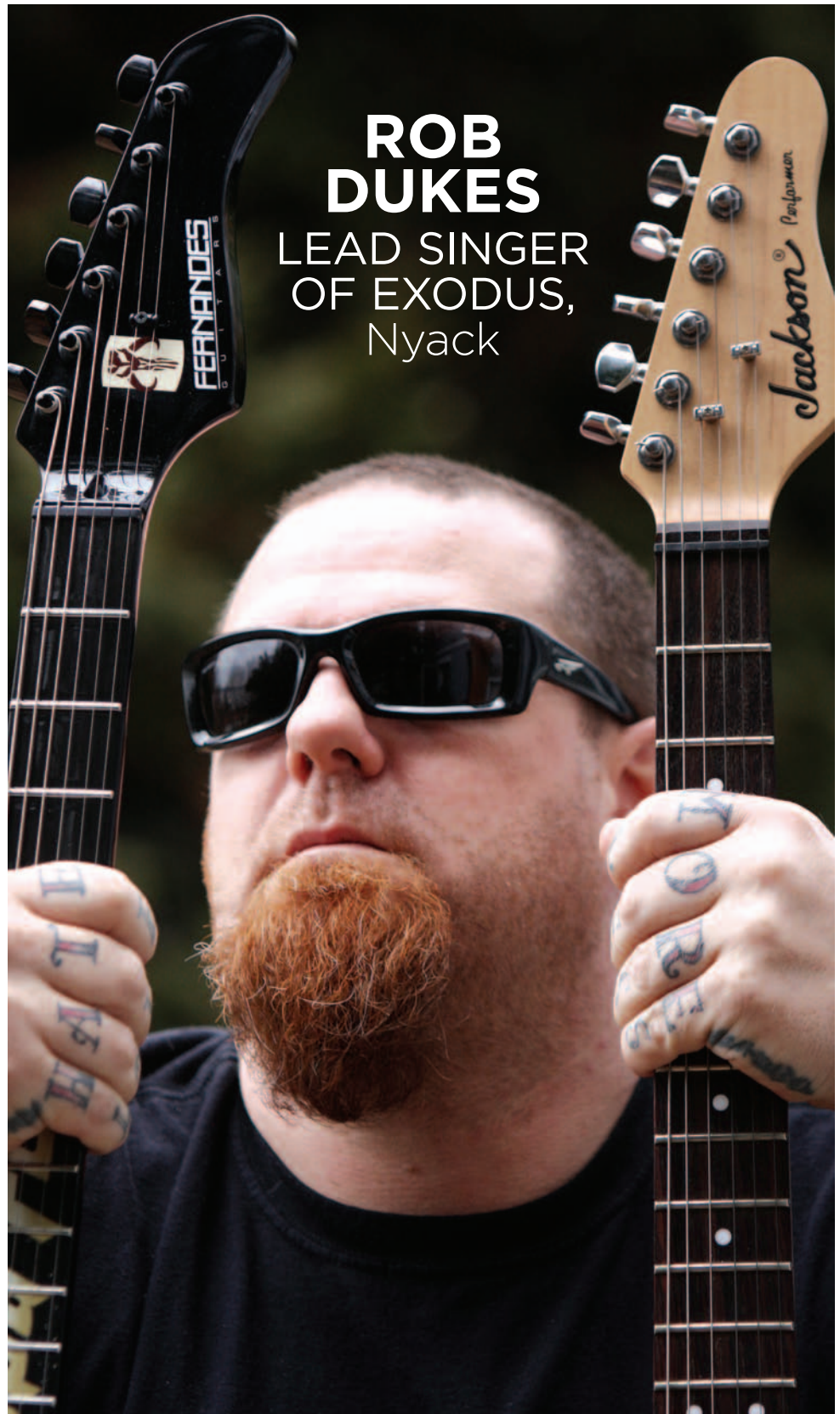


He spends eight months of the year on the road—and has hit 61 countries in two years—but Rob Dukes' favorite spot is in Nyack, at the Vanguard Tattoo studio. "This is my tree fort," says the 40-year-old lead singer of thrash-metal band Exodus, and a Stony Point native. "I come here to hang out, rather than go to a bar." Both his arms are covered with tattoos, but ink isn't Vanguard's only draw. "I used to be a drunken nightmare," he says, with neither pride nor shame. "But then I moved to Nyack, and I've been sober and clean for 15 years." But while you can take the firewater out of the man, you can't put out the fire. Dukes celebrates each year sober, so this summer, he's heading to Isla Guadalupe to cage-swim with great white sharks. It might not be everyone's dream vacation, but it's definitely "metal."

Alongside bands like Metallica and Slayer, Exodus helped sculpt thrash metal in the 1980s. They are one of the few bands that still pumps out speedy, aggressive riffs and shreds, even though only one original member remains. Dukes, "the new guy," joined in 2005. "I was in the right place at the right time," he says. He was working in Hollywood clubs when he got his first big break: a six-week tour with Exodus ... as a guitar tech. In person, Dukes seems too laid back to sing metal, but "When I get behind the mic, I'm a different person," he says. "I'm f***ing nuts." So when the band's singer left at the end of the tour, Dukes took the stage—and blew them away.

Exodus is still based in California, but Dukes chooses to live in Nyack. "It's a great town, an anonymous community where I can stay below the mainstream, and don't cater to anyone," he says. Even when he leaves, he brings a bit of New York with him. Pointing to his beanie, emblazoned with the tattoo studio's logo, he says, "I wear Vanguard stuff everywhere. I spread the word."



ROB DUKES LEAD SINGER OF EXODUS, Nyack

STEPHEN SCHMITT