

SPIN

October 2008

NOISE



Say "Ahhh": Mastodon's Brent Hinds and Troy Sanders; Carr (below)

Susan and the Banshees

Meet the woman who teaches singers how to scream

As anyone who's ever listened to Drowning Pool or Flayleaf can attest, screaming doesn't seem like it takes much skill. But according to vocal instructor Susan Carr, the woman behind the new DVD *The Art of Screaming* (theartofscreaming.com), emitting a bloodcurdling wail is harder than it sounds. "I've been studying screaming for years," explains Carr, "and I hear a lot of singers who might not last if they don't get some help." And no, she won't name names.

But for three decades, smarter vocalists have come to Carr, 54, to learn the safe way to scream. A longtime resident of Seattle, she started teaching the first wave of the city's punk shouters in the early '80s ("Sore throat? Small range?" read the ad she placed in an alt weekly), but things blew up during the grunge era, when labels and managers began sending singers her way as a means of protecting their investments. Without proper training, "a touring singer is always going to risk ruining their voice," says Carr, whose Seattle students included Alice in Chains' Layne Staley ("a quick learner") and Sunny Day Real Estate's Jeremy Enigk ("a beautiful screamer"). And unlike

actual schooling, studying screaming doesn't carry any nerdy stigma. "Back in the punk days, taking voice lessons might have seemed lame," says Minus the Bear's Jake Snider, a former student of Carr's. "But I was sick of losing my voice. Now I never do." Mastodon's Troy Sanders was also eager to learn. "Singing 250 shows a year is brutal. I wanted any help I could get," he says, before happily adding, "Warner Bros. paid for the lessons."

But what exactly is the art of screaming? Fundamentally, the idea is to generate the scream using the appropriate physical techniques. Use the wrong ones—yell from the bottom of your throat, for instance—and you risk developing vocal-chord nodules, which only sound good on Lemmy. Instead, the DVD, which features shriekers like Loudermilk's Davey Ingersoll and Alien Ant Farm's Dryden Mitchell, shows how to support the scream with the pelvic muscles (say "Huh!" like a Marine—those muscles), place it precisely in the top of the throat (less Cookie Monster, more Marge Simpson), and correctly manage air flow (the diaphragm's duty). Learn all that, and you'll be acing "Run to the Hills" on *Rock Band* in no time. Now, that's something to shout about. *DAVID MARCHESI*



"A touring singer is always going to risk ruining their voice."

SUSAN CARR

40 OCTOBER 2008 WWW.SPIN.COM

