

## Three Days Grace maturing out of 'rock star life'

### musicpreview

#### Three Days Grace

With Seether and Econoline Crush  
Wednesday, 30 January at 6pm  
Shaw Conference Centre

KATHLEEN BELL  
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A cursory exploration of Three Days Grace's latest album, *One X*, might leave you feeling like the band needs a hug—while an in-depth exploration might leave you feeling like you need a hug. But before you go all group therapy on the boys, you can rest assured that when Three Days Grace isn't singing about their pain, they're keeping it light and having a laugh.

"Because we play the [darker] music we play and we talk about the things we do, I think we're very happy people. I think if we were happy songwriters, we'd probably be pissed off," bassist Brad Walst says, cramming in yet another phone interview about an album that, by the end of it all, will have kept them touring for almost two years.

The last time they spent this long away from home, in support of their self-titled 2003 album, the road became a strange and self-destructive place. The whole band was having a tough time dealing with the irony of feeling alone while being surrounded by people every night. Lead singer Adam Gontier handled the overwhelming demands of the tour by taking pills.

"[The tour] was pretty long, and for guys just coming out of rural Ontario, it was pretty surprising and pretty



shocking. We kinda just got wrapped up in the habits, I guess you'd call them," Walst explains. "This time's different. I think we've learned a lot from our past experiences, and we've really focused on trying to be as healthy as we can and try[ing] to devote some more time to other things other than just partying and living out the rock star life."

However, before developing such a healthy outlook on the road, the aftermath of living out the

"rock star life" had to be taken care of. Gontier went to rehab, and while he was there, he excised the past few years.

"He just wrote pages and pages of poems and songs and anything that was on his mind," Walst explains.

In the meantime, the rest of the band jammed and wrote music, while inevitably, the pressure came from the label to follow up the success of the last release. Unwilling to rush the creative process, the band packed up

and headed north out of Toronto to drummer Neil Sanderson's cottage. Without the distraction of the outside world, this is where most of the songs on *One X* came together.

The grizzled confessions of a band led astray turned into another massive hit, which of course sent them back to the tour-heavy environment that got them into so much trouble in the first place. But Walst promises they're more focused this time around and more mature; they're already looking

to the future when they finish the tour safe and sound in April.

"We started writing. It's kinda weird 'cause we've got some of the lightest songs we've ever had, but we also have some of the heaviest songs we've ever had. It's going to be interesting to put them together and see what happens. I'm excited. It's definitely going to evolve, and, like I said before, we're maturing all the time, and I think the songs will mature as well."

## Protesting the road of reason

On their new album, Whiby, Ontario's Protest the Hero take a trip back to 'proto-human' times—and tour for home cooking

### musicpreview

#### Protest the Hero

With Silverstein and ill Scarlett  
30-31 January at 6pm  
Starlite Room

PAUL BLINOV  
Arts & Entertainment Editor

High school bands are a dime a dozen, but rare is the group that successfully transitions from cafeteria Battle of the Bands contestants into a successful touring act. Protest the Hero are one of these exceptions, and according to bassist Arif Mirabdolbaghi, playing together for so long has allowed for some huge tweaks to their songcraft.

"We've been together since we were kids; we all picked up our instruments within the same week of each other, and we've all been writing songs together since those days," he explains. "In a lot of ways, we've grown into each other, like a vine around a tree trunk.

We've been doing a lot of touring, and when you tour, you learn what parts translate well live and how to trim the fat on your songwriting."

The five-piece metal-punk group—featuring Mirabdolbaghi, vocalist Roddy Walker, drummer Moe Carlson, and guitarists Tim Millar and Luke Hoskin—have certainly come a long way from high school; in 2004, they beat out the much-better-known Alexisonfire in the Favourite Metal Act category in the Canadian Independent Music Awards. Now, they've put their finishing touches on their second full-length album *Fortress*, set

for release this week.

Sub-divided into three sections called Conquest, Capture, and Isosceles, Mirabdolbaghi says it's a throwback to an earlier time of goddess-worshipping humanity.

"A lot of the album is about the idea of counter-culture and certain scenes that seem to be resurging in counter-culture," he explains, his voice becoming animated. "For example, tattoos and drug usage and ecstatic dance rituals—we were proto-humans last time we were doing these things.

"The period that we appear to be lifting ideas and interests from is one that really [comes] before the development of language, before the age of reason" he continues. "I do think that faith and the scientific and rational processes has been eroding; in a lot of ways, I think we've followed the road of reason straight into the heart of madness, and [we] have forgotten some very innate and very human things about ourselves that we're beginning to remember again."

With a substantial North American tour getting underway to promote *Fortress*, the band will be sure to spread their astute observations all around the continent. But before the bulk of the tour begins, the band's spending a two-night stint here in Edmonton for a little home cooking.

"Our drummer's grandparents and some of his family live [in Edmonton], so we always get the preferential treatment from the grandma," he laughs. "She cooks a lot for eight really hungry, toured-out dudes. You get to sleep in a bed; it's good times."

