

For those who hear the words The Devil Wears Prada and think not of the famous Lauren Weisberger novel or of Meryl Streep's 2006 screen portrayal of the book's infamous villain Miranda Priestly, the news of an upcoming release from Dayton Ohio's beloved Christian Metalcore band of the same name is a welcome sound.

Having read a featured part of the band's blog on Myspace, I learned that their use of the name comes from a personal and original interpretation of the well known title. "It's the same concept as our lyrics "emeralds hold no hope..." Vocalist Mike Hranica wrote. Adding, "When standing before God, He won't care about your sweet Prada scarf or Gucci shoes or whatever. It's all Christian reasoning for the name, we didn't name it to attempt at being fashionable or whatever."

When I had the opportunity to talk with Hranica over the phone, I had to ask if the band addresses this idea from a social stand point as well as a Christian one. If he was also seeing things as though the money that's spent on these types of things could be put to better use by giving to the less fortunate. "Well, we're not homeless people that give every dime to charity. We all live on our own for the most part, and own nice things." He went on to explain, "I think it's just mainly a testimony out to the people that let materials come first over helping someone else out. I think there is a line to be drawn with the rich. Personally, I think no one should have as much money as some people do. I know a lot of rich people help out with charity, but they should probably help more. Not to judge, but... I don't know. It's not so much like take your money to something that's more suiting. It's kind of a message to people that need to think about life in general. People that put too much time into wanting to own something as compared to just the simple concept of love. "

The band's new full length is scheduled for release this spring and will be titled "With Roots Above and Branches Below." It will introduce listeners to a new chapter within The Devil Wears Prada's interpretation of sight and sound. When discussing new approaches and directions the band took with the album, Hranica said, "Musically, it's hard to say what we did differently besides just progress and hopefully write better songs and better parts. Just everything stronger and everything better. I guess that's what anyone would say prog~ression is, but lyrically there's a lot more themes to it than before. Like, we usually have this idea in mind, and I just write dozens of songs off of that. And there are songs off this record with that same general concept in mind: the Mike Hranica concept that I have. It's just the theme I always have going and always write about. But there are a lot more songs on this record that are about a specific person, a specific subject or just a specific group of people. So, lyrically I think it's a little more.... Themed might not be the right word, but I think everything about the record is a step in the right direction. Some friends have told me the same thing, so I don't know. I just hope the fans will like it." He also explained that this release, in parts, will target a different kind of listener. "It actually reaches out specifically in some songs. It's different than anything else I've written about before. It's to the people who know God but are struggling now and having a tough time as to what God wants them to do with their life. Maybe they're having a rough time with family or friends or

whatever. It reaches out. Rather than just to the people who are having a rough time and need to find god, it reaches out to the people that already know God and [we] try to convince them to keep pushing forward. But there's still the songs to the people who don't know about God at all too."

Hranica writes all of the band's lyrics and says "I don't think my lyrics are the best by any means, but I think it makes it easier for everyone else, the fact that I can handle it." He shared with me that he'd always liked writing and literature from an early age. Adding, "When I was asked to join the band it just kind of came in handy as far as being able to write lyrics as compared to some bands that all have to write together because they don't have a vocalist that's really meant to do it."

The album's title is not quoted, but inspired by a verse in the book of Jeremiah. "When I was trying to pick out an album name I had a few ideas involving branches and a tree. So I spent a lot of time just trying to find the right name to try and match the imagery that I had in my head. And to just follow this branches concept that I briefly wrote about and ended up writing a couple lines throughout the record about. It was just a matter of finding the right wording." He explained, "The branches idea came from what I was reading out of Jeremiah, in my Bible. And what I feel from it is the branches being, kind of like, the complexity of things and getting caught up in the branches. Getting too tangled up in the details of life rather than just enjoying the roots or where you came from and the simple elements that you've been blessed with." He quietly concluded, "I think that's what I was going for." Adding, "What I was [originally going off of was 'and its branches were broken.' That's actually what we were going to name the record, but not everybody in the band was into it. So I just kept looking for something along those lines.

I wanted to ask Hranica his opinions of the new songs. If he had any certain one that he was excited about getting out there and letting the fans hear. "The songs I liked most are the ones I'm starting to like least now, and the songs I didn't like at all, that I really didn't even know if I wanted on the record, now I kind of feel like those are my favorite songs," he replied. "So, I think there's certain ones I feel more strong about than others. I'm actually working on the song titles now and typing up all the lyrics for the booklet and everything. I would give you the song names, but they don't really have names yet." [Laughing]

The Devil Wears Prada's myspace page gets constant feedback from fans who want to share with the band how their music has affected them personally. "I get a lot of messages from people who say it changed them and helped them find God or help them get back to what they were originally going for. Or, I guess, just learned something from the lyrics. I don't know... [He pauses] It's special and important. I know that sounds cliché. It happens pretty often. We all kind of keep up to date on our myspace. As silly as it is. [We] just talk to the fans, or hear back from the fans. I don't respond to that many messages, but I try to talk to the people who have questions, good questions."

Even though the band's music and attitude has had a huge impact on thousands, Hríanica admitted to me that there is a lot of opposition towards their message and beliefs within the punk and metal community.

"There is a lot of opposition, but we don't really run into it. We've kind of struggled with it before, but for the most part, a lot of people are open to what we do. A large part of the bands we tour with feel differently than what we believe, but it's fine because we get along with a lot of bands. As much opposition as there is and as much hatred as there is towards what we believe in and what we preach and what our message is, there's plenty more people that can respect it, and we respect them too. I think, for the most part, we've seen it all. ... Maybe not seen it all, but we're able to handle it.

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