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Sir Q&A: Chris Ford of Christopher the Conquered

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Tell me about the first time you were exposed to music.

All my musical stuff when I was younger came from my father. He played guitar and everything a ton growing up. And he kind of came back to it because he learned it before I was born then he didn’t really play. And probably when I was around junior high school age or something like that, he started learning again. Then he would start playing all the time like playing jazz guitar. I don’t really have a specific memory, but he was always playing. A lot of jazz guitar stuff and James Taylor, Jim Croce and all that kind of stuff which I never liked that much. He definitely kicked off my interest in music.

**Poison Control Center has been one of your main influences. When was the first time you saw them?**

It was almost the first real show I played as the drummer of the band Stuck With Arthur. We opened for a show called “Cornstock” at Johnston High School. It was a really hot day. And we played on the back of this trailer, flatbed truck thing. It was a really wonky setup. And we were opening for a band called the Poison Control Center. I was just so naïve, and I was envisioning a hardcore band or a really aggressive band because their name had “poison” in it. I had seen only a few bands at the time and had been to almost no shows. And there were these people there who were like, ‘Have you heard of Poison Control Center? They’re really good! They’re like the Beatles meets …’ I can’t remember what somebody said. So I had no idea what it was going to be. And then I had my whole world opened up to how awesome a band could be [laughs]. I was 17 years old.

**What do you remember specifically about that show?**

I remember they were wearing all green jump suits. Those were their outfits.
back in the day. They were just wild and they had a trumpet and I had never seen individualistic expression like that before.

In the later years, you went to college. Was Iowa State your first choice?

I wanted to be able to be close to Des Moines and play music. And my brother went here and all that. So I didn’t really care that much. I was just going to college because that’s what you do. My first two years at Iowa State, I was living in the dorms but I probably spent two to three weekends in total of those two years in Ames. I went to Des Moines every weekend and played shows.

So you were playing music on the side, and at Iowa State you majored in electrical engineering. Why engineering? Why not music?

Uh … my dad [laughs]. I was really anti–typical music stuff anyway. I was all about Rock and Roll. You can’t go to school to learn Rock
“I WAS ALL ABOUT ROCK AND ROLL. YOU CAN’T GO TO SCHOOL TO LEARN ROCK AND ROLL.”

and Roll. You can’t go to school to learn art. I know better now [that] I have a deeper appreciation for the talent that good composition requires. But, yeah I didn’t want to go into a music program anyway. And at the time I was getting into studio recording, like being a recording engineer. And my dad was like, ‘Well, why don’t you do something like electrical engineering? Because you’ll get to learn some background behind that,’ which is true. ‘And then also have a backup for a real job [laughs].’ I didn’t know, I didn’t really care.

When did Christopher the Conquered first start?

I struggled with always feeling like shit all the time when I was at Iowa State because I was always going away for the weekend. And I really had almost no friends and didn’t really go anywhere around town and didn’t really do anything at all when I was in town. I was kind of a loner. And eventually I got this little keyboard one weekend and then just started writing songs on it as a therapeutic kind of thing. That would have been around 2005, I think. And it wasn’t until the end of 2008 I that even met Nate [Logsdon]. I was playing solo shows for two years.

How did you meet Nate Logsdon?

Christopher the Conquered was booked to play a show in September of 2008 at the Ames Progressive office, which is now The Space. And that’s how I met him because he was running that place. Over the course of the next year, I played tons of shows at the office there. And that’s how I became friends with all those people and started to really get involved with the Ames scene.

How did your first album, I Guess That’s What We’re Dying For come to be?

The first one I made at home with some friends from Stuck With Arthur. And mostly I recorded everything on my own drums, trumpet, accordion and all kinds of instruments. It was really eclectic in that