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ENTERTAINMENT

The angry band with the scary masks

Slipknot takes its music -- and message -- seriously

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NEW YORK (AP) -- The members of Slipknot are known for wearing nefarious masks and matching jumpsuits during every public appearance, but don't think it's all a gimmick.

These guys insist they're artists. The nine-piece band has one drummer and two other percussionists. Their sound is driving, loud and complex. Members go by numbers 0 to 8, which are sewn onto their black uniforms.

Their gruesome masks, which include a clown face with a bloody head wound and one that looks like dead skin sewn together, are worn to make sure fans listen to the music and not watch the faces. They look so unsettling because, well, that's how the music makes them feel.

Slipknot hails from Des Moines, Iowa -- and they're angry about it. Many of lead singer Corey Taylor's lyrics are about pain and frustration growing up in the middle of middle America.

People can relate. By the time Slipknot finishes their current nationwide tour, their latest CD, "Vol. 3: (The Subliminal Verses)," should become the group's fourth platinum album.

On a recent afternoon, eight of the members were crammed into a tiny NBC dressing room for an appearance on Late Night with Conan O'Brien. (Shawn "Clown" Crahan had to stay behind with a sick wife.) Joey Jordison (No. 1), Chris Fehn (No. 3) and Taylor (No. 8) brought some seriously sardonic humor to their talk with The Associated Press.

Q: How did you come up with the concept for this band?

COREY TAYLOR: Just looking at not only what was going on a local level but an international level and just kind of being disgusted. It was all flash and no filling. It was very plastic with no presence. The thing we wanted to do was make a statement. It occurred to us that if we remove ourselves from the equation and just presented a unified front, it would have a greater



Slipknot: Not a band to fool with.

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impact, a more artistic impact. It's really a physical manifestation of what the music is.

Q: And what is the music?

JOEY JORDISON: Dark, very dark, but at the same time very moving and beautiful in its own way.

Q: Why wear masks?



Guitarist Mick Thomson cuts loose in concert.

JORDISON: It shows we're a solid unit. All of us coming together for a purpose. The masks are a physical representation of how the music makes us feel.

Q: It must make you feel bad. One mask looks like Leatherface from "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre."

TAYLOR: It's really easy to compare us to stuff like that, because we wear masks. But we don't write about horror movies, we don't go out of our way to act like a horror movie.

CHRIS FEHN: I think this band is made up of a mental sickness. When I joined the band, before and after practice, they'd be looking online at murder photos, death and bondage photos.

TAYLOR: We had issues.

Q: What kind of issues?

TAYLOR: You don't have enough time, or tape. And you'd have to go get help afterward. All you have to really do is listen to our music.

Q: Seriously, what is your problem?

TAYLOR: As far as our beefs go, you'd have to grow up in Des Moines, Iowa, and really deal with the things that we had to deal with. I don't want to get into my background because I already talked about it on albums so I don't want to rehash. But there are real beefs that we have, and it hasn't changed since day one why we do this.

JORDISON: I hate the cliché of it, but growing up is hard. For anyone. So there's that backdrop. You find something to grasp onto like music, and you try to get it going and be creative and you get put down, and get your fliers torn down.

Q: Will you run out of stuff eventually to write about?

TAYLOR: Just when we stop talking about the past the present gives us enough stuff to be angry about for the rest of our lives. Just being in this band and seeing the way people interpret us is enough to frustrate even the most ardent artist.

Q: How do you think you're interpreted?

TAYLOR: I think we're interpreted as a novelty, and that really bothers me because there is so much substance in this band. People get stuck on the aesthetic, and it's (expletive).

JORDISON: We're not an easily digestible band on the first listen.

Q: Are you pleased with this album?

JORDISON: I think it's our best album yet. We will always be a metal band with aggro and high risk, but this album shows there's not just one Slipknot sound. We're capable



of such range.



TAYLOR: "Iowa" was a very bleak, dark album. But this one you can hear colors, traces of reds and I think that shows how we've evolved as musicians. Plus, coming back together and working together was really a joy.

Q: So what do those masks smell like?

TAYLOR: You want to take a huff? You can right now.

FEHN: Be careful if you do, you'll develop something right on your face. Just don't touch it and it'll go away in about three weeks.

(For the record, it smelled moldy and stale, like someone's basement.)

Q: Do you still live in Iowa?

TAYLOR: Yeah, a few of us have moved around now and then, but we've all come back. There's something about Iowa that just keeps you there.

JORDISON: It's the state equivalent of the "Death Star" with the big tractor beam.

FEHN: Plus we've all made some money now so we can get the double-wide trailers.

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