

Cult of Ned Flanders

Okilly Dokilly makes metalcore inspired by the *Simpsons* character



Left to right: Dread Ned, Bed Ned, Head Ned, Zed Ned and Shred Ned.

BY MOZES ZARATE / mozesz@newsreview.com

based on an older *Tree House of Horror* Halloween episode in which Homer Simpson travels between alternate universes and lands in one where Flanders rules, and humanity is training to be more like him. The tune itself is punk with death growls, contrasted by a moment of tranquil, beach-side indie rock.

To prep for writing the second album, Ned watched the first 10 seasons of *The Simpsons* over the course of a month. "It was the best songwriting work I ever had to do," he says.

The entire idea started as a running joke in 2015: The band enters a stage to Ramstein-style pyrotechnics and other heavy-metal tropes. But when they introduce themselves, the group's name wouldn't fit the vibe.

"Someone mentioned 'Okilly Dokilly,'" Ned says. "And then it was, 'What if the lead singer dressed like Ned Flanders?' 'Well, what if everyone in the band dressed like Ned Flanders?'"

A former stand-up comedian who usually played in indie bands, Ned says he never thought he fit the role of a metal front-man. With Okilly Dokilly, he didn't have to try.

"There's a lot of people who like metal and they're all about it. Tattoos, the long hair. It definitely becomes part of a lifestyle, which we weren't really living," he says.

Aside from making fun of serious metal, there's also a cult of personality concept going on, with five Neds onstage doing Flanders impressions, asking the crowd to consider converting to left-handedness.

"You see people picking their soldiers more than their battles these days ... and just following brainlessly. We're kind of doing that with Ned Flanders, because I think if there's anybody you're going to brainlessly follow, he's not the worst." □

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Head Ned
frontman, Okilly Dokilly

Puns are 30 percent of the workload for Okilly Dokilly, a heavy Nedal band centered around Homer Simpson's neighbor Ned Flanders.

"I feel like we need to just hire three of four people to sit there and write puns for us; it's pretty exhausting," says the Phoenix, Arizona-based band's frontman, Head Ned.

All of the members perform as different Neds, and *The Simpsons* references abound, including an inflatable sprinkle-donut that is tossed into the crowd and a T-shirt cannon, a reference to an episode in which Ned's wife Maude is killed by one. Lyrics are usually a Flanders one-liners that, when taken out of context, can be goofy, dark or creepy when put to metalcore.

If you're wondering, no, Okilly Dokilly hasn't been sued for copyright infringement. Yet. They avoid mentioning *The Simpsons* on their website and social media, and even omit Flanders' full name.

"When we first started the band, we kind of assumed we would get a cease-and-desist letter," Ned says. "So far, nothing from the legal department at Fox, but I just really hope we don't do anything to step over the line."

On February 10, the five will unload their gear from their tour van—Ned Vanders, of course—and into Harlow's, in hopes of bringing "Reneducation" to the masses.

"Reneducation," a new single for the band's upcoming second record, *Howdilly Twodilly*, is

Okilly Dokilly's new album, *Howdilly Twodilly*, releases March 29. Check out Okilly Dokilly Sunday, February 10 at Harlow's Restaurant & Nightclub. Show starts at 8pm. Tickets are \$15-18. For show info, visit harlows.com.

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