

## INTERVIEW WITH OMER CORDELL

Omer Cordell is a true legend among music photographers. Vancouver native, Omer has been interested in photography since childhood. His professional career started in 2003 and since then he has worked with the biggest names on the metal/rock scene including KMFDM, Alexisonfire, Clutch, Mnemic, Threat Signal, Meshuggah, Fear Factory and Apocalyptica. His pictures have also been published in almost every music magazine, on MTV website, Century media promotional materials and in the popular book “New Wave of American Heavy Metal” by Garry Sharpe-Young among others. Outside of photography, he is also a respected artist and designer. We contacted Omer to ask him several questions about his recent projects, working with City of Fire and photographic gear.



**Question 1:** You go a long way with Burton. You photographed Fear Factory, Ascension of The Watchers and now City of Fire. How did you two meet?

**Omer Cordell:** We met back in 2003 when I did my first photo session with FF for their Archetype album and we've kept in good touch ever since. We connected on the theme of Ancient Civilizations and UFO's. I love that kind of stuff! I've spent

hours and hours watching documentaries and reading books about these subjects. Burt also an avid photographer and he's done some great work from what I've seen so far. The photo shoot that I did with FF back in 2003 really helped launch my career. I got some decent recognition from it and I'm still thankful to have had that opportunity. If he reads this then I will have to add: “Nice Marmot!”.

**Question 2:** You recently had various photo sessions with the City of Fire. One in the Factory Studios and the other on the location in Granville Island. Please tell us what was the atmosphere in the studio? Did you hear any new songs?



**Omer Cordell:** Well, I think the most prominent thing that I personally noticed is that as a collective, they are excited about this band, they have a great working relationship and I think that the music on this album will reflect that enthusiasm. I got to hear a lot of songs at various stages and from what I've heard it sounds really great. They all have their bits and pieces of styles and influences that they are bringing into this and I think it mixes together very well. It's definitely going to be one of those albums that you can sit back and listen to 30 years from now.

**Question 3: Any interesting stories from the recording sessions?**

**Omer Cordell:** The band recorded the drums, overdubs and bass at the Factory, the rest was done in Toronto. I visited often to take some photos of the sessions but I'm not sure what the band wants to do with those shots. As far as equipment goes, I only did pay attention to Byron's gear, being a bassist myself. He used an Ampeg SVT Classic and an Ampeg Cab split with a Marshal guitar head and cab. He also used his Custom Fender Jazz. Bob uses Mapex drums, I think. I'm not sure what Terry uses. From the photos, it looks like it's a very old Marshal head and an even older Mesa Boogie cab.



**Question 4: Granville Island is from what we understand an industrial estate. How come you decided to use this location for City of Fire?**



**Omer Cordell:** There wasn't much thought put into it really. We thought it would be a cool place to do a shoot, and it is! There's a lot of great spots to shoot. I often see a lot of people with their cameras and tripods roaming around and taking photos there.

**Question 5: Can you tell us about the book Inside the Machine as not many fans know about its existence. Is it still available?**

**Omer Cordell:** Back in 2004 I proposed to the Fear Factory camp that it would be a cool idea to do a sort of photographic documentary of their lives on the road. They agreed and so I went on a few tours with them and collected an arsenal of photos. It was supposed to have been released officially somehow but it ended up not happening the way I thought it would. Long story short, I was about to scrap that entire folder of photographs when I heard from a friend about this online self publishing thing. So I decided to give it a go and it turned out OK. The only drawback is that it ends up being quite costly as it's over 100 pages and there's a lot of overhead. It's still available for "collectible" die hard fans. Maybe some day I'll do another book with a different theme, who knows. The book can be purchased at: <http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/invited/394986/3ba2ab654ec5aa3648de82fa32b6cd8d>

**Question 6: What equipment/gear do you use? Do you need a different camera to take pictures during gigs and in the studio?**

**Omer Cordell:** Too much gear... I still shoot film, 35mm, 6x6(inch) and 4x5(inch). I don't have a desire nor the enthusiasm to switch to digital. I'm a film guy and that's what I know to use best.

My main body is a Canon EOS 1V  
My backup is a Canon EOS 1N  
My backup to that is a Canon EOS 5  
And my spare one is a Canon Ellan 7

For my Medium Format photos (you can tell because they are square) I shoot a Hasselblad 500c and my large Format (which I hardly use) I have this cool circa 1950's Graflex Crown Graphic which takes stunning photos.

My lenses include:

Canon 17-40 f4 L  
Canon 28mm f2.8  
Canon 50mm f1.8  
Canon 70-200 f2.8 L IS  
Symmar - 150mm S f5.6  
Carl Zeiss T\* 80mm f2.8  
Carl Zeiss T\* 150mm f4

I rarely use strobes, but I have this old Multiblitz set that I sometimes use. In the studio I try to use my Hasselblad more and when I shoot live I take my Eos 1V.



**Question 7: How did you become a photographer**

**Omer Cordell:** I remember taking my first photo in 1985 in *Viña del Mar*, Chile. I was always fascinated with cameras. When I was 14 or 15 I borrowed my father's old Pentax Asahi (from around 1969 I believe) he gave me a 32 second crash course and I was on my way. At some point, taking photographs for me became a meditative experience where the whole process of composition, exposure, waiting for the right light conditions (for some landscape work for example) and final printing was transcending. Because of the type of cameras I used, to this day, regardless of how "modern" my camera is, I still shoot on Manual mode. It makes me feel good to know that I got a well exposed shot, particularly when I shoot live shows where the light quality changes quickly, it's an added challenge. Back when I started to shoot concerts, I used to go through 5 or 8 rolls of film, now I only take 2 rolls at the most. A lot of photographers still look at me like I've just landed from another planet because I still shoot film and only shoot about 30 photos per show. Even when I do a press/promo shoot, I narrow the entire shoot down to maybe 30 images. Too many options can be confusing and tedious to go through.



**Question 8: Tell us more about Seventh Frame.**

**Omer Cordell:** I started [seventhframe.com](http://seventhframe.com) in 2003. It has been very challenging staying afloat in a very saturated industry. It was easier when I started out but nowadays photography is a lot more accessible than it has ever been so anyone can do a good job. For the past 4 years I haven't been shooting as a "business" but mostly for fun. I felt that the business side of things was taking the life essence out of it for me and it could (and did) potentially harm some friendships. So now, I work on a much more conservative scale than before. Strictly if I WANT to do it, not because I have to. Apparently, my hosting has now expired. I have uploaded a "new" site for now, until I figure out what's happening:



<http://seventhframe.webs.com>

**Question 9: What bands have you photographed except for City of Fire, Ascension of the Watchers and Fear Factory?**



**Omer Cordell:** What bands have I photographed, well, I've worked a lot with Strapping Young Lad, a bunch of Devin's projects, Meshuggah, Mnemic, Threat Signal, Darkane, Moonspell, Katatonia, 3 Inches of Blood...and probably a few others I am forgetting.

**Question 10: What is the favorite picture you have taken?**

**Omer Cordell:** Every picture I take of my wife!

**Question 11: Any plans for the future?**

**Omer Cordell:** Currently, I am working on the artwork for the City of Fire's new

album "Trial thought fire" which is coming along nicely. Burt and I have been bouncing ideas and it's been taking shape nicely. I can't say much about it at this point just that it'll look pretty cool :)

Thank you so much for answering our questions!  
Rita and Malicia Dabrowicz