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Subject: Former Pantera Guitarest Killed

Posted by [cowmisfit](#) on Thu, 09 Dec 2004 20:47:26 GMT

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<http://cn.aimtoday.cnn.com/news/story.jsp?&idq=ff/story/0001%2F20041209%2F1251085442.htm&sc=1110&photoid=20041209NY111>

Quote:COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - A gunman charged onstage at a nightclub and opened fire on the band and crowd, killing top heavy metal guitarist ``Dimebag" Darrell Abbott and three other people before a police officer shot him to death, authorities said.

The gunman had a hostage in a headlock and appeared to be preparing to kill him when the officer fired, police spokesman Sgt. Brent Mull said. The hostage escaped uninjured, Mull said.

Two other people were hospitalized. Police said one was in intensive care and the other stable.

Police identified the gunman as Nathan Gale, 25, of Marysville, 25 miles northwest of Columbus. Police said they had no information on a motive or any connection to Abbott or his band, the Texas-based group Damageplan.

Damageplan had just begun its first song at Alrosa Villa club Wednesday night when the gunman climbed onstage, started yelling and shot Abbott five or six times at point-blank range, witness Chris Couch said.

Mull said the gunman's exact statement was unclear because of the loud music. He said some witnesses reported hearing an accusation about Abbott breaking up his former band, thrash-rock pioneer Pantera, but it could not be confirmed whether the speaker was the gunman or a fan.

Couch, 22, said the man was wearing a hooded sweat shirt and was followed by a bouncer and another club employee.

Couch said that after firing on the guitarist, the gunman shot a bouncer who had pulled him off the musician, while fans surged toward the exit. The gunman then fired into the crowd of more than 250 people, Mull said.

Mull said Officer James D. Niggemeyer, patrolling nearby, arrived within two minutes of hearing the call. Niggemeyer, 31, saw one person lying dead and the suspect holding onto another ``pretty much in a headlock," Mull said.

He said the hostage, ``probably a fan, maybe someone who worked with the band," was able to maneuver out of the way before the officer fired.

Mull praised Niggemeyer's response.

``If the officer wasn't as close as he was, I think this would have been a lot worse," he said. ``It was a chaotic scene, just a horrific scene."

Besides Abbott and Gale, police said the dead included Nathan Bray, 23, and Erin Halk, 29. Police said the name of the fifth person killed was being withheld pending notification of family.

Couch said he believed the shooter had a plan. ``It was definitely a grudge. It was against something," he said.

Mull said he believed there was amateur video that officers could view for clues but that police had no answers yet. ``We may never know a motive for this, unless he left a note," Mull said.

Gale has a minor police record in Marysville, said Police Chief Floyd Golden. He was pulled over for driving with a suspended license last month.

Thursday morning, a dozen yellow roses, still in plastic wrap, lay near the entry to the low-slung beige building that since 1974 has hosted mostly heavy metal acts. The 641-person-capacity club, just off a freeway exit on the city's north side, sits amid motels, small businesses and office complexes.

Dozens of messages were posted to the band's Web site after the shootings.

``This is the worst day in metal history," one posting read.

``The metal world feels your pain," another wrote.

Damageplan's debut album, ``New Found Power," which was released in February by Elektra, was produced by Abbott and his brother, drummer Vinnie Paul Abbott. Other band members are vocalist Patrick Lachman and bassist Bob Zilla.

Earlier, the brothers had been members of the Grammy-nominated Pantera, whose popularity soared in the early 1990s with a fast, aggressive sound.

``Damageplan carries on the tradition Pantera started, the ... hell-raising tradition we were all about," Vinnie Paul Abbott told The Dallas Morning News in October.

``It took awhile for some of the Pantera fans to accept it; we knew that was gonna be the case," he said. ``Change is something that people have a hard time accepting. But me and Dime intended on doing this our whole lives."

The shootings came exactly 24 years after John Lennon was shot to death outside his New York apartment building by a deranged fan.

Associated Press writer Jay Jorden in Dallas contributed to this report.

On the Net:

<http://www.damageplan.com>

<http://www.pantera.com>

Just sad, great guitarest gone.

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