

Denzien, Rick - indie artist

By: *Dominick A. Miserandino*

DM) How did you start in the [music](#) industry?

RD) I tried to learn how to play guitar at a very young age - 8 or 9 or so, but I could never get it. All the guitars I tried belonged to my uncles, and they had strings a half mile off the fret board. Then one day when I was 16, I walked into a fog bank in the back yard, and it was like a baseball bat hit me in the head. I was playing 500 one day and I missed a fly ball that disappeared in the sun - and reappeared on my face, even broke my nose. Knocked me on my ass and knocked me flat out. After that, I could play guitar. My dad always told me that to get a jackass's attention you had to get hit in the head 3 or 4 times - I guess that works.

DM) So your guitar playing emerged after a head injury?

RD) Isn't that the way it comes to you? Something just hits you and you're inspired? Actually, I should have hated music. In grade school, I was a trumpet player, sort of. I had this mondo music teacher bitch that would poke the end of my nose with a ball point pen every time I made a mistake. I'd come back from lessons with one big black dot on the end of my nose!

DM) I notice a little hostility in your history. Did this trial by fire further motivate you or hinder you?

RD) Some people believe in detractors. I don't; they just piss me off. When someone tells me that "you can't" or "you'll never amount to anything", I just want to spit in their face. So honestly, there is a thread of motivation in me that wants to prove them wrong. On the other hand, nothing is free, nothing is easy, and nobody owes you anything. And you can't expect everything to go as you think it might or should. Goals can be attained incrementally or by degree. Many times, I've had disappointments, failures or plans not work out. But after that, you suck some air back into your lungs, you get up, and try again. Then there are some things that are just beyond your control, such as when personal tragedy strikes. I finally did get a great music teacher in my freshman year at college. I was in a group of students who were at a rock festival with him. One morning he was bringing water back to our camp and he just dropped dead right in front of us. There was a doctor in the next site over, but even that did not make a difference. So sometimes, you can't do anything; the lesson may be very painful, but that particular music teacher is one reason why I keep going.

DM) Who were your influences?

RD) I'm influenced by literature and [movies](#) more than by other bands, I think. I like to listen to a wide variety of styles. My favorite bands are [Green Day](#), NIN, Rollins Band, REM, in the rock vein, but on the softer side, guys like T-Bone Burnett or [Bruce](#)

Cockburn are cool. I like many female artists too--Sara, Tori, K.D. Lang, the Indigo Girls.

DM) What literature and movies have influenced you?

RD) "Ferris Buehler's Day Off" is my favorite movie of all time - ha. Ferris's room was like my room: electronic crap all over the place, books on classical philosophy, religion, "Old Man and the Sea", "Catcher", Scientific American. All that. Anything from a magazine or newspaper that caught my eye got glued or nailed to my walls. My parents really dug that sh--. Timothy Hutton and Kelly McGillis in that "Made in Heaven" movie. Two streams - two paths... The juxtaposition of life as it is and what maybe is intended to be, while being fully aware of every moment as you live it. "Brave Heart" - the ultimate sacrifice. Real philosophical mosh pit, I know.... But the things that I have come to value are the things that I try to pass on in the music.

DM) What things do you try to pass on in the music?

RD) I'm always amazed by the paradox of life--the natural beauty and chaos of it all. When I was mixing songs for the Blood Hound Gang - "Use Your Fingers" CD, I found they were willing to goof on anything. That was a paradox for me, because I think my music tends to be more conservative. On the "Exit 21" CD, many of the major philosophical and religious questions of life are presented in one way or another. Many social issues too. I have thought about and twisted with these issues for a long time. I can't say that I'm closer than anyone else in figuring all this s--- out, but I've gained some insight--values like tolerance. We sure could use some of that in the world.

DM) What track on this latest work are you most proud of?

RD) The track that is the coolest for me is either "So Clear" or "Grind." When I was in the studio doing the vocals for "So Clear", it was also my day with my son Jamie, so I brought him with me. He was 1.5 at the time. The engineer got everything ready to go and I sat Jamie down on my knee. I told him that this was a take and he couldn't make any noise; he understood. I was really into this one take thing with the "Exit 21" CD, so tape was rolling and I did the vocal. I finished the last line and then Jamie asked, "Done, daddy?" So I left that on the track... to me, it was the coolest thing that has ever happened to me.

DM) Is he old enough to understand what you do?

RD) I think all kids understand everything. It is the parents who either snuff the light in their eyes or keep it burning. I've seen it happen that a kid has a spark, a glitter in the eyes one time that you see him. Then you see the same kid again, like six months or a year later, and the eyes have gone dull, with no luster. It's a crime, but it goes on every day. I have a boy and a girl and they are in the studio with me at every chance, so they see the equipment and the other players. I've been practicing the drums with them since they could sit up. I suck at drums but it's practice. But at least no one pokes me in the nose. I

think they think that something is going on, and they like to meet people. They play at setting up mikes and guitar stands like little roadies.

DM) Do you want them to follow in your footsteps?

RD) That is a tough question. As far as having the spirit to believe that they can do anything they put their mind to do, yes, I hope they follow that. I hope they always keep music in their lives because of the sheer force that music has to heal and make ideas and feelings clear. With music, you can be a real ambassador for the things that you can't see.