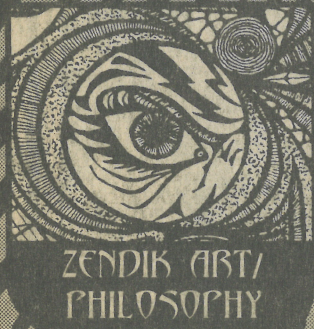



# ZENDIK TRIBE





# CHROME COMMUNICATIONS

featuring  
**DAMON  
EDGE**

INTERVIEW BY NEZ ZENDIK

There's this part of me—something deep in my Soul—that longs for dissonance. Maybe it's some unconscious drive toward the destruction of harmony and order. I don't know. But, whatever it is, very few musical groups seem to satisfy the need. Chrome is one of those few. And Damon Edge is the mastermind behind this unusual, ever changing arrangement. Edge began altering music (and many-a-listener's mind) back in 1975, and has been a consistent creative force ever since, taking almost 180 degree turns at times to explore new realms of aural adventure.

Chrome evolves in steps, sort of bridging the gap between 60's psycho-delia, punk and new wave, and introduces elements of music from other places and planets. *Alien Soundtracks* and *Half Machine Lip Moves* (Chrome's 2nd and 3rd releases, circa '78) paved the way for most of today's "alternative" music. Damon Edge's intense drumming and production skills mixed with the phase-warped, overloaded guitar sound of Helios Creed and John Lambdin was the beginning of something that would change the way rock was played and heard, for good. Chrome's music is intensely "stoney"—it was a serious dare, amongst my circle of "high" school friends, to try and handle them on any mind-altering drugs. Some weaker minds were lost forever. I was happy with the new and improved reality Chrome brought me and continued use in higher doses, serving as one of my biggest influences musically.

Chrome's 5th release, *Blood On The Moon*, was the sound of a garage band turned immortal. Damon Edge and Helios Creed were now gods. Their synth and guitar sounds, backed by the Stench Brothers on drums and bass, produced the first, true psychedelic metal—Deep Purple was left behind in a faded lavender heap. Three more Edge/Creed creations were released before the inevitable happened. Chrome re-emerged a new band in 1984—without Helios Creed, without missing a beat. Damon hooked up with a new guitarist, Remy Devilla, and put his band in a time machine, setting the controls for the future.

This next phase was smoother and cleaner—a little easier on the ears, but just as potent to the mind. Damon, now a god and a legend, was re-creating the re-creation of rock. *Into the Eyes of the Zombie King* was only the lift-off. The next studio release, a solo album mock-up entitled *Alliance*, was a serious masterpiece which included new versions of some already awesome songs. Remy Devilla's guitar work left little room for missing Helios. The tighter-than-humanly-possible rhythm section left little room for missing the Stench Brothers. The new sound left *no* room for missing Chrome. Damon Edge was obviously the one responsible for their totally original sound. A complete list of all the musicians he's worked with is too long to include here, but you should check out his stuff for yourself. Select bits of Edge's sonic expeditions are available on the epic double-discs entitled *Having A Wonderful Time With The Tripods* and *Having A Wonderful Time At The Juicedome*, compiled from his 25 other releases over the last 20 years (see the complete discography at the end of this interview). Chrome's C.D. releases, which are usually two complete albums on one disk, show completely different sides of Edge's artistry and are some of the best rock albums ever made.

I have much respect for Damon Edge—as an artist with integrity—one of the few who dare persist independent of any established “scene” with which to uphold his own popularity and momentum—one of the ever fewer who manage to produce art of any appreciable quality. His unique off-the-wall style as musician and producer have been an inspiration to my own work, and we're planning to work together on future Zendik Tribe Band projects. For now, here's excerpts from a conversation/ interview we had one nite on the phone.

Damon: I haven't done an interview in America for about five years. The last one, the guy doing it called

me crazy after I asked him if he'd heard all 23 albums. I told him to fuck off. Of course, he probably never ran that one (laughs).

Nez: Probably not (laughs). So you established your own label, Siren Records, so you could hang on to all of your music legally, right?

Damon: Yeah, that and so I could do what I wanted to do. I sent *The Visitation* (his first legit Chrome release) to Warner Bros. to see if they wanted to release it, and this A&R dork gave me some shit about it sounding like a fucked-up Doors record. And I was like, thank you, what better compliment could I get? (laughs)

Nez: Yeah, really. How old were you when you started Chrome?

Damon: Oh, eighteen or nineteen.

Nez: What inspired your off-the-wall sounds?

Damon: Part of it was experiencing certain things at Cal Arts, studying under some of the best teachers in the world, including Alan Capra, who was a student of John Cage. But I think it really began during my first trip to Europe. I was going nuts living in Los Angeles, you know, so I just told my father, look my brain is gonna blow up and explode blood all over this room if I don't get outta here. So, he got me a flight to Europe. I remember the first sight of Europe I had, we flew into a rainbow over Portugal, on my way to Madrid — that was really fantastic. And these little boats and little houses, you know, along the coast. It just looked like a fun place. I've always liked it there. Anyway, I flew to Madrid because this friend of mine was there. I bought a bike, a Bultaco Dirt Scrambler, and he had a bike, so we cruised down to Morroco and went into Fez. When we were first in Morroco, we're driving down these mountain roads and there's no lights at all, they're not paved, you're driving through *rocks* in the middle of the night! My friend had the brightest headlight on his BSA, so he would lead the way. And I remember him yelling back to me, “ROCK!” and it just missed me by like four inches when he said it. It wasn't a rock, it was a goddam *boulder* in the middle of the road (laughs)! So, I yelled back to this other guy behind us, and I hear this crashing sound, you know— he went over the cliffs (laughs). I mean, he was okay but it kinda freaked us out. So, then we went back to Valencia, Spain and we were indulging in some refreshments in our room. I'd been hearing all this Arabic music while I was in Morroco, you know. And suddenly, that night I started hearing it in my head with this

really solid 4/4 beat behind it. And these songs were just coming to me. I was listening to this music in my head. And that's when I conceived of the idea.

Nez: I see. So, you were mainly just being exposed to exotic music back then?

Damon: Yeah. I'm sure you've noticed that there's a lot of atmosphere in the sound and production of Chrome, and a lot of 3 and 8 note melodies and this atonal drone, driven by some real hot rhythm sections. That experience pretty much gave it the atmospheric quality that I needed, the inspiration.

Nez: Yeah, the first time I heard Chrome I was immediately hooked by the sound. How long after you started hearing this music in your head were you able to get a band together to start expressing it?

Damon: Oh, probably 6 months. That's when I started making these movie soundtracks. I used to work for MGM—I'd bring in some pretty spaced out cats. They needed something besides some stupid B-melody, you know, so I'd grab a bunch of people and put together music to this movie scene playing on this gigantic screen in this huge room with a forty foot high ceiling. It was wild. And we'd just jam to the vibe of whatever was showing.

Nez: That's interesting because your music does have a very movie sound-track feel to it a lot of the time.

Damon: Yeah, I wouldn't mind doing that for the rest of my life if I had to. I mean, when I watch a movie I listen to it at least as much as I watch it. All those sounds going on in the background are very cool. Anyways, after I got back from Europe I started Chrome, finished college with a four-year bachelor of fine arts degree—I did a sort of farewell concert on campus called *The Death of Cal Arts* (laughs)—then I moved to San Francisco.

Nez: I see. So, is Chrome mainly a studio band, or do you play live a lot?

Damon: I don't play live a lot, but I'm looking into it after my next CD.

Nez: Are you going to tour America?

Damon: No, I don't think so.

Nez: You seem pretty turned off by America. Why is that?

Damon: I'm just too far out, you know. I mean, when I released *Alien Soundtracks* and *Half Machine Lip Moves*, no one in America knew how to book us, or how I should deal with selling it, yet it was selling like hell in Europe. My music really doesn't fit into any "scene". As, a matter of fact I've created a few

scenes out of particular Chrome phases. I mean, Chrome keeps moving along, so I'm not even a part of the scenes I created—such as new wave, cyborg punk, atmospheric rock, probably a few I'm not aware of, you know.

Nez: Yeah, I've noticed a lot of different things happening in all types of music that hadn't been attempted before Chrome charted the territory. Ok, let's get down to the essence of Damon Edge. You said you dug the Zappa interview that we did in our last mag—that you'd never heard anyone speak so closely to how you felt about things. I mean, he was pretty much a cynic...

Damon: Yeah, that seemed to come out a lot in his work. But, I'm not a cynic. It doesn't come out in my work because that's not where I'm at, you know. I mean, sometimes I have very cynical thoughts and some paradoxical themes in my songs, tongue in cheek stuff, like "I'm A Gentleman", you know. But I'm more down to primal stuff. I found with the Zappa interview that I was reading a lot of things that I felt but hadn't ever expressed.

Nez: Like what?

Damon: I appreciated him calling the human species a "genetic design flaw". I remember telling people 10 or 15 years ago that humans are a cancer on the planet.

Nez: Do you think we can evolve out of that?

Damon: Oh, I guess we should all set an hour when everyone on the planet drinks cyanide (laughs). No, I'm just joking. It's a sick joke.

Nez: (Laughs) Do you have any idealistic view of a sane future on earth, I mean do you think there's any hope for humanity?

Damon: Before all this ozone shit started happening I had some hope. I remember seeing this guy on T.V. who was traveling around the planet, taking photos and writing a book about all these toxic waste sites and stuff. They asked him a similar question—he just looked really depressed (laughs). I mean, I saw this NASA report where they showed photos of huge areas where the ozone had been destroyed, especially over Northern Europe.

Nez: Yeah, apparently that's where there's a huge hole.

Damon: Well, there's a south hole and there's a north hole.

Nez: They used to be poles—now they're holes.

Damon: (Laughter) Yeah, what a sadistic conversation.

Nez: (Laughs) I don't know how much of our magazine you had a chance to read, but we're pretty environmentally focused, you know. I mean, our philosophy is called Ecolibrium, meaning ecological balance. Our farm is a prototype Ecology.

Damon: Yeah, that's great, here on Earth. I don't dig this space station crap, you know, what are you gonna do—house 10,000 people in space? You know, the highest bidder gets in? I mean, it's ridiculous. Who wants to hang out in a space station with a bunch of old fart millionaires that made their money being sneaky and cagey?

Nez: (Laughs) Yeah, you get to fly around the cosmos with the head of Exxon and Dow Chemical, the same people that destroyed the planet...thanks a lot guys.

Damon: (Laughs) Yeah, thanks a lot! You could put a big Dow Chemical neon light on it or something, and hope it gets an oxygen leak or blows up like the Hindenburg (laughter).

Nez: So, you told me that you're into psychic healing. We believe in the Psychic Realm and we're pretty active using it...

Damon: Yeah, that's the thing—everybody's got it. You've got to recognize the fact that you do have it and it does exist, and use it. Most people are ignorant of their own ability, they don't take advantage of what they've actually got.

Nez: How did you come to recognize it yourself?

Damon: I came across it at a very young age. I was about six when I recognized what was going on. I had petite mal when I was a kid, which is a type of epilepsy. Grand mal is major epilepsy—you start flipping around on the floor and they have to stop you from swallowing your tongue.

Nez: So, that form of epilepsy sort of opened a door to your psychic self?

Damon: Yes. As a matter of fact, I think I owe a lot of my originality to having had that. I mean, I don't have it anymore, otherwise I wouldn't be able to drive (laughs). I haven't blanked out since I was like 12 or something. When I was a kid the teachers used to call my parents and say, "hey, he just sits there staring out the window. I call his name but he's not there." I don't know how long I'd be out for, you know, and no one ever told me about it, so... I guess now I just have extreme hi and low emotional and creative periods. But, I enjoy what I do, you know.

Nez: Well, you're good at it. You describe the clairaudient syndrome on your new album. Could you elaborate...

Damon: Yeah, that's a psychic thing where you hear something before it happens. These songs just come to me now and I have several tape decks set up around my house so I can channel this music at any time and get it down on tape. I just sing the melodies and then put music behind them later on. The songs on the new album turned out just like I heard them before they were actually recorded.

Nez: That's wild! Could you interpret some of your lyrics?

Damon: I'll do my best.

Nez: The Wind Is Talking...

Damon: I was on the desert with some friends, I was around 16 or so. And I had a friend who had an electric 12-string. We were hanging around with a couple chicks in these sand dunes one afternoon and the wind was hitting the strings of his guitar just right, and if you put your ear up to the body of the guitar—you know, it was playing a whole symphony. It was pretty far out. Ever since then I hear things in the wind and some of them sound like voices, you know.

Nez: And Then The Red Sun...

Damon: That's a comedy, actually a take-off on an old 50's Sci-Fi movie, you know.

Nez: What interests you about Sci-Fi movies?

Damon: Not much since Spielberg started making them (laughter). The old ones are funny and you don't have to take them literally—they're just fun. I don't like going into a movie theatre and having to walk out because everybody's shooting each other full of holes.

Nez: OK. How about We Are Not Dying...

Damon: That's an interesting question. I don't know if that's a cynical one or not, but it's about the planet. I think it's pretty much a prayer for the planet, 'cause it's pretty scary, what's going on, especially since those holes opened up in the ozone.

Nez: Yeah, scary shit man. Ouch! What type of effect do you want your music to have on people?

Damon: I want them to *feel* something, I mean, if I can't feel a song it's not worth a shit to me, and I'm not going to release it. So, I want them to feel it. And I'd say I want to take them on a trip, take them somewhere else. Chrome in a sense is like getting a hit of a natural drug or something.

Nez: Chrome is some of the most stoned out music around...

Damon: Well, to me it sounds quite normal, I mean, I understand the effect it has on other people, that's what it's supposed to do. You know, you go to the market for your milk and bread, and when you want

to go someplace else, you can stick on your headphones and put on a Chrome CD, you know. I've got over 15 hours of music out now on CD, 200 something songs, plus another 25 songs or so in the can... I'm kind of ahead of myself.

Nez: Well, I'm anxious to hear what you come up with next. OK, man, that's great, thanx alot for your time.

Damon: Thank you—have a good night.

*All photos of Damon Edge.*

*All art by Damon Edge.*

## DISCOGRAPHY

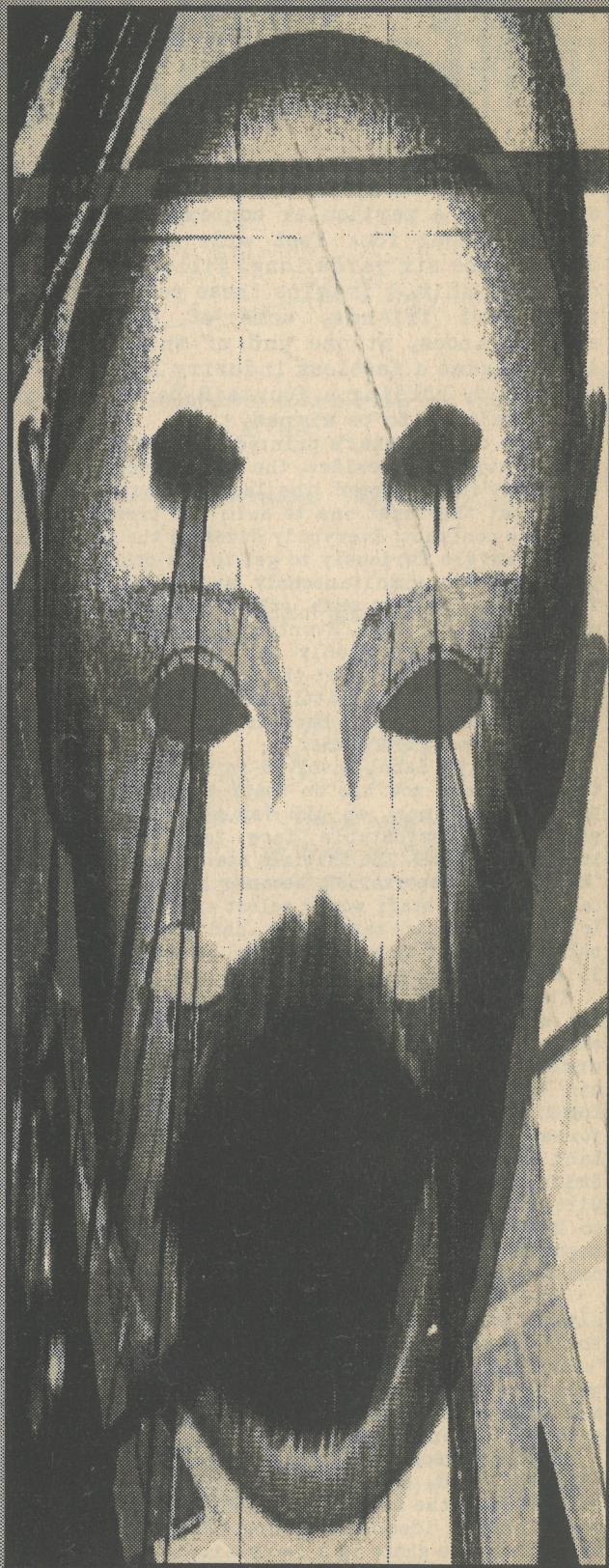
### CHROME Releases-

The Visitation  
Alien Soundtracks  
Half Machine Lip Moves  
Red Exposure  
Blood on the Moon  
3<sup>rd</sup> from the Sun  
Inworlds  
Read Only Memory  
No Humans Allowed  
The Chronicles I+II  
Raining Milk  
Into the Eyes of the Zombie King  
The Lyon Concert  
Another World  
Eternity  
Dreaming in Sequence  
Liquid Forest  
One Million Eyes  
Mission of the Entranced  
Live in Italy  
Live In Germany  
Alien Soundtracks II  
Days of Beauty  
Vermillion Sands  
The Clairaudient Syndrome  
Having a Wonderful Time with the Tripods  
Having a Wonderful Time at the Juicedome

### Damon Edge Releases

Alliance  
The Wind is Talking  
Grand Visions  
The Surreal Rock

Write to: Chrome Communications  
c/o Siren Records  
Suite 188  
633 Post St.  
San Fransisco, CA 94109



*Self Portrait with Inner and Outer Eyes*