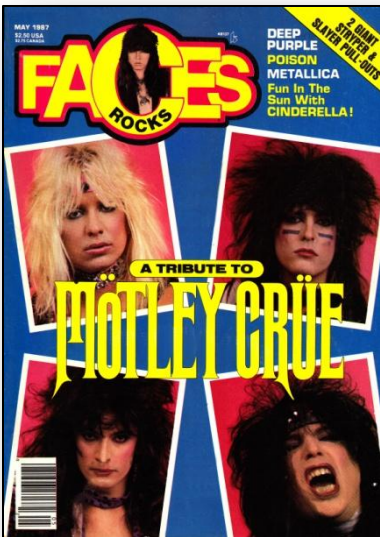


BLOODGOOD IN THE MEDIA



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On the face of it, Christian rock doesn't have a hope in hell of surviving in the heathen world of heavy metal. At the risk of committing blasphemy, the very term sounds ridiculous. Purported to exist as an alternative to the supposed satanic influences present in the music of bands such as Motley Crue and W.A.S.P., Christian heavy metal takes gospel music one over-amplified step forward. Angelic choruses meet guitars that could destroy the walls of Jericho in a unique approach to preach to today's youth.

This attempt to reach kids who wouldn't set foot inside a church originated in the rock musicals of the early '70s (e.g. *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Godspell*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*) that wedded rock 'n roll with stories from the Bible. Now Christian hard rockers Stryper have had their share of mainstream success in the '80s, again proving that the combination isn't as crazy as it first sounds. Not surprisingly there are a host of other bands knocking at heaven's door. Mike Bloodgood, leader of the Seattle-based band **Bloodgood**, is one of the pioneers of this style of music.

"To me, heavy metal is probably the most appropriate music to present the Christian side of the coin," claims Bloodgood. "The Bible is full of drama, and heavy metal is very powerful. We have a song called 'Crucifier' where we recreate the flogging of Christ. We not only sing about the gospel, we illustrate it for you."

The theatrical approach isn't too surprising. Vocalist Les Carlsen is a veteran of the Broadway musical *Hair* and Mike Bloodgood first performed in a band called Crossroads whose specialty was hard rock versions of the songs from *Godspell*. Joining with fellow Christians David Zaffiro on guitar and Mark Welling on drums, the two formed Bloodgood in 1984.

The band is serious about ministering through music, but one look at the leather and chains tells you they are equally serious about being heavy rockers. It isn't always easy for a group like Bloodgood to convince their Christian brethren that what the band is doing is right. Hardcore evangelists have always considered rock 'n roll's music. Says Bloodgood, "The album burner mentality is kind of funny to me. People are looking for other people to voice their own prejudices by putting themselves behind the cross and making them Christian. The devil never invented anything. He just rips off what's already been made."

So what about the idea that heavy metal bands are tools of the devil? Does he seriously think that satanic messages are contained in the grooves of records? And who plays their albums backwards? "Nobody believes that Motley Crue or Ozzy Osbourne worship the devil. I don't think these guys are Satanists but they are preaching a similar philosophy. I'm personally really sick of these guys saying they have no responsibility to their audience. They say they are not religious but yet they're saying taking drugs is cool, or committing adultery is cool. They may not worship the devil but I've got a question to who they are serving."

Some Christian heavy metal is hype, a gimmick used to sell records by groups that aren't good enough to make it without bearing the cross. While that once may have been true, these days the diversity and quality of the bands on the scene rivals that of the mainstream. And Bloodgood insists that commercial considerations are the last thing on his mind. "My purpose is not to be a commercial hit but to present a message. The

gospel message has always been the same but the way you present it changes from generation to generation. If you're trying to hit the bid time there's no reason to sing Christian lyrics. We are in it because we feel strongly about what we are doing. Jesus isn't a novelty item."

After achieving some initial success with a four-song demo tape called *Metal Missionaries*, which received airplay on Seattle radio stations KCMS, Bloodgood was picked up by Frontline Records which released the band's self-titled debut album in March 1986. The commercially-tinged metal on *Bloodgood* should help the band follow Stryper into the mainstream.