

rock on the rise



CANCER BATS **Not Too Hardcore,** **Not Too Metal**

Story: Laina Dawes
Photo: Cindy Frey

Despite vocalist Liam Cormier's admission that the members of Cancer Bats have been literally homeless since finishing their last tour to promote their debut, 2006's *Birthing the Giant*, poverty served as the inspiration for their latest release, *Hail Destroyer*. And he's got few regrets.

"None of us had any money, no stability and weren't able to maintain a romantic relationship," Cormier recalls during a stop on a short promotional tour for their latest collection of ride-or-die, stoner-ish hardcore tracks. Boasting a serious fuck-you attitude attributable at least in part to road-weariness, *Hail Destroyer* delivers musical exactitude from a band that's garnered international acclaim despite being relatively new to the hardcore scene. "This situation that

has wrecked our lives has also made us better people, and has enabled us to do so many other things that we are so appreciative for, like being able to tour."

Cancer Bats formed in 2004 when Cormier and guitarist Scott Middleton, decided to start their own band, influenced by the Southern Ontario hardcore scene where they first met as teenagers. Bassist Jaye R. Schwarzer and drummer Mike Peters joined later. The quartet found inspiration in the cultural wasteland of suburbia through young, local bands that were living the life that they envied — playing and touring on their own terms.

"There was no difference between the band and the audience because there was no stage," Cormier says. Digging the communal vibe and being able to access the musicians he admired made a lasting impact, manifested in the band's penchant for rallying-cry choruses ("it's such a part of hardcore 'cause it inspires participation and a union between the audience and the band"). As Cormier and Middleton are straight edge, the singer frequently talks to kids backstage at their shows whose personal preferences

alienate them from most of their beer-swilling, weed-smoking peers.

The Bats' graciousness and unique sound have garnered interest from a wide variety of fans. "We have a lot of younger fans who have gotten into us through our shows with [fellow Canadian hardcore band] Alexisonfire and then there is that cross-section that listen to Down, Corrosion Of Conformity and Black Label Society," says Cormier. "There are older guys who haven't been into hardcore for awhile, and used to listen to Black Flag and bands like that, who like what we are doing."

Cormier believes that the challenges of touring have forced the band to step up their game. "Being as serious as we are, we have all gotten a lot better at our craft." Not that they needed much improving. Middleton's reputation as an axeman has grown since *Birthing The Giant*, prompting the former metal guitarist to add solos to his signature grinding riffs — even if Cormier's strident punk background initially caused him to shudder at the thought. "Scott doesn't let things get too metal and I don't let things get too punk, and I think that's awesome, because I don't think our band would be as good if we didn't have each other policing it." ❖