

Slipknot

JASON ARNOFF



Penguin
Random House
EBURY PUBLISHING

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About the Book

Ignoring every rule in the book and more besides, Slipknot have achieved unprecedented success, selling two million copies of their debut album worldwide. Outraging authorities and courting controversy at every turn, they have wowed crowds across the globe by risking life and limb during extraordinary live performances. This is a tale of struggle, fear, madness and hideous injuries, all seen through the eyeholes of the band. And best of all, no one knows what they look like.

Featuring an introduction by the legendary Ozzy Osbourne and an afterword by Gene Simmons, plus exclusive quotes from Slipknot themselves, *Inside the Sickness, Behind the Masks* fully documents the Des Moines crew's transformation into unorthodox mega-stars.

With 'nu metal' as the new punk, Slipknot are the most significant and electrifying new band since the Sex Pistols.

About the Author

Jason Arnopp is a former rock journalist who is now an author and scriptwriter. He has written several *Doctor Who* audiobooks, including *The Gemini Contagion*, *UNIT Dominion*, *Army of Death* and the title play in *The Demons of Red Lodge and Other Stories*. In addition, he wrote *The Sarah Jane Adventures: Deadly Download* and has contributed to the anthology *Behind the Sofa: Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who*. In 2011, he wrote and executive-produced the Lionsgate US horror film *Stormhouse*, and the following year two of his horror novellas – *The Beast in the Basement* and *A Sincere Warning About the Entity in Your Home* – were published as Kindle exclusives. He also script-edited the 2012 film *The Man Inside*, a thriller about a young boxer starring Ashley Thomas, Peter Mullan and David Harewood.

SLIPKNOT

INSIDE • THE • SICKNESS

BEHIND • THE • MASKS

JASON ARNOPP



Preface

Fittingly, it was Halloween in 1998 when I first laid ears on Slipknot.

It was always fun, visiting the Manhattan offices of Roadrunner Records. Their A&R gov'nor Monte Conner would always take some pleasure in playing me the latest - and allegedly greatest - signings to the label. This afternoon, Conner had a particularly confident gleam in his eye as he played me rough cuts from a new work-in-progress album by a little known Des Moines act.

The first Slipknot song I heard was 'Spit It Out' - all crazed raps and massive guitar riffs which squealed like pigs, *Deliverance*-style. Next came the truly warped marriage of thumping techno and raging metal that was 'Surfacing'. I was hooked, and not even the subsequent blast of Amen's new demo recordings could outshine the memory. Then Monte showed me a picture of Slipknot.

Oh.

My.

God.

These people looked like characters from the finest slasher movie there never was. And they actually had the music to back it up. Could this be - whisper it - the perfect band? Indeed it could. In ten years of working at *Kerrang!*, the UK's weekly rock Bible, I had rarely been so heavily bowled over by a new outfit.

Today, when I tell people that Slipknot are my favourite band, they tend to look at me as if I had said, 'I derive intense enjoyment from dancing on hot coals.' While

Slipknot are loved by a few million people worldwide, they have at least as many detractors. These people take great pleasure in sneering at the band, writing them off as a mere gimmicky flash in the pan. My stock response is that, even if Slipknot turn out to be one or two-album wonders, being an incendiary band of the moment never did the Sex Pistols any harm. This is the brightest, fiercest flash in the pan you could ever hope for.

Slipknot are all about today, and they are a thousand times more exciting right here, right now, than any number of generation-spanning rock behemoths who stumble onwards, despite having cut their best material decades back. Even if the individual members of 'Knot lose the plot or end up plugging solo projects which suck the big one, they can always tell the grandchildren that they shook the world with a mighty band who made countless draws drop.

This book is not only about cataloguing Slipknot's rise to fame, but tugging back those masks and taking a look at the people behind them. For nine grown men who jump around stages for a living, the 'Knot men are remarkably complex characters and I've tried to capture that, while examining the slings and arrows which have been thrown in their general direction.

In January 2001, I experienced first-hand how far the band's sickness had spread. Leaving Japan's Narita Airport, I dropped some pocket items in a tray which went through the X-Ray machine. On the other side, a female security officer spied my Slipknot key-ring and eagerly exclaimed: 'Ah, Slipknot! I love them!'

This band clearly have friends in high places. Here's to them making many more with their second album. Dust, I think it's fair to say, will be eaten.

*Jason Arnopp
London
January 2001*

Introduction by Ozzy Osbourne

On January 20th 1982, I bit the head off a bat onstage in Des Moines, Iowa. At the time I was pissed out of my mind. I don't drink any more, and if you think I'd put a fucking creature in my mouth today, you'd be crazy. When you're drunk you think you can do anything.

These days I don't go to many rock 'n' roll gigs as everyone seems to be smoking weed and getting stoned which is not my scene. But when I do go you'll probably find me hiding in the corner like a lemon, while everyone's expecting me to leap onstage and do something outrageous like rip the singer's head off!

It seems that the situation with the bat and me caught Slipknot's attention when they were kids. It probably made them go, 'I want to be in a band and I want to be crazier than *that* fucker!'

I know the feeling. When I was about 14, this mad Texan called PJ Proby really inspired me. He was banned from playing a load of halls in the UK. Back then, everyone in bands were fucking idiots in suits, with short hair, playing guitars up by their chins and all doing the same thing. But then along came PJ Proby. At one gig his arse accidentally came out of his trousers and his bollocks flopped out onto the audience. I thought, 'Fucking A!' I loved it, because PJ had the balls to carry on after such an embarrassment. He *had* to be a good frontman!

I first heard rumblings about Slipknot when they played on the Ozzfest in the summer of 1999. My wife and manager Sharon and the kids kept telling me about this

really cool band on the Second Stage. Sharon's very tuned in to everything that's going on - I've got the *easy* job, to be honest with you. I just go down to the venue, get onstage, do a gig and go home. I listen to my son Jack too, because he wakes up every day and plays new music that makes me afraid the house is gonna cave in. That summer, he really got off on Slipknot and said they were really cool.

The exciting thing about the Ozzfest is that there's always a rumble about who's happening that year. Before you even hear the word, you get the feeling from the crowd. In 1999, that band was Slipknot. I'm really happy that the Ozzfest helped break them. It proves that the idea Sharon and I had years ago wasn't all that wrong. When we first put the Ozzfest on in 1996, no-one was playing our music anymore. We thought, 'Fuck you - we'll show you there's an audience!'

We started off small, doing a few of them to see how it went. I don't know anything about promotion, but I knew we'd either have a giant turd on our hands or a fucking great Woodwork. We booked four shows and it grew from there, by word of mouth.

On the surface, Slipknot deal in shock value, but I'm not about to put them down for that. They've got a really good visual approach to what they're doing, and their interviews are out there. A band like this comes along once in every generation. In the Seventies it was The Sex Pistols, whilst - like it or not - in the Eighties everybody wanted to look like Bon Jovi. Someone has to stand out from the pack and Slipknot have got that edge over other bands. Maybe I've been around too long, or I'm showing my age, but to me a lot of newer bands sound very samey. It's all growly, 'You will die tomorrow!' stuff.

The band's masks are great. It's like when Gene Simmons had all that make-up on. People used to wonder what he'd look like without it. It creates a mystique. Slipknot can go off stage, get dressed in normal clothes and

stand in the audience. People wouldn't know it was one of the band. It's like Adam West and Batman!

The fact that a success story like Slipknot are a by-product of the Ozzfest makes me so proud. They're a great inspiration and they've put a bit of fucking jelly-juice back into the business. They've now gone on and done their own thing, which is tremendous.

It's all proof that when I handed the torch over to them, it wasn't such a bad idea. And in future, Slipknot will hand the torch over yet again. Long may they live!

Ozzy Osbourne
October 2000

P.S. I wonder where that bat is now? Maybe he's sitting in Bat Heaven somewhere, with his own bat roadies...

0

Zeroes to heroes

You come into this world a zero, and you leave a zero.
Shawn Crahan, #6

DOMINATION

‘Jump the fuck up!’

The adrenaline rush could have powered Disneyland for a year. Most of the 40,000 people in this field had spent the last 30 seconds crouching down, at the request of a masked humanoid figure on the huge stage before them. This was the calmer mid-section of a gargantuan song named ‘Surfacing’ which brutally mashed metal and techno together. Now, as the dreadlock-faced frontman roared this order, we leapt to our feet as the song’s chorus slammed back in.

‘Fuck it all, fuck this world, fuck everything that you stand for!’ raged the singer, and you’d swear the sky was about to crack and rain down in shards.

The video screens on either side of the stage made the nine angry men in this band appear all the more larger-than-life. All wearing individually customised masks, and numbers from zero to eight, they presented a formidable array of characters. Among their number were an evil clown, a demonic pig and a towering six-foot-plus behemoth who banged his head like he was attempting to crack the stage with his skull.

When Slipknot were onstage, the air was thick with noise, blood, sweat, urine and weighty metallic objects. This evening, they stormed through a 40-minute

jackhammer set, leaving a whole ocean of new converts bruised and agog.

This was August 2000, and Slipknot had not merely taken over England's Reading Festival. They were sinking their teeth into the world.

Rock 'n' roll was perennially expected to churn out freaks, extroverts and characters who were dangerous to know. Yet we had never seen anything like this.

SIGNS OF SICKNESS

After the summer 1999 release of their self-titled debut album, Slipknot proceeded to stomp all over the world, beating the living shit out of themselves and each other.

Incredibly, for an album on an independent record label, *Slipknot* would sell over two million copies worldwide, fashioning a bright new prong on the crown of the fledgling nu-metal genre. The album hit platinum status in America, sailing way over the million mark. It also struck gold in various territories, including Australia, Canada and the UK.

Given the fact that Slipknot were nine boiler-suited characters from Des Moines, Iowa, who wouldn't understand the word 'compromise' if it stomped up to them and pummelled their masks with both fists, this was the unthinkable.

As their success dawned, drummer Joey Jordison told me: 'We never even expected to sell 30,000 copies, let alone this. Maybe the world needs us, in a weird way. We filled a void and we're glad to be that band. We were just doing something we felt was normal - even if it may be sick and completely disgusting to other people.'

In the year 2000, Slipknot's website www.slipknot1.com (one of the two which they themselves ran) received well over 10 million hits. Fan sites sprung up so quickly, it was difficult to keep track of them. When the band finally approved a range of Slipknot boiler suits for commercial

sale, they were eagerly snapped up at \$120 a pop. For the first time in years, this was a convincing band who you didn't just have to love - you could *become* them. Fans made their own versions of the band's masks and turned up to shows in full 'Knot regalia.

People had been crying out for Slipknot - even if some of them didn't realise it. By the late '90s, even punk had lost its ability to shock. It was now an acceptable commodity. Sanitised pop-punk bands like Blink 182 rotated on MTV like a shop window kebab skewer. The Sex Pistols had reformed for a swift cash injection, caused a minor stir in worldwide terms, then shelved their great swindle once again. Even The Prodigy, who had digitally reinvented punk, had reached the end of a mammoth world tour and launched an indefinite hiatus, in order to catch up on the latest instalments of *Tomb Raider*.

Slipknot, then, were truly the new punk - a vital shot in the arm for this worryingly comfortable status quo. Even better, in musical terms they were the best thing to hit the world in some time.

They were the ultimate nu-metal band.

Why? Let's start with a definition of nu-metal itself. To understand this genre, you have to understand how it was born - and thus, how 'old' metal was buried.

By the time the '90s kicked off, the likes of Mudhoney, Soundgarden and Nirvana had already started to exert a stranglehold on America's generation X.

A new age of guitar music, which had yet to even be labelled grunge, was easing its way under the spotlight.

While grunge popularised rock once again, it did little to help extreme metal's ailing cause. Hard-edged metal bands were facing a long, cold winter, which many of them would not survive. Not that most of these acts had produced anything incredible for some time. Fans of hard music might not have admitted it at the time, but the genre had yet to better Slayer's barnstorming *Reign In Blood* album

or Metallica's viciously progressive *Master Of Puppets*, which had both been released back in 1986.

The even more subterranean death metal movement - a musical genre founded on mega-fast snare hits, gory lyrics and evil gurgles - had also become complacent and was already starting to repeat itself. Another year brought another Cannibal Corpse album, with yet another list of ways to slaughter the innocent. All perfectly good fun in its own right, but where was the next real buzz going to come from?

In many ways, grunge provided all these bands with a richly deserved kick in the guts.

Texan cowboys Pantera were doing a sterling job of keeping ugly music alive. Sadly, their landmark 1992 album *A Vulgar Display Of Power* had to compete with the sleeper success of Nirvana's 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' single. It was a thankless task. Mainstream press, TV and radio couldn't care less about the likes of metal crusaders like Pantera or Anthrax. Of far more interest to them was getting the scoop on Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain's February marriage to Hole's Courtney Love.

Nirvana undeniably delivered their own breed of catharsis, even if it was generally self-pitying as opposed to self-empowering. They also dragged a whole new audience into the rock arena. A fair proportion of these new grunge fans weren't dyed-in-the-wool rock fans - they were kids who identified with this loose movement's sentiments, or lack of them.

Slackers didn't especially want to have a good time if they didn't have to, and the likes of Nirvana and Mudhoney basically reassured them that it was okay to do very little. Rock clubs became infested with grunge and its attendant anti-fashion codes. Almost overnight, fans went into 'Seattle lumberjack' mode, growing their hair long and modelling flannel shirts. The who-gives-a-fuck look was well and truly in vogue.

Grungers made it their business to be as down-to-earth as possible. They didn't introduce their individual members onstage and they most definitely didn't split the audience into two halves and launch a competition for both sides to yell louder than the other.

None of which was a bad thing, in its own right. Yet if you wanted straight-down-the-line, hard-edged bands who didn't wear overly long cardigan sleeves, you would have to search pretty hard. Metal bands started feeling the pinch, both in terms of record sales and the size of venues they could play. Glam rock in particular all but perished - a casualty which many music fans would describe as a laudable example of natural selection.

NU MODEL ARMIES

Grunge died tragically with Kurt Cobain's suicide in April 1994. Something new and more intense had already started to rise from the ashes, as rock's cyclical evolution continued. Nu-metal was coming.

In early 1993, Rage Against The Machine sowed the seeds. These four LA agitators were a godsend for those who preferred their knuckles white. Coming on strong with a hard-line political manifesto, Rage had a musical strategy to match. Combining rap and rock like they had never been combined before, the band would take their songs way down low, then build them up again ever so slowly, letting the anger gradually uncoil ... until it *exploded* like a thousand mortar bombs. At that time, Rage seemed like the most incendiary band on the planet. Seen in smaller venues, they were a truly amazing experience. Their 'Killing In The Name' hit also introduced a lyrical catchphrase, which would be embraced by rebellion-hungry fans and condemned by critics for its playground chant mentality: *'Fuck you, won't do what you tell me!'*

Up and coming musicians took careful notes of Rage's modus operandi - and few more studiously than Korn. This Bakersfield, California posse hit the rock scene two years after Rage - by which time the latter's creative stagnation had arguably already begun. If Rage had paved the way for nu-metal, Korn defined it. Their self-titled 1995 debut album was produced by nu-metal's sonic godfather Ross Robinson, who was destined to work with Slipknot four years later. It saw the band assimilating some of the best sounds of the last seven years. Here was a killer cocktail of Rage's powder-keg dynamics; the schizo vocals and big, tribal beats of Faith No More; and a dose of grunge's bleak introspection and rumbling bottom-end. All of these elements were sucked in and spat out in one fantastic, resentful eruption.

Musically and philosophically, *Korn* was one gnarled, bloody raw album. This band positively encouraged America's formerly introverted, apathetic misfits to thrust a livid middle finger in the face of the high-school jocks who would traditionally bundle them into a locker and brand them 'faggots' for sporting hair longer than an Army buzz-cut.

Korn were also about getting shit out of your system, as opposed to wallowing in it. They swiftly came to attract and represent kids who had suffered any form of abuse - mental, emotional, physical, sexual ... the list goes on. Their shows became euphoric self-help sessions, as increasing numbers banded together to yell, 'You can suck my dick and fucking like it!' along with singer Jonathan Davis. Being a freak was now fun. It was okay. In fact, it was absolutely the thing to do.

Korn was the album which taught Robinson how to produce - and made him as much a celebrity as some nu-metal musicians. During the recording process in 1994 at Malibu's Indigo Ranch studio, Robinson wrenched some incredible performances from Jonathan Davis. The album

climaxed with the hair-prickling 'Daddy', which saw the frontman descending into his own personal hell, breaking down in a flood of very real tears. Not a tune to file under Easy Listening.

Davis subsequently said: 'People think "Daddy" was written because my father abused me, but that's not what the song's about. When I was a kid, I was being abused by someone else. I don't really like to talk about that song.'

You can only imagine what it must have been like to watch Davis implode in that vocal booth.

'He had been in a frenzy of tears all night,' Ross Robinson recalled. 'All he could think about was what his mom and dad would think when they heard the song. He didn't go to sleep. The next day, we set up and I told him, "You know what to do on this one".'

The outcome surprised even the producer.

'Personally, I don't think I've ever done anything better,' Robinson told me in October 2000. 'That's God's record that right there brother!'

Robinson's passion for capturing ragged emotion on tape subsequently helped lend nu-metal its shape. This was a movement based on catharsis - provided the purveyors were for real.

Korn's influence on '90s rock is as vital and far-reaching as that of Metallica, Faith No More or indeed Nirvana. Davis and co spawned countless nu-metal bands - the best of whom lent the basic formula some new spin.

LA's Coal Chamber fed on Korn's churning rage, emphasising similar grooves and song structures. So did Limp Bizkit, who focused more on the sound's hip-hop elements and eventually found considerable success in doing so. Even established bands like Machine Head and Sepultura took note of what Korn were doing and weren't too proud to pick up a few tips themselves. New bands seemed to spring up every five minutes, generally with unusual hair, customised names, bizarre fashion statements

and obligatory clip-on personal traumas. Spineshank, Orgy, Disturbed, (hed)PE and Mudvayne were just a few of the second-generation acts inadvertently spawned by the Bakersfield five. Then, of course, came Slipknot. Korn's influence was undeniably present in some aspects of the band's sound - a fact which the Des Moines posse would never refute, while qualifying that they only liked the band's first two albums.

Korn laid down a template which Slipknot twisted, expanded upon and ultimately outshined. This, the Des Moines maulers achieved by virtue of the following ...

VISION THINGS

Slipknot looked incredible from the moment their record label Roadrunner began circulating promotional photographs in early 1999. Their red boiler suits and strikingly twisted masks immediately grabbed your attention and provoked a reaction, whether it be horror from parents or exclamations of 'Cool!' from their offspring.

Immediately, you could picture US comic book guru Todd McFarlane designing dolls of the band, as he had with Alice Cooper and Rob Zombie. Dolls of all nine members, to boot. That was another fantastic thing about Slipknot - the fact that they were literally the size of two nuclear families combined. They were not so much a band as a swarm. Did they multiply when they came into contact with water?

Early in 2001, McFarlane told me: 'I'd love to make action figures out of Slipknot. The only problem is, if I do it, I'll have to make all nine. There's not one guy in that band who doesn't look cool enough to be made into a doll.'

The *Spawn* creator had always been into horror, and Slipknot reminded him of the film *Halloween*. 'There's something about masks,' he said. 'You can't get a reaction from the person's face. When you can only see someone's

eyes through slits and you can't tell whether they're sad, happy or angry - that's quite haunting.'

McFarlane confessed that Slipknot were far more appealing to him aesthetically than sonically. 'I'm a child of the seventies,' he laughed. 'But if Slipknot are packing halls and juicing up the kids, then as far as I'm concerned it's no different from The Beatles.'

Until Slipknot sprang up like a rash, modern rock had been lacking visual excitement: over-the-top stuff to look at. In nu-metal, Coal Chamber were one of the few bands who brought with them their own distinct sense of style - multi-coloured hair, insectoid braids, facial tattoos and numerous piercings. They played an often under-valued role in the evolution of rock fashion.

Adidas provided Korn's hip-hop-style street gear, although the band's company of choice would later become Puma. It's debatable whether this brand mentality was preferable to grunge's thrift-store chic. Either way, hard music lacked eye-candy punch. Again, this was partly due to the post-grunge depression: slacker bands had stripped away what they perceived to be rock's glitzy bullshit and phoney stage personalities.

While Korn and Coal Chamber made more of a sartorial effort, they tended to wear their gear onstage and off - a fact which admittedly proved their integrity. Nevertheless, the decades-old Alice Cooper concept, of the rock star becoming uncontrollably consumed by a Dr Hyde-style personality before striding maniacally onstage, remained seriously outmoded. Grunge had sadly thrust a stake through the heart of larger-than-life alter egos, and pyro-packed stagershows were similarly forbidden. Kiss, those all-American originators of The Rock Star As Super Hero, had scrubbed off their make-up long ago, in 1983. Trent Reznor, the frontman of industrial gods Nine Inch Nails, may have been an enigmatic, dark miserabilist, but he was hardly transforming himself into a bat-lord up there every

night. Even good old mad Al Jourgensen of cyber-rockers Ministry simply threw on a hat and cool shades, and placed a skull on his microphone stand. It was scarcely high theatre.

Slipknot, on the other hand, turned themselves into a different lifeform every night - and proudly wore a uniform of their own devising.

Throughout the '90s, a handful of bands had attempted this brave metamorphosis, but failed to advance beyond limited cult status. US metallers GWAR dressed up like chunky, cartoon aliens and squirted green gism over their bewildered audiences. Starting out as Richmond, Virginia art students hungry for laughs, they certainly achieved their goal. Giving themselves ludicrous names like Balsac The Jaws Of Death, Beefcake The Mighty and Nipples Erectus, they stomped around the world sexually assaulting stooge priests with crucifixes and generally acting the goat. They were good fun, but the problem was their music. It was, in a word, rubbish.

Comedy-rockers Green Jelly sounded and looked terrible, dying a swift death after releasing 1993's lousy *Cereal Killer* album. Sure, we wanted entertainment, but we weren't about to buy any old tat. An image alone didn't make you reach for your wallet.

White Zombie were one of the few bands who found success through excess. One of the biggest metal acts in America circa 1995, their US tour in support of their *Astro-Creep: 2000...* album saw them cram explosions and neon red gravestones into arenas the length and breadth of the nation. Even better, this band were causing offence and getting into trouble with various principled institutions - the hallmark of any proper rock band. The Zombie's Say You Love Satan T-shirts certainly weren't going down a storm in the country's Bible Belt. Death threats and bomb scares - some of which possibly came from religious types - followed the Zombie-mobile around America, only serving

to amplify their profile and momentum. The band ultimately burnt themselves out, however, leaving mainman Rob Zombie to form a new self-titled solo band and don more undead make-up and milky-white contact lenses than ever before.

In October 2000, he told me: 'Slipknot's music is pretty crazy and I always hear how great they are live. I think their whole look is pretty cool. When bands do anything like that, it always gets my attention. Dark, scary and fucked up is always good. Every couple of years, there's the new extreme band. One time it was Slayer, then it was Pantera and now it's Slipknot.'

Even Slayer's own Kerry King - who initially dismissed the 'Knot out of hand - readily concurred that this band were the new flag-bearers for filth. 'It's the new age of Slayer, in my eyes,' he said. 'They get the same reaction. There's chaos onstage and offstage.'

When it came to Alice Cooper-isms, no-one knew the score much better than Marilyn Manson. This man was fundamentally Alice reborn for a modern-day audience. Manson's early band The Spooky Kids went all-out to grab the attention of Floridian kids with such OTT antics as throwing meat into the crowd and performing oral sex on each other.

Manson, the band, may have taken a few years to find a place in the hearts of rock's faithful, but when they did, it was clear that Marilyn himself was the new messiah. The concept of the rock star had been reborn - albeit courtesy of a gangly hedonist.

Manson and his band backed up their headline-grabbing controversy with an intelligent and painfully heavy album in 1996's *Antichrist Superstar*. The Bowie-esque frontman may have looked great and his band rocked hard, but most importantly he had something to say. Rob Zombie was always entertaining, but Manson's brain made him more dangerous than any spookshow. In 'The Beautiful People',

Manson perfectly lampooned a world which ranked surface over feeling. He was truly the people's fiend, opening audience's minds up to accepting potential comic book characters as heroes once again. Slipknot? They had enough OTT characters in their ranks for a whole rack of graphic novels.

Nine Inch Nails frontman Trent Reznor originally signed Marilyn Manson to his own Nothing Records label, and believes his protégé opened the floodgates for a beast like Slipknot.

'You have to give Manson a degree of credit for heralding the way,' he told me. 'It's fun to dress up and offend people, and it's fun to be ridiculous and outrageous. That's a healthy bit of rock 'n' roll that disappeared for a while. It's probably good that it did disappear, because when it came back, you realised you missed it. I don't think there's anything wrong with grunge or the do-it-yourself punk movement it sprung out of - or the Washington DC hardcore movement. But there's also nothing wrong with some fucking good entertainment and outlandishness. Extremities have always been what attracted me to anything in music, books, movies, art, film or whatever.'

Reznor recalled rock's lingering anti-showbiz mood when he signed Manson, post-grunge. 'If you had any kind of show, you were full of shit. It was all about being real, "man", wearing your gas station attendant outfit onstage and being just like everybody else. But you know what? Fuck that. I wanted my rock stars four-dimensional and giant. I wanted Gene Simmons' boots biting my dick off. Excitement, blood, gore! Even with someone like David Bowie, there's a charisma and a larger-than-life aspect. It's a hero. If the effect can be pulled off right, there's nothing at all wrong with that.'

'I'm not taking credit for this,' he continued, 'but I encouraged Manson, back in the day. Yeah - of *course* piss people off! Yeah - don't be afraid to do any of that type of

shit! He wasn't afraid, but I tried to nurture him in that department. Whereas maybe a big label might say, "Hey, maybe if we tone it down a little bit, the record can get sold in K-Mart." Fuck that. Don't be afraid of the politically correct grunge movement. What happened? They're gone.

'Slipknot win my approval,' said Reznor. 'I'd much rather see them than a fucking Creed or a disposable, hip rap-rock crew going, "Look how mad we are - we're fat kids from California!"'

Kiss bassist Gene Simmons added: 'When people say of your band, "Gee, I hate their music but their show was the best ever", that's grand praise. Because if everything depends on whether or not people like the songs, you're dead.'

THE X-MEN

While Slipknot might like to play down this factor's importance, one of the joys of the band is that so few people know what their real faces look like. Many fans work it out, and hunt down their heroes after shows. But if they want a souvenir snap of themselves with their heroes, the band conceal their features. This makes for some awkwardness when some people get a little snap-happy without permission.

Slipknot percussionist Shawn 'Clown' Crahan: 'When I bust someone for taking a picture, I never take the camera from them. I just ask them, "Please, for me and for you and for what we're both trying to do, don't put that photo out anywhere." There are a couple of photos of me out there, but that's okay. Onstage, I'm a masked man. Anywhere else, I don't like my picture taken.'

Laughed the band's frontman Corey Taylor: 'I'd love to spread this sick rumour that we were all chicks. It'd rule to keep that rumour going for about six or seven months, and

really work the shit out of it. People would be going, “But I *met* them!””

Few rock bands besides Kiss had tried concealing their true identities. If groups did, they were generally laughable.

As far back as 1979, British metal band Samson had a masked drummer named Thunderstick. US punk sickos The Mentors wore executioner-style hoods, but turned off audiences at large with their misogynist babbling.

Big-haired Floridian rockers Crimson Glory came out with stylish-looking metallic masks which appeared moulded to their faces. This caught the imagination of a limited audience during the campaign for their first album. Come their second LP, however, the band modified their masks to reveal half their faces. On the third, they ditched the masks altogether - and inadvertently threw their careers away, too. The fundamental problem here, was that no-one cared what Crimson Glory really looked like.

One of the more entertaining attempts at maskery came from The Dwarves’ guitarist Hewhocannotbenamed, who often appeared on stage with the now-defunct San Francisco punks wearing nothing but his gimp head-piece. Rap-rocking duo Insane Clown Posse kicked up a storm in the clubs of Detroit during the mid-’90s, acquiring a cult following with their Kiss-esque evil clown make-up, ultra-violent lyrics and the riotous nature of their gigs. The latter involved Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope squirting their audience with a local soda pop named Faygo. By the new millennium, however, their musically blinkered antics had acquired a more ‘selective’ appeal.

Also on a clown tip were The Prodigy, whose frontman Keith Flint didn’t exactly conceal his wild-eyed fizzog while performing, but nevertheless adopted a character which was equal parts Bobo, Satan and Johnny Rotten. Similarly, the band’s MC Maxim Reality developed his own onstage

persona and look, marrying a kilt with those increasingly popular cat's eye contact lenses.

Over in Scandinavia, a new breed of anti-Christian metallers were stirring. Dubbed the 'Satanic terrorists' by the UK press, bands like Burzum, Mayhem, Darkthrone, and Emperor were daubing corpse-paint on their faces and awarding themselves such grand titles as The Lord Of Silence (Emperor guitarist Samoth) and Count Grishnacht (Burzum mainman Varg Vikernes).

On the whole, masks were far more likely to be seen on the faces of superheroes than bands. Batman and Spiderman concealed their identities with iconic secondary faces, while Superman and Wonder Woman managed to remain anonymous simply by donning spectacles.

Then there were the slasher film slayers. Jason Voorhees of the *Friday The 13th* series famously sported a hockey mask from the second sequel onwards; *Halloween's* Michael Myers modelled a rubbery creation with hair, reportedly moulded from the face of *Star Trek* legend William Shatner; and the ghostface killers of the *Scream* trilogy rocked the Edvard Munch look.

Slipknot liked superheroes and horror movies. They wanted to get away from the whole concept of image, by dehumanising themselves.

Masks were cool. It was amazing that no-one had done this before ...

NO-ONE GETS OUT OF HERE ALIVE

It was a rare live artist who gave you that frisson of wondering whether everybody present would survive their performance. In the midst of a Slipknot gig, though, you couldn't help pondering exactly when one of Shawn 'Clown' Crahan's airborne oil drums was going to stave in the skull of some innocent bystander. When the band's DJ Sid Wilson hesitated for that agonising split-second before diving from

a high balcony, it could quite conceivably be the last moment you'd see him alive.

Slipknot were also, at any given moment, likely to cause a riot or be dragged offstage on stretchers with blood pissing out of their masks. This, needless to say, gave them an edge.

There were, of course, a few precedents for this kind of danger in rock 'n' roll. The Dwarves were notorious for cutting their sets short, due to fighting with members of the audience, or simply among themselves. This tended to make their shows the equivalent of a double espresso - short, but delivering a major buzz. Legendary maniac GG Allin developed an underground name for himself by cutting himself to ribbons, defecating onstage, frolicking naked and generally causing utter havoc against a sonic backdrop of frenzied punk.

So few bands even have a discernible presence, let alone manage to intimidate. Ironically, while most people poked fun at the aforementioned Satanic Terrorists of Norway, some members of their collective transpired to be quite literally the most dangerous metal 'stars' ever. Besides the genre's despicable racist overtones, various bands burnt down churches, which in one instance led to the death of a fireman fighting the blaze. The genre's most incredible event saw Burzum frontman Varg Vikernes jailed for life, after stabbing Mayhem leader Euronymous to death.

At that point, it seemed that extreme music could hardly become more radical. And thankfully, it didn't. What it was about to do, upon Slipknot's arrival, was rise to a whole new level and become a great deal more fun.

All the best rock 'n' roll frontmen were out of control, or at least gave you that impression. In Slipknot, you had nine of these frontmen to look at, all at once.

This was the most exciting band in the world. Which, by 2001, would put them under no small degree of pressure. Still, when you learn exactly what it took to drag

themselves under this microscope, and how long they fought to get there, you won't expect them to throw in their masks any time soon.

Just as with metal itself, the story starts with Ozzy Osbourne. The Double-O not only helped Slipknot out with the Ozzfest: he provided them with one of their first life-shaping events...

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Breeding ground

People ask me, 'Why Des Moines?'
I say, 'Why *not*, you ignorant motherfucker!'
Shawn Crahan, #6

THE OZZ-MAN COMETH

If you believed in destiny, as Joey Jordison assuredly did, then it was no mere coincidence that in January 1982 Ozzy Osbourne chose to wreak havoc in the hometown of kids who would go on to form Slipknot. Judging by the fuss Joey Jordison's parents made, you'd swear that their native Des Moines was under attack.

That morning in the Jordison household, a six-year-old Joey could tell that something major was going down. The unmistakable buzz of outrage streamed from the living room. Joey walked through the door, still half-asleep, to see his parents sitting in front of the television, engaged in shocked discussion.

'I can't believe what the world's coming to!' his mother told her husband.

Gazing at the local TV news report, Joey soon gathered that a heavy metal musician named Ozzy Osbourne had bitten the head off a bat, live onstage in Des Moines.

This had been viewed dimly by the townsfolk and the press.

'I immediately thought that Ozzy ruled,' Joey would recall. 'I knew something was going on with that music, and I had to get my hands on it. I bought his *Blizzard Of Oz* album soon after.'