

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

Back in the 80's when he was Ozzy Osbourne's guitarist, Jake E Lee was one of those iconic rock figures for rock fans like myself. After he split from Ozzy, I followed his career as he formed Badlands, an amazing band that featured the late Ray Gillen on vocals. Then, he effectively disappeared from the mainstream rock scene for about twenty years, releasing a couple of solo albums and making a few guest appearances. It was only the formation of Red Dragon Cartel and the release of their debut album in 2014 that brought Jake E Lee back into the limelight. On 9th November Frontiers Music releases the second Red Dragon Cartel album called "Patina". When the opportunity arose to interview Jake I absolutely jumped at the chance. We spoke via Skype on 29th October and chatted for around 35 minutes about the new album, the band, future plans, collaborating on other projects, his solo records and Badlands.

That interview can be read below or heard on the Friday NI Rocks Show for 9th November which is now on our MixCloud page - <https://www.mixcloud.com/NIROcks/interview-with-jake-e-lee-on-the-friday-ni-rocks-show-9th-nov-2018/>



The full interview has been transcribed and posted below.

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

Playlist for the Show –

OZZY OSBOURNE – Lightning Strikes

SCREAMING EAGLES – Rock n Roll Soul

TRUCKER DIABLO – Never Too Late to Sin

EDEN'S CURSE – Forever

RED DRAGON CARTEL – Crooked Man

Interview with JAKE E LEE Part 1 (13 min)

RED DRAGON CARTEL – Havana

Interview with JAKE E LEE Part 2 (11 min)

RED DRAGON CARTEL – Redeem Me

Interview with JAKE E LEE Part 3 (11 min)

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

BADLANDS – High Wire

BADLANDS – Rumblin' Train

TREMONTI – The First The Last

BLACK SABBATH – The Mob Rules

TYGERS OF PAN TANG – Crazy Nights

METAL ALLEGIANCE – Power Drunk Majesty Pt II

LAWLESS – 1914 (Ghosts of No Mans Land)

SAXON – Call To Arms

STORMZONE – Greatest Sacrifice

IRON MAIDEN - Paschendale

{youtube}MzvYJg81m8w{/youtube}

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

**NI ROCKS** – Hi Jake, thanks for taking the time to talk to Rock Radio NI. The new Red Dragon Cartel album “Patina” is released on 9th November by Frontiers Music. We just played the single “Crooked Man”. What can you tell us about that track?

**JAKE** – Well, I can tell the guitar players that I played a 1963 SG Junior. What else? Oh yeah, I wasn't sure about that track when I was writing it and we were working on it with the band it just seemed like such a...well, to borrow the title, such a crooked riff. Like a weird off-beat riff and I wasn't sure that we were going to be able to make a song out of it. But Anthony came up with the lyrics and the melodies for it and it worked out really good, because it's in a time signature that's not quite 4 - 4. Because the riff is so ugly (laughs), in a weird way, it made me want to write the rest of the song...well, it's followed by a pretty part. In fact it's a part where I play an acoustic guitar, which I almost never do. I don't like acoustic guitar and I don't own an acoustic guitar, but the riff was so bent that it needed something really pretty after it. I think the song flows really well. It's an interesting song.

**NI ROCKS** – It's a great track. Where was the new album recorded and who did you work with for production etc?

**JAKE** – We did the whole thing; writing, recording at Anthony Esposito's studio which is Obscenic Arts and it's on his ranch. He has a ranch in the middle of Pennsylvania, in the middle of nowhere really. Which is good because there is no distraction. He has a big house which can accommodate the entire band and because it's in the middle of nowhere we can go out to the studio and write or record at any time of the day. It worked out well as far as we could function and work at what we're supposed to be doing; not get distracted. I think the nearest bar was a half hour away so we had to actually plan a night out to release some madness.

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

**NI ROCKS** – The band line-up features Darren James Smith on vocals along with drummer Phil Varone and bass player Anthony Esposito. What was it like working with this new team?

**JAKE** – It was great. They're both really solid, groove-oriented players, so I knew we had that nailed. But I like to get a little weird in my songs. I like to take songs off in different directions that you wouldn't normally expect. I like surprises, even in my songs; I like to surprise myself in songs. They both adapted really well to that. I would like to think that both Anthony and Phil did their best playing on this record. They really expanded beyond the usual meat and potatoes kind of playing that they are well known for. This band, it really felt good during the writing and during the recording and I'm really looking forward to going out on the road and doing these songs live. I think these songs are going to be a lot of fun to play and they really kick you in the face more when they're live. Especially "Havana", which sounds great on record, but when we play it together in a room it just has so much more impact. It's just such a fun song to play. I'm really looking forward to being able to do these live.

**NI ROCKS** – The first Red Dragon Cartel album included a number of guest appearances – Robin Zander, Maria Brink etc. Are there any guests on the new album?

**JAKE** – No! (Laughs) Well, for one, we're in the middle of nowhere. When we did have people come out, they would invariably get lost and they'd have to call and we'd have to go find them somewhere at a crossroads. (Laughs) It would be hard getting anybody out there. We did have some local guys. This took a while. I was out on the ranch for about a year for the whole process of writing and recording and all that. Like I said, we'd have the occasional jaunt to the bars and we made some friends. So we did use some local talent. Dillsburg, Pennsylvania is the name of the town. We had one guy play harp on "Luxury of Breathing" – he's a local guy. Did we have anybody else....hmmm, I can't think of anybody right off hand. Yeah, this is much more of a band effort on this record. The first one was very piecemeal and bit by bit. Different drummers, different bass players, different singers. This one, from front to back, just feels more like a project that was done under the same roof, so to speak. And I think that makes the record easier to listen to also. This record, you can listen to it front to back and I don't think there are any two songs that are exactly alike; they're obviously all under the same umbrella, but every song is a little bit different and brings something different to it. Maybe it's just because it's me, but I do feel that you can listen to the record front to back and not get bored with it. This sounds more cohesive and sounds more like a band and I think people will appreciate that.

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

**NI ROCKS** – I read an interview with you recently in which you stated that Darren was always your first choice for the band and the changes a few years ago were just short-term. Do you hope that the new album will be a turning point almost and that people focus on that rather than what went before?

**JAKE** – With Darren? I don't know in this day and age, if you're ever forgiven (laughs). I think once you fuck up there is always going to be somebody with a screenshot or a video, or somebody to bring up your past transgressions. But, I do think that he sang great on this record and I think from the comments that I've read about the first two songs, and we just released the album in Japan and I've read a couple of comments on that; everybody is impressed with Darren, because he does sound a lot more natural on this record. I think he is an incredible singer and I do believe that people are going to change their minds, if they thought he was bad. If they thought he was a good singer before then they're going to be pleasantly surprised at just how good he is.

**NI ROCKS** – In terms of writing for the new album. Were all four of you involved in the writing process at the same time and did each track come together differently or was there a common way of writing?

**JAKE** – We would usually work on a song until it was finished. In general, we did it that way. I'd come up with an idea and then we'd work on it and try to finish that before moving on. But there would be times when you'd get bored working or reach a wall and just couldn't think of anything that would fit in the song; and you'd go off on different ones. But, in general, it was all written almost in sequence. Really, now that I think about it, it was written almost in sequence to what is on the record. I know "Speedbag" which is the first track, was the first track that we wrote. It feels really natural, very organic and honest I think.

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

**NI ROCKS** – You mentioned “Havana” earlier, which was the first track from the new album to be released. We’re going to play that next. What can you tell us about that track?

**JAKE** – “Havana” – originally called ‘Horchata’, and I don’t even know if you know what that is! I grew up in San Diego and Horchata is a delicious rice drink that comes from Mexico and it also happened to be the flavour of the beer that I was drinking when we were writing it. When you first write a song there is no lyrics and no real way to reference it to the others – hey lets work on blah, this song; so you’ve got to give them names, and “Havana” was originally called ‘Horchata’. Let me think of some others. Oh, “The Luxury of Breathing” was originally called ‘Fuzzy Bunny’ because that was the name of the pedal that I used for the riff. Let me think of some other good ones! “Ink and Water” was originally called ‘Tonto Rides Away’ and I’ll give you one more, “Chasing Ghosts” was originally called ‘Chode Strangler’, mainly because it kinda reminded me of “Stranglehold” by Ted Nugent, the early overall sort of vibe of it was like that and so it was originally called ‘Chode Strangler’. A lot of the band now, we still refer to the songs with their original titles. Oh yeah (laughs), I’ll give you one more because I love these old titles. “My Beautiful Mess” was originally titled ‘Feels A Little Rapey’ and I honestly don’t know where that came from (laughs), because I don’t think anything like that happened while we were recording; or if it did I blacked it out! There you go, that’s a lot more than you asked for, but there’s a little spin on “Havana”.

{youtube}JyZwyFWWzw8{/youtube}

**NI ROCKS** – The new album is released on 9th November. Are there plans in place to go out on tour in support of the album?

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

**JAKE** – Yes, I just signed on to do...starting in late February, we're going to do a run of the States, starting in the South West and then moving up to the North East for about a month ( *note – dates now published* ) . I did sign a contract to play Japan for a week in the middle of April. We're working on Europe after that, going straight from Japan to Europe. I don't know how that is going; I haven't seen any dates for me to approve. I know we had a bit of a hard time last time, but I really hope we get to do Europe.

**NI ROCKS** – It'd be great to see you here!

**JAKE** – Yeah, where are you at?

**NI ROCKS** – Belfast in Northern Ireland.

**JAKE** – Ireland! Aw, I really want to go there! We didn't get to go there last time. Ireland is beautiful and you got really good whiskey! (Laughs). I really hope we get to Ireland this time. I'm really going to push for that; if we do indeed get some European dates.

**NI ROCKS** – You kept quite a low profile musically for a long time. What led to the decision to form Red Dragon Cartel and sign with Frontiers, bringing you back into the spotlight?

**JAKE** – What led to that? Well, initially, I live in Las Vegas and Kevin Churko who's a producer, who has done Five Finger Death Punch and he did some Ozzy albums, and he also lives in Vegas and we happened to run into each other once. He wanted to know what it would take; because he was working on the next Ozzy record and I think this might have been right after Zakk was out; he asked what it would take for me to come back into the fold, or work with Ozzy again. I told him I didn't have any problem, I mean I love Ozzy, he's Ozzy; but they're not exactly...known for their....(laughs) I don't know how to word this..business practices...you know, they can be a little shady. I'd already got burned by them once, so I told Kevin, look I have no problem working with Ozzy, I actually think we could do some really good stuff together, but I would like to clear up the past, and if I can get song-writing credits on the "Bark at the Moon " record, which you know, I wrote most of the music for. If you can just put my name in there, I don't want money, I don't want publishing, I don't want any kind of rights to them; it would just



## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

be really nice to have my name on it. I said, if we can do that, then I'll feel like everything is (ok); there's nothing lurking, there's no past uncomfortableness. I told Kevin that and he came back to me and said no-deal! (laughs). So, then he asked me what it would take just to do anything, because I hadn't been doing anything. I still played and I still wrote music; I just did it in a room, on a computer, by myself. He said, why don't you come into the studio; I won't charge you for anything; write a song, I'll come up with the players. The first song was "Feeder" and he got Robin Zander on there and Tom Petersson, and I can't remember exactly who played drums on that; it's been a while. But, he got all the players in there and we finished the song, and it really felt good to do it again. So, Kevin Churko basically coerced me into coming out of hiding.

**NI ROCKS** – I'm glad he did.

**JAKE** – (Laughs)

**NI ROCKS** – Your label, Frontiers, have quite a reputation for bringing different artists together on musical projects. Like Michael Sweet and George Lynch for example. Is that something you'd be interested in and is there anyone you'd really like to work with on such a project?

**JAKE** – Hmm, not really! I'm not that kind of guy. I live here in Vegas and Vegas has a whole influx of musicians from my era who have moved to Vegas for whatever reason. It's like an old musicians graveyard now (laughs). But I'm constantly being asked, because I know the people and I know the clubs, if I want to jam or how about if I do this, or get this kind of band going to make money. That's not.....I would do something like that if I thought it was musically...if something special would blossom out of it. I would never do it for money. I just feel that doing shit for money is a very ignoble pursuit, and I've always thought that way. George Lynch played here in town recently, well not recently, it was a couple of years ago. I went to see him and he said would you come up and jam with me on stage and I said 'No'. And he said why not and I said because I just don't that; it makes me uncomfortable and I just don't want to do it. Then he said, what if I give you money? I said that doesn't make any difference, and I established this for myself a long time ago. Either I want to do something, or I don't want to do something, and money will never enter into it if I don't want to do it. It makes choices a lot easier for me. For example, that night with George, he said I will give you a thousand dollars if you come up and jam one song with me, and I said no! He said it's a thousand dollar! You don't even have to play anything, just be up there with a guitar! I said, I don't care, I don't want to do it and so it doesn't matter what amount! So he said, ok then ten thousand – I'll go to the bank and I'll drag out ten thousand dollars and I will give it to you. And I said no. He said, what are you crazy? I said I'm not crazy, it's just that I don't ever base my decisions on how much money is involved. And I don't, and a lot of people don't believe that. My friends know that it is true, but it makes life much simpler. I don't have to sit there and wonder where the line is. Will I do something if they give me this much money? I think it makes life easier and better; more honest. If I want to do something, then we can negotiate price (laughs), but if I

## NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---

don't then I don't care how much money you offer me. I'm just not going to do it. It's a little like..did you say this was a podcast? (laughs) So you can edit shit out! I don't know if you want to edit this out, this might actually cause a little stir! It's like people that I know, friends or people that I've met who were....and there's nothing wrong with this, it's not anti-gay or anything....but a straight guy said, well I'm not gay, but for a million dollars I'll suck a dick! They'll say that and then look at me and say you wouldn't? I'd say No! I mean, to be honest I'm not into that; there's nothing wrong with that and if I was going to do that it wouldn't be because of the money, it'd be because I want to. Ok, that's what the quote is going to be right there! (laughs). I either want to do something or I don't . Sucking a dick is not something, today, that I particularly feel like doing. So it doesn't matter if someone gave me a million dollars, I'm not going to do it (laughs). It's being a whore basically - if you're doing something for the money, unless you enjoy it. If you're enjoying it and it's something you want to do and you're making money at it, that's great. If you're doing something only because of the money, then it's whorish and I try to live my live unwhorishly.

**NI ROCKS** – We're going to play another track now. Unfortunately, we've played the two tracks from "Patina" that are available so we'll pick something now from the first Red Dragon Cartel album. Which track would you like to play from the first album?

**JAKE** - I'd like to hear "Redeem Me"; isn't that what it was called? (Laughs). It's been so long and we never played that one live. That's one of the things about the first album. We could only maybe do half of it live, and this new record, I think we can play pretty much every song on it live and it's going to be fun. It's the one with Sass Jordan singing on it and she is incredible on that. When she sang that track it just really moved me. I'll pick that one because of her singing and I like that track.

# NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E LEE

Written by NI ROCKS

Wednesday, 07 November 2018 23:42 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2019 06:09

---



to play. Can't say how we ran slightly over slightly, but thanks for taking the time.

