

*Karla Tallas*

INTERVIEW

ROCK TILL DEATH



RONNIE JAMES DIO

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### IDENTITY CARD

**Name:** Ronald James Padavona,  
known professionally as RONNIE JAMES DIO

**Born:** 10 July 1942, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

**Died:** 16 May 2010, Los Angeles, California

**Education:** Cortland High School,  
University at Buffalo (1960–1961)

**Mission in Life:** ROCK/METAL SINGER

**Other activities:**

Songwriter, Musician, Producer

**What makes him special:** Humanity, Humility,  
Sense of Equality, Gift of Natural Wisdom,  
Incredible Memory, Metal Horns Gesture

**The biggest highlights of his career:**  
RISING, HEAVEN AND HELL, HOLY DIVER

**6 of the biggest hits:**

MAN ON THE SILVER MOUNTAIN, STARGAZER,  
LONG LIVE ROCK'N'ROLL, HEAVEN AND HELL,  
HOLY DIVER, RAINBOW IN THE DARK

**Most underrated works:**

ELF: CAROLINA COUNTY BALL (1974), TRYING  
TO BURN THE SUN (1975), LOVE IS ALL  
(Roger Glover – THE BUTTERFLY BALL  
AND THE GRASSHOPPER'S FEAST/1974),  
DIO: ANGRY MACHINES (1996), THE KILLING  
DRAGON (2002), MASTER OF THE MOON (2004)



RONNIE JAMES DIO, one of the most respected personalities in the world of music, became famous in the 1970s and was active on the music scene for more than 50 years. His powerful voice and characteristic vocal expression brought him a lot of attention from early on in his career. He decided to just be himself and cleverly combined his distinctive personality with his unparalleled talent. Throughout all of his career, he managed to maintain a steady position on the music scene, avoiding both musical flops and personal scandals. His humanity and unique approach towards people gained him incredibly high esteem and respect. There were virtually no negative reactions towards his work because he himself never projected any negative energy outwards. RONNIE JAMES DIO also had a jaw-droppingly incredible memory. Despite being constantly surrounded by people, he really valued individuals and never said no to a personal talk or meeting. He would remember people even if he had only been with them for a short while. He always asked you your name and where you came from. You would think it was just a formality and part of getting an autograph, but suddenly he would remember you in the middle of a concert and dedicate a song to you. Whenever he was interviewed by a journalist, he could recall his or her name even ten years later. He was the embodiment of a true star. His humility, sense of equality and moral values made his unique personality even more distinct, helping him reach heights that few people manage to reach in a single lifetime. He was extraordinary in every aspect, with all his being sincerely and fully dedicated to rock 'n' roll until the end of his days.



During his career, RONNIE JAMES DIO sold more than 47 million records. He collaborated with legendary artists like Ritchie Blackmore and BLACK SABBATH and formed several groups himself, including his very successful solo project DIO. Although he had one of the most unique voices in the world, he never took singing lessons. At five years old he started playing the trumpet, which (together with being lucky enough to inherit his talent) he considered sufficient training for his vocal cords. He received a number of awards during his career, an exhaustive list which would be incredibly long to list in full. In 2004, he was inducted into the Cortland Hall of Fame. Three years later, his name was engraved on the Guitar Center's Rock Walk of Fame in Hollywood. On the day of his birthday (July 10, 2011), a street in his hometown of Cortland was named Dio Way in his honor. In 2017, RONNIE JAMES DIO was inducted into the Hall of Heavy Metal History. Even a number of festivals around the world are named in his honor and a monument in tribute to him in Kavarna, Bulgaria is just another testament to his popularity.

On May 16, 2010, a tragic piece of news stunned the whole world – RONNIE JAMES DIO, one of the greatest rock singers of all time, had died in Los Angeles. He had been diagnosed with stomach cancer six months earlier. On May 4, HEAVEN AND HELL's planned summer tour was officially



cancelled due to Ronnie's worsening health. His closest family, musicians and fans around the world were hoping for a miracle up until the very last moment. Sadly, it did not come. The news of Ronnie's death struck everyone like lightning. No one could believe it. Together, we shared a sadness that is still difficult to describe after all these years.

In September 2009, I was probably the last one to do an extensive interview with RONNIE JAMES DIO. I was incredibly lucky and I am truly thankful for the opportunity I was given. He was full of energy and had a lot planned. In that moment, no one, not even in the worst of nightmares, could imagine that none of those plans would come to fruition. I've decided to keep the interview unchanged and am publishing it verbatim.

# INTERVIEW

***You were born in New Hampshire, but you moved with your parents to Cortland, NY. What first comes to your mind when you think about your childhood and how do you remember those years spent with your family when you were growing up?***

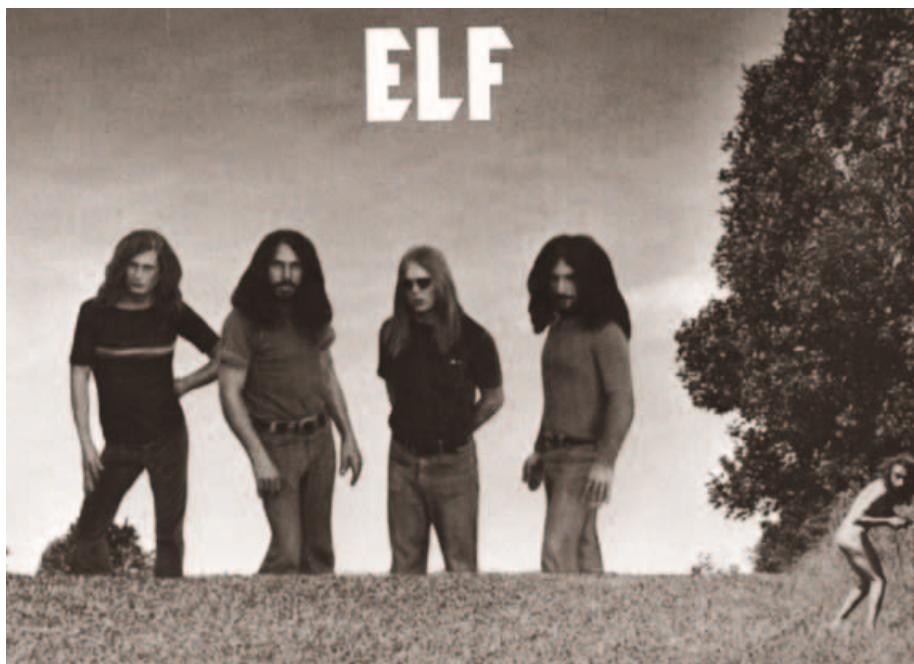
I had a great childhood. I was born in New Hampshire because my father was in the military at that time and my mom and him were living where he was stationed in New Hampshire. I was born there because of where they were, otherwise I would have been born in Cortland because that's where all my family are from. Again, I had a great childhood. I loved playing sports. I always wanted to be a baseball player. If I could be a baseball player, I still would be, but it's too late for that now. I love sports. I was introduced to music at the age of 5. My father said to me one time when I was 5 that he thought that I should have some education other than just math and science, so he thought that music could be good for me too. So I did, I started playing the trumpet at the age of 5. That's really what led me to my career. When I began, I played more classical music in an orchestra as a trumpet player and as I said it led me to being a musician. So, once I kind of discovered music, that became a lot of what my childhood was. I played by myself, I tried to be better at it and started discovering other kinds of music, eventually starting to sing instead of just playing an instrument. I have some great memories of growing up. I had great parents. It was just a great time to be alive.

***Your parents probably wanted you to become a classical musician. Did they support you when you decided to play rock'n'roll?***

Yes, they did. I don't think they had much of a choice. I have never been someone who listens to what people tell me, or when they tell me what to do. I think it's because I did all of the things that they wanted me to do. All the dreams that they had for their child when they were growing up themselves, because they were children of the depression era and didn't have very much. So they wanted more. That generation of people, my mother and father and people like that, wanted to have more for their children, more than they had. I helped them realize that dream. I went to a university, which was what they wanted for me as well. So, I did that. But in the end, I was still a musician, even after all that time. I did that for them because of all the hard work they put into trying to get me a good education and making me a better man. And then I decided that I was just going to do what I wanted to do, which was rock music all the time. They were very supportive of me. I think I always made them proud, and I think that's all they really wanted. They both were always there for me.

***Your parents were religious and raised you in the Roman Catholic faith, which you found unfulfilling at that time. What is your attitude about religion now, are you thankful for this experience, are you religious or not at all?***





Well, I am thankful for my experience. I think it's not something I could tell everyone to relate to, because I just saw it very quickly for what I thought it was. I saw nothing wrong with having faith in something higher, I guess, for those who need it. I just didn't agree with the way things were taught. For me, when I was growing up in the Roman Catholic Church, it was taught mainly by fear. It was 'you are going to go to hell, you are gonna die, you are gonna be burned'. It never seemed to be a whole lot of love, always just fear all the time and being instructed by nuns. In those days they were even more strict than they are now. They are probably not strict at all now, but they used to be. And it was always a lot of hitting with rulers and throwing things at you. I just couldn't agree that this was supposed to be something that's preaching love when everything surrounding me was fear and people taking swats at you. I just didn't get it. I always just really believed in myself more than anything else. I kind of never thought that I needed that kind of thing to lean on. Some people do, and that's fine. Again, this is only my judgment. I really felt that religion didn't have much of a place in my life. Early on I realized that heaven and hell are where we are now. You make your own heaven and you certainly have to go through hell. And when it's over, it's over! I don't really see myself having to go before a man in a chair telling me that I will go to heaven or hell. I just don't agree with any of that. But again, my feelings about religion are probably

pretty well-founded on all the abuse by the Catholic Church, not only just with pedophilia, but also I mean this is one of the richest organizations in the world, if not the richest one. And we're still pushing children out as fast as we can, because that's what our church tells us to do. Now we have all of these population problems. It just never ends. To me, religion is a business. It's business like the music business or like the publishing business. And they work hard at it, that's what they do. That's what they are, that's how they have to earn their living as well. I don't really have a lot of time for religion.

***You grew up in the time of ELVIS PRESLEY, THE BEATLES... You were one of the first musicians who started to play heavier and rougher music. How did people react to you in the beginning?***

It was a time of copying other people, really. The way that you got good at what you did was singing things by Elvis Presley, THE BEATLES, LED ZEPPELIN, DEEP PURPLE or whoever to get good at what you were doing. And then finding your own way. And that's what happened to me. I learned from all those people and then tried to be an individual. Just tried to be very unique by myself. I realized early on that unless you are different than everyone else, I don't think that you could ever reach an incredible amount of success. Once I decided I that didn't want to do any of that material anymore, when I felt I have something to say not just as a musician, but as a lyricist as well, then I started



to write my own music. The reaction I got was wonderful for all those things we were doing early on. When you have great role models of people to listen to, again like DEEP PURPLE, THE BEATLES, THE ROLLING STONES and all those people. When you try to be that good, you have some kind of challenge and you're probably going to succeed at it, and that's all there is. The things I was doing, they were always very well accepted, especially when I started with just my original material.

***When you started your first band THE VEGAS KINGS, you played bass. It's good for the world that you changed your mind and started to sing, but don't you miss playing bass sometimes?***

Oh yes, absolutely, I do. I'm lucky because I get a chance sometimes to play when we do songwriting. Whenever Tony and I get together just on our own, I usually play bass. I've come all this way but I still play. I write occasionally with a bass, mainly with a guitar, but I certainly write with a bass. I still think as a bass player, I think. I think that's one of the things that always attracted me to be in a band, and not being the front man, that you have interaction as a bass player with the drummer. It was a very special thing. So I think in those terms even when I write things for myself to sing. I still think in terms of the feel of the music, the beat of the music, because the bass was so important to me. Yes, I do miss it, but I think I was smart enough to realize that I would be a lot better singer than

I would be a bass player. I wanted to be good at something, so I chose the one I thought that was better to be the best at.

***Do you still remember the feelings you had the first time you performed in front of an audience?***

It was great. It was unbelievable. Of course, the first time I was in front of an audience, I was on my own, early on. As I said, when I started as a trumpet player we got to do some of those things alone. When you are in a band, that's the greatest feeling. Being in a band, having another people to lean on, all of you sharing the same excitement. And what it does to people and how people start to accept you for the joy you are giving them. There's nothing like that at all. I remember the first time. It was, I think, at a dance for teenagers. It was just unbelievable. That just made me feel that I never wanted to stop doing it. I do, I remember it very well. It was just a great experience. It started everything.

***The first breakout moment in your career was probably when you played with ELF in support of DEEP PURPLE with Ritchie Blackmore in the band at the time. Had you met the guys before and how did the whole collaboration with DEEP PURPLE get started?***

No, actually we never met before. All the guys of PURPLE were heroes to us. We really loved the band, but we had never met before. And the story of it is that DEEP PURPLE was about to go on





***"I always just really believed in myself more than anything else."***

a world tour. It started in America. I was still living in New York at that time. It was either Ritchie or Ian Gillan that had Hepatitis and they had to cancel the tour. At this particular time, the band that I had, ELF, was just about to audition for a very famous man in the business, a guy named Cliff Davis. We were going to audition for him for a record deal. At the same time our manager, who also knew the PURPLE guys, saw Roger Glover and Ian Paice after finding out that the tour was cancelled and asked if they would like to come to the audition that we were doing. Maybe if they liked what they heard, they might want to produce the album. So, we went there and we auditioned for Cliff Davis and for Roger and Ian, whom we met for the very first time, which was pretty heavy duty for us. We were auditioning and suddenly 2 of our heroes turn up. We got the record contract and Roger and Ian loved the band, Roger especially loved ELF. That's when we first met them, when they produced the record, then going to couple of their shows, and then suddenly we were touring with them.

***What was your impression like when you met Ritchie Blackmore for the first time?***

He was pleasant. We did really spend a lot of time together. I think Ritchie was in his own world at that point, anyway. I think Roger and Ian introduced us to him. I think it was shaking hands and that was the end of it. And then, years later of course, when he wanted to form his own band, I had known

him by then of course. My first meeting with him, I was like everybody else I think, very in awe. He has a very commanding presence and a great aura around him. Of course, we all knew his reputation as a guitar player. Oh god, it's Ritchie Blackmore! I think everybody should have those feelings about their heroes. I still have those feelings about people that I have not met before that I still idolize. You should always be a kid when it comes to meeting your heroes. But he was very pleasant.

***Ritchie was amazed by your voice and he offered to have you and your companions from ELF join his band RAINBOW after he left DEEP PURPLE. Wasn't it quite strange for you to suddenly perform under a different band name?***

No, I think it was very important that we did not call the band Ritchie Blackmore's ELF. I think if we had done that, it would have been obviously very stupid. And it was Ritchie's project. He wanted to put another band together from DEEP PURPLE. He had an idea what he wanted it to be. He felt that I was the person to write and sing on that project. The rest of the guys came because I really wanted them to. I told Ritchie that I would love to do it, but these are my friends, the people I grew up with. I couldn't suddenly turn my back on them just to go for something better. I said "I will do it if you take the bass player, the drummer and the piano player". He liked them all very much, anyway as people and as musicians. He agreed to do it.



I don't think we ever should have called that ELF by Ritchie Blackmore. I think a lot of people look at it like he had joined ELF, but it worked anyway.

***You released 2 great albums with ELF, but didn't achieve major success back then. Did you believe it would happen later on?***

I think, if we had carried on, we would have been successful. Perhaps not as successful as RAINBOW was, but maybe. That's what you have to do. You have to keep playing, keep learning your craft and finding that right note to hit that everybody in the audience agrees with. It was certainly much easier to do it with Ritchie Blackmore's name in front of it than it was without. That certainly made a difference. Ritchie had so many fans through PURPLE, anyway. We had kind of built an audience already before we even got started. All the right things were happening to that band with Ritchie in it. Without him, it was just a lot more of a struggle. It's the struggle for any young band, just working and working and sometimes getting somewhere and sometimes not, but I still believe at the end of the day that we would have been successful. Perhaps not with all the same people in the ELF band, but I think we would have been.

***What does the time from Rainbow to Rising till Long Live Rock'n'roll mean to you?***

They are all great times. I don't regret anything that happened in my life. I don't regret working

with any of the people I've worked with. I have very few problems with most of the people that I've worked with. I have been able to maintain a good relationship with almost all of them. Once again, a lot of things happened in RAINBOW, of course. There were people who came and went, including myself at the end of the day. It was hard. Hard to see someone that you played with for a year and a half, or 2 years, suddenly had to be kicked out the back door. You know, it was Ritchie's band, so it was all going to be his decision, anyway. Some of those things are hard, but you know, the learning experiences were amazing. To be able to write with someone like Ritchie and learn a way to write that you are not comfortable with, and then to be able to succeed in it. It was a great challenge for me, and he did nothing except make me so much better. The other experiences are things like those days, throwing TV's out of windows and setting your bass player's bad amplifier on fire, seeing someone naked from the top of your stage set while you're performing. All those kinds of little wonderful things that happened. They were all great experiences, they were so funny. We were always on the very edge, because we never kind of knew what Ritchie was going to do next. That's what made life even more exciting rather than just a plot through it all. Those were really exciting times for me. And again, wonderful experiences and a great chance to learn. Another important thing is that the people I like also came into my life, I mean other musicians.



***“Early on I realized that heaven and hell are where we are now. You make your own heaven and you certainly have to go through hell. And when it’s over, it’s over!”***

***Was it just a different musical direction with Ritchie behind your departure from RAINBOW, or was it also his complicated personality that led you to leave the band?***

I don't think so. I think, eventually we all drive people away, anyway. Whether our personality is good or bad. I think that was bound to happen at some point because Ritchie had described himself as a musical vampire. He said it, not me! He said he sucks all the blood out of them, the talent out of them, and then turns away and goes on to the next body. And that's what he does. That sometimes makes your position, where you're thinking to yourself, am I going to be next? I never worried about that. I really never ever worried about that. So, I didn't let that side of Ritchie's personality get in my way. Because I just always felt that if I'm not playing with you, I will play with somebody else. I'm good and I know that I'm good. I know what I can do for myself, so it wouldn't have been a problem for me. So, I didn't worry about things like that at all. I left, I say I was more fired than left, because my musical tastes were not the tastes that Ritchie eventually settled on. He wanted to be more of a pop band and do other people's material. I felt we created that band in some of a classical medieval kind of attitude, and to suddenly change it to move towards a pop form... that wasn't something that I wanted to do. I don't write love songs. It was quite obvious that I wasn't happy with what his direction was going to be. And he probably wasn't happy

with me, when I was not going in that direction with him. It was, as I said, the end of it with him. That's what the musical difference was. He surely had great pop success after that, but that's not something I ever wanted to do. I've always wanted to get heavier and heavier and deeper and deeper into the big broad category of music. More of the things that we've been doing with HEAVEN AND HELL, BLACK SABBATH with DIO at times. I wasn't about to get that with RAINBOW. So, Ritchie went his other direction, but it wasn't a personal thing, not at all. I have no problem with Ritchie at all. I think the man is a genius and I thank him all the time for the opportunity that he gave me. I was really a nobody. He took me in to RAINBOW and we did what we did. Of course, I had improved myself. I think Ritchie is an amazing human being. Certainly he is a genius. I never had a personal problem with Ritchie.

***What were you doing after you left RAINBOW until you started with BLACK SABBATH?***

I was about to put some of the ELF guys back together again. I think we always do what's safest for us in difficult times, I think. I was doing that for a while and was still living on the East Coast, in Connecticut, where we had moved with RAINBOW. Eventually, I just couldn't deal with it there anymore. So we moved back to Los Angeles again. That's where all the people were and all the music business was. New York was

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a very closed society and not a lot of kind of music I wanted to play or the people I wanted to play with. Coming back here, I brought those people out with me, so we continued to write and pursue the next goal. At the same time I got an offer from a guy named Al Kooper. Al Kooper was in a band called THE BLUES PROJECT a long time ago. He is the guy who started BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS and TUBES as well. And the guitar player named Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, who played with THE DOOBIE BROTHERS and the drummer from the band called LITTLE FEAT. So, we were putting together the band ELF that I knew from New York. So I was doing 2 things at once. I was doing the ELF thing and the one with Al Kooper. At that point of my life I met Tony Iommi at a club here called The Rainbow. First time I met Tony we spoke about having some early plans around putting a band together, Tony and I and Bill Ward. We hadn't decided about the bass player at that particular point. We were talking about some options when I met him personally, and he invited me to the house that they were running in Beverly Hills. They were using it as a rehearsal place as well, because they were writing an album for their tenth anniversary. I went up to that place and when he showed me the rehearsal studio, Tony picked up a guitar. He played for me something acoustic and asked if I can do something with that. I asked if he could give me a few minutes, because I thought I could.

I went off to a corner, wrote a little piece and came back. So we did it. The first song we wrote is called "Children of the Sea." From this point Tony said to the rest of the group: "I wanna Ozzy out, I wanna play with him." And so that's what happened. Tony wanted to do something else. That's how the SABBATH thing started.

***What were the first reactions from orthodox BLACK SABBATH fans, when you sang the songs that Ozzy had done before?***

It was ok. I think I spent probably the first 20 shows that we did watching people raise their finger to me. Not a very kind thing to do, I opposed, I didn't ask to do those songs. Not all of the people did, you know, but certainly there were some people who were so into SABBATH with Ozzy. They just weren't going to accept anything else. And then after about 20 shows, it suddenly stopped. Never was a problem anymore. The reactions became good. I think the thing was that *Heaven and Hell* was such a good album and had such good songs on it. It was a nice balance between going out and doing, here's the new singer in BLACK SABBATH, you know, and only singing their old songs. Only the things Ozzy had done. We really were sure to have a good album out that people wanted to hear. Again, I think it was balanced and it all went very well. It made things a lot easier for me.





***“I don’t regret working with any of the people I’ve worked with. I have very few problems with most of the people that I’ve worked with. I have been able to maintain a good relationship with almost all of them.”***

***In one older interview with you, I read you didn’t admire Ozzy as a singer...***

No, I don’t admire him as a singer. There are some people I really do admire as singers. And just because I don’t admire him doesn’t mean he is not good at it. There is certainly nothing wrong with the way he sings and the way he carries a tune. He is not just kind of the singer who is in my mind as one I’d like to be like. That’s all, it’s not I dislike him or think he is a bad singer. I don’t think that at all. To me, he doesn’t have the role of somebody I admire like Chris Cornell for example. Chris Cornell is a great singer. I wouldn’t compare him to Ozzy. I mean the 2 of them are together like chalk and cheese. It’s not that I dislike him. It’s just I don’t think he is the greatest singer. And his personality, I think he has a great personality. I have no problem with Ozzy at all.

***You have already mentioned the album Heaven and Hell is considered to be one of the best albums in rock history. Do you still remember the atmosphere when you were recording it?***

Oh yeah, I remember all of it. It was a very difficult time. As I said, Ozzy was gone. I had my own place in California in Los Angeles, but the other 3, Tony, Bill, and Geezer still had residence in England. They were living in the house that I mentioned, where I first wrote the song with them. We were rehearsing in that place and one day we were gone for cup of a tea and someone knocked on

the door. It was the movers. They came in and took all the furniture away cause all the furniture in the house was rented. Our manager had decided he wanted to quit. At that point it was Don Arden who came up and took all the furniture. There was nothing left there. That made life more difficult. So, now we were without a manager and without any financial resources. We had been in the studio probably about 2 weeks in Los Angeles and then we decided the best thing to do is to get out of Los Angeles and go somewhere else to finish. So, we went to Florida. We recorded the album in a studio called Criteria. In very little time we managed to get another manager, got ourselves kind of set up again. We were ok, we weren’t rolling in money, that’s for sure, but we were having a good time. We were writing great songs. I think that one of the things that made the album so good was that it took a long time to finish, but we also had to face a lot of problems to complete it as well. So, we were proud of it and I think we appreciated it more when it became successful. We finished all but one track for the album in Florida. Then we had to go to England after Bill’s dad passed away. Tony, Geezer, and I went to the Cayman Islands and we wrote “Neon Nights”. After Bill’s dad’s funeral we went to Paris and recorded Neon Nights in a studio where no one spoke English, only French. And we didn’t speak any French. So, another difficult time, but we finally got it. All together, it probably took us a year or so to do it. And again, I think it’s





a great album because of all the things we had to go through to make it. It wasn't easy, but it was certainly enjoyable. We loved the songs we wrote and I loved playing in the band. I liked them because they gave me so much room to do what I wanted to do. That's something I said earlier, which was that I wanted to bring into my writing something darker and heavier. I couldn't call forth anymore the perfect people to do that with. It was wonderful and enjoyable for me, which was one of the reasons why I went back to these guys again for the third time. Just because I like them as people too. It's just so enjoyable to write the songs the way you know you can with the people who feel the same you do.

***What was the reason for leaving the band after the Mob rules release?***

It wasn't anything musical at all. That was a time when lots of bad things were going around. Lots of bad drugs going around and things that really changed your attitude. And I think that's what happened with the band. The band hadn't been successful for 10 years. Then suddenly *Heaven and Hell* came out and it was a giant album and the success was there again. So, success brings more money. More money brings people to hang around you if you allow that to happen. And then there goes your judgment. And that's what happened. The judgment went for some people and they started to believe things that just weren't true.

It just ended. We don't want to be with you and you don't want to be with us. I don't think it was the case at all. So, when we got back again together after that, there was still a bit of that going on. Now, these days we are all grown up. We're not stupid anymore. You know, we talk to each other. We never did that before. We never communicated. We only communicated by playing the music. We didn't do much together, because I guess we didn't have to. But now, we treat each other as the people that we first got to like in the beginning of everything. These are the people you wouldn't play with if you didn't like them in the first place, anyway. We talk about things. We don't make plans too far in advance, because if you make plans for 2 years from now and it falls apart in 6 months, the band falls apart again too. Things will blow up just one more time. We take it very, very slowly. It has been a joy to do this now. For me it was always about the music and about the fact that with these guys I just feel very liberated, that I can write whatever I want to write.

***You've worked with Tony Iommi and Ritchie Blackmore. 2 great, but completely different personalities and musicians. What makes them so different from your point of view?***

I think Tony certainly thinks much more from a solo perspective. I think his guitar is his voice. I think he always found that Ritchie seemed a bit bored with having to play as the rhythm guitar player.



Tony on the other hand is exactly the opposite. He is a rhythm guitar player. He is the best rhythm guitar player I've ever heard in my entire life. There's nobody like him. Tony consumes the guitar. He is amazing. Tony has also now become a hell of a soloist. He is a really, really good soloist. I'm impressed by everything that he plays now. I had always thought before that Ritchie was a better soloist than Tony. I guess because they are different. You can't compare them, anyway. Ritchie is really knowledgeable about his instrument from a musical perspective. Tony is not stupid either musically, but Ritchie is a real student of a lot of classical music. I think that makes him so much different than Tony as well. Because he goes to the places that are a little bit scary at times. Not that Tony doesn't, but it's with a different perspective. I guess they both are very, very unique. There's no way to say that one's better than the other is because they shine at such unique things by themselves. I think Tony is a complete guitar player. I think Ritchie is just a virtuoso. I guess that's the real difference.

***How difficult was it for you to put together your solo band after you left BLACK SABBATH?***

I had some difficulties in the first few moments then. I'll tell you why. Vinny was gone from BLACK SABBATH, so obviously I was too. We decided to put a band together cause I was gonna form a band. It was Vinny and I. We had no bass player,

we had no guitar player. I especially wanted to have an English guitar player, because I played with them in the last 3 bands with SABBATH and with RAINBOW, of course. I just like the English attitude. I just like what the English guitar players give. We went to England to look for a guitar player. We couldn't find anyone. We even ended up one night at reggae club. We didn't know why, but we did, anyway, but it didn't work out. About 2 days before we left, I got hold of Jimmy Bain. Jimmy, who of course played with me in RAINBOW and in DIO. I asked Jimmy if he knows any guitar players and he said, yes, I do, I'll be right over. He came to our hotel with the tape. He had 2 guitar players for us. One was John Sykes. He was in TYGER'S PANG TANG at the time and the other was Vivian Campbell. We said we really liked Vivian. We asked where he was. Jimmy said he was in Ireland. We said, no problem. The next day we hired a rehearsal place and instruments and we flew down there. I was with Vinny, and Jimmy, who was a bass player obviously, came down with his gear. I guess, Jimmy thought he was gonna be in the band and I guess he was. Suddenly we went from having nothing to having everything. We were 4 people that worked so well musically. So, it was difficult up to that time. I take it as one of those things that makes life a little bit easier for me, I had written couple of songs for this band before we even put the band together. One of those songs was "Holy Diver" and the



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other song was the song called “Don’t Talk to Strangers.” Right away, we had 2 songs I felt really, really good about. I think that makes you feel a lot more comfortable about what you’re going to do. If you just put a band together and then suddenly come out with nothing from the rehearsal space, you kinda do. If you got a direction and you got some songs that you think are good, I think it just helped us so much more to get things rolling. At the end of the day it wasn’t terribly difficult to put the band together.

***Your first solo album *Holy Diver* showed exactly what fans could expect from your future work and brought you success, lots of attention, and lots of new fans. You were successful before with *RAINBOW* and *BLACK SABBATH*, but how did it feel for you to achieve such a success with your own first solo album?***

It was great. If I hadn’t liked it, I wouldn’t have done it because there’s too much hard work that went into it. If it only were a matter of like doing something in one day and saying, here, check this out, we haven’t really worked too hard, we are not too caught up in it. I know what it was like to make the album. So, when it was over, we were just hoping that it would be appealing to someone rather than how lucky we struck it with being such a big album right after that. It was strange, but it worked.

***In the 80s you also had to face some charges, like that you were a Satan worshiper because of the name you used, the band logo and the cover artwork for your albums. How did that affect you personally?***

It never affected me. I think as far as the band as a whole, it was probably more attractive than it was anything else. I know so many people who spoke to me over the years and who told me that when they grew up, they had a *Holy Diver* album. That many of their parents were taking it away because it was evil. Whenever you take things away from young people, that makes them want it more and more. I think that probably worked out all right. It wasn’t a problem. We didn’t plan it to be that way. DIO just happened to be the name that I had first used since I was 9 or 10 years old. It was not a matter of being pointed to god and having evil covers, not at all. It just worked out that way. For some strange reason I chose the right name and it all just worked out. I have always been kind of known for my beliefs about good and evil, anyway. I’ve never gone to an extreme and said, you should worship the devil or you should go and pray in front of god. Other people make up their own minds. It just kind of really worked out with the name DIO, I had no particular god in mind when I took that name. I would never have done that. I just would never have called myself a god. I don’t have that kind of ego. I didn’t do it for that reason. It all just worked out, I guess, especially when joining BLACK SABBATH. Dio and BLACK SABBATH. It just all seemed to fit together that way for some reason.



***You also became famous for your live shows, where you used lots of pyrotechnics on stage, and your performances and elaborate stage set-up were among the most advanced in the music industry at that time. Who came up with all these ideas?***

Actually, Wendy Dio, my manager, did. The 2 of us did almost everything right from the beginning of the whole DIO project. I mean, from getting the band together right through everything. We just had some very big ideas and decided that we were going to go for them. I saw a lot of things make sense. The album cover artwork which worked so well for us, anyway. The album itself was a necessary part of the first show that we did. When we did the *Sacred Heart* tour, we had a dragon holding a crystal ball on the cover. So, we decided to use a dragon. When we did an Egyptian set, we decided to have a full pyramid on stage with a top that came off revealing the drums and 3-headed snakes coming out of them with fire in their eyes. It just went on and on and on... We just never stopped imagining what could be and we just gathered the right people to put it together. It cost a lot of money to do it, but we always felt that we did so well with the fans of DIO, who were always so loyal and bought lots of records as well, that they deserved something more for the show than just going on and playing with nothing on stage. Especially at that time. I think we had committed at a time when people were starting to say they

were sick of seeing big productions on stage. They just wanted to get the band to play. I could never understand that because I think you should always make everything larger than it is live. I didn't agree with that, but the main concept of the shows came mainly from all of our work, from Wendy, my imagination, and from some great people we put together. You can do anything you want to if you pay the money for it.

***The situation changed in the music industry in the beginning of the 90s with the arrival of grunge. Lots of metal bands had to go through very bad times, but you were still releasing albums, you were still touring and always had a strong fan base. How do you explain this to yourself?***

I think the most important part of that is that we continued to do it. That's what you have to do. First of all you continue because you love what you do, secondly you should continue because if you don't, you lose even the most devoted people. It wasn't just the bands that had to go on the road due to grunge or whatever else may come to take its place, but the fans had to go on the road as well. They didn't have lots of music they liked anymore. So by touring, certainly, you are still connecting with those same people. I think they always respected that kind of loyalty. We tried to go everywhere all the time. I think it's one of the reasons why DIO fans have been so incredibly loyal throughout all these years. As I said, we love to play and it's important to get out and play for the people.



***“It cost a lot of money to do it, but we always felt that we did so well with the fans of DIO, who were always so loyal and bought lots of records as well, that they deserved something more for the show than just going on and playing with nothing on stage.”***

***You released another album called *Dehumanizer* with BLACK SABBATH in 1992. Was it meant to record just one album or did you try to find a way to get back together again?***

When we did *Dehumanizer*, we planned to stay together. It was so good to play together again. That all fell apart for a different reason. Maybe we would have carried it on for longer, if we had not been faced with the situation why I left the band. On our last show in Los Angeles while finishing the tour that we had done in America after *Dehumanizer*, I was told that we're going to be opening 2 shows for Ozzy's band. I refused to do it, because I felt that it was only going to be a reason for them to announce their reunion. For a period of time, Ozzy hadn't said many nice things about anybody in the band. I didn't want to be a part of that. So, I refused to do it and in refusing to do it, I guess they wanted to do it pretty badly because of what I said before. They were going to announce their reunion, which they did. They got Rob Halford to sing those 2 shows and that was the end of it. It ended for that reason because I felt that we should have more pride than to have to do that, open for Ozzy. And because I knew they were going to announce something special for themselves.

***We have already talked about the 80s, and about the situation on the scene in the 90s. How do you see the current scene after 2000 that some people compare to the 80s?***

Nothing will ever be like the 80s. I see it's good. I see it certainly got much more acceptable again. I guess it proves the old period that keeps things going around in circles again. There's much music that more and more people like and don't like, it's a social thing. It's a societal thing, it depends on how you frame yourself as a human being, how you are living in this world, how happy you are. I think about the political situation, facing nuclear war and all of those kind of things, really. To some of the music that's around at that particular time, maybe it's just because it's a bit gloomy, maybe they wanna hear more gloomy bands

***You released your last album *Master of the Moon* with DIO in 2004. Can we expect another studio album?***

I'm working on it. I have started to work on it and the album is called *Magica*. It's meant to have 2 more parts to it. I've been writing for that while we've been away from the whole HEAVEN AND HELL thing.

***I also read you are working on your autobiography. How far are you with the book now and when are you planning to release it?***

Probably never. The amount of the things I have to do, I would probably say in couple of years from now. I've got about a third of it finished. I just haven't had the time to do it. For me it's something that needs a lot of focus, like writing







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a song. I really need to be focused on that and nothing else. I have too many other things to do in the meantime with my music. I don't have time to sit down for a month or 2 months to really go for it again. Once I will, I think it's going to be really good. Even I like it.

***I would like to mention your guest appearance on the QUEENSRYCHE album Operation Mindcrime II in the song "The Devious Doctor X." It's not so common for you to do guest appearances, why have you decided to accept this offer?***

I've known Geoff for quite a long time. Back then, they did their first European tour with us in 1986-87 or something like that. I got to know the guys in the band and Geoff very well. Out of the blue, his manager called my manager and told me that Geoff would like me to sing the part of "Doctor X" on *Operation Mindcrime II*. We are friends as well, more friends than business partners. I thought about it for a while. I had the time to do it and I decided I would and I did. I went to Seattle and recorded the song. And then we went to Universal Studios just as a one-off. It was great, it was a lot of fun. It's like any musician, I guess. You set out to do one song and you think to yourself that this is over. You do one song and then you want to do ten more. It was a great experience. I like those guys so much. They're such a good band. I was honored that they asked me to be a part of that.

***As you say, things are going around in circles. You reconnected with the BLACK SABBATH guys again. You decided to continue together under the name HEAVEN AND HELL. What main differences can you see comparing the writing process now to the past, and how was it for you all to write new songs together again after such a long time apart?***

It was magical. It all started for us with this album that's called *Black Sabbath: The Dio Years*, which is a compilation album. On that album we were asked if we have any material that we had recorded before, but not ever released. We didn't have anything like that. We don't do things like that. If they are not good enough, we just don't use them anymore. So, we didn't have anything like that and we felt that it made a lot more sense to do what they asked us. They asked us if we could write 2 songs. We hadn't worked together for about 12 years. Because we wanted to make this album not just some same old album again with the same old live tracks, maybe from a different place, we decided to do it. Nothing was going to be reused for it. We were just going to write two songs. I just went to Tony's studio in England and we wrote three songs instead of two. That's how easy it was. It was just like we had fallen right back into the same place again. I got to play bass too, which was cool. Even we were stunned by how quickly it went. We wrote two within one week and then the another one in 4 or 5 days, I think. That was of course the beginning of everything.



You want to find out if you are still good at it, if you still enjoy it, if you are proud of what you've done. Then you want to carry on. That's why we carried on. And that's where it all started. The second album, I guess the first HEAVEN AND HELL album, the one we've just done, *The Devil You Know*. That album was done very wisely, I think. Everyone came here to my home, to my studio. It's just a demo studio. We wrote all the songs here, recorded them, just like we would record in a proper studio that we eventually used. And by the time we went to record the album, we were so prepared. I think we had planned on being in the studio for a little over two months and we finished in three weeks. So it was very quick. We didn't write them quickly, I mean, we didn't try to do it that way and we did. We probably averaged about one song a week, just because we have so many ideas too. Millions of ideas. I have millions of ideas, Geezer has, we had so much to choose from. I think it's one of the reasons that this is a different process than it was before. All those years ago when we did *Mob Rules* and *Heaven and Hell*. No one had their own little private studio. No one had a laptop with pro tools on it. No one had a way to go around the corner and record the things they wanted to do. Because we all have our own studios now, we spent a lot of time just writing on our own. We had more and more ideas. It was a great process. We had the chance to communicate, we didn't have to turn in solos that we chose ourselves. I look forward to writing some more stuff with those guys.

***You are one of the most respected musicians in the music industry and treated by fans, musicians, and also journalists from all over the world as a true rock'n'roll legend. How much do you identify with your iconic status?***

It's not something that I ever planned for my life. It's not something that I ever longed for in my life, really. I thought, I was lucky just to be in the band and just be able earn enough money and keep the family alive, to be able do what I love rather than have to get up and go to work every morning. I just don't feel that way. In that case, it's been wonderful to be all those great things you just said about me because I don't have to work it from 9 to 5 anymore. But again, I've always tried not to put myself above anyone, except myself. Because I can't do some of the things that others can do. I just have a singular talent. My father always used to say to me, if you think you're so special, can you fix the car? I said, no, of course not. Or can you fix the television? No? Can you fix the telephone? No? What makes you better than the person who can do that? It's just a tiny little life lesson that I always hold on to and that's so, so true. I just look at myself as being somebody very, very fortunate for getting a good gift to use and a brain to know how to use it. But it doesn't make me better than anybody else. It's hard for me sometimes to wear the awards that people want to lay on top of me. I just try to be good all the time, that's all. And, I'm just very fortunate, but thank you for saying those nice things to me, anyway.



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***You have been on the scene more than 50 years now. You have always been very creative and you have always had a lot of to offer to your fans as well as to your music colleagues. Do you still have some goals you wish to achieve, and what is the biggest motivation for you to go on?***

Music is what always keeps me going. I guess my goals have always been doing the next album, really. That's the kind of life I think the most musicians live. The next album and the next tour. I don't know how to see past it. If I try to see past it, what I loved to do so much. I'm afraid I would try to attempt to do something that doesn't give me the same pleasure. I can, maybe be at some point in my life, I certainly want to finish this book that I'm writing. After that, I'd like to present some of the musical ideas that I have had through the years and even some of the new one. Especially with *Magica* in a more theatrical kind of a way, I just need some more space. If I have any goals, maybe that's one. Maybe doing a little bit of film work, musical work, not being an actor. I don't wanna do anything that's gonna stop me from what I'm doing now, which is looking forward to the next DIO tour we're gonna do, to the next HEAVEN AND HELL tour, the next HEAVEN AND HELL album, a DIO album and at the end the book, I got so much to think about that I don't know if I'm ever having enough time for too many long-term goals. But I don't worry about goals. My goal is always just to be as good as I possibly can and not just to screw up and stay in the same place.











# Karla Tallas

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