

= Devin Townsend =

Devin Garret Townsend (born May 5 , 1972) is a Canadian musician , songwriter and record producer . He was the founder , songwriter , vocalist , and guitarist in extreme metal band Strapping Young Lad from 1994 to 2007 and has an extensive career as a solo artist .

After performing in a number of heavy metal bands in high school , Townsend was discovered by a record label in 1993 and was asked to perform lead vocals on Steve Vai 's album Sex & Religion . After recording and touring with Vai , Townsend was discouraged by what he found in the music industry , and vented his anger on the solo album Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing released under the pseudonym Strapping Young Lad . He soon assembled a band under the name , and released the critically acclaimed City in 1997 . Since then , he has released three more studio albums with Strapping Young Lad , along with solo material released under his own independent record label , HevyDev Records .

Townsend 's solo albums , a diverse mix of hard rock , progressive metal , ambient , and new @-@ age , have featured a varying lineup of supporting musicians . In 2002 he formed the Devin Townsend Band , a dedicated lineup which recorded and toured for two of his solo releases . In 2007 , he disbanded both Strapping Young Lad and the Devin Townsend Band , taking a break from touring to spend more time with his family . After a two @-@ year hiatus , he began recording again , and soon announced the formation of the Devin Townsend Project . The project began with a series of four albums , released from 2009 to 2011 , each written in a different style , and Townsend continues to record and tour under the new moniker .

Across all his bands and projects , Townsend has released twenty @-@ three studio albums and three live albums . Townsend 's trademark production style , featuring a heavily multitracked wall of sound , has been compared to the styles of Phil Spector and Frank Zappa . His versatile vocal delivery ranges from screaming to an opera @-@ esque singing , and his songwriting is similarly diverse . Townsend 's musical style is rooted in metal , and his albums are written to express different aspects of his personality .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early musical career (1972 ? 1994) = = =

Devin Townsend was born in New Westminster , British Columbia , on May 5 , 1972 . Townsend picked up the banjo when he was five , and began playing guitar when he was 12 . As an early teenager he befriended Brian " Beav " Waddell , who would later play guitars as part of the Devin Townsend Band and bass on the Devin Townsend Project . He participated in several metal bands while he was in high school , and founded Grey Skies at the age of 19 . Around the same time he joined a popular local group called Caustic Thought , replacing Jed Simon on guitar and playing alongside bassist Byron Stroud , both of whom would later become members of Townsend 's flagship band , Strapping Young Lad . In 1993 , Townsend began writing material under the name Noisescapes , a project he later described as " just as violent as Strapping Young Lad " .

Townsend recorded a Noisescapes demo and sent copies to various record labels . Relativity Records responded to Townsend with a record deal and Townsend began work on what was to be the first Noisescapes album , Promise . Shortly afterward , the label introduced him to musician Steve Vai . Impressed with Townsend 's vocal work , Vai offered him the role of the lead vocalist on his new album Sex and Religion . After recording Sex and Religion , Townsend accompanied Vai on a world tour in support of the album . Townsend soon landed a second touring gig , this time with the opening band of Vai 's tour , the Wildhearts . He played live with the band throughout half of 1994 in Europe , and appeared as a guest musician on their single Urge . Ginger , the band 's frontman , remained close friends with Townsend , later co @-@ writing several songs on Infinity and the Christeen + 4 Demos EP .

While on tour with the Wildhearts , Townsend formed a short @-@ lived thrash metal project with

Metallica 's then @-@ bassist Jason Newsted . The band , known as IR8 , featured Newsted on vocals and bass , Townsend on guitar , and Tom Hunting of Exodus on drums . The group recorded a few songs together , although Townsend says that they never intended to go further than that . " People heard about it and thought we wanted to put out a CD , which is absolutely not true , " he explains . " People took this project way too seriously . " A demo tape was put together , but the material was not released until 2002 , when Newsted published the IR8 vs. Sexoturica compilation .

Though Townsend was proud of what he had accomplished so early in his career , he was discouraged by his experience with the music industry . " I was becoming a product of somebody else 's imagination , and it was mixing with my own personality , " he later reflected . " This combination was appalling . " He pushed to get his own projects off the ground . Despite getting notable touring gigs with other musicians , however , Townsend continued to face rejection of his own music . Relativity Records dropped Noisescapes from their label shortly after Townsend accepted Vai 's offer , seeing no commercial appeal in Townsend 's music . " I have a hunch they only offered me a deal to get me to sing with Steve , " he mused . While touring with 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 " .

= = = Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing through Infinity (1994 ? 1998) = = =

In 1994 , Century Media Records offered Townsend a contract to make " some extreme albums " . He agreed to a five @-@ album deal with the record label , and also provided much of the guitar work on the 1994 album Millennium and the 1995 album Hard Wired by Vancouver industrial band Front Line Assembly . Townsend began to record material under the pseudonym Strapping Young Lad . He avoided using his real name at this point in career , looking for a fresh start after his high @-@ profile Vai gig . " At the beginning , I wanted to avoid at all cost to use my name because I was known as the singer for Steve Vai and it wasn 't the best publicity to have , " he later explained . " I was playing somebody else 's music and I was judged in respect to that music . " Townsend produced and performed nearly all the instruments on the debut studio album , Heavy as a Really Heavy Thing , which was released in April 1995 .

Following the release of the record , Townsend and several other musician friends he knew in Vancouver recorded his first solo album in 1996 entitled Punky Brüster ? Cooked on Phonics . Written and recorded in under a month , the album was produced as a parody of punk rock bands and documents the act of selling out for mainstream success . Townsend founded his own independent record label , HevyDevy Records , to release the album . Townsend assembled a permanent lineup of Strapping Young Lad to record City , including prolific metal drummer Gene Hoglan , along with Townsend 's former bandmates Jed Simon on guitar and Byron Stroud on bass . The industrial @-@ influenced album was released in 1997 . To this day , the album is widely considered Strapping Young Lad 's best work , with Metal Maniacs calling it " groundbreaking " and Revolver naming it " one of the greatest metal albums of all time " . Townsend himself considers it the band 's " ultimate " album . Later that year , Townsend released his second solo album , Ocean Machine : Biomech . The album featured a mix of hard rock , ambient , and progressive rock .

After the completion of City and Ocean Machine : Biomech , Townsend began to approach a mental breakdown . " I started to see human beings as little lonesome , water based , pink meat , " he explained , " life forms pushing air through themselves and making noises that the other little pieces of meat seemed to understand . " In 1997 , he checked himself into a mental @-@ health hospital , where he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder . The diagnosis helped him understand where the two sides of his music were coming from ; he felt his disorder " gave birth to the two extremes that are Strapping 's City record and Ocean Machine : Biomech . " After being discharged from the hospital , Townsend found that " everything just clicked " and he was able to write his third solo album , Infinity , which he described as " the parent project " of City and Ocean Machine : Biomech , with music influenced by Broadway . Townsend returned to the studio , accompanied by Hoglan , to work on the album , on which Townsend played most of the instruments . Infinity was

released in October 1998 . Later in his career , Townsend has cited Infinity as his favorite solo record .

With Infinity , Townsend began to label all albums outside of Strapping Young Lad under his own name , dropping the Ocean Machine moniker , to reduce confusion . He wanted to show that despite the highly varied nature of his projects , they are all simply aspects of his identity . The album Biomech was relabeled and redistributed as Ocean Machine : Biomech , under Townsend 's name , to reflect the new arrangement . Townsend 's bandmates began to play two sets at their shows , one as Strapping Young Lad , and one as the Devin Townsend Band , playing songs from Townsend 's solo albums .

= = = Physicist and Terria (1999 ? 2001) = = =

Townsend 's next project took several years to come to fruition . After the creation of the IR8 demo tape , Townsend and Jason Newsted had begun work on a new project called Fizzicist , which they described as " heavier than Strapping Young Lad " . When the IR8 tape was leaked , Newsted 's Metallica bandmates James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich learned of the project . Hetfield was " fucking pissed " that Newsted was playing outside the band , and Newsted was prevented by his bandmates from working on any more side projects . With the project stalled , Townsend instead wrote the album himself , entitling it Physicist . Townsend assembled his Strapping Young Lad bandmates to record it , the only time this lineup was featured on a Devin Townsend album . The thrash @-@ influenced Physicist was released in June 2000 , and is generally considered a low point in Townsend 's career . Hoglan and the rest of the band were dissatisfied with the way the sound was mixed , and Townsend considers it his worst album to date .

Feeling he had " ostracized a bunch of fans " with Physicist , Townsend felt he had the chance to make a more personal and honest record . Townsend was inspired one morning while driving across Canada with his band , and looked to write an " introspective " album dedicated to his homeland . He produced and recorded Terria , a " highly illustrated stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness " album , with Gene Hoglan on drums , Craig McFarland on bass and Jamie Meyer on keyboards . Townsend cited Ween 's White Pepper as an inspiration for the album . Terria was released in November 2001 .

= = = Strapping Young Lad through Synchestra (2003 ? 2006) = = =

Townsend 's solo run lasted until 2002 . After a five @-@ year break from recording , Strapping Young Lad reunited to record a new album . Townsend credits the album , Strapping Young Lad , as an emotional response to the attacks of September 11 , 2001 , in the United States . " If the world 's about to blow up , " said Townsend , " let 's write the soundtrack for it . " The album 's lyrics were based more around fear and insecurity than the " hostile " lyrics of City . Musically , Strapping Young Lad was less industrial than City , and more reminiscent of death metal , with a " larger @-@ than @-@ life " rock production style . Townsend cited Front Line Assembly , Grotus , and Samael 's Passage as influences . The self @-@ titled album was released in February 2003 . It received lukewarm reviews , with critics finding it inferior to City , but it was the band 's first charting album , entering at 97th place on Billboard 's Top Heatseekers chart .

While Strapping Young Lad was being reunited , Townsend formed a new , permanent band " on par with Strapping " to record and tour for his solo releases . The Devin Townsend Band consisted of Brian " Beav " Waddell on guitar , Mike Young on bass , Ryan Van Poederooyen on drums , and Dave Young on keyboards . Townsend performed guitar , vocals , and production , as he did in Strapping Young Lad . Townsend worked on the band 's first album , Accelerated Evolution , at the same time he was working on Strapping Young Lad , spending half the week on one and half on the other . Accelerated Evolution , named for the pace of putting a new band together in under a year , was released a month after Strapping Young Lad . Mike G. of Metal Maniacs called it " the album of the year " , praising it for " the hard @-@ to @-@ accomplish trick of being extreme yet accessible , simultaneously heavy ' n ' rockin ' yet majestic and beautiful . " Prior to the formation of the Devin

Townsend Band , Townsend had represented his solo releases live with the Strapping Young Lad lineup ; the band would play one set of Strapping Young Lad songs and one set of Devin Townsend songs . After the release of Accelerated Evolution , Townsend 's two bands toured separately for their separate albums .

Strapping Young Lad began working on their next album , Alien , in March 2004 . Feeling that the band 's previous album did not live up to expectations , Townsend decided to take his music to a new extreme . To prepare for the new album , Townsend stopped taking the medication prescribed to treat his bipolar disorder . " I think that as an artist , in order for me to get to the next plateau , I kind of feel the need to explore things and sometimes that exploration leads you to places that are a little crazy , " he explains . " And Alien was no exception with that . " Although Townsend considered the album an " impenetrable mass of technicality " , it was well received on its release , selling 3 @, @ 697 copies in its first week and appearing on several Billboard charts . Around this time , Townsend also contributed to the soundtrack of the video game Fallout : Brotherhood of Steel .

Shortly thereafter Townsend began putting together the next Devin Townsend Band record , with the working title Human . Townsend intended the album as the more " pleasant " counterpart to Alien . " It 's basically a record about coming back down to earth after being in space with Alien for a while . " The album ended up being renamed Synchestra and was released in January 2006 . Townsend showcased a wide variety of musical styles in Synchestra , blending his trademark " pop metal " with influences from folk , polka , and Middle Eastern music . The final Strapping Young Lad album , The New Black , was released later in 2006 .

= = = Ziltoid the Omniscient and hiatus (2006 ? 2008) = = =

Townsend withdrew from touring to spend time with his family . From home , Townsend completed his second solo ambient album , The Hummer , releasing it exclusively on his website in November 2006 .

In May 2007 , Townsend released Ziltoid the Omniscient , a tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek rock opera about the eponymous fictional alien . This was truly a solo album ; he programmed the drums using Drumkit from Hell , a software drum machine that uses samples recorded by Tomas Haake of Meshuggah and played all other instruments himself . Shortly after the album 's release , Townsend announced that he no longer planned to tour or make albums with Strapping Young Lad or the Devin Townsend Band . He explained that he was " burnt out on travelling , touring , and self promotion " and wished to do production work , write albums , and spend time with his family without the stress of interviews or touring .

In 2008 , Townsend lent his voice to characters in several episodes of the Adult Swim cartoon Metalocalypse (see Musician cameos in Metalocalypse for more) . The original character design for Pickles the Drummer , one of the series ' main characters , bore a striking resemblance to Townsend . The series ' co @-@ creator Brendon Small acknowledged the similarity , and altered the design before the series began . " We made sure he didn 't look like Devin Townsend . We gave him the goatee and the dreadover so he wouldn 't look like that . "

= = = Devin Townsend Project (2008 ? 2012) = = =

After removing himself from the music industry , Townsend cut his trademark hair off and gave up drinking and smoking . Townsend found it " disconcerting " that he had difficulty writing music without drugs , and that he had trouble identifying his purpose as a musician . He spent a year producing albums in absence of writing , but found it unrewarding and decided to " pick up the guitar and just write " . This began a period of " self discovery " where he learned " how to create without drugs " .

Over two years , Townsend wrote over 60 songs , and found that they fit into " four distinct styles " . In March 2009 , Townsend announced his plans for a four @-@ album series called Devin Townsend Project , with the goal of clarifying his musical identity and being " accountable " for the persona he projects to the public . The project 's concept includes a different " theme " and a

different group of musicians on each album .

Ki , the first album of the Devin Townsend Project tetralogy was written to " set the stage " for the subsequent albums . Townsend channelled his new @-@ found control and sobriety into Ki , a " tense , quiet " album , which contrasts with much of the music he had been known for . Additional female vocals were provided by Ché Aimee Dorval (Casualties of Cool) . Ki was released in May 2009 .

The second entry , a " commercial , yet heavy " album called Addicted , was released in November 2009 and features lead vocals from Townsend and Dutch singer Anneke van Giersbergen . Brian " Beav " Waddell was recruited from the Devin Townsend Band to play bass .

Townsend returned to the stage in January 2010 , touring North America with headliner Between the Buried and Me as well as Cynic and Scale the Summit . This was followed by a headlining tour in Australia and a series of high @-@ profile shows in Europe (for example co @-@ headlining the Brutal Assault festival in Czech Republic) . He headlined a North American tour with UK label mates TesseracT supporting , which began in October 2010 , and toured in Europe with support from Aeon Zen and Anneke van Giersbergen .

The third and fourth albums in the Devin Townsend Project series , Deconstruction and Ghost , were released simultaneously on June 21 , 2011 . In December 2011 all four Devin Townsend Project albums with additional material were released as the Contain Us box set . Townsend performed all four of Devin Townsend Project albums in London and recorded them for a DVD box set called By a Thread : Live in London 2011 that was released on June 18 , 2012 . The first three shows were held at the University of London Union , November 10 ? 12 , 2011 . Ki , Addicted , and Deconstruction were each performed on one night , respectively . The show for Ghost was held at the Union Chapel , Islington on November 13 , 2011 . These four shows were each entitled " An Evening with the Devin Townsend Project " .

Despite the Devin Townsend Project being originally a four @-@ album series , Townsend decided to continue working under the moniker and released the fifth album , Epicloud on September 18 , 2012 . Again featuring Anneke van Giersbergen on vocals , Epicloud appeared on several European charts , peaking at number 8 in Finland . On October 27 , 2012 , Devin Townsend performed a one @-@ off show covering his musical career called The Retinal Circus at Roundhouse in London . The 3 @-@ hour performance was recorded in high definition and released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray on September 30 , 2013 . Also in 2012 , Townsend played bass on the debut Bent Sea album Noistalgia . He also produced the record .

Another project Townsend has mentioned several times between 2009 and 2012 is Obviouser , an album featuring " creepy , bass driven apocalyptic music " created with an " Ampeg rig " and an " Icelandic choir " . Working with many projects simultaneously at that time , Townsend stated in 2012 the Obviouser project is vying for pole position until " he wakes up and says ' he wants to do it ' " .

= = = Casualties of Cool and Z2 (2012 ? present) = = =

After Deconstruction and Ghost , Townsend announced a new album , Casualties of Cool , with which he started to work after the release of Epicloud . The album features Ché Aimee Dorval (from Ki) on vocals and Morgan Ågren on drums . Townsend described the album sounds like " haunted Johnny Cash songs " and " late night music " , highlighting it will be different than anything he has done before . Townsend referred the music of the album to be " closest to his heart " at this point of his life , and that it is an important and satisfying project he doesn 't want to rush .

The album was completed on November 2013 , and a bonus disc was also made for the album , containing the leftover material from the main album as well as songs from Ghost 2 , the unreleased compilation of leftover tracks from Ghost . Originally in 2012 , Townsend stated that this album will be the sixth and the last album in the Devin Townsend Project series , but he ultimately confirmed that Casualties of Cool is its own project . Townsend also started a crowdfunding campaign through PledgeMusic to support the release of the album . The funding quickly reached its goal , and all additional funds were put directly to Townsend 's upcoming projects . Casualties of Cool was released on May 14 , 2014 . The album was re @-@ issued worldwide on January 15 , 2016

containing an additional DVD with live footage from the 2014 concert at the Union Chapel in London

From 2009, Townsend worked on a long @-@ running album project called Z², a sequel to the album Ziltoid the Omniscient (2007). Originally in 2012, he teased he "may have just written the heaviest thing he's ever done" for the album, and told there might be a surprising lack of Ziltoid himself appearing on the album. However, in August 2013, a London @-@ based radio station TeamRock Radio aired the first episode of Ziltoid Radio, a satirical radio show hosted solely by Ziltoid, this being one element of the Z² project. Townsend also discussed a "ZTV" or "Ziltoid TV" is preceding the album. Later Townsend stated he has found the project hard to schedule and work with amidst touring and writing, stating "it takes a lot of effort" to keep the content with tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek humour entertaining.

After writing ideas for over 70 songs, Townsend stated he is finally going to finish the whole project, followed by the announcement the album will be released on October 27, 2014. The recording process started in May 2014, and the final project includes the album, a Ziltoid TV program and a live show, with a "big graphic novel comic" and a documentary. The album itself is a double album, with disc one being the main album and disc two featuring Devin Townsend Project material; according to Townsend, the album's theme is "Ziltoid against the world". The Devin Townsend Project disc is called Sky Blue and the Ziltoid disc is called Dark Matters.

After finishing the album, Townsend stated the project was "punishing" and an "absolute nightmare to complete" due to amount of material against tight schedules. He also described the hardship of the project by telling "if he was ever going to start drinking [again], the last months would have been it", but now "he's starting to get excited again". Later, "after the chaos of finishing it had subsided", Townsend stated he is really satisfied with the result.

Townsend recently discussed at least a year @-@ long hiatus, beginning after the Z² show taking place at the Royal Albert Hall on April 13, 2015. During the indefinitely long break Townsend intends to "recharge his batteries", "get some inspiration and experiences" and to "see what the next chapter holds" for him.

In 2014, Devin recorded a 'poppy sounding' song in Los Angeles with producer Brian Howes, but has decided against releasing. Devin mentioned he is against the project being contrived due to the current hard rock undertones in popular music. He described it as a "lukewarm heavy metal Devin song". On December 11, 2015 Townsend announced via Twitter that he was recording vocals for a song by Steve Vai.

As of April 2016, Devin is in the middle of recording the seventh DTP album, entitled Transcendence at Armoury Studios in Vancouver.

= = Personal life = =

Townsend has been married to Tracy Turner, his girlfriend since he was 19. She gave birth to their first son, Reyner Liam Johnstan Townsend, on October 4, 2006. He is a vegetarian.

= = Musical style = =

= = = Projects = = =

Townsend designed his two main projects, the aggressive Strapping Young Lad and his more melodic solo material, as counterparts. Strapping Young Lad's music was a diverse mix of extreme metal genres: death metal, thrash metal, black metal and industrial metal. Townsend's solo material blends many genres and influences, with elements of atmospheric ambient music, hard rock and progressive rock, along with pop metal and arena rock. He described it as "a highly orchestrated type of expansive music based in hard rock and heavy metal. Dense and produced with a large amount of ambient elements." Despite Strapping Young Lad's greater mainstream acceptance, Townsend identifies more with his solo material, and has never intended Strapping

Young Lad to be the focus of his music .

== Production style ==

As a self @-@ proclaimed " fan of multitracking " , Townsend has developed a trademark production style featuring an atmospheric , layered " wall of sound " . Townsend has drawn critical praise for his productions , which " are always marked by a sense of adventure , intrigue , chaotic atmospherics and overall aural pyrotechnics " , according to Mike G. of Metal Maniacs . Townsend mainly uses Pro Tools to produce his music , alongside other software suites such as Steinberg Cubase , Ableton Live , and Logic Pro . Townsend 's musical ideas and production style have drawn comparisons to Phil Spector and Frank Zappa . Townsend has carried out the mixing and mastering for most of his solo work himself . He has also mixed and remixed work for other artists such as Rammstein , August Burns Red and Misery Signals .

== Playing style ==

Townsend mainly uses Open C tuning for both six and seven string guitar . He now also uses Open B tuning and Open B flat tuning (Open C tuning tuned a half and a whole step down respectively) on his six string guitars . Townsend 's technique varies from fingerpicking , power chords and polychords to sweep @-@ picked arpeggios and tapping techniques . He is also known for his heavy use of reverb and delay effects . He has expressed that he has no taste for shred guitar , saying that " Musically it doesn 't do anything for me " and that he only solos when he thinks that he can within the context of the song .

== Vocals ==

Townsend 's employs a variety of vocal techniques in his work , including screaming , growling or even falsetto . His vocal range has been noted to be over 5 octaves (C2 to F7) .

== Influences ==

Townsend draws influence from a wide range of music genres , most prominently heavy metal . Townsend has cited , among others , Judas Priest , W.A.S.P. , Frank Zappa , Broadway musicals , ABBA , new @-@ age music , Zoviet France , King 's X , Morbid Angel , Barkmarket , Grotus , Jane 's Addiction , Metallica , Cop Shoot Cop and Fear Factory as his influences , and has also expressed his admiration for Meshuggah on several occasions , calling them " the best metal band on the planet " . Townsend lists Paul Horn and Ravi Shankar as the " two most important musicians in his life " . The two songs that Townsend credits with changing the way he thought about music are " The Burning Down " by King 's X , and " Up the Beach " by Jane 's Addiction . City was influenced by bands such as Foetus and Cop Shoot Cop , and The New Black 's influences were Meshuggah , and " more traditional metal " like Metallica . He is also influenced by orchestral and classical composers such as John Williams , Trevor Jones and Igor Stravinsky .

== Discography ==