

INDIE SCENE



Billy Davis, Damon Carroll, Joey Reilly

Craig Shaw

DC VILLAINS

Rock trio, comic-book characters, video-game entrepreneurs or TV stars? These guys want it all



IF THEIR NAME CONJURES UP IMAGES of scheming politicians or comic-book ne'er-do-wells, the members of the Nashville-based rock band DC Villains don't mind at all. "Bad guys are often cooler than the good guys," says frontman Damon Carroll (the first part of the moniker is derived from his initials). "And sometimes the bad guys are really good guys after all." Carroll has gotten this far by not doing as he's told—six years ago he came to Nashville and signed on with a management company, only to see the deal fall apart over musical differences. "I didn't want to write and sing only country music, and that's what was expected," Carroll explains. "My manager's response was 'I understand, but I don't get it.' At that point I knew I had to move on."

His next step presented itself when Carroll met bass player Billy Davis during a demo session in 2006. "Billy was the only one who understood what I was trying to do musically," Carroll says. "We told ourselves one day we'd do a project together that really captured that—something that wasn't limited by genre or Nashville's rules." Davis introduced Carroll to drummer Joey Reilly, and the trio began

forging the sound heard on their new debut album, *Divided We Stand*. It's an edgy set of tunes that incorporates hard rock, metal, rap and the occasional burst of political commentary. "It's just me being pissed off," Carroll quips.

The three are determined to make *Divided* more than just an album, and DC Villains more than just a band. Carroll and his bandmates are readying a host of other projects, including a video game, comic books and a TV series. "I've always hated being told I have to pick one thing and focus only on it," says Carroll, who also works as a personal trainer. "In high school I joined the chorus *and* played on the football team *and* studied art." In fact, it was Carroll's triumph over a high school football injury that fortified his can-do spirit. A misdiagnosis caused complications, and he came close to dying; he defied the odds and pulled through, using the two years he spent recuperating to write songs and hone his singing skills. "I've always said, 'Screw what we're supposed to do,'" he says. "That's why we're always looking for new outlets for our creativity."

The Villains have attracted key investors to subsidize their ventures,

inspiring a couple of studio owners to offer time free and even enlisting one of Carroll's training clients, Kings of Leon bassist Jared Followill, to help sequence the album. Followill, in turn, became a character in the band's video game—which came about after Davis went on Craigslist looking for someone to repair his Xbox. "He found a guy, and we started talking to him about how cool it would be to develop our own game," Carroll says. "As it turned out, he was also a programmer who knew how to do it. He built our website as well."

The video game spawned the idea for a comic book that will share characters in common. The television show, which is being shopped to a major network by one of Davis' industry associates, will have an interactive component as well. "The idea is to have fans suggest the plot for each episode," says Carroll. "Then we'll write a song from that idea and develop a plot around it." It's all a lot for a young band to attempt—but Carroll believes their independent spirit will guide them. "Nobody tells us what we can and can't do," he says. "The music business is in shambles anyway. We're indie intentionally."

—Lee Zimmerman