

FEATURE

MEET THE

SUPER FANS

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WITH THIS WEEK'S COVER STARS, CREEPER, INVITING YOU INTO THEIR CULT, WE MEET THE SUPERFANS OF ROCK TO CELEBRATE YOUR DEVOTION TO YOUR FAVOURITE BANDS

Showing support for your favourite band is a rite of passage. Often it's buying their latest album or a T-shirt. Yet for many, a band is not merely a bunch of musicians with a few tunes, but a community. A culture. A way of life. The ways that fandoms show their devotion are as numerous as the groups themselves, whether it's the inclusive attitude twenty one pilots' Skeleton Clique exhibit towards each other, or the show of solidarity in The Callous Heart patches sported by the Creeper Cult at gigs. But it all starts somewhere: that moment you hear a song that hits you between the eyes and changes your life forever.

For Panic! At The Disco superfan Leighton, that moment came one day in 2011 when The Ballad of Mona Lisa came on BBC Radio 1. "I was 11 and I had never heard anything like it before," he remembers,

clear as day. "The moment I heard it, it was something I needed more of. I never caught the name, so I was typing lyrics into Google and I discovered they already had three albums! They became my favourite band instantly." And so began Leighton's journey from the cold and wet of northern Wales into Brendon Urie's colourful world.

A similar appeal captured the imaginations of Jess and Emma from Liverpool when they discovered the might of BABYMETAL. "We've always liked Japanese culture and used to be in the emo scene," explains Jess. "BABYMETAL put those things into one and it became an amazing thing to us." Naturally, their enthusiasm for cosplaying lead them to don black and red kimonos when BABYMETAL played London's O2 Forum Kentish Town in 2014. "We wanted them to see that we were wearing the same outfits to show our support," says



"Avenge's music has always been there for me when I'm down"

MILLIE, EGHAM

I ♥
AVENGED
SEVENFOLD

MILLIE, 13, EGHAM

Jess, who since that show has never left the house without wearing something BABYMETAL-related. Emma adds: "It makes us happy to see others in the outfits as well. It's made a lot of friendships."

Emulating the clothes and hairstyles of your idols has been a thing long before the warpaint and holes'n'leather garbs of Black Veil Brides' Army, but with the eruption of punk and goth in the late-'70s, devotion demanded a new wardrobe. Being a fan meant a commitment to turning heads wherever you went and showing your colours – even if those colours were strictly black and white make-up.

Turning heads is something 13-year-old Avenged Sevenfold fanatic Millie has been doing since she donned the gear of her hero, M. Shadows. "It started off casually when it was bright outside one day and I realised, 'Hey, these sunglasses look like M. Shadows' sunglasses!' Then I got some flannel shirts and a denim vest which I studded," grins Millie, whose friends have now taken to calling Matt. "I just felt really comfortable in them, and dressing in boys clothes has always been something I've done."

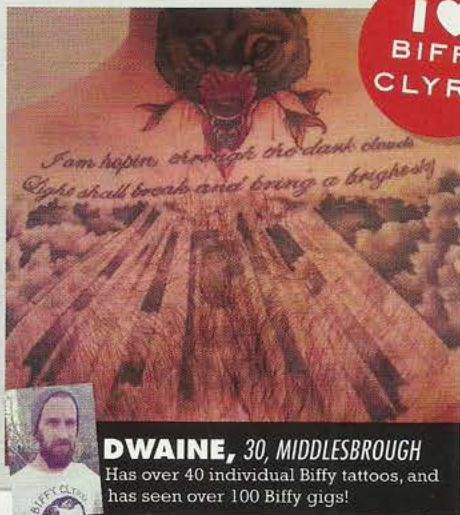
Beyond the personal connection to a song or a band and the clothes that define you, music brings us closer together, and one of the best things about fandoms are the inclusive communities they foster. The sense that there's a tribe of like-minded people out there that you belong to. And as technology has progressed the fan experience from a mail-order fan club affair to a global network of Hustlers, Maggots and artists interacting in real time, those friendships are now closer than ever. It's something Jess and Emma found as part of THE ONE community. "That's one of the reasons why we love them, because there are all these people we never would have met if it wasn't for BABYMETAL," explains Jess. "Everyone is so kind and generous to each other, it's just the best fandom to be in."

It's that spirit of generosity that inspired them to start their own fan Twitter account (@redbabymetal) and a YouTube channel on all things kawaii-metal to give back. "It started because when Wembley [Arena] was announced we panicked and ended up buying four tickets," explains Emma. "So we did a giveaway on our YouTube channel, because we thought it would be nice to give a ticket to someone who couldn't afford one. It slowly built



AIMEE, 17, SOMERSET

Works with the PTV Street Team, and travelled over 400 miles just to meet the band!



DWAINE, 30, MIDDLESBROUGH

Has over 40 individual Biffy tattoos, and has seen over 100 Biffy gigs!



"There are all these people we'd never have met if not for BABYMETAL"

JESS, LIVERPOOL



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Doomsday is coming... in the end

WE ♥

BABY METAL

JESS, 22, LIVERPOOL
EMMA, 23, LIVERPOOL

"My Chemical Romance shaped me as a person"

BEX, HAMPSHIRE

PHIL, 28, DORSET

Has travelled to the U.S. five times to see Paramore, been on both Parahoy! cruises, and performed onstage with them!



SEAN, 22, WOLVERHAMPTON

"One of my many Green Day adventures saw me Hitchin' A Ride to LA to see an early rendition of the American Idiot musical. On the same trip, I went to Oakland to visit Billie Joe Armstrong and Mike Dirnt's hometown, later visiting Tré Cool's hometown of Frankfurt to complete the set."

TOM, 19, MAIDENHEAD

"My blink collection ranges from vinyl, CDs, posters, clothing and guitars. Last year I took a trip to San Diego and visited Sombrosos – the Mexican restaurant in the blink song Josie – and the record store that Mark Hoppus and Tom DeLonge started putting their first cassettes in."

from there into making reviews and discussion videos on our favourite merch."

Showing their dedication to THE ONE, the kimono-clad pair travelled all the way to Japan to be part of the 55,000 people at Tokyo Dome witnessing BABYMETAL play the show of their lives. They met up with other fans at a BABYMETAL-hosted party, yet despite the language barrier the mutual appreciation of the Fox God was enough. "We were still able to get our point across even if we couldn't understand each other fully," smiles Jess. Even if their devotion to seeing BABYMETAL in their home country is impressive, their Japanese fans are always one step further though. "They will go anywhere to see BABYMETAL," laughs Emma. "When we went to see them support Red Hot Chili Peppers in Manchester there were still Japanese fans there!"

Closer to home, Leighton found that as well as meeting Panic! fans through fan websites, he found a feeling of belonging amongst the crowds at Panic! gigs when he finally made it to last November's show at Manchester's Apollo. "Everybody was so nice, and if you needed to get through they'd let you through," he

remembers. "It just felt amazing to be rocking out to the same thing and everyone knew every word." It was a far cry from his first live experience of Panic! at Slam Dunk Midlands earlier that year. "My girlfriend and I stayed in the arena from 1pm to 9:30pm to keep our spot. We did not eat, or drink or go to the toilet and we were so tired. I really don't know how we did it." And was it

worth it when Brendon finally arrived? "It was better than anything I could imagine. Seeing him walk out... I can't even put it into words. It was overwhelming in many ways to see someone who I had admired for five years finally in front of me..."

They say to never meet your heroes, in case you find out they're only human after all. But sometimes it's their humanity that makes them even more of a hero. That was the case when 21-year-old Bex – who has been a My Chemical Romance fan since hearing I'm Not Okay (I Promise) at the age of eight, and now boasts an exhaustive MCR collection – met Gerard Way after his debut UK solo show in Portsmouth. "He stayed for



"Panic! At The Disco has done so much for me"

LEIGHTON, NORTH WALES



JOANNA, 28, NEW ZEALAND

"I have a huge collection of Evanescence items, including over 150 CDs and tapes from releases all over the world, each one a little different. I also have props used from their music videos and countless signed items, including a RIAA plaque for when (debut album) *Fallen* first went Platinum. I even named my daughter Amy Lee!"

day before with her friend Kate. "They absolutely loved it!" she grins. "Synyster [Gates, guitar] said, 'Oh my God, wow!'" Naturally, Millie arrived in full M. Shadows mode. And what was his response to being confronted with a tiny version of himself? "Hey, you've got good style!"

At the core of our devotion to any band is that they have changed our lives for the better. "They've done so much for me," says Leighton of P!ATD. "They've given me something to adore." Similarly, Emma and Jess simply say, "Our life revolves around BABYMETAL," with Jess adding, "I just want to cover myself from head-to-toe in BABYMETAL, and I have successfully done that."

And sometimes a band's message can comfort and give you strength to carry on when nothing else can. For Millie, the way Avenged Sevenfold chose to live on after the sudden death of drummer Jimmy 'The Rev' Sullivan in 2009 has helped her cope with her mother's illnesses. "Their music has always been there when I'm down, and the



LIZZIE, 16, HARLOW

Went without sleep for over 30 hours having flown back from New York to meet the band in London!



way they managed to come back after The Rev's death has been a big factor," she admits. "They didn't think they'd be able to go on without him, but they're still going strong."

But, likewise, the A7X fans that held candlelit vigils for The Rev around the world and on the band's home turf of Huntington Beach, California in turn gave the band the courage to face another day without Jimmy. "The fans would send in hundreds and thousands of letters. They'd make books begging us to keep going," guitarist Zacky Vengeance confided in a Noisecreep interview. "If it wasn't for them, we certainly wouldn't have had the strength to get back and walk through the fire at the hardest time in our life."

For Bex, the greatest gift being a fan of My Chemical Romance gave her is a sense of self. "It sounds weird, but they have completely shaped me as a person," she muses. "They gave me a sense of morality. They've made me a confident, strong adult. My Chemical Romance still makes me want to be the best person I can be."

"Honestly, it would be pointless if Tyler [Joseph] and I went onstage alone," TØP's Josh Dun told Kerrang! last year. "The people who listen to the music are the most important part of this entire thing." And he's right. At the end of the day, the main thing that makes the band's devotion to music worth it is the devotion you, the fans, show to the same music. That same passion and belief that mutually push both bands and fans to be the best they can be.

Days after Green Day were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame, Billie Joe Armstrong took to Instagram to send a message to an Idiot Nation that now spans continents: "We share this honour together, because honestly YOU ARE our Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame. Idiot Nation forever." Rock music starts and ends with fans like Bex, Emma, Jess, Leighton, Millie – and you.

Share YOUR stories of fandom with us
– Feedback@Kerrang.com