



JAY BENTLEY EEN GESPREK MET

Bad Religion werd opgericht begin jaren tachtig in de suburbs van LA: een versterkende omgeving van enkelzake laagbouw en malls waarin apathie en blind consumptisme hoogtij vienden. Bad Religion reageerde hierop met maatschappijkritische lyrics die inspieren tot nadenken in combinatie met genadeloze harde gitaarriffs. Daarmee werd Bad Religion een van de grondleggers van de Californian punk en ook de band die de brug sloeg tussen punkrock en skateboarden en snowboarden. Taste kreeg de unieke kans om een interview te doen met één van de oprichters, bassist Jay Bentley. Het werd een interessant gesprek dat begint bij de huidige politieke situatie in de VS en eindigt in metafysische overpeinzingen. Het gesprek is in het Engels. Het was niet mogelijk om het hele gesprek af te drukken door ruimtegebrek. Het volledige gesprek is daarom terug te vinden op www.soulonline.nl/taste

Tekst: Olof P. Foto: Derek Alberts

The Bin Laden strikes that were released last before the Bush re-election. Well it was released not just before but a bit before, enough before that everybody should have gotten the point of it. (the point was that the most important thing anyone could do in that time is making sure Bush did not get re-elected -ed)

Exactly. But they didn't. My question is now what? What is going to happen?

Really the question is: what kind of planet are we going to be living on? Maybe six years ago for a while there it looked like a global community was a real possibility. The protests were focusing on organizations like the WTO, on the real global power. And then this current US administration kind of blew that apart again. It returned us to the Cold War ethic in which we are back to being these nationalistic bullies acting like the world's police. Or problem, depending on where you are coming from. A lot of people in the US consider that return a good thing. But also a lot of people in the US do not see that as positive at all. Yet everybody outside America sees the US as bullies. Let my fear isn't necessarily this whole attitude towards America. My fear is that America, whether it means to or not, seems to be lighting the fuse of this more religious type war: Western VS Eastern. It's this Christian right wing Western philosophy saying essentially that all Eastern religion, whether it be Islam or Buddhism or Hinduism, they pretty much all need to be exterminated because they are all bad. They are all terrorists. The American ideology that's being exported right now is that if you wear a turban, you are a

terrorist. And if people think I am kidding: they shot a guy in England on a whim. They thought he was bad, so they shot him. There are people right now being held in American prisons because they are Muslims and maybe their stories don't jive. So maybe they are a little scared cuz they sneak into the country or whatever but that does not make them less human and it certainly does not make them a terrorist.

You are referring to that Brazilian guy Charles de Menezes? The guy who wasn't a terrorist at all but they killed accidentally. The guy of whom they first said he got out on the run but who was actually basically executed in the subway because they thought he was a terrorist?

I am sure. They shot him nine times, seven times in the head. I mean, I am pretty sure one headshot is a killer... seven? That's manic! That means someone has some serious problems. What a shame that you thought you were doing something good. And now here comes my morality. If that guy sleeps well at night he's a fucking animal. What pissed me off though was when Sir Iain Blair *leader of London news police* -ed compared the death of that one guy to the 57 deaths of the terrorist attack. Those 57 people were just standing there at random and got blown up. This guy was chased down, a gun put to his head and then shot.

All a coincidence, deshaan. Absolutely! What happens is that Sir Iain Blair uses those 57 deaths as leverage and an excuse for this manic behaviour. He condones it.



And so he implies that that guy deserved to die. It's the same cowboy mentality that popped up after 9/11 and said "They 300 people died! Now go turn Saudi Arabia into glass! Everyone there deserves to die." Really? I don't believe that to be true. Now at the time, when George W Bush said stuff like "we are going to get those guys and we are going to hunt them down and make them pay" and so on, my ten year old son said "hey dad, didn't the terrorists just die in the chaos?" And he's right of course. These guys weren't wearing uniforms, they didn't carry a flag, they didn't belong to a country and no president said "hey you guys, go do this!" They were terrorists, no different than Timothy McVey, who blew up the Oklahoma federal building killing 300 people and up until 9/11 the biggest single terrorist attack on US soil -ed. He was an American but a terrorist none the less. Now I didn't see a public outcry to go and fuck up Tennessee or some shit. It's all so hypocritical. This entire war is law -ed is being used for so many things but the reality of the why is disgusting: it is money it is power it is oil it is control of the Middle East and that's all it is and that's all it has been. Because the people who are controlling the direction of the government and of the military and who have stakes and interests in defence subsidies and all of the Iraq rebuilding process have been in power or close to the power since Richard Nixon. waiting. And if they weren't waiting, explain to me how the fuck they came up with a 600 page report on how to rebuild Iraq even before the war happened?

Well, there was Gulf war I you know. It's way too old, that support, and there is no exit strategy. If it would have been for the first Gulf war it would have had an exit strategy. Bush Senior didn't go for it cuz there was no exit strategy. But Dubya is a moron and fell for it: hook line and sinker. *for more on this check out www.soulonline.nl/basel*

you said earlier that someone has to step up someone has to do something. There used to be a true one like in the Vietnam era that you had a counter culture, and now too you have a counter culture in which you guys have a leading role. You are writing music with lyrics telling people how it really is. Yeah, but there is nobody there.



Wait? There's nobody there? So who are the guys in the crowd then, what are they doing? Nothing.

That's it? Not listening? So the undergrounds guys, the counter culture's dead?

I guess what happened is this whole generation X thing where it's like "fuck it, why bother?" It's the ultimate middle finger and it's just at everybody. I don't say "fuck the government", I say "fuck you all! Fuck em, as long as it doesn't interfere with me and my life, I don't give a shit, fuck you guys. I'm not gonna vote cuz fuck you guys, you are all criminals" - which is true - and yeah, well, I don't like the war in Iraq but fuck it! "You think marching out in the streets is gonna do any good because when 16 million people marched out in the streets in one single day and said we don't want you to go to war, George W said "fuck you 16 million people were going to anyway!" It's a let down, you really thought you were making a difference and still all it takes is this one guy to say fuck you and you are left standing there with your signs and your dick in your hand. We have no say, no power, and they prove that again and again. It's like they say to all of us fuck you, write your books, make your movies, do your documentaries, it doesn't mean shit! This is what you get, what happens if people are gonna watch it and go "yeah that's fascinating... I wonder what's on the other channel..." clickclick "hey is my popcorn ready?"

So then it's all dead. *Paul's dead!* Everything is dead. Until people just start fucking rioting in the streets. And the fact that people aren't just rioting in the streets, that's ultimate apathy. One guy rioting in the streets goes to jail. The masses rioting in the streets make change... what would happen if Jesus Christ came down now, they'd throw him in the looney bin. Nobody would follow him, all I am saying is that there is a sense of apathy and it comes from the lack of results of civil disobedience.

But on The Bin Laden strikes first, there is a message there and the message is NOT fuck it! It's open your eyes look at what's happening and question everything. With no one listening, what is it that keeps you going then? Like everything else, you are just banging your head against the wall hoping one day the wall will fall. That's it, keep on being angry. You know when I was fifteen I was really mad. But I was just really mad at everybody. It was like "fuck you all! But now I am forty-one and

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it's not fuck you all. I can look at some people and say 'you know what, you are one of us. You are a blameworthy individual. Fuck George Bush! Yeah that works pretty well. Fuck Sir Iain Blair. You know that just happened a week ago, but I am pretty sure that I can sit here at 41 and say fuck that guy. He just said that that man deserved to die because 57 other people died... that's FUCKED! Fuck you, I hate you. That's easy. The new pope. I don't hate the new pope. You know why I don't hate the new pope? cuz he didn't tell me that I am crazy. He can be an asshole. he can be an arrogant prick, he's part of the Catholic Church but it's okay, he doesn't bother me. What bothers me is the people who pick up the stick and say 'my God is better than your God. Now I've got a problem. When we started punksucking and snowboarding and skateboarding and all that shit and it was all 'anarchy!' it was only 500 or 400 people running around in California doing that shit. And now Green Day can sell 17 million records. But it doesn't affect the level of people who mean to effect change. It's more like something of a fashion statement. And that's cool. I don't give shit about that you know. Music is entertainment. And anybody that ever said 'oh but punksucking music is important'. It's important entertainment. It's not the be-all end-all, it doesn't cure cancer and it certainly doesn't stop wars... what is important is when people get together and say: 'we are going to make a difference.' But I keep going round in circles because like I said, all it seems to take is one man to say 'no, you're not. I am sending in the military, I am sending in the police and you will make no difference.' This is a time that I am at a loss for an idea on how to make it better. I really am. I really wish there was some way to say 'if this person was at power it would be better' but I can't say that. I know it isn't true. I've been kind of toying around with the idea of women in power. Are women more empathetic? Are they more sympathetic? Are they more humanitarian even perhaps? (L) (for more on this check out www.southernline.net/steve)

the greatest evil in the absence of compassion. Apathy is very close to that.

Yeah and that's where we are right now with the majority of people in America. If you had the apathetic party oh man hahaha... maybe that's the way to go you know!

Another direction now I know that Qing Giffin (the lead singer of Bad Religion) and writer of most of Bad Religion's lyrics is a great advocate of the Nietzschean world view. By the philosophical school, there is nothing beyond the measurable reality. The universe is in fact a linear endless chain of action and reaction, following a strict set of natural laws and so much as water boils at a 100 degrees Celsius, we humans are bound by these natural laws in anything we do. All that we think we see is basically an illusion. All we really see is a big chemical reaction. That means that we cannot act independently, everything we do is a natural reaction. That also means free will does not exist, we do not actually have any choice as to what decisions we make. With no choice we cannot be held responsible for our actions. So Good and Evil also do not exist. Do you believe that to be true? The strange part about what he talks about is that everything is pre-ordained, that everything has already been determined, that what is going to happen is going to happen. And you may think you can change it but you can't. I don't believe that. I believe in free will. I believe you have an ability to make choices in your life. What I say to him is that I don't believe that you have the ability to make up your own path entirely. Even though I don't believe you can make up your own path, I still do believe that there are forks in the road: you are given choices and these choices determine where you are going to go. I don't believe that you just move down this linear path of cause and consequence and that it's just this natural thing and there is nothing you can do about it. I believe that if you rob a liquor store with a gun and you are pointing this gun at the cash register

person, you make a choice right there and then to pull the trigger or not. That's not a chemical reaction. If you are going to have a baby if you are an eighteen-year-old and you are pregnant, you have a choice: you can have the baby or not have the baby. The choice you make will change your life and effect all changes thereafter. The weight of the choice then makes it a fork in your road. I am not talking about it in a moralistic way. I am just saying it's the choice that you make that determine much of what follows. I can not go with the fact that everything is pre-ordained. That being said I do believe that even though you have choices, there is nothing you can do about things that lay outside of you and to me, that's way more frustrating. So I think where he and I differ is the metaphysical plane. It is faith, it's karma. I kinda believe that what you put in you also get out. I also have faith in a power greater than myself, something metaphysical. It's not Santa-Claus in the sky, but it's something that has a far truer value than anything I could ever acquire, nothing that this mortal coil could ever possibly decipher or definitely valuable. It's far truer than that. And I like that about it. I like going over religions and saying 'oh I like this, I like that' just taking all the good things. And yet people say to me 'you can't do that, that's cheating'.

But the logical consequence of saying that there is Good and Evil and that we do have choice right and wrong is that not everything is relative. Some things in themselves are better than others. Which ultimately means that our moral system may be better than the other? Do you believe that's true?

No, I don't think one system is better than the other. Because that's what gets us into trouble. By thinking my system is better than yours. My brother can beat up your brother. My President is better than your President. I think that the dangerous part of organized religion is that gang mentality where you are not really allowed to have a free-feeling thought on your religion. It's not as if you could all be in the same religion and all kind of have your own vibe on what is right to do and collectively say 'I feel this' 'yeah that's a good idea...'. Its when you start saying 'you have to do this and you cannot do this' and there are hard lines drawn in the sand that you start pushing around other people. You can't eat pork on Friday. That guy is eating pork on Friday lets go kick his ass. That's no good. It always ends up with one guy saying that guy is doing what we are not supposed to be doing lets go kick his ass! Isn't that always the way it goes? And that's where I just say enough of that! Why can't everybody say hey, if you believe something, the underlying rule is do unto others as you would have done unto yourself? Then what's the problem? You can believe in a coat rack, a cornucopia, a fucking piece of plastic floating down the canal. Who gives a shit. As long as you go 'I love this thing and it loves me' that's fine, you're loved by something. Right? That's a big part of it because no one wants to feel alone. I was married for seventeen and a half years and my wife just left me. And I was devastated! Two kids, I was totally fucking devastated and I spent... I spent four months just lying on the floor of an apartment drinking Vodka, just trying to kill myself. And one day it was just snap! You know what? It's okay because there is something there that loves me and I'm okay and it wants me to be okay. It's not like another girl either cuz that's just another thing. This was something far greater than that telling me you know what? Its okay! You will be okay. And I don't have to get up and shout about it and have a stick and say 'Listen to what I say this is what happened to me! I had a revelation! God talked to me!' No. I'm crazy! I'm insane but I am happy and I know that I am loved and if everybody was walking around knowing that they are loved, by a coat rack, a cornucopia, a plastic piece of fucking nothing floating down the canal, wouldn't we all be happy? Who do you love. I love the coat rack. That's nice man. Now that's great.