

AN INTERVIEW WITH BLACKIE LAWLESS, SINGER/GUITARIST/SONGWRITER OF W.A.S.P.

BY DAVE THE METAL GUY

Image has always been an attention-getter in the rock and roll business, often to the detriment of the music. It was inevitable that, in many cases, image would overshadow the music makers. In 2001, a quick scan of the music charts proves that style often supercedes substance (Limp Bizkit, Korn, Kittie, 'Nsync etc).

Fortunately, Blackie Lawless and W.A.S.P. continue to prove that a band can continue creating challenging, powerful and ruthless albums and grow musically, even if some people choose to paste a static image of the distant past in their minds. The shocking songs, raw-meat and blood-and-guts stage show of W.A.S.P.'s early 1980's debut are integral to the bands history, but they are just that. History.

Lawless isn't afraid to tackle titillating and disturbing aspects of sex and violence and other controversial topics in W.A.S.P.'s music, but the vocalist/guitarist/bassist/songwriter often isn't given proper credit for evolving musically over the bands almost 20-year career. The vastly underrated, richly textured 1992 concept album *The Crimson Idol* is a perfect example, as are all the albums right up to 1999's *Helldorado*.

But Lawless is concerned about what he sees

in the world in 2001, and along with lead guitarist Chris Holmes, bassist Mike Duda and drummer Stet Howland, he has created the dark, brutal, threatening and thought-provoking new album, *Unholy Terror*. *Unholy Terror* deals with socio, religious and political hypocrisy.

"I had a fundamentalist Christian



W.A.S.P.

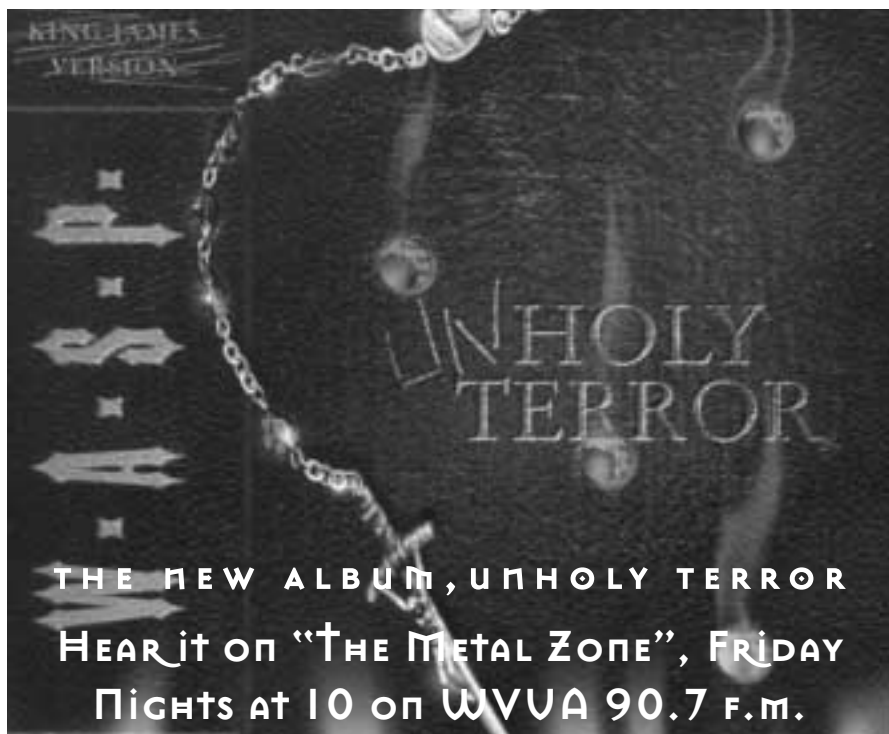
upbringing and I grew up seeing the world through a very different pair of eyes. This album attempts to draw attention to those hypocritical points of view", Blackie Lawless explained in a recent inter-

view with 'The Metal Zone'. "I was brought up in the church-I still have very devout belief of some things that I discovered when I was there. This record in NO WAY is intended to be

blasphemous or an attack on religion, but specifically man's interpretation of what they believe the Bible says..."It's not about attacking religion, it's about attacking organized religions that mobilize mass amounts of people to go out and create war, to bomb abortion clinics; to die under those banners. The whole time I was in the church--I have a pretty good foundation of the Bible--I never once read you're supposed to go out and bomb abortion clinics. Where'd that come from? I'll tell you where it came from, it came from indoctrination of people's ideas of what they think it's supposed to say, you know, and that's a dangerous thing. It's not just about religion, governments are famous for doing this stuff too...When you've got people going out and doing all kinds of whacked-out stuff like that in the name of whatever their religion is. I'm sorry man, that's wrong".

When asked about his feelings of certain songs on the new album Lawless explains regarding 'Loco-Motive Man'. "If you look at the common threads that have been in W.A.S.P.'s material over the years, a lot of it is about some kid standing up desperately waving his arms in the air screaming saying 'Please pay attention to me, show me some love and maybe I won't blow up on you'. When the [school] shootings do occur, even that is a symptom. The headlines you see are the symptom. They're not the disease. The disease is the parents not paying attention to the kids. How does it happen when some kid is creating some





arsenal in his basement and somebody don't know it? It's unthinkable. I know this sounds fascist but maybe there ought to be a test for some people to see if they're capable of raising kids. 'cause a lot of 'em just ain't qualified to do it. The problem with that is, they bring this machine into the world and that machine malfunctions and I'm standing next to it one day or like a mushroom I pop up in the wrong place at the wrong time and I get whacked, {Laughs}. You know, I don't want to deal with it".

Another stand-out track on the new album is 'Charisma'. "There is a dark side of charisma that mesmerizes all of us when we look at the world figures who possess that dark gift. It's kinda like watching Charles Manson doing an interview where he seems to be halfway serious then all of a sudden in the middle of the interview he breaks out into a Johnny Cash song {Laughs}. You know, that's why they got him locked up. The human mind as a mechanism is this unbelievable thing, you know, how it works. Why is it occasionally some of them break down? Why do they malfunction? To me it's fascinating, not that I endorse it. If I was in a room with him [Charles Manson] and had a gun would I blow his brains out? Hell yeah. It's still like, how does this happen, maybe I can learn something from it so the next guy that freaks out I won't be standing next to him, or at least I'll know what to look for. In the song there's a line that goes 'Preaching fear and using

religion with the Bible and Koran'. Oftentimes organized religions wield a mighty power over their congregations in the name of God".

W.A.S.P. has been targeted for ridicule and censorship by many of these hypocritical, self-righteous, self-appointed guardians of so-called morality from the very beginning of its career. The notorious P.M.R.C. (Parents' Music Resource Center) Senate Hearings in the mid 80's targeted many "objectionable" rock 'n roll acts (specifically W.A.S.P.) with the goal--no matter what its supporters claimed--of censorship. "They built their whole campaign on crap. I told people for 15 years that they don't give a damn about censorship, they're trying to get a man in the White House, that's exactly what they're after and lo and behold look what happened. It got close, too". It's 17 years later and the United States is the only world super-power and the country's economy and way of life are more robust for more people than ever before. But Tipper Gore, a PMRC spearhead and wife of then Senator Al Gore, seemed very likely to become the first lady after the 2000 presidential election. It didn't happen, but the fact that the men on the Democratic Party's presidential ticket appointed themselves moral watchdogs horrified Lawless, who is used to taking these shots from the conservative, religious right-wingers in the Republican Party.

Blackie Lawless certainly isn't a man who will allow himself to be backed into a corner, and he comes out fighting fiercely on *Unholy Terror*. W.A.S.P. takes a provocative lyrical approach on the album, and it's reinforced by the brain-pummeling music contained within. Blackie then goes on to say about *Unholy Terror*, "The message in this album is to think for yourself, seek out answers for yourself and not be manipulated (as I was) by some guy selling you 'prepacked' beliefs whether they are religious or political".



BLACKIE
CIRCA 1987



BLACKIE
CIRCA 1999



Censored by
PMRC!