

TERRELL'S TUNE-UP

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WASP — Beasts of metal

WASP stings like a beast

Backie Lawless is anything but typical. Yet his disturbing message is a sign of the times. While Lawless and others like him may think they are merely entertaining impressionable youth with their shocking rituals, he says reports of youth violence and sexual assaults "Tipper Gore from *Raising PG* is an educated Society."

Well, we review. You can't buy publicity like that. I have to admit, most of my readers for Lawless' band WASP is because Tipper and her Parents' Music Resource Council (PMRC) hate them so much.

PMRC's latest target is WASP's new album, *The Headless Children*. It includes quotes from Lawless saying even before Sen. Albert Gore's misuse and her influence, Congress and Washington wives began using WASP as the best example of the worst example. The band was already hot stuff.

Hogwarts WASP loves PMRC and they know it. Blackie should send Tipper flowers — perhaps a black rose — every Sept. 10. That's the anniversary of the congressional hearing when Gore and her friends put WASP's single (*Exploded*) *Like A Beast* on the charts.

But, the PMRC is in for a surprise with *The Headless Children*. The cover art is classic heavy metal. A skull-shaped cloud hovers above a burning city. Beneath the clouds are familiar faces — Hitler, Khomeni, Manson, Jack Ruby, Lee Harvey Oswald, Rev. Jiminy Jones. It is like the *Pepperland* of *Lonely Hearts*.

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Club Band for the criminally insane. However, on various songs on the new album, Lawless comes out squarely against gang violence and drugs and in favor of parents spending more time with their PC kids. "Our parents are lost to our X-tended society."

Is this more apple pie? "If you had in mind the City Council campaign? Has WASP lost its sting? Or are they just growing up?"

"Can you see the real me, Mother? Mother?" Lawless screeches. The song is a hairy lament to his mother, a woman (though it is no worse than the 12th recent version of the Beatles' "Helter Skelter"). Lawless is trying to make it clear he is not growing up. "Sometimes I feel like an animal in a cage ... But nobody knows what's really going on inside me."

The band is at their best on the title song. It starts out with eerie horns and guitars, then goes to Castle Frankenstein. It then goes into a plodding heavy-metal riff that sounds like the entrance music for the now-wrapping tag team Demolition.

Finally, WASP cracks a song. "The Headless Children" that you've made lost their minds/This monster that we call the earth is loose/Cause the children have been left alone to grow."

The theme of children corrupted by the evils of the world — even the world's parents — blames on bands like WASP throughout the album.

On The Heretic (The Headless Children) is another fine tragedy of gang warfare not as the violence itself, but the fact that kids have turned into bloodthirsty zombies.

"Cangland's alive when mothers cry ... It burns on the fuel of shared pain and the agony in their eyes/They're the lost child."

A socially responsible WASP? Is Lawless shunning the excesses that made heavy metal in general

and WASP in particular synonymous with wild debauchery? Thankfully, not entirely.

The Headless Mean Man is a full-speed salute to the gory glory of hard rock.

"A tattooed madman, I am hell's wheel/And a wild child left in the sun/My mother was the wind, my mother was fire/Raised by the wolves and I grew wild."

It's a bragging song in the tradition of *Wheels Within* or *Meatchie Coocie Man*. If the PMRC gets their wish and record companies have to put warning labels on "tasty rock," *Mean Man* will ensure it for this album by its liberal use of some words.

Every time I think of it, and it doesn't happen every heavy metal album these days contains one slow syrupy song designed to appeal to those rowdy numbers. But here it sticks.

Lawless is no Roy Orbison and WASP is no Metallica. The group, which has been the yardstick by which heavy metal should be measured these days. The two groups share many similarities, but it is WASP lacks Metallica's innovative ideas about rhythm and minimalism.

(Young metalheads probably snicker at such serious, pompous analysis of the music they love. But headbanging is too much fun to be left in the hands of brainless teenagers.)

All in all, *The Headless Children* is not a bad effort. It is nice to know that we are back to real heavy metal. But it's nice to know the bravado is still there. Roll over, Tipper. WASP can still do it. Like a beast.

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