

David Pajo: Dead Child

by Erin Broadley for SuicideGirls (<http://suicidegirls.com/>)

Dubbed the "first indie metal supergroup" by WIRED Magazine, Louisville, Kentucky-based metal band Dead Child is very much the sum of its parts. Formed by Slint alums David Pajo (guitar) and Michael McMahan (guitar), Tony Bailey (drums), Dahm (vocals), and Todd Cook (bass), when the band set out to record their debut, their goal was to record an album that recalled the '70s and '80s metal of their youth and cut no corners when it came to the aggression of the message and playing style.

The result is Dead Child's Attack -- metal that's not just hard, but fun, and without any of those cookie monster vocals that have come to dominate the genre. It's good ol' Southern metal that'll make you want to shotgun a PBR, kick the dog and write home to your momma.

SuicideGirls caught up with David Pajo during a recent afternoon off in Los Angeles to chat about the band's debut and the current state of metal music.

Erin Broadley: How has the reception been so far with the release of Attack?

David Pajo: It's been good. The first part of the tour we were opening for that band Witchcraft and they had a good audience that was open to the kind of stuff we do. After that we did some shows with Skeleton Witch that were also cool because they're more of like thrash metal. People have been cool but it's also been clear that we don't really fit in anywhere. It has made it evident to me that there's a lot of people we don't appeal to [laughs]. For indie kids we're too metal and for metal kids we're not extreme enough.

EB: Right. I read an interview you did where you talked about how you were expecting a lot of metal heads to be put off by the band because of the different approach you guys are taking. You talked about how metal has changed so much over the years. In what ways has it changed?

DP: It seems like there's almost, like, rules or criteria to be able to be a metal band nowadays. You almost have to project a certain kind of image; there's a certain way of singing that's considered what makes it metal... that cookie monster kind of vocal. It's actually gotten really strict. There's a technical musicianship level [too]... I guess metal has always been sort of flashy.

EB: Like, you've got to shred on your guitar solo [laughs].

DP: Totally. Or you have to go the other route and be a slow, stoner jam band, more atmospheric and droney. If you don't fit in or if you take a little bit from all of those different sub-genres, it's almost like people don't know where to put you. They don't know if they like it or not.

EB: Growing up it always seemed that if you just had a certain attitude, then you were metal. It didn't have to be about meeting all the criteria as much as it was just a lifestyle or an attitude... just really fun.

DP: Totally. That's exactly it. It was the same for punk, too. When I was younger, it was an attitude. When I was a teenager there was a point where those two attitudes kind of met. That was when the crossover thrash metal scene happened... what I like the most... when Anthrax started getting into punk and Metallica and all those bands. I thought that was a really good time for music. They were open to punk and the punk kids were open to the metal stuff. It was a cool period. It was open-minded. But yeah, I think a lot of that's lost nowadays. If you were into indie music but your tastes are a little bit heavier and you like some metal but not all of it, nowadays you're just a poser. I feel like it's a bit misguided because it's not really those people that are the enemy. The whole poser idea is from the '80s when there was hair metal and guys with bleached

blonde hair... that was when the whole poser thing started. There's not that many people [now] that are posing to look hairy and gross [laughs].

EB: Yeah, I really want that style. I really want to look like I smell [laughs]. I think in any genre of music where fans are predominantly male there's always going to be that pressure for authenticity, whether it's hip-hop, whether it's metal, there's always these conditions about what makes somebody authentic.

DP: That's true. I can understand that. I want to feel like the band that I'm into is genuine. You don't want to think that they're putting on a front or that they have some ulterior motive. So I can understand that to an extent. But there's very little completely pure in music, really. Everyone has some dark motivation, whether it's just to get laid... you know what I mean? What gets me is the people who think we're really lame because we aren't brutal enough. We just aren't full on brutality. That's a '90s thing. Metal was more of an outlet, however it came out. It was what it was. Judas Priest wasn't a brutal band but I doubt anyone would say they weren't heavy metal.

EB: Right. Well, except for all those people who were totally surprised when Rob Halford came out of the closet.

DP: Oh, I know, yeah [laughs].

EB: You did an interview with SMN News and had a great quote where you said, "playing metal has nothing to do with trends or fashion, it's just unfinished business."

DP: Yeah, that's what it is for me. I feel like it's something that I was into when I was younger but I never really went for it. So this was/is my chance to bang my head.

EB: Back when Dead Child first got together and started playing in 2005-2006, what were some of those early gigs like compared to now?

DP: Oh, wow. We did a tour before we had any recorded output released and it was a headlining tour for some reason and it was just a really bad idea. There was like no promotion and no record and no one knew what we sounded like. We didn't have a MySpace page or anything [laughs]. I think it got promoted as like, "Oh the guys from Slint have a metal band, that will be enough to get people interested." But it was kind of like shooting yourself in the foot because if you're a Slint fan, you're not going to like [Dead Child]. We don't sound anything like it. We don't even have the same kind of criteria. With Slint we were self-conscious about doing something that was different from everybody else but that's definitely not the case with this band. We just want to do music that gets us excited. I think Slint had loftier ambitions but, to me, that's part of the charm about this band. It's not lofty, Dead Child is totally on a level that anybody can relate to and understand.

Attack is available now on Touch and Go/Quarterstick Records.

web address: <http://suicidegirls.com/words/David+Pajo%3A+Dead+Child/>