



The return of Blink-182

Plane crash was the catalyst for a comeback tour that's 'beyond anything we've ever brought'

Provided by PMK/HBH Public Relations

Blink-182: From left, Tom DeLonge, Travis Barker and Mark Hoppus.



STORY BY **TROY L. SMITH**
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On a recent Friday evening, Mark Hoppus sits alone in a locker room inside Montreal's Bell Centre nursing his wound.

One night earlier, during a show in Boston, the Blink-182 bassist was jumping around on a stack of speakers when he rolled his ankle on guitarist Tom DeLonge's foot.

It's Hoppus' first injury of Blink-182's highly anticipated reunion tour. And to hear him tell it, he's enjoying every minute.

"This, honestly, is the most fun I've ever had on tour," says the 37-year-old during a recent phone interview. "We're really excited about this tour. We're just jumping around and sometimes tripping each other up and spraining ankles. It's been super-fun."

The excitement in Hoppus' voice is great news for local Blink-182 fans, who've been eagerly awaiting the group's show Friday, Aug. 21, at Darien Lake.

As most people know, Blink-182 split up back in 2005 but officially reunited earlier this year. Now, for their comeback, Hoppus and company have worked with the same production team as Daft Punk, Kanye West and Nine Inch Nails to create something that's "beyond anything we've ever brought out on tour," Hoppus says. Reportedly, drummer Travis Barker will have an elevated drum riser that'll move around during his drum solo.

The flashy return seems fitting for a band that's had such an enormous impact on mainstream rock music over the past 10 years. For proof, look no further than the opening acts for the Darien Lake show. The members of platinum-selling acts Fall Out Boy and Panic! At the Disco aren't shy in crediting Blink-182 as a major influence.

"I was, like, 15 or 16 years old when (Blink-182's album) *Enema of the State* came out," says Panic! drummer Spencer Smith. "For me and my friends, that was the record we listened to and decided we wanted to be in a band."

On a local level, Blink's influence may be even more prevalent, given the tattoos, spiked hair and bratty lyrics that fill Water Street Music Hall and the Penny Arcade several times a month.

"Blink-182 is one of the main reasons I got into the whole music deal," says Rochester resident Kevin O'Brien, 25, lead singer of local pop-rock band Avenue You. "They pretty much created the soundtrack for the junior high and high school portion of my life. I was just a skinny, dorky kid determined to learn 'Dammit' on guitar."

By the time the 21st century was about to hit, O'Brien wasn't alone. In 1999, Blink-182's video for "What's My Age Again?" stormed MTV, highlighted by the iconic image of Hoppus, Delonge and Barker running down the

street naked. Things exploded after that.

"It was that video and then (the single) 'All The Small Things' that kind of catapulted things into heights we'd never dreamed of our band achieving," Hoppus says.

Blink went on to sell more than 8 million records between 1999 and 2003. But just as things were at an all-time high, constant touring and infighting began to take a toll, and the band members parted ways in February 2005.

However, in September 2008 Barker was critically injured in a plane crash, which prompted Delonge and Hoppus to reach out to their former band mate. It was the first time all three were together in the same room since the breakup.

"I think that all of us were kind of in the headspace that we were ready to continue with Blink-182, even before Travis' accident," Hoppus says. "But that was obviously a huge catalyst for us, and we were finally able to look past the nonsense that we were fighting over back in the day."

Blink-182 officially announced its reunion in February at the Grammy Awards and began work on a new album shortly thereafter. Hoppus says the new tunes pick up right where the band's 2003 self-titled album left off, and when the tour ends in October the guys will head back into the studio.

In the meantime, Hoppus says he's just stoked to be back on the road again, engaging fans who seem more interested than ever in Blink-182.

"The response of people has been overwhelming and very humbling," he says. "In a strange and wonderful way, somehow our band breaking up for four years and us hating each other is the greatest thing that's ever happened to us." ♦

Rich Paprocki



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Investigators look over the debris left by the Learjet that carried Travis Barker, and Adam Goldstein, also known as DJ-AM, in Columbia, S.C.

Associated Press file photo 2008

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BLINK-182 LIVE

WHEN: 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 21

WITH: Fall Out Boy, Panic!

WHERE: Darien Lake Performing Arts Center

COST: \$20 to \$69

TICKETS: www.livenation.com