

The Expendables expound upon weed reputation, tattoos and the Warped Tour dynamic

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The Expendables

Ryan DeMars, the bassist of Santa Cruz reggae crew The Expendables, called *College Times* just after the band's set in Charlotte, North Carolina, to dish on being a minority of sound, the power of fan tattoos, juvenile jams and keeping things chill since 1997...as well as a peculiar touring tradition.

I was excited to talk to you because the band has a different [musical] dynamic than the others on the tour.

Yeah, [laughs] I think that 75 percent of bands on this tour really sound the same and they're a bit more of a metalcore kind of like screaming vocals kind of thing going on. We kind of fall into a small sliver of the pie, there's bands like us, Pepper, The Aggrolites, and Passafire, Tommorow's Bad Seeds and Lionize. And, actually, a group of bands that we kind of really associate together well because we kind of have more reggae influence and we're kind of mellower, different compared to what else is going on here.

Have you tried to bond or listen to other bands out there or do people stick around their genre?

You'd always think it's a lot like high school, but most people [are] super stoked to be on Warped Tour. It's a good networking tool for all bands to get that chance to meet people in different genres. You know, meet people you'd never meet doing business how you usually do. You know, Warped Tour does a good job of getting all the bands together after the day is over. They occasionally have barbecues with a DJ or something, so everyone gets a chance to mingle.

From what I hear, your sound is changing a little with the song "Zombies in America." is that influenced by Warped Tour or just a new direction you're going in for a new album?

That's a hard question because, being a musician, you always want to change something. You're always trying to make it different from what you've done before. It's like an artist doesn't want to paint the same picture over and over and over. [...] It's funny you've heard about that song because we haven't recorded it yet. We've just been playing it live. It's like a full reggae song. It's about zombies in a sense, but it could mean something else on many different levels. I wouldn't take that song super literally.

One of the biggest songs you're known for, ["Bowl For Two"], is about smoking pot. Does it bother you at all that it's kind of a reggae cliché?

You think we're pigeonholing ourselves?

I meant to ask, is it something [the band] is trying to get away from or associated with you guys?

I think people worry about things that they think we do. [...] As far as, like, being worried about pigeonholing ourselves or being stuck in the marijuana thing, it just happens to be one of our popular songs and I think that's why it's popular, because it's about weed. When we wrote that song, we were still teenagers. It's kind of a juvenile song for us because we wrote it when we were juvenile. And that's the kind of thing, you just put your name on something throughout your career and it's always going to be stuck with you. We're not trying to write songs about weed and we're not trying *not* to write songs about weed.

You guys did a tattoo contest for Warped Tour.

Yeah, that was my idea. [...] We always get involved with our Facebook and talk to our fans and stuff and so, I was like, "Warped Tour is known for being the punk rock thing although there aren't really any punk bands on [the roster]. But let's take that and let's give away some guest list spots to the winner, just let people have fun with it." You know what I'm saying?

What's [a tattoo story] that sticks out in your head?

There was this guy that had a song title of ours, "Positive Mind," on his collar bone. He had this story about how he had broken his neck and about how our music and that song in particular got him through that sliver of time.

Just to know you've helped someone you've never met before has to be so rewarding.

Yeah and it's really cool for us because we're serious but we don't take ourselves serious. So, like, we're writing songs, we're just avoiding having real jobs and growing up. [...] It's crazy when someone comes out and it's like, "Hey, by the way, while you guys were d***ing around, you made this song that really affected me." And that's really cool and I appreciate that.

You joined the band when you were still in high school [17] — have you ever had a "real job"?

Well, not as far as like a career. But the first freaking six or seven years of us playing shows together, we didn't make enough money to support ourselves so we all had our weird little jobs and deals with our bosses to let us leave for the weekends to do our shows. [...] So, yeah, I worked at

a surf shop for five years on and off back home. It was really cool, because they would let us play in the parking lot on Labor Day and let us sell our CDs and T-shirts in the store and stuff.

Back to the the guy with tattoo; has that made you guys consider taking yourselves and the songwriting process more seriously?

I don't think I said that right before. We're serious about what we do and our song production, recording and writing. But, on stage, we don't really take ourselves super-seriously. We're just having fun. We're not looking to reach out to people.

Do you have any tour traditions?

Ah. [chuckles]. We used to have this little mini disco ball that Kyle [McDonald] from Slightly Stoopid gave us like 10 years ago, and we used to take it in our van and hang it and you would add things to it like a broken guitar cable. One time, it was hanging by handcuffs. It collected this weird junk, and we'd take it with us in every vehicle we had until recently. We lost it. [...]

Did it happen on this tour?

I think it was probably in between tours. When we get down with a tour, we're so beat and tired we unload the bus into storage and a lot of stuff is always lost and missing like, oh, half my clothes or where is my skateboard or the disco ball? We're always losing stuff.

Does your tour bus have a name?

No. [...] We don't have, like, "Old Betsy, she's been with us for 20 years." We don't have that. But we do have our van, and we've put like 280,000 miles on it and we've lived in that thing for six or seven years.

And you haven't named it after all that?

No; It's definitely a she and she's definitely abused. That's all we've got on it.

**Vans Warped Tour w/ A Day to Remember, Against Me!, Blood on the Dance Floor, Eyes Set to Kill, Gym Class Heroes, Lucero, Terrible Things, The Ready Set, Yelawolf, many more,
Ashley Furniture Homestore Pavilion, 2121 N. 83rd Avenue, Phoenix, 602.254.7200,
vanswarpedtour.com, Sunday, August 7, 11:30 a.m., \$43**