



# MIXED MEDIA

**Chimaira** Changes It Up Again for *The Infection*

BY CONTESSA ABONO

Chimaira, named after the legendary beast of Greek mythology, has been on the metal circuit for two decades now, but the Cleveland-based band continues to keep fans guessing what the next album or live show will bring.

"Maybe people think we're crazy, but we have a different vibe each time we come out with an album," says vocalist Mark Hunter. "We have signature things we do, so you ultimately know it's us, but for the most part, our songs aren't interchangeable from album to album—you'll only hear certain styles for a specific record."

For the band's fifth album, *The Infection* [Ferret Music/Nuclear Blast], the members returned to their friend and producer, Ben Schigel, who had worked on their previous albums, *This Present Darkness*, *The Impossibility Of Reason*, and *Chimaira*.

"Ben has been involved with the band since we were 15 years old," says Hunter. "He's like the seventh member of the band. He knows us inside and out."

Chimaira's sonic signature for *The Infection* focused on a more melodic, groove-oriented approach—a departure from the band's previous release, *Resurrection*, which was extremely heavy and very technical.

"The most noticeable change is that the new album is slower," says Hunter. "But slowing down the songs wasn't a conscious decision—it just kind of happened as we were writing."

Once the overall approach was nailed down, the band played records for Schigel to illustrate the sounds they wanted to achieve in the studio.

"You don't necessarily play your favorite records of all time," says Hunter. "For example, I'll bring in a band's best-sounding album—or the one that has sounds that best relate to what we want to do—rather than my personal favorite from that group. I'll bring in Mötley Crüe's *Dr. Feel Good* or Metallica's "Black Album" because they are amazing productions. Then, we'll listen and make comments such as 'I love that snare drum tone,' or 'I love how deep that kick drum sounds.' I also referenced extreme death metal records that had cool guitar tones. Now, you're not trying to match the sounds you're playing for everyone—you just say, 'Okay, let's go for some kind of gigantic kick-drum sound.' The songs are just references to let everyone know the direction you're going for. I'm influenced by so many productions—things I grew up listening to that I loved. Ultimately, you throw all the audio references into a melting pot, and that's what you use to

develop a production approach for your own album."

To achieve the kick-drum sound Chimaira wanted for *The Infection*, drummer Andols Herrick was tracked with MIDI drum triggers via an Alesis DM5 system.

"We didn't even bother miking up the kick drum," says Hunter. "Andols still played all the parts in real time, but the kick-drum sound was our own creation constructed from various stock samples in the DM5. The sound was perfect, and we didn't have to waste six hours setting up mics and trying to get the kick just right."

Another technique Hunter found efficient was evaluating mixes via email while working on production and mastering with album engineer Zeuss (real name, Chris Harris).

"It took about two or three weeks to mix the record," says Hunter. "The mixing was done in a studio in Massachusetts while we sat in Cleveland. "The real advantage—besides not having to travel to Massachusetts—was being able to listen to the tracks in our own comfortable environments. For example, instead of being in a control room, trying to assess sounds on speakers we're not familiar with, we could listen in our cars, or on our favorite playback systems." **EQ**