

‘Hemlock’ tears it up on a Gallup stage

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 01 September 2017 05:37



Heavy metal band going strong since ‘93

A favorite heavy metal band from Las Vegas, Nevada, Hemlock, made a stop in Gallup on their 2017 “Skele-Tour” at the Juggernaut Aug. 25.

Together for more than 17 years, since 1993, they have played concerts with the likes of Lamb Of God, Slipknot, Drowning Pool, Slayer, Korn and others.

Chad Smith – Lead Vocals, Bass, 1993–present; Jezy Ward – Guitar (2010–present); Brian Smith – Drums (1993–2002, 2009–present); and James Gelber- Guitar (2013–present); have been a local favorite for over 10 years. The last album “Mouth of the Swine” produced in 2015, has created an even stronger following amongst the hardcore rockers here in the Southwest.

Considered a heavy/thrash metal band, Hemlock has always focused on their fans and their live shows, typically touring for 8 to 9 months out of the year. The band, fronted by bass guitarist/lead vocalist Chad Smith, makes a valiant effort to be real with their fans while on tour, often staying at the venue hours after the last song to hang out with fans.

Smith, with his long dreadlocked hair and workingman attitude, also handles the merchandise booth at venues and is the heart of the band. Nine albums are currently available from Hemlock: *Mouth of the Swine*, *The Only Enemy*, *No Time For Sorrow*, *Bleed the Dream*, *Pigeon Holed*, *Shut Down*

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Back in The Day, and Viva Lock Vegas.

The Sun got the chance to speak with front man Chad Smith, outside the venue prior to them taking the stage.

Sun: Chad ... Hemlock ... dude.

Smith: What's up, how you doing?

Sun: Good. How's it going with you guys?

Smith: Rocking and rolling we love it, it's been a beautiful day here in Gallup, playing here, and it's going to be a fun time.

Sun: When was the last time you guys were here?

Smith: We played here about a year and a half ago, and another time out in Window Rock during the summer time with Devil Driver; and that was a big show too. One in April the other June here in this neck of the woods, and it was fun.

Oh, we love it out here, been playing here probably since 2001, so here we are still rocking and rolling having fun The people out here are awesome.

Sun: Pretty soon they're going to just have to change the name of this place to the House of Hemlock (*laughing*).

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Smith: Oh, right on (*laughing*), yeah we try to always come back once a year or twice if we can. When we're rolling through, Gallup is always on the tour list.

Sun: How is the tour so far?

Smith: Amazing. We started out in July, and so far we've done 47 shows and on the last stretch of it. All the shows have been awesome. We've been up to Montana, Colorado, down to California and played at the Whiskey a Go Go about two weeks ago and it was fun. Now we're working our way through Arizona, New Mexico and into Texas. We've also been doing some fun sightseeing, rafting, hiking, and went to Yellowstone.

Sun: Cool. What's new with Hemlock these days?

Smith: We had an album come out, and we've been touring hard behind that album, Mouth of the Swine. We've been playing the new stuff and playing the old stuff.

Next year is our 25th anniversary, so we're going to do a bunch of shows next year; we've been writing some new material so we're hoping to have a new album out next spring.

We went through all of Europe last year, Switzerland, Germany, Czech Republic, Ireland, Berlin, lots of rocking and rolling, lots of head banging.

Sun: Did you ever think this would happen back in 1993?

Smith: Ah, you know of course you always want it to happen, to dream about it, but you just keep working and working. Too stubborn to give up, but I love to do it.

Here we are and it's still a lot of work and a lot of fun too. It's cool because we've been so many

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places and met so many people that we wouldn't have if it weren't for the music.

Sun: Same guys still with you?

Smith: My brother Brian and I still ... and we've gone through a couple guitar guys because it's a lot of time out on the road and away from their families, so it's pretty rough. Or someone gets married, or has a kid, or something like that.

Sun: Cool.

(Looking at the band's enormous black school bus parked out front, I just had to ask this next question.)

Now no one can't mistake you guys being here, you have your huge Hemlock ride here; I got to ask ... do you guys have a name for it?

Smith: The bus, I call it the Tour Tank. We thought about calling it some other name, cool like Betty, Frank, or something. We actually don't have a name for it, but it's a 35-foot long international school, but that we painted black and it looks like a prison bus. *(Both of us are laughing.)*

We were hoping to get a year out of it, but here it's been going on seven years now. We've driven it all over the United States, all through Canada ... everywhere. We built bunk beds in it; it's the ultimate tour RV for a band.

Sun: You've toured with some heavy duty bands, huh?

Smith: We've toured with everybody you can think of. Bands I thought about when I was a kid.

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All the bands I grew up listening to as a kid. And it's cool sharing the stage with them all.

Sun: You've heard Testament is going to be here next month out in Window Rock?

Smith: Yeah, I've heard that from my friend, Vice President Jonathan Nez of the Navajo Nation. He's actually been to three of my shows, and he said he's a metal head (*laughing*).

Sun: Okay, here's strange question for you Chad. What's one thing people don't know about you?

Smith: My nickname is Tender Bear because I don't like needles at all ... so that's why I don't have any tattoos at all. I do have a little blue dot on my right leg when I was a kid teasing my sister, and she stabbed me with a pen (*laughing*). That's my prison tattoo (*laughing*).

I collect action figure dolls like He-Man, Star Wars; I collect Garbage Pail Kids stickers, Muppet toys, all kinds of stuff ... I like silly things.

Sun: Well, Chad I know you guys have to get ready, so I'll end it here and check you guys out inside.

Smith: We are going to rock tonight, and always so cool to be here. Keep your chins up and look for us next year. We'll see you all soon.

For more information visit Hemlock, www.hemlockworld.com , or on Facebook/Hemlock.

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