputin: The Saint Who*





**Little Mr. Scareall:**  
Going a little mad  
in Motel Hell

*Sinned*: “Grigory Efimovich Rasputin—drinker, thief, womanizer—arrived in St. Petersburg in 1903 as if from the medieval past... tattered, black-clad, muttering. By the time of his sensational murder 13 years later, the peasant had become the ‘beloved friend’ of Czar Nicholas and Empress Alexandra, with a seemingly supernatural power to stop the bleeding attacks of their hemophiliac son, Alexis. How could it have happened? As one society lady of the time asked,

him,” he continues. “The Communists tried to shoot him, poison him, stab him, and I believe that he ultimately froze to death. They fed him all these poison pastries and then they stabbed him, shot him and dumped him in the river. [Author’s note: *The exact details of Rasputin’s death—particularly the alleged poisoning—remain disputed, but it is generally accepted that he was shot and stabbed several times before his body was thrown into the Neva River sometime in mid-to-late December*

was what it was. To not even match the offer for the previous album—especially when you’re really desperate to maintain control over a tremendous back catalogue, which to this day sells well—was a stupid move, if you ask me. It’s too bad, really, because I enjoyed a lot of the people there; I had a good relationship with the president and the owner. I’m not gonna say I don’t miss ‘em, but if that’s what was gonna go down, we just needed to move on.”

Reached for comment at his New York office, Roadrunner Senior VP of A&R Monte Conner opted for diplomacy, saying only this: “We appreciate everything that Type O Negative has represented for Roadrunner over the years and we wish everyone in the band nothing but success in the future.”

These days, I pretty much never have a dull moment. I’m working with *Carnivore* or I’m working with Type O, ‘cause I gotta get out of the house. I mean, how much *Law & Order* can you watch?

—PETER STEELE

“How could so pitiful a wretch throw so vast a shadow?”

“Rasputin is one of my heroes,” Steele enthuses. “What I like about Rasputin is the fact that he was a mad monk, a womanizer, a drunk, a drug addict, a glutton, but he was able to cure the Romanov boy and he was taken care of by the [czar’s] family. And rumor has it he had a really big dick. I don’t have penis envy, but I guess that’s kind of where I differ from him. I am a big dick; he had a big dick.

“I also like the fact that they couldn’t kill

of 1916.] Plus, he actually looks like a Type O Negative member.”

*Dead Again* also happens to be the band’s first album on SPV/Steamhammer and, consequently, the first not released by Roadrunner. “I think we were one of two bands that lived through the term [of the contract],” Silver chuckles. “We weren’t looking to leave necessarily, but [Roadrunner] came up with an offer that fell short of our last offer, and it was kind of a shock. And it wasn’t even a lot different, that’s what was annoying about it. It was kind of a fuck-you,

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The blocaine, the rehab, the prison time—all this we can believe. It’s a familiar story, after all, in the minefield of treachery and temptation loosely corralled into what is affectionately known as “the rock ‘n’ roll business.” It’s what Steele says next that seems fucking weird, given his decades-long history of strident atheism.

“Believe it or not, I go to church.”

Huh?

“I’m a devout Roman Catholic, actually,” he insists. “There are no atheists in foxholes, they say, and I was a foxhole atheist for a long time.



### SLOW, DEEP AND HARD

I love *Slow, Deep and Hard*—one of my favorite Type O records. I think, lyrically, Peter was on fire and I love that. It’s pure aggression. The production is shit and it’s appropriate for the material. It just all worked together—the sound and the material are marriage. It was sonic diarrhea and the birth of an identity. *Carnivore* was a prelude, in some respects, but Type O really took that whole sludge thing to, you know, eight levels. Even though it sold only 150,000 copies, it’s still a really good record.

### BLOODY KISSES

Extremely eclectic. Lots of good songwriting. Obviously, it broke us commercially, but for a real reason: Unlike most bands that break commercially, we broke because our fan base refused to let up. We toured almost three years straight. We were a real band’s band at that time. They all wanted to take us out. We never had the industry support until it was kind of forced upon them by sheer demand. Even though it was never an enormous demand, ‘cause we’re Type O Negative, there was enough of a demand to get “Christian Woman” played and get the specialty shows like *Headbangers Ball*. It wasn’t intentional; I’m not gonna tell you we came up with this brilliant plan. Everything’s an accident ‘til it goes well.

### WORLD COMING DOWN

Brilliant piece of work, I love it. I think it was vastly underrated by the public, but it doesn’t change my mind about it. I think it’s the darkest thing Type O has ever done. When I put it on I want to kill myself. Sometimes, when I don’t put it on, I want to kill myself. It’s blacker than black. None bleaker. I think the songs were really from the heart. Every word was meant and yet it still retains a very minor amount of humor on that record. That’s the way that we felt at that time. I’m very proud of that volume of work. I’d rather hear it than most Type O records. It’s up there for me. It’s honest. Its honesty is unsurpassed.

### LIFE IS KILLING ME

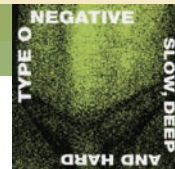
*Life Is Killing Me* was bits and pieces of previous works. It wasn’t conscious. We never really do anything consciously. In fact, if two out of the three people in the room are conscious, it’s miraculous. Whatever mindset or frame of mind the band is in, in any given moment, is what happens. I guess we were less inspired. There’s some good tunes on it, don’t get me wrong. There’s always Type O albums with stronger and weaker songs, in my opinion. There are fewer things that I like on that record than most.

*All records, except Dead Again, released by Roadrunner*

## ACCENTUATE THE NEGATIVE

Type O keyboardist/producer **Josh Silver** takes *Decibel* step by painful step through the band’s discography

{1991}→



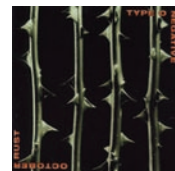
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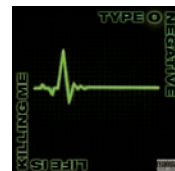
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{2003}→



{2007}→



### THE ORIGIN OF FECES

Interesting, interesting record. It was put out by the record company because they wanted something between *Slow, Deep and Hard* and the next record, so we went into the studio and did a fake live album. We told people it was bullshit. They said, “No way, you’re just playing with us.” They wouldn’t believe us when we told them it wasn’t actually recorded live. We just had fun with it. It was pretty much 90% of what was on *Slow, Deep and Hard* with some added things to it: a cover, new parts, and Peter always wanted to take a second shot at doing the same record. So why not?

### OCTOBER RUST

It’s the easiest listen. It was a departure from *Bloody Kisses*, because after such a success we didn’t want to repeat ourselves, as so many bands do. They attain a level of success and put out the same thing, which never works. Even if it does, it’s boring as shit. We took a shot at doing something completely different. It was odd, it was weird, and very sexual. It worked. I like all the writing on that. There are some songs that make my balls become ovaries, but that’s OK. I can deal with my balls becoming ovaries, as long as there’s some good stuff in between.

### THE LEAST WORST OF TYPE O NEGATIVE

A boldface lie—it was the worst-of. I hated that record. I don’t even consider it to be a record. I despise “best-of” albums. I hate that kind of thing. Things like... the mix of “Cinnamon Girl,” that’s a piece of shit. How can any Type O fan like it? I didn’t even want to do it. It sucked. I still think it sucks. It was a boldfaced attempt to rip off the fans by Roadrunner because they had that in our contract.

### DEAD AGAIN

*Life Is Killing Me* was always a little too moderate for me. It’s a little too much of what you’d expect the sum of Type O to be and that always bugged me a little bit. And this one has more of its own identity and it’s more of a rock album. I think it’s probably the most rock album that Type O’s done. It has at least captured its own identity and still retains the Type O sound or trademark. This took on its own life. It’s something that was good to accomplish with this record.



But after going through a midlife crisis and having many things change very quickly, it made me realize my mortality. And when you start to think about death, you start to think about what's after it. And then you start hoping there is a god. For me, it's a frightening thought to go nowhere. I also can't believe that people like Stalin and Hitler are gonna go to the same place as Mother Teresa."

All this is a recent development, apparently—Steele says he's only been riding pews for a few years. He admits that this might be somewhat of a Dave Mustaine move, although certainly not to that bizarre level of born-again extremism. "Church is kind of a substitute, yeah, because if I wasn't going to church, what else would I be doing, you know? I walk to church, and it's like a half an hour away, so altogether I'm gone for like two hours, which takes a nice little chunk out of the day and it really clears my mind because I really pay attention when I'm in church. I don't think about the other bullshit."

As part of his ongoing effort to stay busy and keep his nose out of Tony Montana's stash, Steele has also resurrected Carnivore with Joey Z. from Life of Agony and Paul Bento and Steve Tobin from Brooklyn's Metal Health Association. "My enemy is boredom," he says. "I must have ADD—I know I have OCD. I'm bipolar; I'm actually bi-Polack, because I'm Polish too, so I need to be constantly occupied, pretty much. These days, I pretty much never have a dull moment. I'm working with Carnivore or I'm working with Type O, 'cause I gotta get out of the house. I mean, how much *Law & Order* can you watch?"

Neither Steele nor Silver make a secret of the fact that they're often at each other's throats in the studio ("We've come close to breaking up twice a week for the last 10 years," Silver laughs), and though Silver says Steele's renewed involvement with Carnivore doesn't necessarily make him uneasy, he obviously has some reservations. "I think it makes a multiple-agenda situation, which isn't good for Type O in my opinion—I think it dilutes the focus, which I don't need. I don't have anything on the side, and that's by choice. For me, Type O is full-time because I'm the guy who sits there for the whole recording process regardless of who's laying the tracks. I'm there for every fucking second of it, so to me, it's super-full-time. I'm not saying [having a side project] is bad, though—I understand that people wanna go out and create other stuff. But I do think it dilutes the focus and makes multiple agendas that would probably be easier not to have."

Silver views Kelly and Hickey's recent enlistment in Danzig somewhat differently. "I think it is different, because you're not putting in the passion—it's more of a cover band," he explains. "But even that takes away time, obviously. With drummers, you know, you do the drums and it's done, so the drummer has more free time than most. At the same time, I would've liked to have more time with Kenny in the studio, sure, but

he's extremely busy. So, again, multiple agendas suck, but they're also part of life, so you deal with it."

Steele, on the other hand, says he has his multiple agendas strictly prioritized. "When I resurrected Carnivore, I told Type O, 'You have my word—Type O comes first,'" he insists. "And Glenn [Danzig] is a friend of mine, so he knows Kenny and Johnny have to work around Type O. When I'm playing with Carnivore or Johnny and Kenny are playing with Danzig, I think it gives us a greater appreciation for Type O Negative. But what I'd really like to see is Johnny and Kenny's other band, Seventh Void, Carnivore, Type O and Danzig all play together so we all get like five paychecks."

According to the Book of Steele, the happy

ending reads like this: "We're just four dicks from Brooklyn, and I'm just grateful that my occupation pays my bills. A lot of people drive themselves to work and hate every fuckin' minute they're there, so I have nothing to complain about. The band has existed for 17 years, you know? It's amazing. I'm not bragging—I'm just looking at it from a statistical point of view. Most bands don't last 17 months or 17 weeks. Actually, on August 28 of this year, we'll be together 18 years, and I think that's something special about Type O Negative because we were friends before we were a band. We played hockey in the street and we got in trouble together, so it's been a growing process. It's like four menstruating women living together, and the cap is always off the toothpaste." [dB]



**Jesus Christ  
Looks Like Him:**

Steele poolside in L.A:  
Still fashionably loud