

Nine Inch Nails:  
A rare shot of  
Reznor and his  
road playmates.

# NINE INCH NAILS

## REZNOR'S REVENGE

If Nine Inch Nails' enigmatic Trent Reznor ever harbored any secret intent of taking over the rock and roll world, he's certainly going about it the right way. Sometimes it appears as if *whatever* this unusual-yet-brilliant Cleveland native decides to do, it serves to further augment his career aspirations and cement his reputation as a true musical visionary—a man one step ahead of the game in virtually every respect. If, for example, Reznor decides to release a series of albums, as he did in 1994 with NIN's multi-million-selling **The Downward Spiral** and its companion piece, **Further Down The Spiral**, he is lauded for his industrious work habits and uncommonly bold album release patterns. If, on the other hand, he decides to lay low, as he's done for most of the last 18 months, then he's widely commended by all segments of rock society for being "mysteriously unapproachable." It would almost seem as if

BY P.J. MERKLE

Mr. Reznor can do no wrong—no matter how hard he may try.

Ironically, there are those close to the Reznor camp who indicate that this media-generated aura of "invincibility", of being able to leap the tallest building and scale the highest mountain, has had the net effect of weighing heavily on Reznor's artistic soul. Rather than filling him with the degree of confidence needed to reach out and further stretch his seemingly limitless musical boundaries, Reznor's newfound powers have had the reverse effect of virtually forcing the dark-haired vocalist into an ill-timed retreat, back into an even-more severe isolationist's world. There, in a place only he fully comprehends, Reznor now functions, battling against his own inner-demons while he attempts to create the various musical

components needed to form the next Nine Inch Nails magnum opus.

"My music and my life don't work along some preordained alarm clock," Reznor stated. "When I'm inspired, I try to create. When I'm not inspired, I try figure out why not. I've sometimes thought it was funny to read what people have said and written about the music I've made. They come up with these wild interpretations of things that make me shake my head in wonder. Am I that confused—or are they?"

For all of his press-created air of inscrutability, at times it seems as if Reznor is a surprisingly down-to-earth individual. Even David Bowie, one of Reznor's idols and with whom Nine Inch Nails toured North America for a good part of 1995, admitted that once he got to know Reznor a little bit better, and began to understand his motivations and dreams, then the veneer of unapproachability that he



expected to find quickly vanished. In fact, by mid-tour the seemingly unlikely pair had become bosom buddies, with the still-awe-struck Reznor hanging out in Bowie's pre-concert dressing room on virtually a nightly basis. Bowie recently recalled their pre-show meetings as one of the highlights of the tour.

"There's so much going on within Trent," he said. "But it's rarely the kind of stuff that the media portrays. I believe they'd like to treat him as if he was some sort of alien life form—perhaps much as I was portrayed years ago. In Trent's case such a description simply doesn't apply. If anything, he may be a touch too human. All his weaknesses and frailties are right there on display when he stands on stage. He's a performer who gives everything of himself each evening, and I admire him tremendously for that."

Revealing his emotions and frailties through song has been one of Reznor's primary calling card since the release of Nine Inch Nails' debut disc, **Pretty Hate Machine**, in 1991. Since then Reznor and an ever-shifting alliance of Nails cohorts have constructed a musical legacy that has done much to shape the sound, style and substance of mid-'90s music. NIN's dark, post-industrial leanings and stark lyrical forays have proven to be an opiate for the era's rock masses, with the band's often

who make the music they love are unhappy. They want to idolize their musical heroes again. I'm certainly not going to say that Nine Inch Nails is still not a vital, influential and successful band, but the notion that Reznor is the single most important voice in the field no longer rings true."

Perhaps it is just such an opinion—misguided though it may be—that will eventually serve to free Reznor from his

allow him to again be just a brilliant rock and roll performer. As inviting as that may sound to Reznor's perpetually perturbed ears, he knows that such an idealistic scenario is not yet to be his. There are apparently still more dues to be paid and more battles to be won.

"I can't control the way the world perceives me, and I have no desire to try and do that," he said. "I've given up

***"Sometimes it's funny to read what people have said about my music."***

horrid, usually sordid sound serving as a harsh reflection of the world that surrounds both Reznor and his followers. And as if his own recent accomplishments weren't enough to amaze and enthrall, Reznor has kept his hands perpetually busy with a variety of other rock-related matters. In addition to his own chart-topping recordings, Reznor's disciples now include the likes of Marilyn Manson, Prick and even Filter, whose leader, Richard Patrick, was once Reznor's lead guitarist. With his own Nothing record label, and a seemingly ever-widening sphere of influence, it would appear as if the Age Of Reznor is in full swing. But there are others who insist that NIN's Golden Age has already come and gone.

"Just look at the charts, look at MTV," said one record industry executive. "The bleak tides of the last few years have begun to shift. The angst that filled the Seattle Scene and the total bleakness that Reznor has used so effectively have begun to be replaced by more up-beat and palatable styles. Music fans have grown tired with being told over and over again that life isn't worth living and that the stars

**Trent Reznor:**  
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self-imposed isolation and allow him to once again seek true artistic fulfillment. After all, here is a man who *never* professed any desire to pilot a commercial juggernaut or be a rock and roll taste maker and deal breaker; all that has been thrust upon Reznor at various points along his musical sojourn. Perhaps now is the time to release Reznor from his unwanted role as The Spokesman For His Generation, and

trying to understand the media fascination with me. At times I believe that things have gotten a little out of hand. I almost liked it better when I was on a small label with little attention being cast my way—though I certainly wasn't happy in that environment. I just want to go about my business the best I can and hope that I produce the kind of music that makes people think—at least a little."

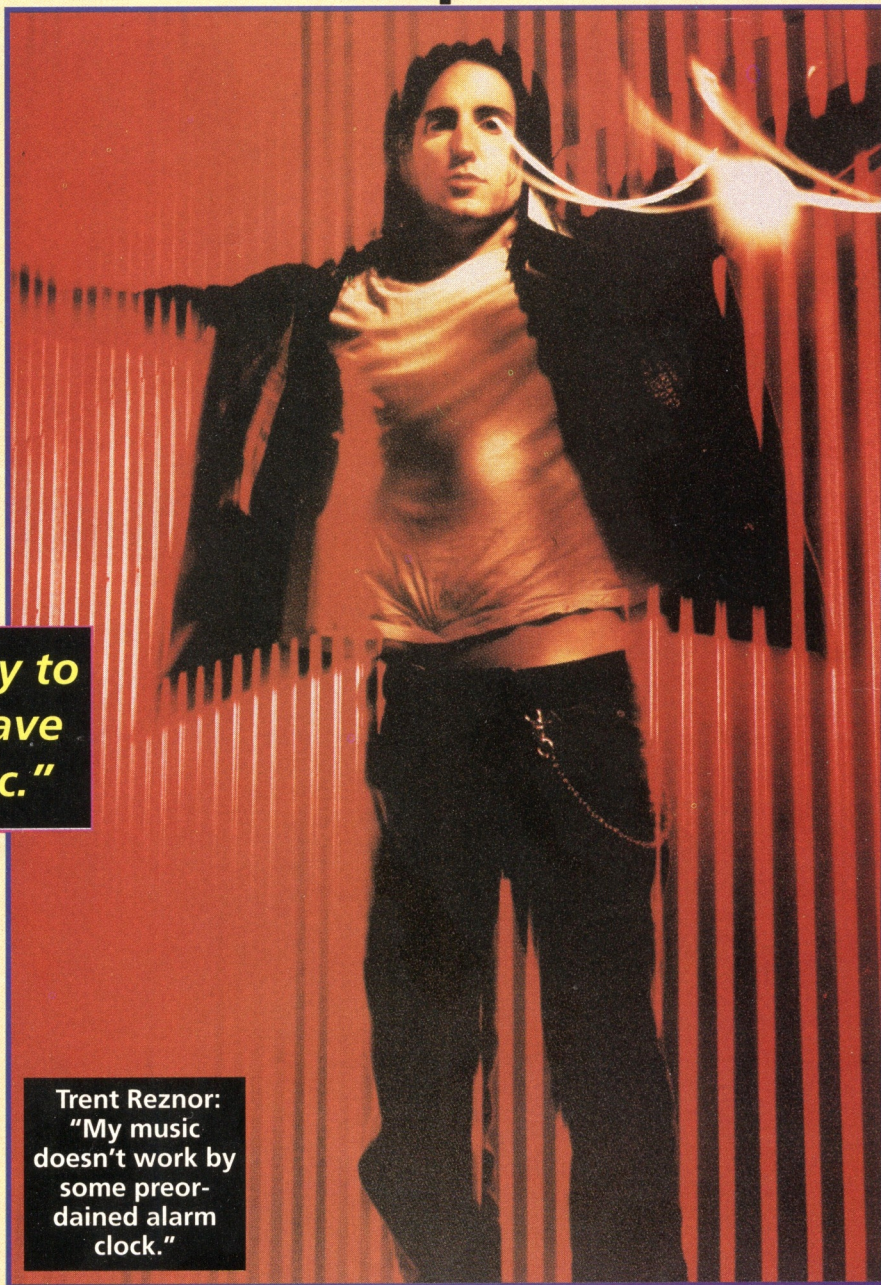
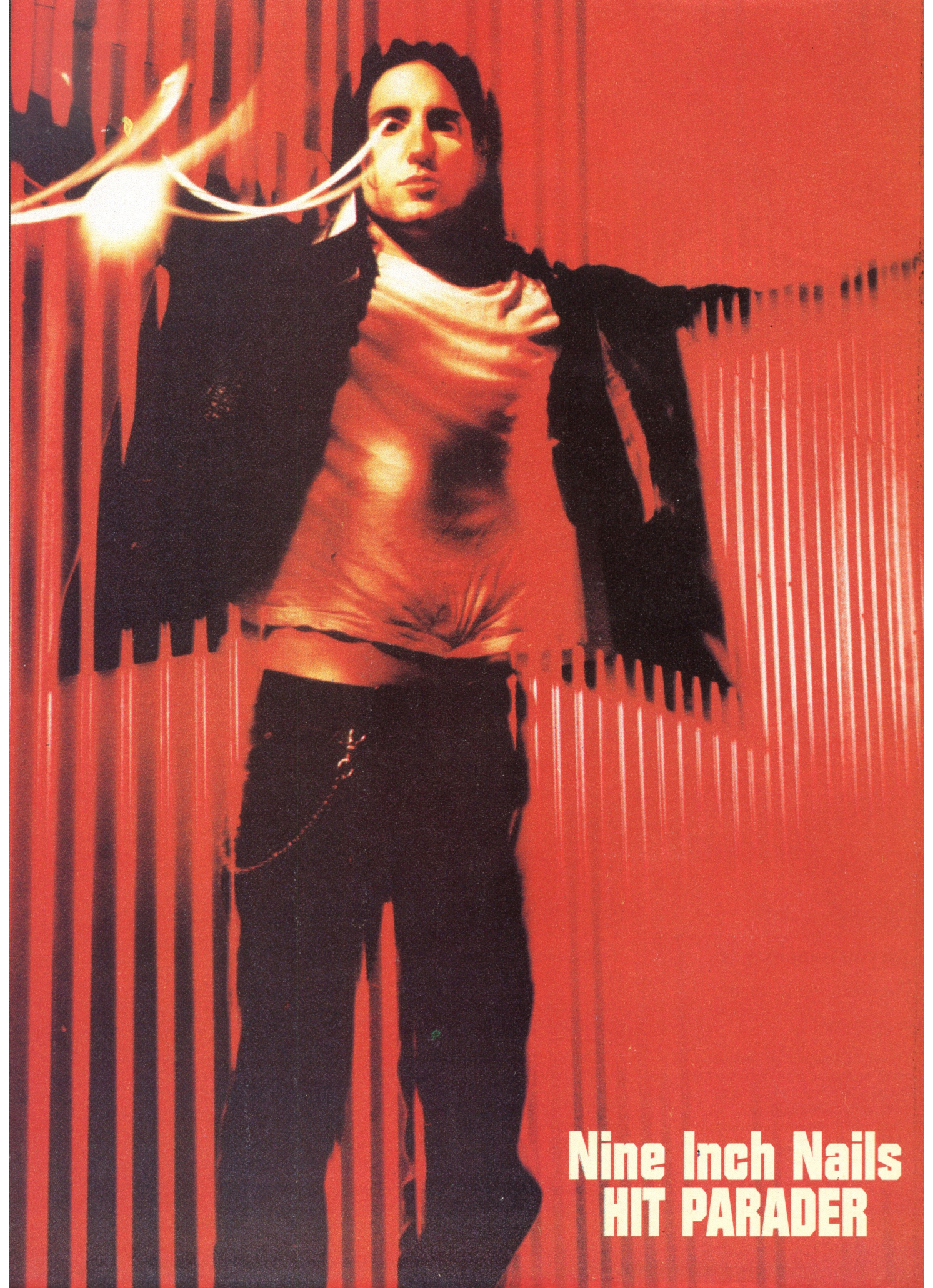


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