



GOOD OLE' CANADIAN BOYS

Hard rock collective *Art Of Dying* is taking the world by storm.

BY BEAR FRAZER

Cale Gontier, bassist for Art of Dying, has a lot in common with many of his fellow countrymen—his favorite mixed martial artist is UFC Welterweight Champion Georges St-Pierre. Gontier takes pride in his Canadian heritage, and he sees a lot of that in St-Pierre. “GSP is so committed and so talented,” Gontier says. “He’s one of the best fighters in the world. He’s just a really tough Canadian.”

In fact, it was his country’s influence that initially hooked Gontier on MMA. While growing up in Norwood, Ontario, he was drawn to hockey—Canada’s national sport—because, as he puts it, “Hockey fights might be the best part of the game.” However, when he saw a few early episodes of *The Ultimate Fighter*, he realized his passion for fighting was shifting from the ice to the Octagon.

“I have the utmost respect for fighters and aspiring fighters because these guys spend their life training and gearing them-

selves toward being the best,” Gontier says. “I kind of relate it to what we’ve been doing in a band and what we have been doing for the past few years—slugging it out every day so we can get better and better. It’s not an easy go. It’s a super tough business to make it in, music or fighting. I have so much respect for those guys for doing what they love and doing their best to be the best.”

Art Of Dying was formed in 2005 by front man Jonny Hetherington and guitarist Greg Bradley. They released the group’s self-titled debut album two years later. But in 2008, they made some lineup changes and brought in Gontier, second guitarist Tavis Stanley, and drummer Jeff Brown. Since then, the band’s visibility has skyrocketed—thanks in part to the WWE, which uses their forward-thinking smash single “Get Through This” for pay-per-view and television programming.

Despite performing alongside well-established metal groups such as Deftones, Metallica, and Five Finger Death Punch, and Gontier's relation to his cousin Adam Gontier (lead singer of Three Days Grace), the Canadian quintet's biggest ally thus far has been fellow MMA aficionados Disturbed.

Back in 2008, Disturbed's guitarist Dan Donegan received Art Of Dying's demo through a mutual friend and enjoyed what he heard. That led him to calling Hetherington directly, and the two had an informal conversation about the music business. About a year later, Donegan phoned Hetherington again and invited the Canadian troupe to open up for Disturbed on an upcoming tour.

Little did Art Of Dying know that Disturbed was scouting their sets the entire time and were preparing to make them the leadoff group on their newly formed label, Intoxication Records. "We just thought we were going on tour with them, but they were sitting there and watching us every night," Gontier says. "We became friends and all that, and as it turned out, they had their eye on us the whole time and ended up signing us."

The signing was made official in December 2009, and now, Art Of Dying is ready to unveil their long-awaited major studio album *Vices & Virtues*. While a few tracks from the previous effort like "Get Through This" and "I Will Be There" have carried over to the new record, the five-piece wrote nine new compositions that maintain their edge, but also reflect the hardships various members of the band have experienced. "I hope at the end of the day, people realize we're pouring our hearts and souls into these songs, and they'll feel it," Gontier says. "Hopefully, it will help them with their day-to-day life."

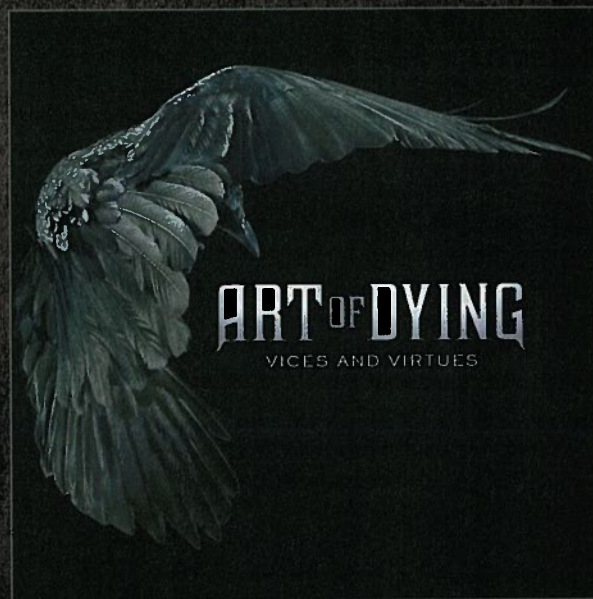
Gontier and company will be promoting *Vices & Virtues* over the next several months, and while it has been admittedly difficult to stay up to speed on the latest MMA occurrences, they set aside time to work out. "All of the guys in the Art Of Dying do their best to keep in shape," says Gontier. "When I'm home, I work out for 90 minutes—not to fight, but just to keep in shape for running around on stage and to keep up with the grind of being on the road."

Don't let him fool you entirely though. Gontier actually has a combat sports background. When the bassist was a kid, he trained judo and received his green belt. He would like to pick it back up again, but due to his hectic schedule, the only way that will happen is if Art of Dying tours with Five Finger Death Punch again. After all, FFDP guitarist Zoltan Bathory is a judo black belt and practices backstage every chance he gets.

It might be a while before Gontier breaks out a judo throw, but he is keeping an eye on his favorite fighters, including GSP, Anderson Silva, and Josh Koscheck—even though the AKA product was booed out of the Bell Centre in Montreal, Quebec, after getting pulverized by GSP back at UFC 124.

Now, with the talk of a potential showdown between St-Pierre and Silva, the bassist is salivating about seeing the two square off. "That would be the ultimate fight," he says. "Anderson Silva is a machine and GSP is my favorite. I'd have to stick with GSP though. I think he could do it. I think he could get on the inside and take him to the ground with his wrestling skills. I would put my money on GSP."

Of course, Gontier could never be expected to bet against his fellow countryman. ❧



VICES & VIRTUES

Art of Dying can breathe a little easier now. The once fledgling Canadian quintet has overcome the rocky terrain of oversaturated, unsigned hopefuls to release their sophomore set *Vices & Virtues* through Disturbed's Intoxication Records.

In a world filled with more vices than virtues, the mainstream rock collective demonstrates a mature outlook, sharing some of their gratification through despair. Those sentiments are pierced on the semi-agro "Completely," the non-50 Cent related "Die Trying," and the cutting-edge ballad "Best I Can." The vice sentiments tend to strike with "Straight Across My Mind," but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes, internal pain can be just way too overbearing. The record is on shelves now, so check it out.