

# BETWEEN *Heaven*



ALTERNATIVE PRESS

L-R: BANEV, WILLIAMS, DePOYSTER, RUBEV, HRANICA, TRICK

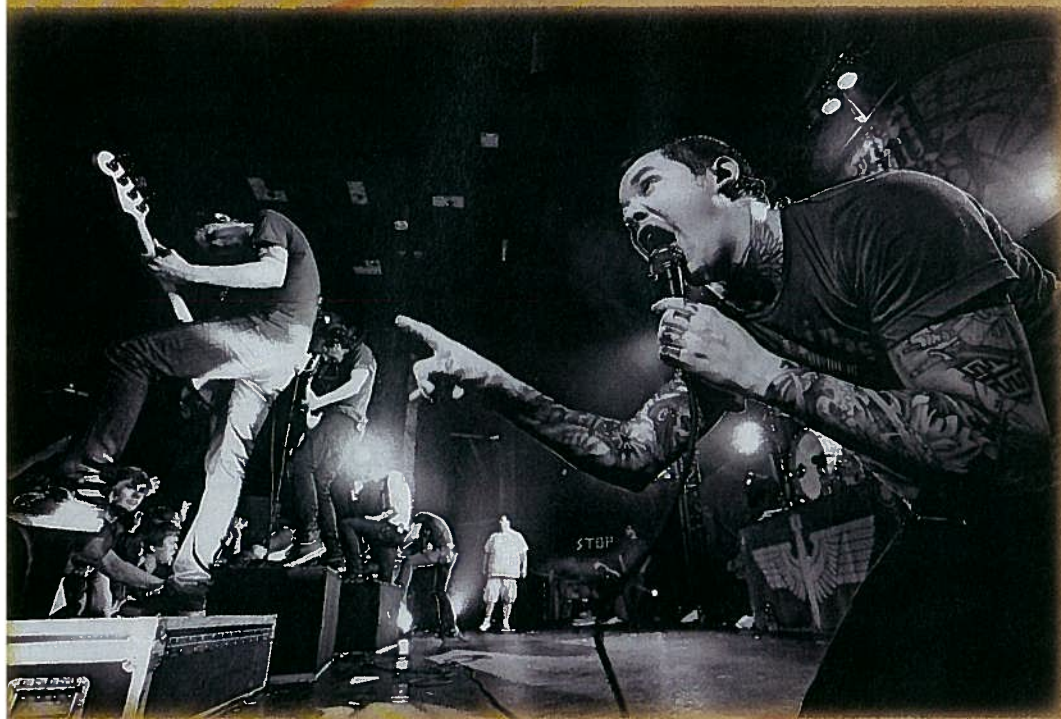
# RIGHT HERE

## THERE'S A PASSAGE

in the Biblical book of Leviticus that reads, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord." Translation: If you're inked, well, you've sinned big time. At least that's how some Christian parents interpret it when they ban their children from listening to Dayton, Ohio, metalcore maestros the Devil Wears Prada.

"I get [online] messages from fans who'll say, 'Hey, I wanted to go to your show this week, but my church says it's wrong,'" says Mike Hranica, the band's heavily tattooed frontman, in TDWP's heat-deficient practice space located in an old industrial warehouse downtown. "I've gotten a number of those—and that's only the people that reach out to tell me. Can you imagine how many people feel that way but don't know how to contact me? I'm sure there are people who don't attend our shows or pick up our CDs—or they do, and are grounded by their parents because they think it's wrong—because they think you can't know God *and* be in a metal band."

The fact that the Devil Wears Prada embody two seemingly conflicting ideas—proud, practicing Christians and enthusiastic fans of scathing, yet melodic metal—shouldn't add up. Somehow, though, it does. But TDWP's detractors aren't limited to God-fearing, conservative parents: For the past three years, the band—Hranica, guitarists Jeremy DePoyster and Chris Rubey, bassist Andy Trick, keyboardist James Baney and drummer Daniel Williams—have been logging road mile after road mile trying to earn the acceptance of metal elitists. According to Carl Severson, esteemed founder of Ferret Music (TDWP's label), the band



## THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

are Christian metalcore maniacs with a message: It's okay to like them, no matter what you do on Sundays.

STORY: CHRIS HARRIS  
PHOTOS: ADAM ELMAKIAS

still have some longhairs to convert. "When you're a metal band and you're saying 'Jesus' onstage, dudes are going to yell," says Severson, who witnessed the band's attempts at winning over the crowd on 2007's mostly secular Sounds Of The Underground tour. "But those guys held their own, and were brave every day. I think Prada are spreading a totally positive message, and they don't do it in a manner that will exclude people that don't 100 percent agree with them, like some bands do."

That's because Hranica doesn't force his beliefs on fans, choosing instead to share them in a manner that's self-assured, but not critical. The band hardly ever tour with acts that share the same belief system, and they've never gone painfully overboard with their message. But, "before the last song, we are going to tell you we believe in Jesus Christ—and we believe that He loves you... That's just who we are."

"There's a fine line between being overly preachy and simply telling people what you believe," the singer continues. "I know we have fans who don't want to follow the teachings of Christ, and we're perfectly fine with that. We just hope they can like our music without feeling uncomfortable."

Hranica says Prada have been "condemned" in a sense by both Christians and metalheads, "but we're right here in the middle, and it's awesome." The rest of the band consider themselves fortunate to be actively touring, with a supportive label behind them

and a mounting fanbase that's sure to grow substantially during this summer's Warped Tour. It will be TDWP's second stint on the tour after accepting a personal invitation from Warped founder Kevin Lyman to appear on last summer's trek. "The methead metal dudes think God hates us all, and then you have the church objecting to tattoos. That might seem unfortunate, but the fact of the matter is we've been blessed beyond belief," Hranica says adding that Warped is the perfect platform for his band's punishing sound. "We've been given so much, and all our shows are so good. So, it doesn't matter if Limpgoat.com hates us and the church says metal is evil... My life is the best; do what I love and spread the message I believe in."

## THE RANGE OF THE MESSAGES

Based on the band's latest album, *With Roots Above And Branches Below*, it revolves around some of the struggles Hranica's had with his faith. But this time, the singer had a decidedly more outward muse, one that involved a certain kind of fan he encountered while touring. "[The album is] more directed at the people who've found God and struggle more with just day-to-day life; and the people who found God, but [the belief is] kind of fading for them, and they want to re-establish that relationship," he says. Hranica's message is that no matter how tough things get, trust in what you believe to get you through. It might sound trite, but it's an encouraging notion in today's decidedly uncertain times. The singer also tackles political apathy and "corrupt churches that are more about the money and the image."

That said, it's apparent that *Roots* is the band's most mature effort to date (see our review on pg. 104). Not surprisingly, it's the first album Hranica and guitarist Chris Rubey (both barely a day over 20) have written since high school

graduation. To record *Roots*, the band returned to the shit's-not-even-on-the-map town of Connersville, Indiana, a place they vowed they'd never return. "For whatever reason, this dude Joey Sturgis is from there, and he's really good at recording stuff," DePoyster chimes in. "But the looks you get [from the townspeople], coming in with your tight pants, flat-bill hats and leather jackets... It really doesn't fit the bill!"

Both DePoyster and Hranica agree their new music captures the band at their most confident. "It's been a long journey for us toward finding our sound," DePoyster says. "We really just wanted to take a hardcore band with breakdowns and metal riffs and bring melody and a big, cinematic, epic feeling to it. We just got so tired of popping in metal records and [I felt like], 'I've been listening to this for five years, and I'm just so sick of it.' Metal is not a dead genre; it just feels like it's getting monotonous. So on this record, I think we really came into our sound. It's just a bigger-sounding record."

Regardless of whom listeners call upon in moments of crisis, DePoyster said he hopes fans of heavy music will give the *Devil Wears Prada* a chance. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what a band believe, so long as you can bang your head to their crushing cuts.

"I've talked to dudes from Behemoth and Amon Amarth, and they believe what they believe," DePoyster resigns. "But once you're out on the touring circuit, you find these bands are a lot more forgiving than their fans. Backstage, it's more of a community climate; this band can hang out with this band and this band and this band. One's pop-punk, one's gore-metal, and one can be Christian folk. They can all hang out because backstage, [it's] not 'bands; they're *dudes*. But then, all of their fans go, 'Oh, how can you listen to *that* band?' and make it about what you believe or how you look.

"I'm really good friends with guys in both those bands," he adds. "It's too bad their fans wanted to throw poop at me onstage." **alt**



## THE NAME GAME

When Mike Hranica was listening to the book on tape, and Chris thought it was a good name", Hranica seems the moniker "worthless," and notes that none of the dudes in the band bothered to even read the book before picking the title as their own. "If someone said we had to change our name, that would be the happiest moment of my life," Hranica admits. "It's the worst book ever, and it's a stupid movie. I was actually a fan of the band before I read it, and I assumed [the name] was a reference to materialism; that you don't need possessions to be happy and the most important things in life aren't possessions. That's what I thought, anyway. Then I read the book."

The one thing the *Devil Wears Prada* frontman Mike Hranica absolutely hates about his band: their name. Having joined the group long after the rest of the guys had decided on the *Devil Wears Prada* ("[Guitarist Chris Rubey's]

After finishing Lauren Weisberger's tome on breaking into the world of fashion, Hranica couldn't believe it. "This is a best seller? It's absolute pop-culture trash," he says. "It wasn't long after that that we signed [with Ferret], and everyone told us we couldn't change our name. They told us that from a marketing perspective, we'd be dumb to change it because it was already established."

While Hranica says he thinks a name change at this point would "turn kids off," he also points out "the *Devil Wears Prada*" is at least better than the first name the band were toying with: *Five Fish And A Fish*. "Naming your band after a book is a bad idea," he says. "I know that makes me sound like the biggest hypocrite, seeing as I'm in [a] band named after a book. At the end of the day, it's not that bad. I kind of like the idea of naming your band something that isn't 100 percent serious." Though their name may turn off metal elitists, Hranica has found at least one true believer. "Jeremy [McKinnon] from *A Day To Remember* tries to convince me it's not as stupid as I think it is."



