

## FAITH



INO Records

Skillet's "Awake" sizzles with the talents of, from left, Jen Ledger, Ben Kasica, John Cooper and Korey Cooper.

# Skillet urges fans to wake up, be heroes

By **BRIAN BOWERS**  
*Stars and Stripes*

During a summertime mission trip, the teens in my SUV had two goals: help their neighbors and blow out the speakers.

One of the primary tools in that secondary effort was Skillet's "Comatose."

They loved that album and were eager to hear some more from the hard-rocking band fronted by John Cooper.

They weren't the only ones. Panheads — as Skillet's fans are known — helped propel the band's "Awake" to No. 1 on the iTunes chart in a matter of hours when it was released in this month.

"There's a real excitement for the record," Cooper said in an interview before the album's release.

"That's very unusual. I guess 'Comatose' put us in a new place. ... People are kind of foaming at the mouth for it."

What they'll hear is an album that Cooper said arose from the concerns swirling

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around life today — war, economic turmoil and random violence.

"The things going on in the world really hit me," Cooper said. "... It was too much for me to believe. There's no way that people were doing these things."

That's when the idea for the song "Hero" emerged.

"I was saying in my mind, 'Where are all the heroes?'" But eventually, Cooper said he realized "the point isn't that I *need* a hero but I need to be the hero. I need to make a difference in the world."

It's a conviction that Cooper belts out in full force in the aggressive rocker.

However, he also realizes that some of that darkness exists inside each of us, a very biblical idea that spurred him to write "Monster."

"The Bible talks about the old self, or the old man. It's a guy you don't want people to

see," Cooper said. "... Sometimes you get cut off in traffic or something and that old guy wants to pop his head out. ... It's like the conflict between the flesh and spirit."

Of course that struggle is sometimes heightened by those around us. "It's Not Me It's You" is a powerful — and fun — song that explores bad relationships.

"Young people specifically relate to that song," said Cooper, who admits it's one of his favorites. "It's a song about someone who's always trying to bring you down. ... We all know what it's like to have friends who bring us down, who are poison for us."

The epic "Awake and Alive" recalls the intensity — and the string accompaniment — that powered "Comatose." Its lyrics highlight the worldly pressures on believers.

"It's dealing with the fact that the world doesn't want you to believe in God, to run to God with your problems," Cooper said. "... Make no mistake, we are in a war."

Personally, the song "One Day Too Late" resonated most for me. It's about grasping opportunities before they slip away. It's especially meaningful in the wake of that mission trip, when we had so little time to reach out with assistance and encouragement — to be those heroes Cooper described.

For Cooper, the song evokes images of his two young children and the regrets that surround time that slips away.

"I just get really busy with the band, with business, with doing all the things I need to do," Cooper said. "... Before I know it, I'm so busy that I haven't done the things that I want to do."

Although it covers many topics, the album's bottom line echoes its title.

"We have a responsibility as Christians ... to wake up and face our issues and face the world awake and alive," Cooper said.

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