

Precious Metal

Put away your slide rules, math-rock fans. Dead Child, the newest band to come from the Slint-Tortoise-Shipping News axis, is all about furious and heavy thrash metal. Make all the ironic devil horns you want: They're serious, and it's great.

By Joseph Lord

Dave Pajo, Michael McMahan and Todd Cook spent a lot of time lounging around a tour van during Slint's 2005 reunion tour. Band members will chat about damn near anything while in transit between shows, and on this particular day, Pajo and Cook were gabbing about thrash metal.

Surprised? It turned out that Pajo grew up listening to Iron Maiden and Black Sabbath. The math-rock-loving hipsters and critics who worshipped Slint might have been shaken to their clunky-black-glasses core, but inside the indie- and alt-rocker was a stifled metalhead with a childhood dream of becoming a horror makeup artist. *Why not start a thrash metal band?* someone in the van suggested. Why not, indeed?

"I was so young when I was into all this stuff," said Pajo, who, in addition to Slint, has played with Tortoise, Zwan and Will Oldham. "I saw Iron Maiden in 1983. I was like 10 years old. It stayed with me. I always liked that there seemed to be an element of danger to the music, that it sounded a little scary. I guess it's sort of like going back to basics."

Now Pajo, McMahan and Cook

form the unlikely core of a thrash metal band named Dead Child, which reaches for the crunchy, fast guitars of bands not often associated with Louisville's more intellectual brands of rock. The touchstones are Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden and early Metallica — palm-muting, neck-break drumming and Dominic Cipolla's Ozzy-like singing.

Dead Child's five members are so atypical of a metal band — and the name is so macabre — that the band has to endeavor to be taken seriously by some who are sure the band is some elaborate insider joke.

"It's not ironic," Pajo implored. "This is a hurdle we're going to have to face. Because of our pasts, people think it must be some sort of Spinal Tap thing. Even if they go to a show, they might think that. There's no irony to it at all. But people who think that aren't that into metal that much. They probably don't need to be there."

Dead Child is dead serious. The band members are definitely not laughing at thrash metal, but embracing it. And with it, they're embracing the metal kids clad in black T-shirts and denim jackets. They're embracing the people