



Left: Roger, the bassist of the punk band Less Than Jake, performs at the Warped Tour. The band connects with their fans through comedic live performances. Opposite: Sevendust's Lajon Witherspoon bolts out his aggressive lyrics last Tuesday. Below: Lit's lead singer A. Jay Popoff thrusts into his best rock star pose. In story: Buddy, Less Than Jake's trombone player works the crowd with silly antics involving the masked "devil man."



All photos by Andrew Long of the State Press

# Warped Tour distorts bands and fans

BY DAN MAREK  
STATE PRESS

The Vans Warped Tour consumed the Celebrity Theater last Tuesday, featuring 30 bands, a ton of athletes and thousands of fans.

The largest touring event of its kind, the tour has gained the attention of many fans, bands and athletes from across the world.

"It's been great. This is our first Warped Tour, and it's way cooler than I ever expected," said A. Jay Popoff, lead vocalist for Lit. "This is a tour that I always wanted to do."

But the 110-degree climate was no help. It turned the packed concert into a sauna.

"I think the hot weather is effecting the mood of the crowd and it's really hard to get into the music when you have the sun pounding down on you," Popoff added.

Although most of the bands' followers crammed near the stage to dance and mosh, the first aid office saw few casualties.

"All you got to do is get in a mosh pit for three minutes and you'll know that your gonna need all the oxygen you can get just to stay up," Ice-T said. "Put that on fuckin' hot asphalt, you could die out there."

Event staff cooled down the situation, giving fans free water.

"It's understandable that these tours are expensive to put out, but to totally take water away is wrong. No one is going to starve to death, but you could dehydrate out there pretty quick," Warped Tour promoter Kevin Lyman said.

Using squirt guns and water bottles, many bands gave the fans a nice washing.

"I give respect to anybody who goes out there in 100 degrees and puts on a show," said John Connolly, guitarist for Sevendust. "As long as you can get up there and convince people that what your doing is cool, you have earned all the respect in the world from me."

## What Dreams May Come

Despite the heat, many musicians were still on the high of being given the opportunity to travel with this self-proclaimed "Punk Rock Summer Camp."

"It's a dream come true," said Damion, guitarist and vocalist for RiverTX. "A couple years back your like, 'Wouldn't it be cool one day if we were on the Warped Tour,' and now we are. Now it's like 'Wow, were on the fuckin' Warped Tour.' Plus, it's a good thing to put on your resume."

Some musicians were more excited about touring with their childhood idols than just being featured on the line up.

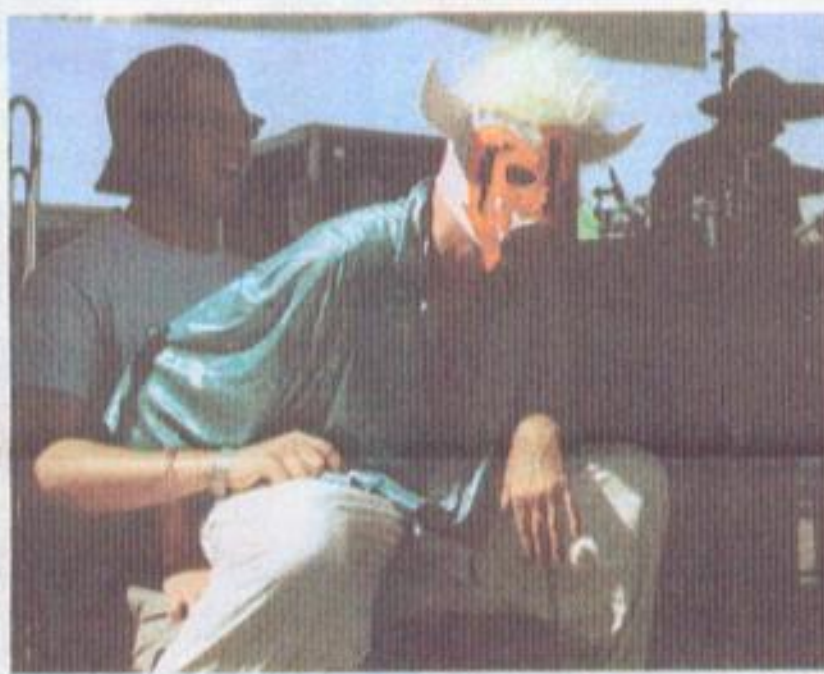
"I started listening to Suicidal Tendencies back in the 1980s when we had all these skateboarding parties," said Henning, singer in H-Blockx. "Suicidal and skateboarding were always the same thing. Seeing them walk around and on stage all the time is kind of like a life long dream."

Some Valley bands also made it to the tour after duking it out two weeks ago at a battle of the bands in Tempe. Although 5 on 1 won the contest, local favorites Dislocated Styles, Tolerance, Size 5, Pollen, Sloth and El Centro also played at Warped.

"It's a great show for the local bands because they've had the best audience all day in the air conditioning," Lyman said. "It was planned that way. We did it last year and it worked out well, it was just packed in there. Hopefully it will help out the local scene a lot."

## Opening Up To New Music Markets

Although its known as a punk tour, Warped embraced a variety of bands and sounds that would normally be on competing tours.



"Even though these bands genres are spread out, all these bands have the same ethos of the music business," said Vinnie, drummer for Less Than Jake. "Five years ago, Ice-T probably wouldn't have gone as well on this tour. But he's trying to build things up on the Internet and things like that, it just fits well into it."

The addition of Ice-T and other hip-hop artists to line-up stirred most of the controversy surrounding the tour.

"If you read the message boards on the Warped Web page, man they're getting a lot of shit for it. I think it's a good thing that they're expanding," said Jason "King" Kendal, lead vocalist for The Amazing Crowns.

Lyman received comments via the Web saying rap should not be involved, Ice-T said.

"Kevin came from Lollapalooza (where) he was the stage manager," he said. "The fly thing about Lollapalooza was that it had Jane's Addiction playing next to the Butt Hole Surfers, Henry Rollins, Ice-T and the original Siouxsie and the Banshees. To me, that's what festivals are all about."

Other bands looked at the tour as an opportunity to expand their music to a new audience.

"I think it's good that were on (the tour) and showing people that may not really dig hip-hop, how hip-hop can be creative. How all the hip-hop that you see is not really all that," said Will.I.Am, rapper for the Black Eyed Peas. "We're blessed to represent hip-hop to a new audience."

"It's like we're performing to Martians and we're the spokespersons for humans. Sometimes the only thing they know is on the radio. We get played on the radio too, but that's not what the Black Eyed Peas is all about—were a touring hip-hop band."

Travis Barker, drummer for Blink-182, said, "I think its 100 times better than any other year. Even when I wasn't playing on the Warped Tour, I'd watch it. I'd get sick of seeing punk band after punk band. I think it's good that it's opening up."

"Kids that have never listened to Ice-T before can see what's up. I don't think he's drawing in a big hip hop crowd to the event, but I think that a lot of punk rock kids are able to see what real hip hop is. I think it's good that they brought hip-hop to the tour because it was getting sort of recycled. It keeps it fresh."

Although the musicians have reacted well to the change in genres participating in the tour, many fans still disagree with the change.

"I found a 'fuck Kevin Lyman Web site' out right now,"

Lyman said. "It's funny because we have had hip-hop on the Warped Tour before. The Alcoholics have been out there, Ozomatli had hip-hop elements. A lot of skaters listen to hip-hop, they're listening to diverse music."

"I could put the same tour out every year. Rancid, NOFX and Bad Religion last year was the kings of punk tour. I try to give the audience a lot of credit, so I said let's go out and be diverse with the line-up without straying to far from our roots. Over-all I think that everyone is here to have a good time, and they think there is enough room for hip-hop on the Warped tour."

## Sticking to the Grass Roots

Keeping the tour simple in its infrastructure has also added an appeal to the musicians. Not only does it keep ticket prices low but the merchandise booths featuring musicians signing autographs keeps the fans in touch with the musicians.

"It doesn't bull shit around with video screens and stuff like that," said Phil Jamison, singer for Grinspoon. "It does mess around with sponsors and stuff, but it's not like \$50 a ticket either. They're a lot more level headed about it. The bands all play for the same amount of time."

The bands all play a 30-minute set which gives more opportunity for fresh bands to spotlight their talents.

"Since we only have 30 minutes, that party is more like a 30 minute version of our normal set," Will.I.Am said.

And no matter what time it was, a band was performing on one of the four stages.

"What I'm impressed with is the infrastructure and how they're able to get this to work," said Kendal, of The Amazing Crowns. "Its amazing. When you really think about it—the vendors, the bands, merchandise and stage equipment—the planning it takes and the way they have to do it all so quickly is impressive."

When the bands finished playing, many of them would take time to visit their merchandising booths to talk to fans.

"Our band is ranked up there in visibility," said Chris, guitarist and vocalist for Less Than Jake. "We go hang out at our merchandising booth. We still do our own fan mail, all the kids that write in, we hand write em back. That's a lot of letters. These kids think they're your friends, and they are. We are just a fan intensive band."

Much like their fans, some of the popular bands idolized their old-school predecessors.

"Ice-T, you just can't knock him. He's just one of those cats you just have to respect," Will.I.Am said. "You can't say anything about it. He's responsible for a lot of things in this industry."

Donnie, drummer for RiverTX, agreed. "It's cool eatin' lunch and seeing that Ice-T's right next to you," he said.

The veterans also seemed to have fun playing off the younger bands idolization.

"I meet the kids out here. I know a lot of them, there is a lot of respect and that's good," Ice-T said. "To me the G's out here are me and Michael Muir. Suicidal (Tendencies) is old school; I don't give a fuck, they still kick ass."

The Warped Tour has undergone many changes this year. According to the artists, it's for the best. Opening a new platform for musicians to showcase their individual styles will eventually cater to new audiences spanning all age groups.

"In 1991 when Lollapalooza started, that was the real big thing," said Chris, of Less Than Jake. "That was eight years ago. There kids here that are 14, they were 6 then. They weren't going to shows, they were watching Sesame Street. So things are definitely changing; they have to."