

# Mp3 Last Stone Cast (ep) - Rock: Hard Rock

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Straight up midwestern hard rock 5 MP3 Songs ROCK: Hard Rock, METAL/PUNK: Power Metal Details: Last Stone Cast By Martin Popoff (martinpopoff.com) The Players: Scott McConnell guitars and vocals Jon Epstein bass Josh Lipply drums Tone, taste and tenacity. Those are words invoked by the mighty ZZ Top in reference to their own pursuit of excellence, but they could just as easily apply to this classy new Cleveland, Ohio-based band, new, save for the fact that this particular tasty trio are veterans with all manner of hard rock experience behind them. Bassist in the band, local legend Jon Epstein, amusingly describes the Last Stone Cast sound as the Midwest equivalent of southern rock. And that makes perfect sense, given the above ZZ Top-derived characteristics within this long-awaited lead EP for the band. First off, the production of Last Stone Cast is rich and creamy, with values and frequencies not heard since key, expensive, golden era Alice in Chains moments. Specifically, Scotts guitars come drenched with electricity, but with a pleasing, rounded-off tone and tenacity. Drummer Josh Lipply, despite some heroic fills and egregiously deep grooves, reacts in kind at the production end, mixed gorgeously with bleed, his cymbals clipped perfectly, especially so, given his chops-heavy, cymbal-mad style. Jons bass fits cozily within the intense brew, and then up top, man Scott is a killer vocalist, anchored in a legacy between Gregg Allman and Zakk Wylde, but again, with judiciously applied modern rock stylings somewhat indicative of the best Seattle sounds. He can croon, he can roar, and he can obviously hit high notes when he wants to which is not that often (one suspects he knows its not cool). All told, its a heady mix, resulting in explosive tri-partite power trio chemistry, firing on all cylinders despite an astonishing variety of dynamic between and in an around this mere collection of five rock-solid anthems. Epstein offers a little background on the band, beginning with the memorable name chosen for the project. We were kicking around different band names, and somehow or another we started talking about relationships. Someone said something about casting the first stone. We changed it to Last Stone Cast because we figured that we didnt want to throw the first one, but we would definitely throw the last. The Cleveland band Fast Chester is a big part of why last Stone Cast is getting so much local (and actually European!) attention, from both printed press and radio. Epsteins last band was yet another, but different, fiery act combining

the best of an encyclopedic classic rock and metal knowledge, with current, visceral tones and emotions. And as is evidenced by the diverse touchstones charging this galvanizing collection My tastes and influences run from Rush, Warrior Soul, Last Crack, Marillion, Slayer to Tribe After Tribe, notes Jon. Scott is basically 80s-influenced - Van Halen is one of his faves. Josh, being 20 years younger than Scott and I, is more influenced by recent bands; hes a big Shinedown fan. As for the cover art, says Jon, I wanted something that connected us to our Ohio roots, hence the flag. Cleveland is the home of rock n roll after all, and were proud of that. Josh likes steer skulls, and the bleeding rose is an allusion to how hard love can be. The hole in the steers head is from the last stone cast (laughs). Further fleshing out this fortuitous meeting of the local rock establishment, Jon explains that, Scott has been active on the local scene here in Ohio for years. He was in Avitar, Meltdown and Ripcored. Ripcored was written up in Garry Sharpe Youngs New Wave Of American Heavy Metal book. Josh is 24 and has played with quite a few of the better musicians in Akron, blues guitarist Hurricane James being the most well-known. He came highly recommended to me by Frankie Garisto, the new drummer for American Dog, formerly of The Godz. Josh and Scott were basically the house band at the bar I owned in Akron last year, called Crossroads. The three of us played together every Wednesday at jam night. At the time they were both in a cover band called Meltdown. Their bass player quit at the same time that I was leaving Fast Chester. We wanted to make music that was both interesting to us and would appeal to a broader audience than Fast Chester had... girls specifically (laughs). Indeed the tracks enclosed have that elusive universal appeal, being tough and riffy and guitar-y yet hook-heavy, especially come the immense Only You. Our fans call this the chick song, laughs Epstein. Its a song about realizing just how much your significant other means to you, and how hard it is to say. Scanning the rest of the EP, Jon reveals that Blown Away is a song about trying to deal with a former lovers uncaring attitude during a break-up - its a song of exasperation. More Again I wrote the lyrics to this song while in a detox unit in Evansville, Indiana Im much better now! (laughs). The riff was something Scott had been tossing around for awhile. We liked the juxtaposition of the mellow arpeggio with the heavy almost nu-metal chorus. More Again is indeed a winner, even if its one of the more subdued tracks on the album. A rich and epic southern rock vibe spills out of this one, until huge doom riffs turn it fresh and multi-dimensional. Following this section, the verse becomes juiced with guitars and a classic yet electrocuted dark ballad is born. No Love For Me brings it back down for more of a melodic track with huge radio potential. Says Jon, This is a song that Scott had been messing with for

20 years, but never actually finished. It was a riff he played on acoustic. When he played it for me I really liked it. Not a whole lot of hard rock in C sharp minor! Its about realizing that you are not, and will never be, who you think you are to a lover. Closing the EP is a party-hard riff rocker with a number of sublime melodies, its riff gorgeous, again, of tone, with an excellent vocal melody from Scott placed on top. Again, one can hear the neurons firing between these guys, with Josh throwing in some novel double bass as well as cowbell? True story, quips Jon. My girlfriend Deb asked us to write a song with a cowbell in it. I had been listening to American Dog. Bingo! And despite the sturdiness of song all over, its not inconceivable and even productive and fully pleasurable - to work ones way through this EP simply marveling at individual performances. Asked to call out a few of his favourite moments among the tracks, Jon says, My fave bass part is probably the diddly bit between the bridge and chorus in Blown Away. Either that or the second verse of Only You. A key drum part has got to be the roll Josh does right after the I taste you in the breakdown at the end of Only you. Its awesome, man. Vocally I really like what Scott did with Blown Away, the juxtaposition between the melodic vocal line and the metal scream - works great. Guitar part? I love the bad horsey outro in Blown Away- a real Steve Vai moment. We basically recorded the rhythm tracks live, adds Jon, with respect to getting such an authentic and warm sound, start to finish. I punched in three small bass glitches. The only cool stuff was the doubled bass tracks something I always do. One clean, the other with effects and distortion. It makes it thicker but still articulate. Other than that, the vocals were all first take except Supposed To Be which I had Scott do twice. The doubled vocals were first take as well. All the solos were also first takes. I did the whole thing, including mixing, in 15 hours. Its all looking promising for this obviously efficient and seasoned trio of dependable rock warriors. Despite career ties to the area, it looks like the band will do what it takes to get the word out. We are serious, says Epstein, with respect to the prospect of touring. We want to get to Europe by next summer. This summer we are concentrating on the American Midwest, and possibly New England. We are also looking into Southern Ontario. We are currently trying to set up a circuit with a couple other bands, most notably American Dog and Broken Teeth. Epstein has no reservations about creative converts who come out to see the shows. Were very good live. Our CD release party was broadcast live over the Classic Metal Show last week. Scott is an outstanding front man; he really knows how to connect with an audience. Both he and Josh spent a great deal of time in cover bands doing the three set a night thing so they are very, very tight. Josh also did time in a Garth Brooks tribute band. And

these songs cut through and connect. No, I dont think theres any problem at all, as you say creating converts (laughs). With the bands full-length debut in the works as we speak (Jon is co-producing the album with Billy Morris, using Clevelands esteemed Lava Room), it looks to be a busy year for this hard yet hook-proud Midwest classic rock machine. And as Jon promises catch Last Stone Cast live, and youll become a believer indeed.

----- Last Stone Cast EP  
(2007) The Songs: 1 - Blown Away (3:22) 2 More Again (4:32) 3 No Love For Me (3:54) 4 Only You (3:59) 5 Supposed To Be (2:54) Recorded at the Lava Room, Cleveland, Ohio Produced by Jon Epstein, Billy Morris and Last Stone Cast

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