



Clutch's Tim Sult BY DARRIN FOX

WITH NEARLY A DOZEN FULL-LENGTH albums to their credit, Clutch has grown its fan base the old-fashioned way—with incessant touring. Besides winning converts one show at a time with pure rock fury (to reference the band's 2001 album of the same name), all of the road miles have allowed Clutch to open up its style and hone its sound. The group's latest, *From Beale Street to Oblivion* [DRT] is easily their most fully realized effort, and, according to guitarist Tim Sult, there's a reason for that.

"We went straight to tape, whereas the last couple of records were done in Pro Tools," he explains. "Performances were chopped up, and some of the guitars were tracked bar-by-bar. This time we just blasted, and I hear the difference.

It sounds like Clutch live."

Clutch has never fit neatly into any one musical category, and *Beale Street* won't help the pigeonholers. The band's style veers in and out of metal, punk, classic rock, and funk. And throughout its nearly 17-year existence, Sult has waved the flag of old-school cool—not only with his always-killing tones, but also with his stylish command of the heavy blues-rock oeuvre.

A lot of *From Beale Street to Oblivion's* rhythm tones are reminiscent of ZZ Top's first two records.

I'll take that. I'm totally fine being a Billy Gibbons rip-off! I've been a Gibson Les Paul-into-a-Marshall-guy ever since Clutch started back in 1991. When I first started playing guitar, I fiddled with dis-

tortion pedals, but they never seemed to work with a band. The minute I cranked my first Marshall half-stack, however, I never looked back. I'm all about the old school, natural, Paul Kossoff/Free-type tone. Turn it up, and hope for the best.

What gear did you use on the new record?

I used a 100-watt Marshall 1959 Super Lead plexi reissue with a Matamp 2x12 combo for most of the record. Occasionally, we'd also plug into a '60s Vox AC30, and a Top Hat head. Guitars were Les Pauls, and I think on one track I used a Les Paul Jr. I also used [engineer/producer] Joe Barresi's old Watkins combo.

Clutch developed a bluesy and more exploratory side over the years. How did that come about?

I think it's fair to say that we developed

a more riff-based, jam-type sound because of touring. The punk and hardcore influences—such as Black Flag and Minor Threat—were a little more apparent on our first record. But we toured so much on those early tunes, that we grew pretty sick of them. After a while, we would extend an intro here, a solo section there, or maybe riff-out on an ending—just to keep things interesting. So, when we recorded the second record, we actually tracked some of those jams and used

them. I think that freaked out a lot of our fans who liked the punk stuff. Plus, I started playing when I was 14, and I was into all of the usuals—Page, Blackmore, Iommi, and Gibbons. Later on, when I also started listening to punk, the rock stuff was already the roots of my style, so I was very comfortable with heavy riffing and soloing. And, as a band, we began using less chord progressions, and instead concentrated on making each song section a musical event. And that's

what a riff will do.

What are you using live?

A Gibson Les Paul into a dual rig: a '74 100-watt Marshall through a Marshall 1960A 4x12 cab loaded with Celestion Vintage 30s, and a '78 50-watt Marshall through a straight Orange 4x12 loaded with 75-watt Celestions. Tonally, two amps are always better than one—the sound is thicker and more complex.

What are the differences between the two amps, and how do you set them?

I turn the Volume controls on both amps all the way up. The 50-watter is the most *brutal* 50-watt Marshall I've ever heard, and the other Marshall is one of the softest 100-watters I've heard. The 50-watt is actually cleaner. If I overpower a venue, I'll use a Marshall PowerBrake speaker attenuator on the 100. Half the time, our sound guy makes me use it, because he hates it when I'm louder than the P.A. system! I think the biggest tonal contrast is with the speaker cabs. The Marshall cab has way more high-end than the Orange—which has a ton of rumble. I usually set the Volume and Tone controls on my Les Pauls to ten, though on our cover of Howlin' Wolf's "Who's Been Talkin'?", I roll the Tone down to two or three and back off on the Volume a bit.

On the floor I have a Geoffrey Teese RMC3 wah, an old MXR Micro Flanger that you can hear on the intro to "When Vegans Attack," a Maxon Analog Delay, and a Line 6 DL4 delay. I like the tone of the Maxon better, but the Line 6 has tap-tempo and a reverse function that I'll kick on for a jam. My strings are D'Adarrio .010s, my cables are Planet Waves, and I use .88 green Dunlop Tortex picks.

There is a lot more Hammond B-3 organ on this record. Did you have to alter your approach in any way?

Not at all—other than I get to sit around and rest while he plays a solo. We actually had some organ on our second record, but nobody really picked up on that. Sonically, the organ never gets in my way. I can't imagine *not* having it. We have a harmonica player on the road, too.

The new record tends more towards the blues, with the harmonica and even a couple of shuffle grooves. Why is that?

There is no particular reason. We just started laying down riffs, and that's where we ended up. As for the shuffles, our drummer is into the old-school styles. I don't think anyone under the age of 30 has ever heard a shuffle! Maybe that's why a lot of kids think we're some groundbreaking act! 