

# CHRIS JERICHO

PHOTO BY CHARLES GESELL



## I AM ROCK!

### OUR EXCLUSIVE Q&A WITH A CHAMPION WRESTLER-TURNED ROCK GOD.

**F**ormer wrestling superstar Chris Jericho rocks—literally. During his almost-two-decade career, he reigned as the undisputed king of the ring, winning a record 30 title belts. Jericho is the only wrestler in history to dominate all three major professional federations: World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), World Championship Wrestling (WCW) and Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW).

In 2010, Jericho stepped away from the grueling sport to focus on his life's other driving passion: hard rock music. As lead singer of the heavy

metal band Fozzy, he has made the transition to bona fide rock star. Backstage at the 2012 *Revolver* Golden Gods award show, Arts & Entertainment Editor Keith Valcourt sat down with Jericho to discuss all things rock and wrestling.

**HUSTLER: What was your greatest moment in the ring?**

**CHRIS JERICHO:** Quite honestly, all of them! When I was a kid, I had two dreams: to be a wrestler and to be a rock star. I had the same amount of passion for both. The fact that I've had the opportunity to *do* both of them

is something I don't take for granted. Every time I've walked into the ring or onto the stage with Fozzy, it's a dream come true.

**What was your worst injury?**

In the ring, I broke my arm trying a shooting star press and wrestled that night with a broken arm. Onstage with my band Fozzy, I blew out my knee when I fell off the stage in Winnipeg—my hometown—but I finished the show.

**Are there groupies in professional wrestling?**

Yeah, there are groupies in wrestling just like there are groupies in rock 'n' roll. They're called strippers!

**Have any of them gone to great lengths to try to meet you?**

I find, nowadays, that girls or guys that go to great lengths to meet you are a little creepy—in the stalker category. I find in the Internet age, with Twitter and Facebook, it's easy for people to figure out where you're going to be, and you can pick them out quickly.

**Why did you decide to leave wrestling behind?**

I haven't left wrestling behind, but I've achieved everything I wanted to achieve. Now that Fozzy is growing at such a rapid rate, I want to spend as much time with the band as possible to help take Fozzy to the next level.

**Was it hard to make the transition to rock star?**

Anyone who knows me knows I know way more about music than I do about wrestling. Music is my thing. Wrestling took off first, but even during the height of it, I never stopped playing music, recording songs and doing gigs. Then in 1999, when I met Rich Ward, we started our band Fozzy, and that's when it became more of a professional real thing.

Wrestling and heavy metal are both a lot of fun and come from a similar place. They're aggressive forms of entertainment. Both are hard-hitting styles of entertainment that feed off the reaction you get from the crowd.

**If you had to pick just one, would it have been music over wrestling?**

I've never been that type of guy. If you ask me now, music would be the way I'd want to go because I've done everything in wrestling. But I've always wanted more from my life. I loved wrestling. I loved music. I want-

ed to do them both. If you would have asked me then [in 1999] which one I would want to do more, I would have said, "I want them both, but whichever one comes up first, I'll go with." I've been very lucky that both started going.

**Do you miss wrestling at all?**

I've done everything you can do in wrestling at the top of the level. So no.

**Are people finally taking your band seriously?**

After 12 years we are finally starting to play in the big leagues. It may be at the bottom of the big leagues, but at least we got in the game. (*Laughs.*) I will continue to do everything I can to see the band grow. It's easier now because we've gone beyond that point where people are getting over the preconceptions and stereotypes about "the band with the guy

in it who's a wrestler." As if we're wearing tights onstage and singing about body slams.

I like to use the band Thirty Seconds to Mars for comparison. Their lead singer is Jared Leto, who is a very accomplished actor. But he's not onstage singing about

Shakespeare and method acting. He's a real rock singer believing what he's doing.

When we put out our last record, *Chasing the Grail*, we toured 16 countries, and people knew that this is real. It's not a part-time thing. I'm real—not just some guy pretending to be a rock star. It's who I am as a person, and our band kicks ass. The only people that don't like our band are the ones who have never checked us out.

**What is the most important thing a rocker needs to make it?**

You have to be willing to do something that has never been done before—a very unique vibe. You can't worry about what other people think. You have to be an individual. If you look at rock's biggest stars, they don't follow trends. They're who they are. No fake actions. Very real. There's no bullshit, pretentiousness or lies in heavy metal.

**Since this is your third time hosting the Golden Gods, what are you doing differently this year?**

**“WHEN I WAS A KID, I HAD TWO DREAMS: TO BE A WRESTLER AND TO BE A ROCKSTAR. I HAD THE SAME AMOUNT OF PASSION FOR BOTH”**



It's not just so much what I'm going to do. The beauty of a show like this is you have a different cast of characters, a different list of bands that play every year and different nominees. I pretty much just hold down the fort. It's not really about me. I do the opening monologue, tell some jokes and have some fun, but it's all about the bands and the fans' [voting] results. Last year I had to do double duty 'cause Fozzy played too. That was pretty intense and pretty stressful. This year it's kind of laid-back business as usual, so I can just relax and enjoy myself.

**When you were growing up in Canada, which metal gods influenced you?**

Metallica, Iron Maiden, KISS, Ozzy. A lot of the guys that are still at it and coming to the [Golden Gods] show. I was always a big Beatles guy too. It's cool to not just be fans of a lot of these guys now but peers of them as well. To become friends with them too is a real honor.

**Does that mean you're still starstruck?**

There are still a few guys. It took me a while. I've met James Hetfield [Metallica's lead singer] maybe five or six times now, and the first couple of times I was a wreck—a total fanboy. The last time I saw him, in San Francisco, we actually had a pretty good conversation and got to know each other a little bit more. So I don't have to come across as such a fanboy.

Whenever I come across Ozzy, I'm always a little bit nervous. There are certain guys at that level. I've never met [KISS member] Gene Simmons, and he'll be receiving this year's Golden God Award, so I'll be a little nervous probably to meet him. I know he's pretty intimidating as well. There's not many left that I haven't met, and it's always cool when you do meet someone you loved when you were younger. It gives you a real charge. A real buzz. Makes you feel like a kid again.

**Now that heavy metal has the Golden God Awards and a museum exhibit, has it become respectable?**

I don't think it's ever going to be fully mainstream or accepted. It flirts with the big leagues sometimes. You saw Zakk Wylde on *American Idol*, and I did *Dancing With the Stars*. Maybe that's a sign of the apocalypse—or just metal breaking into the mainstream a little.

At the 2011 Golden Gods, it was the first time I ever met Geezer Butler [Black Sabbath bassist and lyricist], one of the biggest metal rock stars of all time. He came up to me to say, "I've been watching you on *Dancing With the Stars*. I even voted for you." Fuck, that gave me all the credibility I will ever need! I am now officially metal. I love flying the flag of metal in places it's never been flown before.

**What draws people to heavy metal?**

It's like a secret society—a real brotherhood. If you're a heavy metal fan and you meet another metal fan, you automatically become friends no matter what. It's big enough where we have that but not big enough to be in the arena at the Grammy Awards. It's never gonna be that. That's just the way it is.

There are guys that have made inroads. Dave Grohl [lead singer and guitarist of the alt-rock band Foo Fighters] is one of the biggest metal fans you can meet, but there he was onstage playing with Paul McCartney closing the Grammy Awards. That doesn't make him wimpy or any less metal. If anything, it makes him more metal because he made it to that point.

**Now that you're a rock singer, how different are the groupies?**

It's great being a rock singer because it enabled me to have a twelvesome once in Peoria. The bad news is I lasted only 12 seconds! 🌐