Episode 887: Eric July Returns: Rothbardian Band Hits Billboard Charts

Guest: Eric July

WOODS: I am so excited about your success. We have a lot of people in the libertarian movement who are trying to do a lot of things, and some of them work and some of them don't, but it seems like what you're doing is working like crazy. This album *Veracity*, I mean, it's selling like crazy. We're going to talk about that in just a second. And as this is airing, it's Monday, April 10th, which is when we'll get some information about the Billboard charts, so maybe in my intro to this episode I will already have told people how it's doing. But anyway, it's super great. But I'll tell you, the thing that I have heard the most about this album from people is that they say, You know, I ordered it because I wanted to help the cause, and then I listened to it and it's so good that of course I would have wanted to order it anyway. Now, that's what you want to hear.

JULY: Right, I think that's the biggest one. We got a lot of support initially, and I think that's why the sales kind of went up, because there was a lot of people — and big shout out to them — they wanted to just support the cause and the message that we're kind of hammering home. But then people realized that the production quality and stuff, like, this was legit. This wasn't anything that — this was something that could have been put out on any major label and it would have been a solid record top to bottom. So I think that is what increased to support, was that not only did we have the message that people were just waiting for and the consciousness that people were waiting for in music, but the fact that again, we put a lot of time, spent a lot of money really just making sure that we didn't want to half tail this. We wanted to make sure that this was something that was going to be professionally done and that sounded good, it was quality, and this was the result. And the support has been awesome, but even more so, just to hear that kind of reception from people that are saying like, Man, like this is — the cause, yeah, but this is a solid album. That's the reason why we do it.

WOODS: Yeah, I'm listening to it in my headphones and it's just top quality. You're right. It does not sound like — it's not amateur at all. It is top notch. I thought, Wow, these guys are great. I'm so glad about that.

Now, I want you to talk about the theme of the album, because there is rather a theme running through these songs. And I've got some particular lyrics I'd like to pull out a little bit later, but tell people who haven't seen the album yet what the message is.

JULY: [laughing] Right, well, we're obviously libertarians. We're anarchocapitalists. But I wanted to try to implement other aspects, not just on the social end, but the economic end obviously as well, which is why you get those hints of kind of Austrianism in there with the songs, that interlude we have called "So to Speak," which is a shout out to Hoppe, but we actually have a song called "Praxiology," and I'm literally in that song really breaking down the dangers of Keynesianism and central planning and stuff like that. But from top to bottom, we pop the song, aside from the intro song — "Pop It Off" is just really kind of getting you warmed up — but the second track, which is technically the first band track, "Individualism," sets the tone for the entire record because it's talking about I see all the way to the individual and acknowledging the individual over the collective and stuff like that.

So it's very liberty-minded, but we made sure that we executed it in a way where if you're listening to this and maybe you don't know any of what I'm talking about, you're at least going to listen to it and try to at least go out of your way to maybe research some of the topics that we're talking about. So it's almost to create conversations out of it. And it works because we can go on YouTube, and it's funny because I see the comments, and on other people's videos, the comments are always like, "Hey, this song is good," but in ours it's always people arguing about —

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah.

JULY: [laughing] Yeah, about the topics. And it's awesome.

WOODS: Yeah, that is great. Now, I want to make sure everybody caught the thing you said about "So to Speak." Yeah, there is this interlude and it's called "So to Speak," and I thought, okay, that's obviously a tribute to Hoppe, so I asked you and you said yeah, that was kind of your idea. And then the fact that there's a song called "Praxiology," I mean, you've got to be kidding me. [laughing] That's unbelievable.

Now, there's a part of — there's got to be a part of you that worries that if you do too much of this it gets too preachy and you're hitting people over the head. How do you feel like you're able to avoid that?

JULY: Well, we have the benefit of having a lot of talent within this band to keep it fresh. So us being, you know, the benefit — not also that, but of the scene, as well. The scene itself, metal hardcore kind of got a little stale. People were singing about the same stuff and talking about the same stuff, and really we just stuck out like a sore thumb because we stood for something. But the style in itself is what we have at

our benefit, which keeps it fresh, which is why you hear songs like "Addict," which is like an R&B song, or you've got "Set Us Free," which is the last track on the album which is a ballad, essentially, talking about my faith and Alex's faith on that song, and it showed just the diversity of this band and obviously me as a rapper, a screamer, a singer. So we have that benefit.

That's what you have to do, is like if I was making the same exact songs, then it would get old really fast, but because we from a style standpoint and just talent base in this band, we're able to keep it fresh. So we can talk about a wide range of topics, but if you switch it up here and there and kind of deliver it differently, it sounds — that's the benefit of music in itself, is that it does have that kind of emotional attachment to it. So I can maybe sing some of the same things, but if I packaged it on a hardcore tip and then I maybe packaged it on an R&B track or a rap track, it's flat-out different, you know what I mean? So that's the benefit, and that's the key with album itself. It has 18 tracks, so we have to keep your attention some type of way, and you can see that the styles, they kind of go from one way to another, and it's why in the first song I encourage people to don't try to worry about slapping us in genres, because you're in an album and you might hear a song that's completely different from the one you listened to before.

WOODS: Right. Right, right. By the way, just in case people are wondering, can kids listen to it? Is there any bad language on it?

JULY: Nope, that's purposefully the case. Like in my music, I do not cuss in my music. The worst word that we said was "hell," you know what I mean?

WOODS: Okay.

JULY: On the record, there's no Parental Advisory sticker on it. That's on purpose, because definitely considering some of the topics that I feel are important, and a lot of our fans, we've got a lot of fans that are on the younger side just because of the scene that we're in, and I want parents and I want everybody to be able to feel like there definitely are those liberty-minded folks, they're feeling like they're doing some good when they slide this to their child or something like that.

WOODS: Right, right, good. Now, do you have the lyrics in front of you? Like are you able to call them up on your computer?

JULY: Yeah, absolutely.

WOODS: You may have them memorized by now, I don't know.

JULY: Absolutely.

WOODS: But there are a couple of passages that I wonder if you could, not sing, but would you mind reading them?

JULY: Yeah, absolutely. I can pull some of these up, no problem. Like the big ones, like "Praxiology," which seems to be one of the favorites on this on this album, and going through some of those lyrics —

WOODS: Well, let me pick out a couple that jumped right out to me.

JULY: Go ahead.

WOODS: First of all, in the "Statism" song —

JULY: "Statism," mm hmm —

WOODS: — you've got a passage in there where you're basically saying — it's the one that starts, "Look, it ain't really hard to keep up." Can you — I'd like to hear that one, because it's a very — [laughing] man, that's hardcore.

JULY: Yeah, yeah, no, that's — yeah, no, it's:

"Look, it ain't really hard to keep up
The politician just hypnotized you with free stuff
More and more statism, and y'all people just eat up
Yet crying and you're protesting about how the police suck."

And I say:

"Y'all don't get no sympathy from me, because that's the bed that you made
So you gotta lay
More inconsistent by the day, making mistake after mistake after mistake."

And you know, that next part that a lot of people love is when I'd said:

"At some time you gotta realize
That the same crap that you despise might be your demise
And I'd advise that you become more knowledgeable on subjects like economics that benefit
Not memes on the internet."

So you know, that whole entire — that was the second verse of that song, and what I was trying to bring — obviously the first track was talking about statism really itself, what it is and why it's bad and why the cling to it is dangerous. But we don't really hear, definitely in our genres, we don't really hear people talk about, all right, the

individual and what they have done to maybe stimulate some of these issues that they go around crying about. I got tired of hearing so many songs about people, all the police brutality and all of these things, and I"m like, well, but who's talking about that aspect of your protesting, but in the same time at the voter booth, you go out there and support a person that wants to expand the government openly? A lot of these people that protest this are leftists, definitely, and these genres, they're the main ones talking about police brutality but also the main ones that want to expand government and think they should be just about in every aspect of our lives. So that has to be talked about, and I felt that was missing, and that's why I felt it was appropriate to put in that song, like "Statism."

WOODS: Well, and the very last part of — let's see — of "Self Ownership," there's a thing about, again, talking about a cop shooting a black man, and you're saying, Look, you're the same people who have no problem at all handing these people — giving them your confidence, handing them all this power, expecting to get something other than this, but this is what you're going to get.

JULY: Right, absolutely. That's what that — we had the music video with it and we tried to capture that kind of moment, in that powerful moment in which we had a person that works for the government and he got fed up, he saw the corruption himself, and then he went to talk to a bunch of protestors, and that was the — he basically recited my lines. And that's what it was, you know what I mean? And basically saying that people go protesting and they focus on racism and all of this, but they have no idea how silly it is and how much it really is an example of Stockholm syndrome, because these are the same people that they expect to have this power. They have no problem with them having the power itself, but the minute somebody that wields it does something I guess they consider bad, here they go crying. But again, they don't acknowledge that the issue itself is the position of power, and that's what we were trying to portray in that last kind of — you know, the most powerful portion of that track we me kind of doing that rap and what not, and that's what we were trying to portray, just getting people to think about those aspects, that a lot of this protesting is often, often silly, because some of what they do and advocate is diametrically opposed to whatever cause they call themselves trying to bring about.

WOODS: I want to talk about track 13 for obvious reasons in a minute, but first let's talk about sales. I just want to know about sales ranks, because I've been following this, and you guys have been ranked pretty high on Amazon, for example, and also on iTunes. So you guys have high hopes for what's to come this week.

JULY: Right, and you know, we are doing good right now. Like right now we have the number two album on hard rock and metal albums on Amazon as we're recording this. Now, that's going to go down and up, and same with iTunes, definitely, because now we're entering into another week, so other people release their — this is their debut week, and that's obviously when you're going to sell the most. And we have floated in

the top — on Amazon, we've been in the top five consistently, but on the iTunes we've kind of bounced between — been as high as like three, bounced between the three and nine spots, so we've been in the top ten.

So the chart — *the* chart is always Billboard, so we're trying to see how high we're going to get on that, because what we're doing is unprecedented, and essentially this is a self-release and we kept a lot of this in house. We don't have nearly the resources of a lot of these bands. We released the same week as like Mastodon and, you know, Demon Hunter. These are bands that have been around forever and have massive fan bases, and for us to even just be in the conversation says a lot about our supporters. But we have high hopes.

At first we — I don't want to say we didn't have high hopes, but you've got to understand, this is a self-release, right? And this is also our debut album. So we were going into the preorders, I'm like, yeah, if we do 500 preorders, that's okay. But as they first started coming in, I'm like, Wait a minute, this is getting — we creamed that by like the second week, you know, that we announced the album. And it was like, Okay, this is for real. And the next thing we know, we've hit our 2,000-preorder mark, and then it's like, at that point it sets in and it's like something special is about to happen, and we can't wait.

The Billboard charts are in this Monday. The Billboard charts will be out, and it's going to be special to see where we landed on not just that one, like the hard rock charts, but also like the Heatseekers, because we are new artists, so the bands I mentioned like Mastodon and Demon Hunter, they won't be on that chart; we will. So it's going to be interesting to see where we land and if we can maybe get like a top three position on New Artists, that's huge in itself, let alone what we can do on the hard rock charts, which is what we're all waiting on.

WOODS: Yeah, that's really exciting stuff. I have a sense of who your political and intellectual influences are, but who would you describe as your musical influences?

JULY: Ooh, man, now that's a good one. I grew up, my mother, she listened to just about everything obviously from the '70s, '60s, Motown music, the '70s going into soul artists like Bill Withers and all those guys, so I grew up on that. But I also grew up in the '90s where you had that new jack swing era of — and it's a lot, even though it's more rap and R&B, a lot of that crosses over into rock elements, definitely as far as what we're trying to do where you've got a little rap here, a little singing here, and it gets a little aggressive here. But I remember 1998, mother had a cassette of Lauryn Hill's *Miseducation* album, and I remember hearing that and it was — hearing that, I knew I wanted to be in music. I was in like the kids' choir up until then at church and stuff, but I heard that album and I knew I wanted to do music, because she was doing something, she had mixed those gospel elements into what she was doing, but she was

rapping and singing. And not only that, but she was doing it with a message that was important behind it. So I heard that and I was like, Man, this could really be done.

Again, having the benefit of a mother that would listen to everything and I picked up on that — and also growing up in an area — like if you realized what albums were dropping between like '97 and 2002, just that block alone how many artists that we see as breached and albums that we see as breached dropped between them — I mean, that was when Lauryn Hill, she got a diamond record, *Hybrid Theory* by Linkin Park, Eminem had just dropped his *Slim Shady* LP, had System of a Down and all these guys, Rage were kind of on the latter half of what they were doing — Rage Against the Machine, the latter half of what they were doing in the '90s, as well. So there was so much music that I was able to consume during that time. But if it was one album that I could point to and said this is why I want to do music, it had to have been Lauryn Hill's *Miseducation* album. I believe that was like '98 when that came out.

WOODS: Is everybody in your current band a libertarian?

JULY: Yes, mm hmm, yep. The most vocal ones obviously being myself and Alex. Those guys aren't as — the instrumentalists aren't as vocal about the topic, but yeah, we're all libertarians, and that's what makes this so much easier to do, to speak about, because we already went in with this game plan when we were drawing out this kind of blueprint two years ago, a little more than two years ago before we had even announced that we were going to be an actual band, so it made that process of working our way into talking about stuff like this very, very easy.

WOODS: By the way, before I forget, is there one place that if people order the album you guys do the best? Like would you prefer that people get it from a particular source?

JULY: Yeah, if you go to Backwordz.MerchNOW.com, you can get the physical copies of the album, but you can also get cool little shirts in bundles and what not with it, so I would say go there. With this being a debut, I'm satisfied — I'm not going to be angry at anybody that gets it from iTunes or Google or Amazon and stuff like that, because that's really focal point, is really — because first-week sales and all of that stuff really determines what a band is going to — the opportunities that you're going to get. And understand, with us and our message, why it's even double the importance is because we have gotten a lot of — it's an establishment involved in music, and they're all leftists, so you can imagine the amount of tours and stuff. We're bigger than a lot of artists that get put on these tours or stuff like that, and it's because I've said something like I want to defund Planned Parenthood or something like that. Planned Parenthood works with a tour or something like that.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, forget it.

JULY: Yeah, and then it's like, Oh, screw those guys. So we have an establishment that we're working against. So the plan is, what we have to do is essentially get so big that they can't ignore us, which is kind of what's happening right now when you see how we had basically little to no press surrounding this album, and we are about to — our first-week sales creamed labels that are way more massive and have more resources than we have right now because we're choosing to keep it independent. So it's even more important for us to do really well, so at this point with it being a debut — maybe it's a little bit different when you're talking about second or third album, but at least on a debut, as long as it's a legitimate purchase, go get it.

WOODS: Right, okay, I'm curious about the way they calculate this, because I would think it's analogous with books, that I can make more money if I have people order the book through me, but I don't think it counts toward my sales for a bestseller list. And likewise, if they order through your merchandise store, does that count toward the Billboard charts the way an Amazon sale would count?

JULY: Yes, it does. If they got it from us, it's a little different in terms of how we have to report it. We can still get like SoundScan to count it, but it's a little different if we sell it at a show or if someone wants to come to me and buy it. But that's specifically why we went with this particular company, MerchNOW, to distribute it, because they report straight to SoundScan. So that means that anything that we sell on there is going to go directly to counting towards Billboard. That's specifically why we went to them, because we knew that that was a possibility that we would get a lot of people that wanted to get physical copies, so we needed to go with somebody that we knew the reporting was going to be legitimate, and that's why we went with them.

WOODS: Track 13 on *Veracity* is called "Democracy Sucks." I would like your comment, please.

JULY: [laughing] Yes, it absolutely sucks, and it features a Canadian friend of mine by the name of Lauren Babic. She's in a band called Red Handed Denial, and that's her singing in the two verses and I'm rapping after her and what not. And it was so fun to record because we did a little different style. There's no screaming or anything in that song, for example, and we played around with it a lot. But the lyrics itself, it speaks for itself and the dangers of democracy and how people are essentially willing to sell their lives away for the kind of false sense of security and stuff like that. And Lauren — I didn't right her parts for her, by the way, and she killed it with some of her lyrics and it lets you know how much she feels — I can imagine with her being in Canada, she's seeing some statism of her own, and she talked about some of those aspects and her perspective as well. So it was a song that we all got to do a little different, something different on the instrumental, but the subject matter itself is a very important one, if not the most important one on the record.

WOODS: And then following that is another one whose title is quite blunt: "Utopias Don't Exist."

JULY: [laughing] Yup, that was technically our first single that we released when we announced the — So to let you know how much changed, because we announced the album *Veracity* in like 2015, like September, I believe, September of 2015. And that was a song that we kind of popped it off with. And a lot changed so that we had to push it all the way back to now, and it's just now releasing almost two years after the fact. But it's because so much had changed, but that song was like the first one in which we dove really headfirst into the anti-politics of this all, and I think that was around the time when there was a lot going on with the Freddie Grays of the world and there was a lot of racism cries and stuff like that, and I was really, really frustrated.

But you can tell in the second verse, in which I talk about how these people — and we actually talk about this in another song — I can't remember the — "The Professional Protester," it's the same exact element, how a lot of these people that are in these communities where there are gang members and stuff like that — and I used to be one of those — essentially terrorize their own cities, and they get absolutely little to no pushback from people that would go around protesting. And that's what I was talking about and how we don't really value a life that's black and I don't like the fact that the only time a black life matters is when a cop does it.

And me being a person that's anti-statism, that doesn't sit well with me just because it was a cop or he was in some illegitimate position and he shot somebody — like I don't feel any — definitely if I feel that position is illegitimate, how am I going to overreact over that as opposed to somebody catching some four-year-old in a crossfire and not get upset with that person? There's a lot of gang members, man, and a lot of gangs in and of itself — that's a completely different conversation — that mimic the state in terms of how they approach things like turf, and it's a territorial kind of monopoly on decision making in a lot of cases, and there are a lot of aspects of the state. And I talk about just that aspect in "Utopias Don't Exist" in that second verse, but it was such an important track because it kind of launched us into really talking about I guess again the anti-politics side of our music.

WOODS: You know, I'm looking at your — I Googled you and found out your age and figured, let me see if I can in a sneaky way found out his age without having to ask —

JULY: [laughing] Yeah.

WOODS: And you were born the year I graduated from high school.

JULY: [laughing]

WOODS: That's just not right, man. [laughing] That is just not right.

JULY: Yeah, it's so crazy; so many people find out because I'm technically like still a kid, and it blows their mind because people thought I'm well into my 30s or something like that.

WOODS: Well, the beard — beards always make it hard to guess ages.

JULY: Yeah, that's true, that's true. That is very true. Yeah, no, I'm still a kid, man. I just had to — it's positive and there's a negative side to it as well, but I was doing a lot of stuff that I shouldn't have been doing at a very young age, so I had a lot of experience before I'd even hit, you know, 18 years old I was doing — I was already involved in the silliness. And I use it now to obviously speak against some of the things that I used to participate in, even with Obama, with me campaigning for him back in '07, '08, stuff like that. So it was a learning experience certainly, but yeah, I'm still technically a kid by a standard — definitely amongst our community of people that are I guess known for speaking some of this beautiful message of property rights, nonaggression, and self-ownership, I'm certainly young in comparison.

WOODS: Well, let me tell you something. You are an absolute gem we are very, very fortunate to have. I'll say that.

JULY: [laughing] Appreciate it.

WOODS: Where should people — now, I'm going to link to everything at TomWoods.com/887. We'll get your website, we'll do Twitter, we'll do all that stuff, Facebook, so that people can connect with you in all sorts of different ways. And I'm going to link to where people can order the album so that it benefits you the most, so we'll have that link as well. Anything in particular that I might be overlooking? Do you want BackwordzMusic.com? You tell me what you want linked there and I'll put it there.

JULY: Right, yeah, BackwordzMusic.com is our actual website, for the people that want to keep — we just got off a tour, but for the people that want to keep up definitely on our tour stuff, they're going to want to go to BackwordzMusic.com to stay up to date as far as what we're doing, but if it's regarding the album, Backwordz.MerchNOW.com is going to be the better site, because again, that has all of the merchandise essentially. You can get some merchandise from BackwordzMusic.com as well, but the MerchNOW site is going to have the merchandise surrounding the album, which is really our focal point right now.

WOODS: Well, thanks for your time, Eric. I hope you guys keep on crushing it. I'm glad to hear about your good news and I hope we have even more good news to come.

JULY: Absolutely, man. I appreciate you having me. It's always a good time.