

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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SHOW 39

Guitarist's workload runs away with him

HEAVY METAL: Danzig's John Christ needs a break, so he's looking forward to a tour.

By DON MAYHEW
McClatchy News Service

Most rock musicians going on tour hope they make it through the experience fairly sane and in one piece. John Christ of Danzig has his sights set higher: He's hoping to catch up on his sleep.

Besides playing guitar on the recently released "Danzig 4," Christ has been busy rehearsing almost daily with the band as it breaks in a new drummer (Danzig launches a national tour today). He wrote and played a song for a coming compilation CD. He's composed music for ABC television promos and a recent HBO TV movie and is working on more potential TV projects.

So it's only with a trace of irony in his voice that he says: "I think I'll get out on the road and relax a little bit. Yeah, I can sleep any time I want when we're out on the road."

Christ admits, though, that even a band with an image as tough as Danzig's gets road-wear.

"Life on the road is a lot of fun, traveling and meeting new people and longtime fans you've seen before," Christ said by telephone. "But at the same time, you get some scheduling conflicts where you have to go 600 miles overnight between shows two or three nights in a row. That can be tough in the winter."

"You get to a point where all you can think about is, 'Wouldn't it be great to be sleeping in my own bed — just for one night. That's all I ask.'"

The good news for Danzig fans is that they get to see the band fresh. The bad news, Christ said, is that it always takes the band a couple of weeks "for everyone to hit the groove. We have a new crew, a new stage set-up — it takes time to get it all together."

Also new is drummer Joey Castillo. Longtime Danzig drummer Chuck Biscuits, who performed on "Danzig 4," has left. Castillo's career includes a stint with Sugarfoot.

With Glenn Danzig around, there's no danger that these changes will alter the tone of his band.

Danzig's dark songs, brutal demeanor and fascination with mystic arts have led some to label him an occult figure. There's even — gasp! — some backward recording on the new album, one



LIKES IT LIVE: Guitarist John Christ, right, says he gets more room to express himself when Danzig tours.

Danzig

- **Where:** Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre, 8800 Irvine Center Drive, Irvine
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- **How much:** \$17.50
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of the top 10 signs that a performer worships the devil.

It's a reputation Christ finds hilarious.

"It's funny the different twist each journalist will put on it," Christ said. "And to watch how (Danzig's) going to react to a certain interviewer, I learn a lot from reading his interviews."

There's no question that Glenn Danzig is inspired by religion. Martyrdom and godliness abound on "Danzig 4." Of course, it's the heresy and the failure of religion that interest

him. "The idea of religion, and especially ancient religion, captivates his imagination," Christ said.

Christ admits to some frustration playing within the confines of Danzig, weaned as he was on the likes of guitar slingers Angus Young and Ted Nugent, whose solos could rarely be described as disciplined.

"A song is a song, written a

certain way for a reason," Christ said. "I have to keep in mind when I'm playing songs that Glenn had an idea, an image in mind — visual, lyrical, musical, whatever. My job is to help him get across that image."

He said the flip side is that playing with Danzig has made his playing direct.

"It's an exercise in discipline and concision, concision meaning I have a very short duration

to say a lot," Christ said. "Solos in the band are mainly a commentary on the lyrical content and vibe of the song."

On stage, though, things open up.

"That's why I encourage people to come down and watch me play out all over the place," Christ said. "The live show is more musical, more flashy, more intense than the records."

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