



This file photo shows French heavy metal band Gojira performing on the second day of the Rock in Rio music festival at the City of Rock park in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

Gojira's dark eco metal finds unlikely Grammy glory

After two decades growling about the planet's impending environmental collapse, the French death metal band Gojira has some surprise good news—the music industry thinks they're great. Gojira has been an unexpected success story ahead of the Grammy Awards on Sunday. The band has been nominated in two categories including the coveted Best Rock Album for "Magma." "We started playing pretty intense thrash and death metal and I've been mostly growling for the last 20 years, so I wasn't expecting any kind of award," Gojira's 40-year-old frontman and rhythm guitarist Joe Duplantier told AFP with a small laugh.

"I never even thought of the concept of being nominated for the Grammys," he said. Gojira—whose name is the Japanese for Godzilla—edged a small step into the mainstream with "Magma." Previously known for raw, complex songs that built into dark climax, "Magma" is more accessible with chorus structures and Duplantier at times swapping growls for clean vocals. The Grammys are not the only recognition for Gojira. Metal legends Metallica, whom Duplantier counts as a key influence, earlier tapped Gojira as an opening act. Metallica lead guitarist Kirk Hammett in a recent interview with AFP said "Magma" was "incredible" and "the best thing I've heard in a long time."

Humans as 'parasites'

While some metal bands sing of fantasy lands, Gojira's lyricism lies firmly in the real world. On the song "Silvera," nominated for the Grammy for Best Metal Performance, Duplantier unleashes on animal agriculture, singing: "Time to open your eyes to this genocide / When you clear your mind, you see it all." Duplantier is vegan. But adding to his bleak outlook, he doubts how much he can do as he believes the planet has far too many people. "I'm a part of it—I'm also a parasite to the planet. I try to reduce my impact and it seems a drop in the ocean," he said. Duplantier is content if Gojira fans simply bang their heads. But he is even happier if the music is "shaking people up in a good way."

"I love creating songs, I love performing,

but I don't want to just sing something meaningless," he said. "People live without thinking or feeling too much.

They go and buy meat in the store without thinking how it was produced, how it was killed, how much water was needed for that and what it's doing to you," he said. For Duplantier, too many people are caught up thinking about politicians and asking "what can this guy do for me." "I don't believe in politics anymore," he said. "I believe in the revolution, but the revolution needs to come from each individual, from the inside."

Love of oceans

Duplantier's environmental consciousness came at an early age as he grew up on the Atlantic Ocean near the southern city of Bayonne. He recalled how his brother Mario—who is Gojira's drummer—suffered an ear infection from swimming in polluted water. In a youthful bit of activism, Joe Duplantier gathered litter from the beach and scattered it on a parking lot, making local news. "I thought it was weird. People don't mind what's on the beach but when it's on the parking lot it's a problem," he said.

The Duplantiers' mother was American and the brothers have set up a studio in New York. Duplantier sings in English, which he speaks at native level, but said his language choice was more practical than artistic.

"If Spanish were the most common language in the world, I would probably sing in Spanish," he said. "Magma" is Gojira's sixth album and came more than four years after its previous work, the ambitious existentialist opus "L'Enfant Sauvage." Between the albums, the Duplantiers' mother died. Joe Duplantier hesitated to speak of the episode, saying he did not want to appear to be using her death as marketing, but said it brought new darkness to "Magma."

Duplantier said the Grammy glory would not affect Gojira, even if the band risked losing fans if it again went in a more arcane direction. "We're super excited and surprised, but it's not like God telling you you're good and the others are not good," he said. "It's the Grammys." — AFP

The top nominees at the Grammy Awards

Beyonce leads the nominations for Sunday's Grammy Awards with nods in nine categories, including three of the most prestigious. More than 13,000 music professionals in the Recording Academy vote to determine winners of the Grammys, to be announced in a televised gala in Los Angeles. Here is a list of nominees in the most prominent categories:

Album Of The Year:

Adele, "25"
Beyonce, "Lemonade"
Justin Bieber, "Purpose"
Drake, "Views"
Sturgill Simpson, "A Sailor's Guide to Earth"

Record Of The Year (for best overall song):

Adele, "Hello"
Beyonce, "Formation"
Lukas Graham, "7 Years"
Rihanna featuring Drake, "Work"
Twenty One Pilots, "Stressed Out"

Song Of The Year (for songwriting):

Adele, "Hello." Songwriters Adele and Greg Kurstin
Beyonce, "Formation." Songwriters Beyonce along with Khalif Brown of rap duo Rae Sremmurd, Asheton Hogan and Mike Will Made It
Justin Bieber, "Love Yourself." Songwriters Bieber along with English star Ed Sheeran and producer Benny Blanco

Lukas Graham, "7 Years." Songwriters are band frontman Lukas Forchhammer and keyboardist Morten Ristorp along with producer Stefan Forrest and composer Morten Pilegaard
Mike Posner, "I Took a Pill in Ibiza." No additional songwriters

Best New Artist:

Kelsea Ballerini
The Chainsmokers
Chance the Rapper
Maren Morris
Anderson .Paak

Best Rap Album:

Chance the Rapper, "Coloring Book"
De La Soul, "And the Anonymous Nobody"
DJ Khaled, "Major Key"
Drake, "Views"
Schoolboy Q, "Blank Face LP"
Kanye West, "The Life of Pablo"

Best Rock Album:

Blink-182, "California"
Cage the Elephant, "Tell Me I'm Pretty"
Gojira, "Magma"
Panic! At The Disco, "Death of a Bachelor"
Weezer, "Weezer"

Best Alternative Rock Album:

Bon Iver, "22, A Million"
David Bowie, "Blackstar"
PJ Harvey, "The Hope Six Demolition Project"
Iggy Pop, "Post Pop Depression"
Radiohead, "A Moon Shaped Pool" — AP



File photo shows Prince performs during the halftime show at the Super Bowl XLI football game at Dolphin Stadium in Miami. — AP



File photo shows British singer George Michael in concert to raise money for AIDS charity Sidaction, in Paris, France.