

Salute

Apr/May 2011

The magazine for America's military



Our 5th Annual Music Issue

Featuring

Paramore, Bryan Adams, Michelle Penn, Seether,
Avenge Sevenfold, Raheem DeVaughn and more

Check out Beetle Bailey on page 16.



Compos
SNACKS

**THE MEAL
THAT'S NOT
A MEAL.**

A photograph of Paramore lead singer Hayley Williams performing on stage. She is wearing a blue-sparkle jumpsuit and has her signature neon-red hair. She is holding a red microphone and has her head tilted back. In the background, a drummer is visible behind a drum kit. The stage is lit with warm, golden lights.

paramore

Paramore lead singer
Hayley Williams

The Twilight Zone

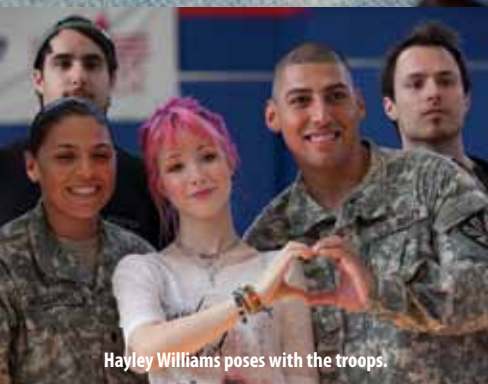
It was all Team **Paramore** when the Grammy-nominated band rocked the troops in Kuwait

By ROBIN EILEEN BERNSTEIN

Two days before Thanksgiving, a holiday in which Americans collectively let their belts out a notch, Paramore's lead singer, Hayley Williams, was in Kuwait, wearing a blue-sparkle Capri body suit and a belt around her waist that couldn't possibly be cinched any tighter. She has called it her "Marilyn Monroe suit" probably because it hugged her toned five-foot-two body like paint. With her blue-glitter eye shadow, trademark neon-red hair and a pair of sneakers, she looked like a pint-sized Wonder Woman ready for a night of hard-core dancing. ▶



Paramore performs at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait.



Hayley Williams poses with the troops.

And that's a good thing, because Williams and her band-mates were more than ready to burn calories on stage for the *VH1 Divas Salute the Troops* tour, presented by the USO – which is exactly what they did, putting on a high-wattage, high-volume concert under the stars for the troops stationed at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. The show, which aired a week later, on December 5, 2010, was Paramore's first on a military base.

"We were invited by VH1 to play the show," says Williams, 22. "We were so excited we didn't even hesitate. It had been a dream of ours to play for

the troops since we first started receiving fan mail from people stationed in Iraq and listening to our first album, *All We Know Is Falling*."

Paramore was grateful for the opportunity. Then again, they've had a lot to be thankful for these past seven years. The band got its start in Williams' hometown of Franklin, Tenn., in 2004, and since then has racked up an impressive stack of honors, including more than 50 nominations and awards, and has crossed over to mass audiences – propelled, in large part, by the wildly popular *Twilight* films for whose original soundtrack the band contributed two songs.

The band was thrice-nominated for a Grammy, most recently for their highly praised crossover hit, "The Only Exception," from the album, *Brand New Eyes* (Fueled by Ramen/Atlantic), in the category of Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals, losing to Train's "Hey, Soul Sister." They've won seven Teen Choice Awards, as well as the People's Choice Award for Favorite Rock Band both this year and last—beating out Daughtry, Linkin Park, Maroon 5, Nickelback, Green Day, Kings of Leon and Muse.

Their music has been described as alt-rock,

emo and pop-punk. By whatever name, it sells. Following *All We Know Is Falling* in 2005, Paramore released *Riot!* in 2007, which went platinum in the U.S. So did that album's hit single, "Misery Business." And so did "Decode" from the *Twilight* motion picture soundtrack. Their album *Brand New Eyes*, released in 2009, went gold.

The honors and accolades are pretty impressive, considering how young they are. Williams was just 15 when she joined two other teens, guitarist Josh Farro and drummer Zak Farro—yes, they're brothers—along with teen bassist Jeremy Davis, to form Paramore. Although the Farro brothers left the band in late December, Paramore endures today with three core members: Williams, Davis and Nashville-based guitarist Taylor York, 21, who had toured with them for several years and officially joined in 2009.

It was Davis, 26, who helped inspire Paramore to play for the troops. Several of his high school friends had enlisted in the military and, in 2006, one of his best buddies, Lance Cpl Richard Allen Buerstetta of the U.S. Marine Corps was killed at age 20 by an IED while patrolling during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I know that was really hard on Jeremy," says Williams. "It definitely affected his decision to want to go over there and play a show."

The bottom line is that Paramore feels a responsibility as a band to make a difference with their music. Part of that journey involved traveling to the Middle East and playing for people who are risking their lives on a daily basis.

"It's humbling and fulfilling to give back," says Williams. "To show our support to those men and women was important. Even if some weren't fans or didn't know our music, they were still so excited that we were there to honor them. Our respect for them was already through the roof, but it became less about stories or hearsay and it became life."

Paramore played 12 tunes that night in Kuwait, including the up-tempo "That's What You Get," a cover of The Foo-Fighters' tune, "My Hero" ("the first time we've ever played the song full band!" Williams wrote in her blog the next day), and the hard-driving "Crushcrushcrush," which drove the crowd wild because, according to Williams, "a dude in a lime-green spandex body suit jumped on stage and danced with me."

Perhaps the highlight was during the last song

of the night, "Misery Business," when Williams looked out into the crowd, spotted someone and said to her, "You know this? Come up here!" With that, a service woman joined Paramore on stage, and the two, legs and fists pumping, belted out the chorus: *Whoa, I never meant to brag. But I got him where I want him now.* It was an unforgettable moment for both band and audience.

"Any time you make the crowd part of the show, it's gonna be awesome," says Williams.

For Paramore, it also was the ordinary moments offstage with the troops that were truly memorable, like a trip to the movies or a few games of volleyball and basketball. "We got to be there and just be normal," says Williams. "It wasn't about us being in some band or any of them serving. It wasn't even like we were far from home. It was just relaxing."

Paramore also got to experience firsthand the type of work the troops have to do. Williams explains how "they put all the gear on us and let us ride in one of the tanks" and how she couldn't believe how heavy all of it was: the vest, the helmet and the headset. "I could barely duck down to get inside the turret," she says.

For a band that's toured worldwide, playing the Middle East was a first for them—exciting, a little nerve-wracking, according to Williams, although with a couple of unexpected and welcome amenities. "Back home, on the news, you only hear the horror stories," she explains. Yet when the band drove down to the base by van, they were amazed and excited to hear the radio DJ talk about the first Taco Bell opening up in Kuwait. "And I couldn't believe there was a Starbucks on base," she adds.

Despite the comforting presence of familiar chain restaurants, and being surrounded by troops who clearly loved them, Williams admits to one rather "creepy" fact of desert life that terrified her: "I was pretty afraid of running into a camel spider."

Scary eight-legged creatures aside, Paramore found a common bond with the troops in terms of being passionate about what they each do—whether it's playing music or serving their country. "It was nice that both our passions complemented each other so well that weekend," says Williams.

But for Paramore it is even more profound than that. "We travel the world to play shows," Williams adds. "They travel with the risk of losing their lives, so that we can have that freedom." 