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by **JASON FEIRMAN**

The Offspring's *Smash* was released in April 1994, a year before the inaugural edition of the Vans Warped Tour. Until this year, the Southern California rockers had never played the legendary summer festival. But when the tour hit New York's Randalls Island in August, Dexter and the boys had no problem convincing the sold-out crowd that their Warped Tour debut was well worth the wait.

Crammed in between sets by My Chemical Romance and Fall Out Boy, The Offspring cranked out hit after hit, from seven studio albums. Even fans that were still in diapers when *Smash* was released (a large percentage of Warped attendees these days) crowded around the Mike Stage for the band's early evening set.

And with 60 others acts to catch, The Offspring were in good company.

Artists like Thrice and Story of the Year played new material from their upcoming albums, while Dropkick Murphys and Mest dug into their back catalogs. Collaborations including Hot Rod Circuit's Andy Jackson joining The Starting Line onstage for "Ready" and Taking Back Sunday's Adam Lazzara helping out My Chemical Romance with "Helena."

The Warped Tour has been able to remain popular for so many years by bringing young and MTV-savvy acts to the tour, but even members of Thrice (who played the 2003 Warped Tour) noticed an unusually large scarcity of more traditional punk rock bands on this year's trek. "Two years ago Lagwagon, Rancid and Me First and the Gimme Gimmes were on the tour. It feels strange that there aren't as many veterans this year," said drummer Riley Breckenridge. "It's always been a punk-rock based tour and it feels like it's at a weird spot right now."

Perhaps that's because 14-year-old girls in pink tank tops were so prevalent throughout the festival grounds. And perhaps that had to do with a little band called Fall Out Boy. The Chicago rockers have become as commercialized as the Warped Tour itself, since releasing *Under The Cork Tree* in May. But bassist and lyricist Pete Wentz isn't worried about the overexposure. "Whether there's billions of cameras flashing or if it's just four of us in somebody's basement, it's still gonna be fun and exciting for us," he said. "I guess it's better to have it this way than to have it the other way."

As Wentz and his bandmates took the stage to close the show, prepubescent girls (and the rest of the crowd) went crazy for their TRL favorites. If only they knew about the band's bad hygiene. "I gave up on taking showers about two weeks ago," joked Wentz. "Then I was doing baby wipe showers, but we ran out of baby wipes." Oh, Fall Out Boy. Who knows whether or not they'll still be relevant ten years from now (or even ten months from now). But one thing is for sure... it's not too soon to starting thinking about the 2006 Warped Tour -- featuring whatever emoscremohardcoreprogrorockpoppunk group that ends up making it on MTV this spring.

august 13. randalls island, new york

WARPED TOUR

