

# Westward to bring angst to Ranch Bowl

By ANN STACK  
Senior Reporter

has finally achieved some of the success it deserves. The band also managed to miss the fabled sophomore slump — the album has sold more than half a million copies since its January 1996 release, and the current single "Shame" is in the Top 10 on Billboard's Mainstream Rock Tracks.

It even had the somewhat dubious honor of doing 11 opening dates for arena-rock gods Kiss while out on their reunion tour.

"That was pretty overwhelming, the hugeness of the spectacle," Hall said. "The crowds received us well, but after the first night we realized this was a Kiss audience — we had to put on a big rock show instead of being ourselves."

"If we're playing for our own audience, we can let the show be more subtly emotional, more what the songs are about," he said. "The songs are intensely personal."

In that statement lies the crux of what separates Stabbing Westward from other rock bands around — its ability to reach an audience through lyrics that hit so close to home for so many people. Take the current single, "Shame:"

"I stare in this mirror, so tired of this life/ If only you would speak to me, or care that I'm alive/ Once I swore I would die for you, but I never meant it like this."

"Anyone who's been through the ringer can understand," Hall said. "But it (writing the album) didn't really make me feel any better. At the end of the day, she's still not there."

The doors open at 5:30 p.m., with the show starting at 6. Opening bands are Ash and Drill, and tickets are \$10 in advance, and \$12 at the door.

Christopher Hall's window on the world really isn't as stained as it appears to be at first glance.

Hall, the lead singer and principle songwriter of the rock band Stabbing Westward, is known for his raw, painfully honest lyrics on relationships gone bad and trust broken.

Stabbing Westward will bring that angst to the Ranch Bowl in Omaha Saturday night in support of its second album, "Wither, Blister, Burn + Peel."

Hall formed the Chicago-based band 11 years ago with keyboardist Walter Flakus. The two met at a summer music camp in high school, fighting over a girl. They both lost the girl, but found a future in music together. The pair went to Western Illinois University, where they studied music and evolved as a band.

"At first it was just us, a drum machine, keyboards and a four-track," Hall said. "We were really into The Cure and Depeche Mode — that music sort of lent itself to keyboards. Hence the industrial — although I hate that word — and electronic side of the band."

Influences and electronics aside, Stabbing Westward is a rock band, first and foremost.

"We write our songs on guitar and add keyboards. We don't want to be another Pearl Jam or Nirvana," he said. "I think we make an innovative rock band, but a piss-poor industrial band."

Whatever the case, thanks to heavy airplay and videos on MTV, Stabbing Westward



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA RECORDS  
THE MEMBERS of Stabbing Westward are, from left, Walter Flakus, Christopher Hall, Jim Sellers, Andy Kubiszewski, and Mark Eliopoulos.

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