

= Strapping Young Lad =

Strapping Young Lad was a Canadian extreme metal band formed by Devin Townsend in Vancouver , British Columbia in 1994 . The band started as a one @-@ man studio project ; Townsend played most of the instruments on the 1995 debut album , Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing . By 1997 , he had recruited permanent members ; this line @-@ up , which consisted of Townsend on vocals and guitar , Jed Simon on guitar , Byron Stroud on bass , and Gene Hoglan on drums , lasted until the band 's dissolution .

Containing elements of death metal , thrash metal , black metal , progressive metal and industrial metal , Strapping Young Lad 's music was characterized by the use of complex time signatures , polyrhythmic guitar riffing and drumming , blast beats and Wall of Sound production . The band 's musical direction was mainly determined by Townsend , whose battle with bipolar disorder and dark sense of humour were major influences on his songwriting . Townsend was also noted for his eccentric appearance and on @-@ stage behaviour , which greatly contributed to the band 's intense live performances .

The band gained critical success and a growing underground fan base from their 1997 album City . After a hiatus between 1999 and 2002 , the band released three more albums , reaching their commercial peak with the 2006 effort , The New Black . Townsend disbanded Strapping Young Lad in May 2007 , announcing his decision to retreat from public view while continuing to record solo albums .

= = History = =

= = Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing and City ( 1994 ? 1998 ) = = =

Strapping Young Lad began in 1994 as a solo project of Canadian musician Devin Townsend . Following his work as vocalist on Steve Vai 's 1993 album Sex & Religion and its 1994 tour , Townsend believed he had been a " musical whore " , spending " the first five years of [ his ] career working at the behest of other people " . During a brief stint as touring guitarist for The Wildhearts , Townsend received a phone call from an A & R representative for Roadrunner Records , expressing an interest in his demos and an intention to sign him . The offer was ultimately rescinded by the head of Roadrunner , who regarded Townsend 's recordings as " just noise " . He faced further rejection by Relativity Records , the label behind Vai 's Sex & Religion , who saw no commercial appeal in his music . Century Media Records subsequently contacted the musician , offering him a contract to " make us some extreme albums " . Townsend agreed to a five @-@ album deal with the record label .

Following his tour with The Wildhearts , Townsend began recording and producing his debut album , Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing , under the moniker Strapping Young Lad . According to Townsend , the recording process took " about a week " . Embracing The Wildhearts ' anarchist approach , " while focusing on dissonance and just being as over @-@ the @-@ top as [ he ] could " , Townsend sang on the record and performed the majority of its instrumental tracks ( with the assistance of a drum machine ) . A few songs , however , featured local session musicians , including guitarist Jed Simon , Townsend 's future band mate .

Released on April 4 , 1995 , Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing was not widely recognized in the metal community . The album sold 143 copies in its first six months , but received favorable reviews from the heavy metal press . Its unusual musical ideas ? a synthesis of death , thrash , and industrial metal influences ? prompted Andy Stout from Metal Hammer to call it " one of the most disturbing albums you 'll hear for a very long time " . Nevertheless , Townsend has repeatedly expressed his distaste for the recording . He dismissed the album in the liner notes of the record 's 2006 reissue , contending it contained only two great songs . He also deemed its production poor in interviews , referring to the album as " basically a collection of demos that were remixed " . When Century Media advertised the reissue of Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing as the " rebirth of a genre @-@ defying

classic " , Townsend called it " record company bullshit " .

Townsend recruited a permanent line @-@ up for the second album : Jed Simon on guitar , Byron Stroud on bass , and Gene Hoglan on drums . City was released on February 11 , 1997 , and received highly favorable critical reception . Kerrang ! praised the album for its heaviness , claiming it sounded like " sticking your head into the jet nozzle of a Stealth Bomber " , while Metal Hammer ranked it No. 13 on its " Top 20 Albums of 1997 " list . The album soon gained a cult following and a loyal fan base for the band . City is considered to be the band 's best effort by a large number of fans and critics alike . In 2002 , the album was No. 45 on Revolver magazine 's " 69 Greatest Metal Albums of All Time " list , and also appeared on their " Must Have Metal Albums " list in 2005 . It also appeared on the " 100 Most Important Albums of the Nineties " list conducted by Terrorizer . Townsend himself stated City " is the real Strapping record . That 's the ultimate one out of all of them " .

The band embarked on a world tour in 1997 to promote the album , which included dates in Europe , the US and Australia . On May 30 , 1998 , they performed at the Dynamo Open Air festival in Eindhoven , Netherlands , then continued touring the next month in Europe . In June 1998 , the group released No Sleep 'till Bedtime , a live album containing songs performed at a 1997 performance at the HiFi Bar and Ballroom in Melbourne , Australia . Century Media was not initially interested in releasing a live record , but impressed with Townsend 's production , the label agreed to release it . The band closed the year playing a few more dates in Japan and Australia .

= = = On hiatus ( 1999 ? 2002 ) = = =

At the end of 1998 , Townsend placed Strapping Young Lad on hiatus to concentrate on his solo career and on his work as a record producer . He had already released two solo albums , Ocean Machine : Biomech in 1997 and Infinity in 1998 and produced several other artists ' albums . Townsend explained numerous conflicts with Century Media , and his struggle with bipolar disorder ( for which he checked himself into a psychiatric hospital in early 1998 ) , contributed to the curtailment of Strapping Young Lad 's activities :

What happened ? I signed a shitty deal , but luckily it was non @-@ exclusive . I got tired of doing Strapping so I said , ' I can 't do it anymore . ' Then I freaked out and went into a hospital . My lawyer said that I was under mental duress when I signed the contract so the contract is void . At that point it was like , ' I just won 't do another Strapping record . ' Yeah , I went down saying ' CM was the shittiest label ever . ' And they went down as saying that I was ' a complete , arrogant psychopath . '

Townsend remained productive between 1999 and 2002 , recording two more solo albums , Physicist in 2000 and Terria in 2001 , and producing albums for Zimmers Hole , Stuck Mojo and Soilwork , among others . Although Strapping Young Lad was officially on hiatus , they gave occasional live performances , including an appearance on the Foot In Mouth Tour in 2001 with Fear Factory . During this period , Townsend 's bandmates were active musically ; both Stroud and Hoglan recorded with other bands , and all three were involved in Townsend 's solo efforts as studio musicians and as part of his live band as well . Hoglan and Simon also formed a side project called Tenet with Grip Inc. bassist Stuart Carruthers and Interzone frontman Rob Urbinati in early 2002 .

In December 2001 Townsend announced , contrary to his earlier public statements , a new Strapping Young Lad album would be released in 2002 . He emphasized he was not " forcing " his product upon fans to generate record sales , arguing his band ? and its contract with Century ? was never a lucrative endeavor . Instead , Townsend 's motivation was the " creative anger " sparked by the September 11 , 2001 attacks and further cultivated during their 2001 tour . For the first time , the album would be a product of collaborative writing ; the band wrote " about half " of the material on the 2001 Foot In Mouth Tour , and the rest at home , starting January 2002 . After playing a small number of festivals in 2002 , Strapping Young Lad entered the studio in September of that year , to record their third album .

= = = Strapping Young Lad and Alien ( 2003 ? 2005 ) = = =

The self @-@ titled Strapping Young Lad was released on February 11 , 2003 , and became the band 's first charting album , entering Billboard 's Top Heatseekers at No. 97 . The album received moderate critical success , Nate Smith from Rockzone.com called it a " solid addition to the Townsend catalog " , but " not an instant classic " , Xander Hoose from Chronicles of Chaos called it " a good album " , but also pointed out it is inferior to City . Strapping Young Lad differed from City because it was less industrial and more reminiscent of death metal ; the humor pervading the previous two albums became more subdued . The song Devour would later appear on the soundtrack for the 2005 film Alone in the Dark .

The band toured heavily throughout 2003 and 2004 , making stops in the United States , Europe , Canada , and Australia . Although Townsend stated Strapping Young Lad might be the last album , the band re @-@ signed with Century Media Worldwide in March 2004 and announced plans for a new album . On November 2 , 2004 , Strapping Young Lad released a DVD entitled For Those About to Rock : Live at the Commodore , which documented the band 's January 16 , 2004 , performance at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver . Bonus features included two music videos , " Relentless " and " Detox " , and interviews with band members .

Alien was released on March 22 , 2005 , selling 3 @,@ 697 copies in its first week . It reached No. 32 on the Billboard Top Heatseekers chart , and No. 35 on the Top Independent Albums chart . Critics praised Townsend 's inventiveness and the dynamism of the songs in which " melody and discord meet midway " ; Adrien Begrand of PopMatters wrote that " Strapping Young Lad have raised the bar yet again " , while Blabbermouth.net 's Krista G. called it one of the best albums of the year . Townsend and Hoglan were the primary writers of the album , since Simon and Stroud were busy with other commitments . To prepare for the recording of Alien , Townsend had stopped taking the medication prescribed to treat his bipolar disorder ; he explained the experimental noise track " Info Dump " is a reflection on the panicked state of mind that ensued after he stopped taking his medication . The making of Alien was documented and made viewable online on Century Media 's official site in February 2005 . It was also available as a bonus DVD of the limited first edition of the album .

" Love ? " was chosen as the sole single from the album . Its accompanying music video , inspired by the cult horror film , The Evil Dead , was directed by Joe Lynch . The video garnered the band wider attention , and helped " Love ? " become one of their most recognizable songs . Jed Simon admitted to having produced a video for this particular song because it had " the most commercial potential " . " Love ? " was originally one of two confirmed songs for an EP that was supposed to contain four new songs and four covers . Although planned for release in 2003 , the EP was eventually canceled . A music video was also filmed for Zen ; the video itself would also appear in the 2007 film Shoot ' Em Up .

The band embarked on a headlining tour in the United States in April and May 2005 , then went on to tour in Europe . Starting at the end of June , they toured North America as part of the Sounds of the Underground tour , then joined Fear Factory on the Transgression Tour in the U.S. Throughout the tour , Fear Factory bassist Stroud performed with both bands at every concert . Strapping Young Lad concluded the year with a tour in the UK . While on tour , the band started writing the next album , then continued the work in January 2006 , and finished the album by May . In the same month , Townsend announced his intention to " take a hiatus from making records for a while " after the end of touring due to exhaustion from continuous recording and producing for the past ten years .

== The New Black ( 2006 ) ==

The New Black , Strapping Young Lad 's fifth and final studio album , was released on July 11 , 2006 . Century Media imposed a strict deadline on the release date of the album ; it was to be ready before the 2006 Ozzfest . Despite this , Townsend stated the recording was not rushed , and The New Black became a critical , as well as a commercial , success . It was more melodic than any of the band 's previous albums and brought back the debut album 's tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek humor . Having sold more than 4 @,@ 000 copies during its first week , The New Black reached No.

200 on the Billboard 200 chart , No. 15 on the Top Independent Albums , and No. 8 on the Top Heatseekers charts . Stylus Magazine 's Cosmo Lee described it as " heavy , catchy , and with no filler " , and About.com 's Chad Bowar was also positive , stating that " this is a CD that 's dense and heavy , but also has some memorable hooks " .

A music video was shot in late May to accompany the sole single from the album , " Wrong Side " . In June 2006 Strapping Young Lad embarked on a short festival tour of Europe , including performances at the Rock am Ring and Rock im Park festivals in Germany and the Download Festival in England , which was followed by a second stage appearance at Ozzfest in July and August , where they played to some of their largest audiences in their career .

= = = Dissolution ( 2006 ) = = =

Townsend recalls that after Alien , he already knew that he wouldn 't want to continue SYL as a project , and that he already wished to abandon SYL after the release of City already , considering the project 's purpose fulfilled . In an interview conducted by Terrorizer in August 2006 , Townsend explained why he decided to put the band on hold :

At the end of the day , man , I 'm just tired , and old , and bald , and fat , and grouchy , and bored . You know ? So I was just like , I 'm going to make this record , and do this stupid Ozzfest thing , and tell a bunch of stupid jokes in front of a lot of people at Download , then I 'm just going to fuck off for a while . The bigger this gets , the less I care , to the point where I just need to go spend some time with my family . I don 't wanna bastardise Strapping and all these other projects by doing it for the money . Strapping was about the big middle finger , and it still is , but I don 't think it needs to go any further than this .

Although Hoglan initially denied the definitive break @-@ up of the band , saying they would go on tour in March 2007 , he later stated Strapping Young Lad is on " extended hiatus " , and might never reunite again . In May 2007 , during a press conference held to promote his new solo album , Ziltoid the Omniscient , Townsend announced his plans to retreat from public view , including giving interviews and touring , to concentrate on his family , and producing solo albums , as well as other people 's music . As a result , Strapping Young Lad were effectively disbanded . Townsend discussed his future projects in a May 2007 Metal Hammer interview , where he stated " there may be some stuff I do in the future that is as brutal and heavy as Strapping , it 's just not going to be Strapping " .

The remastered 10th anniversary edition of City was released on June 7 , 2007 , in similar vein to the 2006 remaster of Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing , with bonus tracks and extended liner notes by Townsend . A career spanning best of album , entitled 1994 ? 2006 Chaos Years , was released on March 31 , 2008 , with a bonus DVD of live performances and all of the band 's music videos .

During his career @-@ retrospective concert The Retinal Circus in October 2012 , Townsend introduced Jed Simon on stage and performed two SYL songs , " Love ? " and " Detox " . Townsend has since stated that this was a one off performance and that he is not interested getting SYL back together or playing songs at future shows . He posted to Twitter that he no longer feels the same connection to SYL 's music and that this performance was closure for him and Strapping . In an interview on the Metal Hammer podcast , Townsend said that while he still connects to the music , SYL required him to go to extremes that took a toll on him . On his own website , he reiterates that SYL was a project that he eventually perceived to be harmful to his mental and physical health . In 2013 , he played Love ? at concerts in Mexico and Chile as a " cover song " , but later expressed regretting the decision saying it " confuses people " .

Townsend also performed an acoustic version of Love ? during his " An Evening with Devin Townsend " shows through the UK in 2015 .

= = Musical style = =

Strapping Young Lad 's music was a diverse mix of extreme metal genres ; death metal , thrash metal , black metal , progressive , experimental and industrial metal . Many of the band 's songs

showcased Townsend 's versatile vocal style , often changing from screaming , and growling to clean vocals , or even falsetto , within the course of a single song . According to Townsend , the band functioned as his " outlet to freak out " , and his two main projects , the more melodic The Devin Townsend Band and the aggressive Strapping Young Lad were " supposed to be the positive and the negative " . To achieve a chaotic and cacophonous sound the band utilized complex time signatures , polyrhythmic composition , blast beats , sampling , keyboard effects and intricately layered production . Townsend used the newest technology available , such as Pro Tools , Steinberg Cubase and Logic Pro , when recording , mixing and producing the band 's songs . As a self @-@ proclaimed " fan of multitracking " , he created an atmospheric , layered " wall of sound " , which became a hallmark of the band 's production style ( with the exception of their self @-@ titled album which featured no samples , or vocal layering ) . Townsend 's musical ideas and production style have drawn comparisons to Phil Spector and Frank Zappa . Strapping Young Lad mostly eschewed guitar solos until The New Black , which featured a more heightened emphasis on melody than their previous albums .

= = = Influences = = =

Strapping Young Lad drew influence from a wide range of music genres , most prominently , but not exclusively , heavy metal . Townsend cited , amongst others , Judas Priest , Jane 's Addiction , Zoviet France , Grotus , and Frank Zappa as his influences , and also expressed his admiration for Meshuggah on several occasions , calling them " the best metal band on the planet " . Simon and Stroud listed classic hard rock bands , like AC / DC , Led Zeppelin and Kiss , and old school thrash and death metal bands , like Exodus , Slayer and Morbid Angel among their influences , while Hoglan 's influences range wildly in style from Stevie Wonder to progressive rock drummers like Neil Peart , Terry Bozzio and Nick Mason . Townsend stated his main influences for Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing were Napalm Death and Fear Factory , City was influenced by bands such as Foetus and White Noise , and The New Black 's influences were Meshuggah , and " more traditional metal " like Metallica .

= = = Lyrical themes = = =

Townsend was the band 's primary songwriter . While the first two albums were solely his work , subsequent albums featured a minority of " riffs , lyrical ideas , and song titles " by his band mates .

Despite the brutality of Strapping Young Lad 's music , their songs contain hints of tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek humor and self @-@ parody . Frequently , Townsend 's lyrics approached serious personal or political issues with a morbid sense of humor . He has likened the band 's sense of silliness to that of " Weird Al " Yankovic . Townsend 's lyrical influences covered a wide range of themes , including warfare , mathematical theorems , and movies . He also used the technique of cross @-@ referencing , repeating lines from his own works , such as older Strapping Young Lad , or solo material .

= = Live performances = =

Strapping Young Lad was known for its energetic live performances , mostly owing to the eccentric appearance and persona of Devin Townsend . Adrian Begrand of PopMatters wrote " Nobody in metal today has the same kind of commanding stage presence as the self @-@ professed Bald Bastard , Devin Townsend " , and called Strapping Young Lad " one of the best live bands around " . Townsend was famous for his on @-@ stage antics ; he integrated his ironic and tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek humor into live shows and interacted heavily with the audience . He would deliver comical , and often insulting remarks to them , organize circle pits , and parody heavy metal clichés as well as the genre itself .

The band 's humorous approach was also evidenced by a song frequently performed live from 1997 , entitled " Far Beyond Metal " , a parody of classic heavy metal . It became a live staple and a fan

favorite , with lyrics changing practically every performance . Although it was recorded live on No Sleep ' till Bedtime , and on the For Those About to Rock DVD , a studio version was not recorded until 2006 during The New Black sessions . The band was also sarcastic about their own Canadian heritage , they used " Blame Canada " , a comedic anti @-@ Canada song from South Park : Bigger , Longer & Uncut as intro music at many concerts in 2003 and 2004 .

For a period of time , Strapping Young Lad also played Townsend 's solo material live . In 1998 , after the release of Infinity , they began performing both Strapping Young Lad and Townsend 's solo songs , as two separate sets . It was not until the 2003 release of Accelerated Evolution when Townsend formed a separate band , called The Devin Townsend Band , to act as his full @-@ fledged solo band .

= = Discography = =

Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing ( 1995 )

City ( 1997 )

Strapping Young Lad ( 2003 )

Alien ( 2005 )

The New Black ( 2006 )

= = Band members = =

= = = Final line @-@ up = = =

Devin Townsend ? guitar , lead vocals , keyboards ( 1994 ? 2007 )

Jed Simon ? guitar , backing vocals ( 1994 ? 2007 )

Byron Stroud ? bass guitar , backing vocals ( 1996 ? 2007 )

Gene Hoglan ? drums ( 1996 ? 2007 )

= = = Former members = = =

Adrian White ? drums ( 1994 ? 1995 )

Ashley Scribner ? bass ( 1994 ? 1995 )

Mike Sudar ? guitar ( 1994 ? 1995 )

= = = Session members = = =

Chris Bayes ? drums ( 1994 )

Smokin ' Lord Toot ? drums ( 1994 )

Chris Meyers ? keyboards ( 1994 )

Note : The pre @-@ City touring line @-@ up consisted of Townsend , Simon , White , Scribner , Sudar and Meyers .

Dave Young - Keyboards ( 2005 ) ( played on Alien )

= = = Touring members = = =

John Morgan ? keyboards ( 1997 )

Matteo Caratozzolo ? keyboards ( 1997 ? 1998 , 2003 )

Jamie Meyer ? keyboards ( 1998 ? 1999 )

Jason Filipchuk ? keyboards ( 1999 )

Chris Valagao ? keyboards ( 2002 )

Will Campagna ? keyboards ( 2002 , 2005 ? 2006 )

Munesh Sami ? keyboards ( 2003 ? 2004 )

Jon Miller ? bass ( substituting Byron Stroud , July 14 ? 31 , 2005 )

James MacDonough ? bass ( substituting Byron Stroud , August 1 ? 13 , 2006 )