



MADE IN TAIWAN

ChthoniC Bring the Manners Back to Black Metal

Things that are awesome about ChthoniC: They're the biggest metal band in Taiwan, they're the first Asian band to tour with Ozzfest, they just put out an elaborately packaged ten-year anniversary DVD called *A Decade on the Throne* (no pun intended, we think), they have two girls in the band (quick, name another metal band with two girl members. Can't, can ya?), oh, and the drummer wears a spike-studded leather surgical mask when he plays that looks really neat and now whenever I see those old ladies walking around Chinatown wearing surgical masks I think of that and giggle.

Another big thing about ChthoniC is that they've been banned in parts of China because of their support for the Taiwan independence movement. A brief history: In 1949, when Mao was on the slaughter, killing everyone who didn't love communism (50 million people), Chiang Kai-shek said "Fuck this" and fled to Taiwan to start a capitalist China. He had to kill a bunch of indigenous people

but it worked. Currently, Taiwan operates as an independent democratic country, with free press, no censorship and a thriving economy. Basically they're Canada, while China is like Africa but freezing. Still, when you live in Taiwan, your address is Taiwan, Republic of China. Communist China has all these laws to prevent them from becoming an independent nation and they're not allowed to be part of the UN, which sucks because that's where all the fun is (if you're a country).

Heavy stuff for the Ozzfest audience to ponder after they get bored of head-butting each other and puking, eh? Anyway, I spoke to ChthoniC's main guy, Freddy Lim, on the first leg of their tour. They were in Albuquerque, so we had plenty of time to chat.

Vice: When did you first get into metal?

Freddy Lim: When I was in junior high school. I started with all of the glam 80s metal bands like Guns N' Roses and Motley Crüe.

We call them hair bands.

Yes, apparently. Then I listened to more and

more heavy bands like Metallica, Slayer, Exodus, Testament, Megadeth. And by the time I was in high school I was listening to black metal like Carcass and Morbid Angel. I worked my way up to it.

Is there a big metal scene in Taiwan?

Not really, but it has gotten bigger than it was 10 or 11 years ago. When we first started playing, we were the only metal band in Taiwan who wrote original songs. There were a few other bands but they just covered hair-band songs. Sometimes we would play for three fans. We never expected what we have now, where sometimes we play for thousands of people.

Have you toured all around the world?

We've played in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and a few shows in European metal festivals, but this is our first tour in the US.

What's your favorite place to play so far?

Maybe LA. The fans in Asia are so polite and the fans in the States are much crazier. There



were some fans who showed their titties at Ozzfest. We like our fans in Asia too, of course, but sometimes they are so serious during the show, trying to analyze your guitar technique instead of really getting into it.

Why have you been banned in parts of China? Well, not just us. Beastie Boys, U2, Rage Against the Machine—many Western bands are banned in China. All because we express our political messages. We stand for freedom and human rights, and so we have to be banned.

That means you're cool if you're banned. It makes the kids like you even more.

Maybe, but I really don't want to say things like that because I hope that China can improve their human rights situation soon.

Your tour is called the UNlimited Tour as a protest against the UN. Why are you protesting?

The UN doesn't allow Taiwan to be a member, which is really unfair. We should be a part of the UN, of the WHO—all the international organizations, and we should have the same basic rights that you have.

What's the story behind your album *Relentless Recurrence*?

The UN doesn't allow Taiwan to be a member, which is really unfair. We should be a part of the UN, of the WHO — all the international organizations, and we should have the same basic rights that you have.

It's the classic story of a female ghost-demon in the 16th century. At that time there were pirates who came from China to rape the women, destroy the families, and grab all the treasure. The story is about a woman named Natao who committed suicide after her family was killed by pirates, and became a demon. She went to China to get revenge against the pirates, and when she finished her revenge she was cursed by the gods and ghosts. The curse was that she has to do it all again and again, forever, and that is what's called *Relentless Recurrence*.

Wow, that's perfect material for a metal concept album.

Yes, it's quite different from the stories in China. In China there are always happy endings, but in Taiwan all the stories are tragic. Also, we use a traditional instrument called a *bessa*. It's like a violin, and it has a very sad tone.

You mentioned that the corpse paint you wear is also a part of Taiwanese mythology.

Yes. Because we are fans of bands like Emperor, Immortal, and Enslaved, we wanted to try Scandinavian-style makeup, but it didn't fit our faces. So we made our own kind of corpse paint. It's the style of corpse paint that ancient Taiwanese priests wore to communicate with ghosts. It's called "The Makeup of Eight Generals."

What's the craziest thing that's happened on Ozzfest so far?

There are quite a lot. The other day we were in the autograph-signing tent and a female fan said to us, "You made my pants wet five times." We never expect this kind of feedback from our fans so we are always stunned and never know how to react. But we always say thank you.

MEG SNEED