MUSIC FOR GOOD MAY 2013

ALERT312 brings Chicago hip-hop to the world

Andy Mineo wants a true superhero

> Red sets off a panic

THE INTERVIEW

AUGUST BURNS RED in their own words

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Change is going to come.

There was this time when I was sitting on the balcony at the San Luis Resort in Galveston with my new wife and I had just asked her what she most wanted out of life. A time when I was driving out to Augusta with my old college roommate, teaching him how to play craps. A time when I watched my alma mater beat a certain maize-and-blue-outfitted football team on New Year's Day with family, not knowing it'd be the last time I'd see my uncle alive.

There are times you just don't want to end. I could have listened to my wife talk about why she did or didn't want kids for legitimately an hour or so, but if we didn't have to leave that hotel for a few years, I would have been fine with it. I could legitimately watch football games for the rest of my life, so long as it comes with the caveat that my wife would also not murder me.

This magazine is going through change. A pretty big one. For the first time in almost 30 years, someone other than former editor Doug Van Pelt is making the final decisions on what you'll be reading in these pages. I'm truly honored I get that responsibility, and the boots I'll be filling are worn, experienced, and time-tested. Any kind of change after 30 years is going to be tough, but the mission of HM hasn't—and won't—change.

If you have any questions about the future of this magazine, feel free to contact me. We're not going anywhere; in fact, we want to do this thing better than it's ever been done and we want you along for the ride. After all, change is *going* to come. If I had stayed in that hotel suite for three years, I would have missed out on this opportunity. Change isn't always bad. It's a fact of life, and life without change would be boring.



-DAVID STAGG, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF DSTAGG@HMMAGAZINE.COM

SPINNING AT HM

Killswitch Engage
Disarm the Descent
Great metal from one of
the cornerstones in the
game. Jesse Leach is true
to form.

Paramore
Paramore
Sometimes the stars
line up and your labor
becomes your love.
Paramore's latest is worth
your penny.

Charli XCX
True Romance
Stellar work from the
young lady from England.
A little goth, a little electronic, a lot addicting.

Grave Declaration
When Dying Souls
Scream Praise
Worth the wait. Over
four years after their EP,
release this symphonic
unblack metal is crushing.

Fall Out Boy Save Rock 'n' Roll Great hooks, great rock. Very appropriate for the arenas they're probably planning on filling.



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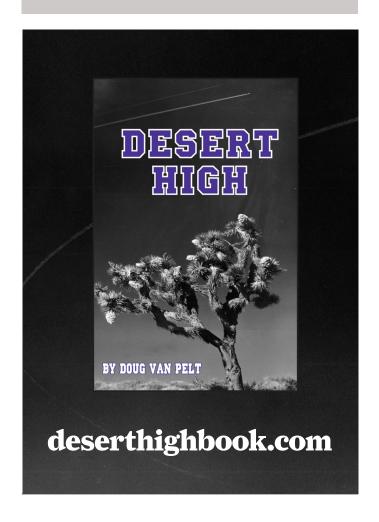
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Corrections

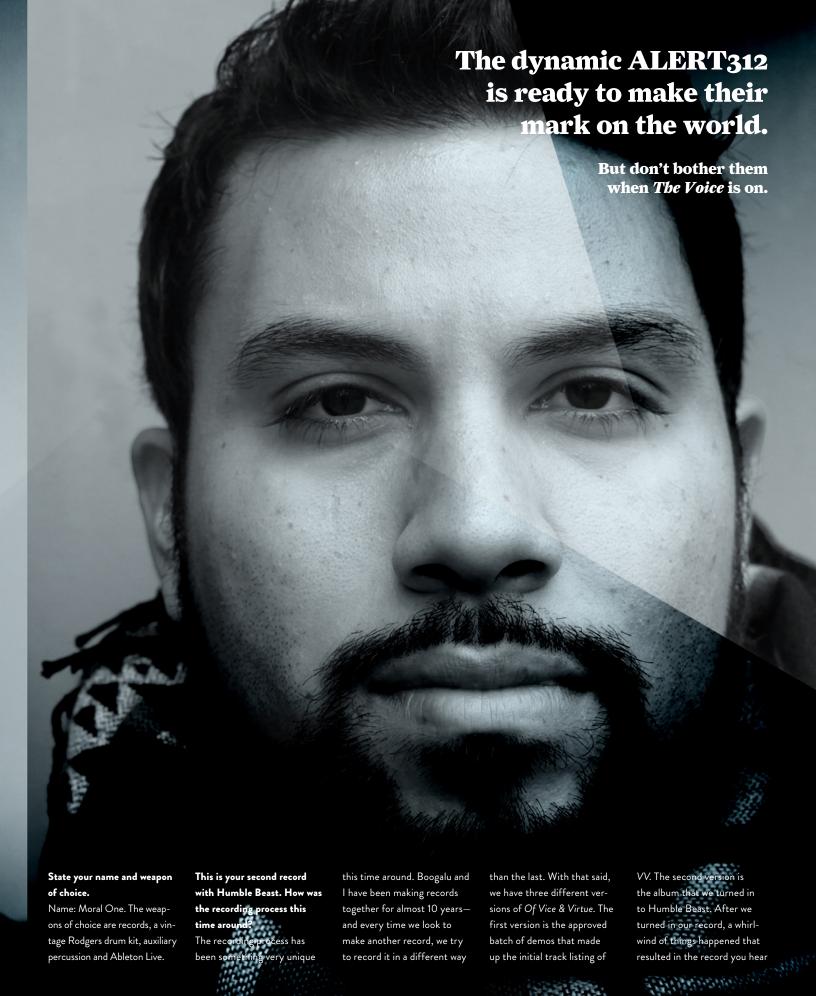
In the April issue, Jared Lacey's band is named Mayfly.

In the April issue, Jesse Leach and Adam Dutkiewicz's side project is named
Times of Grace.

THUMP

By Rob Houston

ALERT312 is one of the most dynamic groups Humble Beast Records has to offer. They have an early-Beastie Boys/ The Roots approach to hip-hop and a lyrical mix of Christ-centered and Christ-conscious content. This is one hip-hop group that can't be missed, as their second release, Of Vice & Virtue, is blaring out of cars and headphones across the country. How can you go wrong? I had the chance to chat with visual timekeeper Moral One over a few days to talk about Chicago, touring, and the dark side of hip-hop.



CONTINUED >

▶ ALERT312 CONTINUED

today—the third version.

And this third version we recorded, mixed, and mastered in under eight weeks, which is something we've never done before.

Why did you guys choose the earlier Beastie Boys or Roots approach to making hip-hop with live instru-

Live music has always inspired us. From seeing the Beasties and The Roots to being a part of local rock shows in Chicago to having Feist & the Dirty Projectors be influences on how we create... Live instruments—more specifically, drums and percussion—have always been a part of our musical equation. With VV, we really wanted to have this influence be front and center.

Coming from Chi-town, where you have artists like Common and Kanye West repping secular hip-hop, as well as President Obama having his headquarters there, how important is it for you guys to use hip-hop to spread the message of Christ?

Again, this has always been a part of our equation. We've done "conscious hip-hop" in the past, and, when it was all said and done, we found that all we were doing was making fluff—nothing with content, nothing that points the listener to Christ above all else. So, when it came to making ALERT312 songs, it is of utmost importance that these songs be creatively

Christocentric, and we believe that they are.
They're street enough that our boys on the block can feel it, they're creative enough that our older and more artistic friends can appreciate it, and they're Christ-centered at the core enough that the Church can be encouraged by it.

I know that venues like
The Metro are places
where bands like The
Smashing Pumpkins got
their start. Where are the
venues in Chi-town that
up-and-coming hip-hop
artists go to become the
next big thing?

There is this unspoken chain of command that exists in Chicago for up-and-coming bands to follow. In previous groups, Boogalu and I have hit the majority of the venues in the chain, but ALERT312 has been a different story. Some of the venues that are great for up-and-coming hip-hop artists would be Subterranean, The Double Door, The Shrine and, eventually (with good management), The Metro.

It seems that hip-hop is getting darker and darker in what is being said and how it is being portrayed. Some Christians say it is satanic. Even Christian hip-hop is not that "holy." To me, this is an interesting topic. Do you think this is a dead topic or something you'd like to help educate Christians on?

You're pretty spot on.
A lot of newer hip-hop is very dark, and I may agree that some of it is satanic. The watershed moment I point to is

K. West's My Dark and Twisted Fantasy, more specifically, post-"Monster" video. When he crossed that line and released a single and a video so dark and blatant, thus making it fashionable, the rest of the genre followed suit. The bottom line for me is that, as a believer in Jesus Christ and as someone who has a passion for art, it is my responsibility when I create to do so with the fact that Christ is evident at the core. And it has to be relevant, creative, and quality enough that it can stand toe-to-toe, recordto-record with the rest of the genre.

Yeah, "Monster" is what I was thinking about when I asked that last question. You see it with Lady Gaga a whole lot, too. Then you have artists like Talib Kweli, with tracks like "Going Hard" and then some tracks on Gutter Rainbow. He seems like he got caught up in whatever demon got to Kanye West and Jay Z.

(Laughs) There are even cats like Odd Future and the ASAP crews that are crafting very dark rap songs that just aren't palatable to me as an older and more seasoned listener of hip-hop music, and, even more so, as my convictions as a believer become stronger.

I read a few months back that Jay Z said grunge and the rise of Nirvana killed hip-hop for a minute. Do you think that could happen again, or do you think there are too many people that are making hip-hop The bottom line is that it is my responsibility to create with the fact that Christ is evident at the core.

-Moral One

culture acceptable now so hip-hop can't die out?

Hip-hop is so global and "pop" that it's hard to think of it being trumped or killed by another genre nowadays. I mean, the biggest song on the planet last year was a South Korean rap song about nothing. And with culture now being on the Internet, there will always be a bubbling purist hip-hop subculture existing.

I know that hardcore, punk, and metal always go back into the past to pull out old sounds and subject matter. Do you think hiphop can do the same and go back to the lighter days of The Fat Boys, Fresh Prince, and Young MC? Touching back on that

bubbling purist subculture, there is a small line of artists on both the general market and Christian side of the spectrum that are recreating Golden Era (1990s time period) and Old School (pre-'90s) hip-hop music. In Chicago, there's this group called

The Cool Kids who make stripped down kick/snare tracks and rap simple songs-very reminiscent of the late-'80s hip-hop. There is also a Chicago emcee/singer named Kid Sister, who makes light-hearted, party electro-rap songs with no kind of content other than having a good time. On the Christian side of the genre, there was a rap trio called Lightheaded who found their sound in Golden Eratype emceeing and production. And, even today, there is a very talented producer named Wes Pendleton who produces music very much the way Pete Rock, RZA and others made it-samples, kick, and a snare. Boogalu and I grew up in the era, so we still try to keep that feeling alive, but just with a new school twist to it.

0

Yeah, I had forgotten about The Cool Kids; I really like what they bring to the table. Christian hip-

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▶ ALERT312 CONTINUED

hop has not always been up to par with what secular hip-hop is doing. Now, you have guys like Lecrae that are doing Dirty South as well or better than secular artists. How does it feel to be a part of an era in Christian hip-hop that secular artists like and respect?

It's been refreshing to see Christian artists crafting music that is being respected by general market peers. ALERT312 is fairly new to CHH. We've mainly been a part of the local Chicago hip-hop scene and have played in general market venues like The Metro and Double Door. So, to now be a part of a movement—I think it might

be fair to call it that—of artists that are creating compelling art and music that is Christocentric is really special. ALERT312 feels especially blessed to be doing it alongside our brothers on Humble Beast.

How has the Chicago scene embraced you guys? Are groups like The Cool Kids down with this project? Do you get any artists bigger than you guys that hit you up to play shows with them? How have people that have never heard of you respond?

ALERT312 has been a different kind of experience. In previous bands, Boogalu and I have shared stages with a handful of acts that are way bigger than us and have gotten

great feedback from our general market peers. But, since then, the Chicago scene has changed, and it's been a slow burn for ALERT312 to get any sort of movement locally. With ALERT312 debuting on Humble Beast, we were received with open arms nationally, but not so much locally. With that being said, Of Vice & Virtue has gotten positive feedback from many folks we respect, and this summer we have some ideas to make more aggressive strides to play more locally in Chicago.

I watched ALERT312 last year online doing a Whosoevers Friday night gig. What are your plans this year to get out and tour for this record cycle? We just ended an eightcity tour about two weeks ago. Again, it was a new experience for us because tours were always DIY gigs for us, handling every aspect from booking to hotel to travel. Not this time around. We were very blessed to tour alongside an organization called Dare2Share that handled all of those details for us. The tour was great, the response to ALERT312's music was great, and lives were changed by the power of the Gospel on the tour.

Humble Beast follows a "pay what you want" model in getting their artists' music out into the world. Why did you guys choose that way to go for the band, and not go with a label that would make fans pay for the record (although people can still buy the record for a base price on digital outlets like iTunes)?

The partnership with Humble Beast is bigger than music to us. With all the guys on the label, it goes way past simply making records. It boils down to us locking arms together in using our passion for art and music to communicate the Gospel through them. So why should people have to pay for it? It's been cool to see that, even though we offer our music for free, people have been opting to still purchase the hard copies—especially the last three records: Prop's Excellent, Beautiful Eulogy's Kite and ALERT312's VV.

Bears, Bulls, or White
Sox? What is the most
memorable time you
and Boogalu have shared
watching your favorites?
Boogalu and I are triedand-true Bulls and Cubs
fans. The last moment that
was pretty memorable
for the both of us was
(Chicago Bulls' NBA point
guard) D. Rose's injury last
season. No lie, Boogalu did
not talk for two days. He
was that sad.

Last Question: what is something secret or funny that no fans know about Boogalu and yourself?
Well, Boogalu is passionate about his Insanity workouts. Once you get to know him, it's no longer a secret. And I'm a secret fan of The Voice TV show. I think I just lost all musical credibility.

IHLJUMP



By David Stagg

Everyone knows how much of a difference a strong leading lady can make—it's also hard to find. In Adelaine, it took a little convincing to make it happen, but the four dudes in Adelaine convinced the now-frontwoman Stormy Piña to make the jump while she was with another band.

She was the last piece of their puzzle, completing the quintet, and it's a good thing the guys were persistent—Piña has a super-powerful voice. It was on display late one night this spring, just outside of Houston, TX, in a town called Magnolia. Adelaine was kicking off a mini-tour with Sumerlin, a punk-ish trio, and celebrating the release of their first full-length record, *Currents*.

Unfortunately, the night didn't go as planned—a hailstorm showered the area, and it poured rain throughout the city, making it incredibly difficult to amass a crowd before start time. (Most news outlets were advising people to stay home at all costs. Even Piña's dad couldn't make it to the show because he was flooded out.)

It pushed the stage times back, and the trouble didn't end there. All bands fought through horrible technical difficulties as microphones went out, tones echoed, and feedback was rampant.

Despite it all, the pint-sized Piña and the band were able to shine through. It's a horrible feeling being stuck on-stage without any control over the sound, but the band was professional throughout, plowing through the adversity. (Go listen to their single "Bad Blood." It's killer.)

Their power-pop-punk sound will inevitably draw comparisons

to Paramore, but they're still young, so it will evolve as they grow as a band. The main deviation from their conventional sound (both on the record and during their set) is the track "Home." For the performance, drummer Zach Sebree abandoned his riser to come play keys with Piña, as she showcased her outstanding voice behind a wispy backing track and Sebree's playing.

As the band comes into their own, and it breeds potential for their next effort. The band ends their tour in May.



THE HM RECOMMENDATION:

CATCH ROBERT RUDOLPH LIVE

By Rob Houston

The third weekend in April, the city of Fort Worth closes Main Street in downtown for their annual Main Street Arts Festival. This is the third year I have been since I moved to Fort Worth in 2005. There is always one artist that I really want to see, and this year it was Saturday night headliner Robert Rudolph and the Family Band. While I was waiting for him to go on, I walked around, watching kids on the inflatable mountain climb, and taking pictures of the events that, if my girls hadn't been sick, we would have been doing. There was some cool art, and I actually saw more that I liked this year than I did the past two years. Following a set by The Wailers—a Bob Marley cover band—and a 30-minute set change, Rudolph and the boys took the stage. This was the first time I had been able to see this pedal steel guitar wonder perform; it was refreshing after the hardcore and metal shows I usually go to. Rudolph was on pedal steel guitar for 96% of the show. The rest of the time, he was hyping up the crowd by playing a six-string with a fan. All was cool until he played an instrumental of some '80s hair rock band. I think it was Van Halen, and a dozen or so girls took up the whole stage and had a dance party. (It was fun to watch his tour manager sweat about the girls not messing with his pedals.) He also did an amazing instrumental of the King of Pop's "The Way You Make Me Feel," with a good number of the crowd singing along. He played all his hits, and the crowd-young and old-seemed to love every minute.

COLUMNS

BY MATT FRANCIS

Dear Black Beauty,

My first car.

I'm not sure I ever got a chance to thank you for everything you were to me as a kid of 17...

Many metaphors of unbridled youth are synonymous with a car, and, more so, a first car. Windows down, abandonment, freedom, open road... a rite of passage. A claim, or a dream—either aimless or driven; a destination or the journey itself.

Try to imagine cinematic imagery suddenly neutered of its ability to correlate the two, and, suddenly, we have classic movie's scenes erased, even entire films drained of premise. What could be more intertwined than the road trip picture with the idea of youth and freedom?

It's the reason the crane shot was invented. (Orson Welles may dispute that one, but I say it was the fulfillment of the promise of the crane shot.)

A newly-acquired driver's license is only so good when you're on your dad's car schedule. But you... you were a newspaper's ad away. Asking price was \$2,000. I offered \$1,800— but don't take that as a slight. You were worth every penny and more.

The world became smaller. Like a barren Wild West town suddenly bridged by the railroad, the world was now conquerable, if only in accessibility. It's a lot easier to paint a town red when you're not biking there. Of course, that belies a more rebellious nature (and a sexier car than a used Plymouth Acclaim—no offense).

I owe a lot of my musical appreciation to you, my limited wallet, and my hopelessly romantic teenage years. Music cost money back in our heyday. I had a Discman that came with a car hook-up (it even boasted antiskip technology). The Discman sat on a change tray in front of the cup holder and was Frankensteined into both the tape deck and cigarette lighter for power. I could bring a couple of CDs for a long trip, but usually it was just you and me

and whatever single album I had just purchased. And at the cost of an album (\$18). I wasn't about to see the music devalued by lack of thorough playthroughs. It's silly to think about it in such frugal terms; the value of the music should be defined by the sonic expression and longevity contained wherein, not the overpriced Christian store cost of the plastic and distribution. I feel like a lot of albums, the so-called "growers not showers," were more fully appreciated when there was still monetary value attached to the disks and far more limited resources for discovery. Basically, if I bought an album at full price, and it didn't

click on the first listen. it wasn't confined to a dust bin (or left for dead on a hard drive). There was a guaranteed period of spins as the single source of music in the car. Not to say that an album like Ace Troubleshooter's The Madness of the Crowds wasn't immediately accessible, just that it blossomed under scrutiny and distanced itself from the pop-punk pack holding court in my musical commute.

And Ace
Troubleshooter was a band I initially took for granted. They had the equivalent of a "hit" or breakthrough song on their label debut in "Tonight."
The song is pop-punk perfection, if not for-

Matt Francis is a filmmaker/media designer out of Virginia Beach and the drummer for Feral Conservatives, an indie rock band. You can check out his website at mfrancisfilm.com.



mulaic: soaring vocal over palm-muted guitar intro, lyrics that tap into two great tropes of the genrelove and a youthful, seize-the-moment mentality. The song is immediate-it plays off a pre-chorus as a false chorus, offering a hook that, in itself, would make their peers jealous on the first go round before exploding into a bigger, anthem-release of the true chorus: "Tonight, the stars in her eyes outshine the stars in the sky."

I took the band for granted because I would always see them at festivals or on bills with frequency between 1999 and 2004 without ever seeking them out in their own right. They were the 2 p.m.-on-a-Saturday-slot band, offering a solid set but generally when nothing else was steal-

ing for your attention.

The Madness of the Crowds changed my view. Released in 2002 after an internal switch from BEC to Tooth & Nail Records, the album showed the band dropping the hyper-punk beat for some mid-tempo, emo-tinged numbers alongside more memorable hooks and song structures. There are still plenty of fast/loud numbers; the opening title track is a distorted guitar cold shower, "2:00 Your Time" may well be the sequel to "Tonight." "Age of Gold" and "Out to Sea" both showcase memorable guitar riffs, and "Amanda" may be Ace's most immediately accessible number, if a bit shallow.

These songs space out the more alternative rock numbers, like the more reflective "Estella" and

"Numinous," their mid-tempos buoyed by fine lyric work. "Have It All" turns holiday commercialism into a prayer for redemption: "Child enters in this world, it's broken / Angels sing and men sleep the night / Though it's brazen and defiant / Please be born in my heart." The sequencing is diverse, yet well-paced, combining varying tones, shades, and tempos into a satisfying whole.

The peak is "Let's Go Away," in both sonics and sentiment. The song is relentless. It's a gut-level blast of driving, expert drums and overdriven guitar leading into the album's best chorus. The album shows tinges of garage in its sometimes claustrophobic production, and this song is no different. The lyrics spill over with romantic abandon without being

juvenile, a simple plea to leave life behind on a road trip—escape—for love.

So, Black Beauty, Ace Troubleshooter called it quits in 2005. The band disbanded when singer John Warne left to pick up bass duties for friends Relient K. Of course, you died in 2007 when your radiator blew after a 13-hour car ride to Virginia was compounded by DC rushhour traffic. You hung on like a champ.

"This view has got to change..." The summer before, we were driving back from Kansas. I had just broken up with my girlfriend of a year-and-a-half while working for her dad and living with her sister's family...five states away from my home.

"So let's skip town, let's go away..." Over the 11 hour drive home, I called my best friend

at the time, Eric. My personal crisis was bad timing for him. He had just gotten engaged and was in the middle of wedding planning, but he just seemed generally annoyed that I had called him up for an unforeseen support dalliance. He was short and quickly offered a, "Gotta go!" even after asking me to be his best man (ironic timing, to be sure). But maybe it was all for the best. Things were fresh and emotions were convoluted. I ended up rolling the windows down-"We'll feel the wind on our face"—and turning the music up. It was just you-my car-an open road, and the promise of rebound in the music and maybe in your gentle pull from poor alignment. I needed to get my tires rotated, but still: romantic abandon, even in heartache. Let's go away.

COLUMNS

BY GREGORY TUCKER

Look Others in the Eye

It happened 70 years ago in the sky over wartorn Europe. Just five days before Christmas. A young American pilot named Charles Brown had just one wish: to escape German airspace in his bomber that had just been shot to pieces. Various members of his crew were dead or wounded and the dismal end seemed inevitable when Brown saw a German fighter off his wing. Thousands of feet above frozen ground, the pilots were close enough to make eye contact.

What happened next was extraordinary.
When the German pilot saw his enemy's face, he had compassion.
Instead of sending the B-17 to a fiery doom, he traveled alongside, giving escort to his enemy, all the way to the coast.
Then, he peeled off, and the bomber was able to

return to England. It was some time after the war ended when those two former enemies met again. They became dear friends and remained friends for the rest of their lives.

That true story illustrates what's referred to as the warrior's honor code, a set of unwritten rules that helps a combatant maintain his sense of humanity by doing what's right, even in the midst of violent battle. This sort of honor was observed during the 2013 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship, when Louisville's Kevin Ware jumped to challenge a three-point shot attempt from a Duke player. For some reason, the manner in which Ware landed broke his leg in a way few had seen before on a basketball court, and

in the minutes that followed, even members of the opposing team were brought to tears. We're playing to win, yes, but we don't want to see our opponent destroyed in the process.

In everyday life, looking the other person in the eye helps keep us civil. Recently, the news was of a socially conservative politician whose stance on the legal status of gays changed dramatically after his son announced his homosexuality. Before, he saw an issue; now, he sees a person. In another case, a woman had trouble loving the homeless, but her heart softened after three weeks of volunteering at a soup kitchen when she realized she was serving some remarkable people. Before, it was an issue; now, they're people.

The honor code is a lot like the Golden Rule.

When it plays out, it's done righteously—it can't be done otherwise. Its success is based on relating to one's opponent

The honor code is easy to ignore in this age of drone warfare, when missiles can be launched and bombs dropped from a mouse click thousands of miles away (perhaps like you've done countless times in a video game). It's a lot easier to kill without compassion when the enemy is a faceless target instead of a fellow human.

Obviously, the warrior's honor code applies to God's church—the primary work of the church deals with people, not issues. If we're not careful, Christians can end up having a drone warfare mentality regarding the sins we stand against.

To oppose something publicly, perhaps by adding a Facebook comment criticizing one group or another, removes the personal aspect from evangelism and loving lost people is the heart of evangelism. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that sinners are not the enemy. We know who the enemy of this world is, and finishing him off is something God promises to take care of. Our task is to love people as God loved us in our lostness—and He still loves us where we are now.

We are to live by that Golden Rule. It's found in the book of Matthew (chapter seven) and Luke (chapter six). Jesus declared, "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." This is the best way to deal with your enemies, and everybody else.

Gregory Tucker is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills and pastor of HopeCCA. You can hear him online at HopeSermons.com.

BY KEMPER CRABB

Concerning "Jesus Is My Girlfriend" Songs

Some Observations On The Imbalances of Today's Worship: Part the Eleventh

We've seen in this series that contemporary worship music has become dominated by songs modeled on romantic, experiential, and subjective musical expressions. We've also seen that, though such songs are a legitimate stream of Biblical worship expression, they have been historical and Biblical worship models (such as the Psalms or the Book of Revelation) held in balance with objective, doctrinal song content.

We then began to investigate how and why such an imbalance has led to such an experiential overemphasis. We began by seeing that the deep alienation between God and mankind engendered by the Fall leads men to see the world dualistically, as split between the "pure," spiritual realm and the flawed and imperfect physical world, a view which is a result of the simultaneous and inescapable knowledge that men have rebelled against their Holy Creator while they attempt to suppress that inescapable knowledge (Romans 1:18-32).

This split was institutionalized in Platonic thought, which hugely influenced monastic thought, which, in turn, shaped the way the Medievals viewed reality to a certain extent. It resulted in a late Medieval and Renaissance perspective which located

emotion and instinct in a "religious" zone, while reason and normative life were seen as belonging to the "secular" sphere.

Christian reactions to the rationalism of the Enlightenment fused with Victorian and pietist viewpoints produced a feminized, experientially-fixated Evangelicalism whose worship music institutionalized these attitudes for that branch of the Church.

This was all the easier, because there is a legitimate strand of subjective and emotional aspects included in Biblical worship paradigms (for instance, in Psalms 51, 56, 3, 6, etc.).

We began in the last article to consider the ramifications of the Holy Trinity for worship (considering that we humans are created in the image of the Triune God, and that all we do, including worship, should reflect that image accurately), and saw that, just as God possesses a Unified Perspective common to His Three Persons in His Oneness, He also possesses Diversified, Differing Perspectives amongst His Persons in Their Diversity.

Our worship of this Unified, yet equally Diverse Trinity should also reflect, from our participation in that worship, both an objective (general) praise of what He has done and who He is for us all, as well as a subjective (specific) praise for what He has done and who He is for me (each of us individually). At this time, Evangelical

worship is imbalanced with an overemphasis on the subjective, individualized aspect of worship, warping worship to reflect only a God of the subjective individual, rather than the Triune God who is also the God of the objective and of us all.

We continue now in our consideration of the implications of God's Tri-Unity for worship, as we see how God's Three-Personed Attributes speak to the issue of continuity and change in worship. In God's Oneness of Essence is Absolute Undifferentiated Unity, as God shares among His Persons the same perspective and experience. However, each of the Divine Persons also enjoys a Unique Personal

'CRABB' CONTINUED ON PAGE 44 ▶

Kemper Crabb is a musician, sound engineer, and is currently is a priest in the Community of Evangelical Episcopal Churches (CEEC). He is from Houston, TX.







Andy Mineo is an open book: He'll answer almost anything. Just don't ask him to match.

By Rob Houston

Andy Mineo is one of the most open emcees on Reach Records. He has been on some hot joints with labelmates like Tedashii, Trip Lee, and Lecrae. Now, he is making bis label debut with Heroes For Sale, 16 transparent tracks from a single, 24-year-old poet from New York City. From behindthe-scenes YouTube videos, we see how Mineo recorded the full album on the road, something you don't see every day. While bitting the road with his label mates on last year's Unashamed Tour, he pulled out all the stops—that's the kind of emcee he is—speaking about what his reality is. He empathizes with others walking the narrow path being a good-looking dude living in a big city. I had the chance to ask him some questions about what it was like putting out his first record, being transparent, and not paying any mind to what the trashcan hands have to say.

For our readers who don't know who you are, tell us your name and where you are from.

My name is Andy Mineo and I am originally from Syracuse, NY, but now living in Washington Heights, NYC.

You have been doing guest spots on many Reach Record joints for a few years now. How does it feel that your first LP drops in stores and online today?

It feels incredible! It's been a long time coming! I can't wait to go into a store and see it on the shelf.

You are really open with your struggles on this record. I know people could take what you say on this record the wrong way. Why was it important to you to be that open and take the risk of people looking

down on you?

I think the transparency I showed on this record was needed. A lot of times, rappers in our circle feel the need to be teachers or "answer givers" and there's nothing wrong with that. I just felt like there was a need for honest, transparent music that openly displays the struggles of a young, single 24-year-old dude living in a big city and trying to follow Jesus.

Sure, people can take what I say and look down on me for it, but I pray Jesus would heal their self-righteousness. In many ways, I feel free to speak about my struggles because I know my identity is not in my struggles, but in the One who is getting me through them. Because Christ has died for me, I have inherited an identity that I get to function from and not work for. I am secure in Him. So, to quote a line







from the album: "What I care what you think about me? The Father knows it all, and I'm still forgiven" (from "Take Me Alive").

What was it like getting guys like For King and Country on the record? I know all you Reach Records guys are always on each other's joints. Was it hard choosing who you wanted on the record or was it a whoever was available at the time to do it kind of situation?

Working with For King and Country was great. They blessed me with an incredible chorus. They are great dudes, and they love God. On this album, I didn't get a chance to put all of the features on it that I would have liked. My A&R and label really wanted me to shine on this project so that the world could get introduced to me.

So many of your fans have seen the behind-thescenes footage of you on tour, making the record on the road. How was it having some embarrassing moments documented, like being left behind and the behindclosed-doors conversations with your tour manager?

The camera had been rolling so much that I kind of forgot it was on me at times. Again, those moments were kind

of embarrassing, but I really wasn't fazed by putting it out. I have begun to care a lot less about what people think of me. Plus, I know someone is going to learn from my mistakes, so why not share them? When I read the Bible, I see all kinds of men of God in there who have all kinds of victories and triumphs, but also tons of failures. God wants to show us those things for our good and His Glory.

How important is it for you that people see you as a regular dude and not some superstar?

It is very important but tricky to navigate. I am a "regular dude"—I struggle, I sin, I love, I have feelings, I hurt like anyone else—but, in a lot of ways, I'm not a "regular dude." I have an exalted platform that God has called me to steward well. My lifestyle is often hectic due to travel, strange hours, fanfare, etc. I hope people can see and respect both.

On the record you reference skateboard culture. What is your favorite brand to ride, and who are your top five favorite skaters?

Yeah, that is slightly misunderstood. I don't follow skateboard culture like that. I just like to ride. Actually, I like riding cruisers and longboards to get around New York. I am not a raw trick board rider by any means. I'm learning,









RED IS A PRETTY BIG BAND.



Depending on your definition of "big," I suppose that meaning could vary, but when you play the Tonight Show with Jay Leno and you're on Conan O'Brien in the same week, I tend to lean towards "big enough." Red did that a couple of weeks after they released their third full-length album, Until We Have Faces, back in 2011. It actually charted at No. 2 on the U.S. Billboard 200. A couple of years later—roughly two months ago—they again landed on the charts at No. 7 with their most recent effort, Release The Panic. Panic was all over Billboard: Rock Album, Hard Rock Album, Alternative Album, Digital, Christian, Independent. It's an artist's dream: Make a record you're simultaneously proud of while still appealing to a critical mass. And Red did a pretty good job of this—good enough, at least, to keep their lease on the Billboard charts.

By David Stagg Interview by Doug Van Pelt

It's an enviable position for any musician, especially for drummer Joe Rickard. He didn't actually join the band until sometime around 2009, and he knows musicianship isn't always Billboards and roses. "Getting started in music is not very glamorous for most," he says. It's what feels like a one-in-a-million shot. I haven't done the numbers, but the odds of landing a single track on a Billboard chart at any position—let alone an album or two may actually be a million to one.

It doesn't look like Red's planning on slowing down anytime soon either, treating their careers a lot like marathoners. They've had a steady diet of record releases every two to three years and kept their inspirations fresh doing other ventures when not touring; Rickard's a budding entrepreneur and songwriter.

Recently, Rickard shared some insight with HM into his technical life, as well as a little bit about where he came from. When he first started touring at 17, "big" might be a dream he just aimed for. But now, from the best seat in the house, Rickard can view the world from a higher perspective.

Let's start with your drum setup. How has it evolved?

Over the years, I've learned more about what works live and what works in the studio. I use a five-piece kit almost all the time: big drums, deep snare... I like the look of it. I prefer the sound of big drums. I've settled into a certain style and sound. I want people to know that it's me playing by the sound of my drums.

I've been using a Spaun Custom LED Acrylic Kit for a while and just got my second acrylic kit for the Release The Panic tour. I use Evans drum heads, and I am always trying out different ones. I'll get hooked on a certain head for a while and then switch to something different.

Also, I recently added a couple more Zildjian cymbals to my setup, mainly just to change things up a little; it's always fun to

have something new to smash. I usually stick with playing a single kick pedal. The past two Red albums (Innocence and Instinct and Until We Have Faces) have a little double-pedal playing here and there for some different flavor, but on the new Red album (Release The Panic), I used only one pedal the whole time.

I'm definitely an advocate of practicing your instrument. I have an electric drum kit I bring on the road with me, and I set up in our dressing rooms for practice. When I'm home, I have a rehearsal spot I go to often.

How would you describe your role in Red? What roles do you feel like the other members play?

Red is definitely a team. We all have different "band jobs" that we do to split up responsibilities. Being on the road a lot and being away from family is a hard thing, so it's helped us to have a good understanding of each other and to learn to respect each other's time.

What has God done through the band that amazes you?

The reason I began playing drums in the first place was to start playing at this small church I went to in Houston, TX. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to make an impact on the world through music and drumming, which has turned into an amazing opportunity with Red. I see how much this band means to people and how much the music can inspire them. Hearing someone come up to me and say that Red saved their life and that they wouldn't be here without us is an indescribable feeling. It usually leaves me speechless.

God is using this band and the four guys in it-for His glory. That's why we're here.

How has your personal

faith changed over the vears?

I started touring when I was 17. I was very green and young, but my faith was strong. Over the years, I've learned more and more to trust in God. Getting started in music is not very glamorous for most. It's a lot of sleepless nights driving in a van, and there's not really any money coming in. I had to keep reminding myself why I was out there on the road and that God would always providewhich He did.

Years later, I'm still touring, things have gotten a lot better, and God is here just as much as He always has been.

What are some of the things that only the drummer sees?

Being in what I like to call "drum world" can be intense some days (laughs). With all of the pyro, things blowing up around me, and loud music, it can seem like a war zone. My drum tech

(Derek Benitez) takes really good care of me during the shows. We have issues sometimes, like breaking a snare head or a kick pedal, so things stay interesting for us.

Seeing a crowd from my drum riser is one of the coolest things—I definitely have the best seat in the house.

What else is going on in your life?

I have a couple of new ventures I'm working on outside of drumming. I like to stay busy and get into new business ventures. Plus, I really enjoy songwriting. I get the opportunity to do some co-writing in Nashville in my time off.

One of the coolest projects I've worked on was the new Love And Death album with Brian "Head" Welch. It was an honor to write with him-and, of course, I had to be a part of the drums, just for fun.

WITH THEIR FIRST FULL-LENGTH RECORD NOW UNDER THEIR BELTS, ARK OF THE COVENANT

HAS STARTED THEIR MOVE ACROSS THE NATION.



LET'S HOPE THEIR VAN HOLDS UP.

BY ANTHONY BRYANT

Through trials, strength, tragedy, and faith, Ark of the Covenant finally released their debut record, *Self Harvest*, at the end of April.

Fresh from their set in Fredericksburg, VA, I caught up with drummer Mike Hnath. They are currently touring with Saving Grace and Those Who Fear on the Hard And Relentless tour, preparing for things to come.

"We had some van trouble in California, and in Arizona, and then again in the middle of the country. We got the van up and running again, we just finished our set, and things are going well. People seem to really dig our new stuff, and we are trying to bring the musicianship side of things to them, to show that we have grown compared to the stuff in the past.

"We had a struggle getting home," Hnath continued. "With all the van trouble, we had to really pull together and make sure we made it here. We had to hold out financially till we got home, which, thankfully we did, but every band should be pre-

pared for the worst case scenario. Missing dates, canceling shows, double drives—go into a tour financially stable, and don't get stuck in the middle of nowhere."

With the band being from the small state of Connecticut and being close to Boston, I was curious as to how they were affected as a band by the recent tragedy, as the terrorists set off homemade bombs at the finish line of the Boston Marathon.

"We were actually getting our van fixed in Flagstaff, AZ, and, when we heard about it, we were very concerned about the family and friends we have up there," Hnath said. "We were in the waiting room watching the news, calling everyone we knew in that area. It's crazy that something like that can happen so close to home and be such a big thing. It's just nuts how stuff like that can happen. Our prayers are out there for all the families."

With Greg Thomas of Misery Signals partnering up with the band again, I asked Hnath what his role has been with the band and how long they plan on working with Greg in the future.

"We were halfway done with the new album, and it sounded a lot like the EP Separation, and Greg stepped in and pushed us to make music we never thought we could make," Hnath said. "He helped us re-write the half that we had, and he wrote the second half. Sometimes we have a pattern, a rhythm, a riff, but, on this record, our bassist and vocalist collaborated a lot. And, with our original guitarist coming back to the band, he brings a lot of technical playing that some of us do not have. where Dan has a more outof-the-box way of thinking with some of the things he comes up with.

"Greg has really become a mentor to us, teaching us how to implement time signatures, guitar textures, and layouts of the songs and how they can benefit the songs," Hnath said. "I think the sound we had before was cool, but with the changes we have made, it will help broaden our fan base. Our older fans will still like us, but we will be reaching out to a new audience as well.

"Greg said he would come in and help us with future albums; he is kind of like a ghost writer, along with being a producer. He is like our mentor, someone who is really here with the band in the studio and is looking out for us. Self Harvest is about a man who questions life and God. And, at the end, he realizes that, after everything, he still believes. When we did the artwork, we wanted to explain the album in an image. We gave the artist

a description of what the album was about and what we were looking for, and he brought us back the cover art."

With a new sound and a bright future, Ark of the Covenant has taken influence from multiple areas and turned them into their own.

"Our new guitarist, Brad, who was an original member. is a big fan of (technical metal outfit) Protest the Hero. We are really stoked to be able to start writing with him again to see what he comes up with. Where Greg is more about hardcore metal, personally, I am a fan of A Plea for Purging and things of that nature. Alex really likes Coheed and Cambria, so we have a wide range of influence that I think each of us brings to the band.

"While on tour, we listen to everything: '80s music, the radio... Each of us has thousands of songs on our Androids and iPhones. We all have different playlists and songs to listen to. It makes for some weird, but cool, music that we listen to."

With a major release on Facedown Records, it tends to put a little air in the sails of bands. Curious, I asked them about their future. Hnath opened up about their next record, and how they can keep in touch with their fans:

"We love Facedown, and

in the next couple of years, we hope to have our next full length out or about to be released, and maybe another EP before that as well. Facedown is a great label, but, if a dream offer came up, you never know. Jason has been great to us, and he has been supportive of other bands leaving to bigger labels. For now,

excited for that. With the lyric video out, the kids have really gone with it and know all the words to the song when we play it live. With the new single out and the video, people can hear a little bit of the new album, and our old fans are really starting to come around. Social media has really helped us with thou-

ALL WE CAN DO IS WORK HARD, PUT OUT THE BEST MUSIC WE CAN, NOT BE ANOTHER COOKIE-CUTTER BAND THAT COPIES OTHER BANDS.

-DRUMMER MIKE HNATH

we are on Facedown, and we probably have another album or two with them.

"We have no plans to go independent. We need to have a label. All we can do is work hard, put out the best music we can, not be another cookie-cutter band that copies other bands or the typical styles that genres have set in place. We want to mold our own style and constantly grow. We will see where that takes us.

"This will be our first full length, and we are sands of downloads and video plays, it has really helped us get us exposure.

"Technology and social media are changing all the time. We can barely keep up with it. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are the most popular, but we keep an eye on it. You never know what will happen next and what will become the next big thing. We are going to just wait and see what happens, you never know, something could come out of the woodworks."



wants something more from this life

While reading up on the band Altars, my mind kept going back to one question: Why on earth would a band stop playing hardcore and choose punk instead? I was baffled. I wondered how on earth I was going to give a good review, or if this would, in fact, be my first unfavorable commentary—without being judgmental, of course.

Diversity in this scene is paramount to reaching as many as possible. It's part of what makes Bible-thumpers effective in every area of ministry. I decided that Altars has not changed their style to punk, but have become a Stretch Armstrong-esque brutal singing hurricane with strategically placed breakdowns. I must admit, it still felt like what I know as the original hardcore scene. There exists in Altars the color of truth that drew me to Christian hardcore in the first place, so many years ago, when kids would come out in droves to the Showcase Theater to see Point of Recognition and NIV, only to show up the next night for Cast in Stone or Torn in Two.

Those young men had a focus—a real reason to get on stage. The young people in this world need to know that there is a Heavenly Father to lean on, One that will give them the strength to put down the blade that slices their skin, the nerve to disagree when the world says something immoral is proper, the rational thought that will prevent them from denying themselves food in an attempt to "feel better," and the kinetic hope that creates movement and purpose.

I spoke to bassist Mike Searle about the transitions Altars has gone through and the upcoming album Something More, coming out this month. Altars has something to say, and they mean to be heard. They are intelligent, focused, and devoted to practicing what they preach.

Why did you change your sound?

We wrote that first EP as textbook hardcore one-and-a-half years before it was actually released, so all of the band members' musical tastes have changed. When you are 19 going on 20, musical tastes are still maturing, and (you're) getting into different styles. That is a large part of the initial change between our EP *Opposition* and our full-length *Conclusions*. Then, the jump between *Conclusions* and *Something More* occurred because we got little bit angrier and some of the angst that went into the writing of *Something More* had more of a punk feel. I can see it in the drumming, vocals, and faster guitar riffs.

How are your fans reacting to the change?

Surprisingly, it's been very positive. We are getting less negative reactions than *Conclusions* received. I was kind of already on the offensive before we released anything, because you have to expect that kind of criticism when you are changing your sound. People seem to be liking it and are downloading it all over the world. We actually just released a new

BY COLLETTE WYCOFF

lyric video for "Eternity" yesterday (on our Facebook page).

Writer's Note: I don't normally do this, but I have to interject here. If you have not picked up Opposition, you should make that happen. It should be a part of your personal space.

You have a very specific credo to share about rising above societal pressures to conform. Do these views come from personal experience or from seeing others' struggles?

Largely, it comes from personal experience, but a lot of it also comes from observation. Seeking in life and searching for what truth is is an everlasting journey (that) I think is only interrupted. We all kind of come from a (town) that is fairly cookie-cutter. There was not a lot of diversity, so we grew up in the pool of general conformity, and we didn't know. It wasn't until we started asking questions that we realized that there were a lot of ways of looking at something. Information was just handed to us, fed to us, and we would take that. As of late, we have been asking lots of questions, and it has been extremely enlightening.

That is kind of the premise of *Something More*. The (album) comes across in a voice that is searching for something. It doesn't get too political, but it does discuss asking questions when it comes to spirituality. It's all about asking questions, [and] that's what I hope the album will convey.

Have you had an experience with your fans that has evidenced to you that you are getting this point across?

Yes. There was a guy who was not a Christian at one of our shows. He was asking about questioning everything; he wanted to know if we actually do question everything because we are on a Christian label. We ended up discussing things with him in great depth. He was talking about questioning reality and God and the Bible and structure. It was an amazing experience for me, and I hope it was for him, too. I think spirituality is something that is very questionable, whether we are talking about the church or anything else. If one is not questioning their own spirituality or God, it is an inhibitor, and it keeps you from learning. We were talking about what God is and who exactly He is, and it was cool because he had been questioning things, but didn't have much peace with them.

'ALTARS' CONTINUED ON PAGE 44





AUGUST BUST SET TO RELATION FIFTH ALBUMULL REIN GENRE.* * PREDICTION.

FIRST OFF, AUGUST BURNS RED IS A HUMBLE, SELF-AWARE GROUP OF GUYS. THEY'D NEVER MAKE THAT STATEMENT. SECONDLY, I WOULD. WHEREAS MOST BANDS' PROCLAMATIONS REFUSING TO BE COOKIE-CUT IS JUST LIP SERVICE, THE FIVE GUYS FROM LANCASTER, PA PUT THEIR MONEY WHERE THEIR MOUTH IS AND SPEND QUALITY TIME RELEASING THINGS LIKE A CHRISTMAS ALBUM. HERE, GUITARIST AND MAIN SONGWRITER JB BRUBAKER SITS DOWN WITH HM TO TALK ABOUT THEIR LATEST EFFORT, RESCUE & RESTORE, THE FUTURE OF THEIR CRAFT, AND WHETHER OR NOT EAGLES' QUARTERBACK NICK FOLES IS NFL READY.

BY DAVID STAGG

August Burns Red is now a veteran act. What are some of the lessons that your experience has taught you, and how do you think you have changed as a band (and as musicians, as artists, as communicators) over the years?

When talking about what we've learned as a band over the last 10 years, it's hard to speak generally about the topic because there are many different aspects to playing in a band as a career. I can break it down into four categories: performance, business, relationships, and musicians.

Let's start with the performance aspect. I see a lot of bands on the road not preparing for their live shows. They'll just grab their instruments and go up there and play. That would be great for us if we were capable of just hitting the stage cold and playing to our potential, but that simply isn't the case. We have tried it, and we certainly don't play as well. It all comes down to the amount of time you're willing to put in. (This lesson can apply to all things in life, but for right now, we're just talking about preparing to play a show.)

For me, personally, I need at least 20 minutes minimum to get my

RNS RED IS EASE THEIR M, AND IT ENT THEIR

fingers warmed up so I can play up to speed. In addition, there are almost always a few riffs in the set that are giving me trouble on any given show day, and I have to continue to practice those parts so I can nail them when it counts. There are parts in songs that date back as far as *Messengers* and *Constellations* that still give me trouble. You'd think it'd get easier after all these years (*laughs*).

At this point, each of us know what we need to do in order to deliver the best show we can. We have played over 1,250 shows in our career and we are definitely still refining the performance preparation process. I don't think that will ever stop.

The business aspect of the band has come a long way since the beginning. From 2003-2008, I was doing my best to manage the band and our finances. After our first two trips to Europe, I decided I was spending too much time behind my computer trying to manage our business and not enough time behind my guitar. After much thought and a lot of meetings, we finally hired management in 2008. Holding out as long as we could gave us a lot more options for management and was one of the wiser decisions we made along the way.

We've always tried to make decisions with the long-term in mind. ABR is definitely not a "live fast" kind of band. We toured in a van and trailer as long as possible—once you step up to a bus, it's hard to go back. After touring on a bus for a few years, I understand that more now than ever. We recognize that this could all go away very quickly, and because of that we are always trying to make sound business decisions that will make sense in the long term.

We aren't teenagers playing music just for fun anymore. Obviously, this is the best job in the world, but we have to treat the business aspect of it as any normal company would. There are a lot of people directly affected by our success (or lack thereof). For that reason, we try to look at every business decision from all angles. We listen to what people advising us have to say and try to learn from the mistakes we've made or our peers have made.

This industry is changing a lot, lately. It doesn't matter if you're the best band in the world—if you can't run a business well, your band will fail. That is very clear to all of us at this point.

Relationships are a huge aspect of being in a band. Not just the ones we have with each other as band mates, but the ones we try to maintain with people while we are on the road, with other bands we tour with, and our fans. Fan interaction is so important now, and if you don't give your listeners the time of day, there are a thousand other bands who will. You'll be the only jerks who don't care enough to reply to a tweet or take a photo at a show. That stuff is pretty easy to do, so there's no excuse to ignore the people who made you the least bit relevant in the first place.

Learning how to get along with each other has been an ongoing struggle as time has passed. I think ABR does a pretty good job on getting along while crammed into small living spaces for months at a time. We can see the signs of when someone is not in the mood, and we're pretty good about leaving each other alone in those situations.

I know what makes everyone in this band tick and I know how to tick everyone in this band off (*laughs*). We all do. We crossed the "friendship" line years ago, and we are more like brothers at this point. We fight over petty things, and we all have different views on all sorts of subjects. It's hard to get everyone to see eye-to-eye, but we've learned to take a democratic approach to most things, be it an album title or

where we want to go eat dinner on an off day.

Finally, as musicians we've learned what works live and what doesn't. We are always trying to push our music forward and stretch our fans as much as we can without going past that breaking point of being too far out there. While we are a metal band, there are a lot of other styles of music that influence the way our songs come out. I think that's only natural at this stage in the game. We used to write songs just for the people in the pit, trying to be as heavy as possible.

People sometimes ask if we are going to write another *Messengers*. That was our heaviest, most breakdown-driven album to date. We will never write another Messengers, and I can say with confidence that if we did, even those people who say they want that would be bored by it. Been there, done that. The genre needs to change, or it will quickly become irrelevant.

When you guys are together on tour or in the studio, what does the typical conversation sound like?

When we're together, we are joking around constantly. We are pretty great at making fun of one another, and we know where our lines are and what the consequences of crossing those lines would be. If you sat in on a conversation, you might be surprised at how ruthless we can be to one another, but it's just a product of being together in small living conditions for years and years. We really do love each other. We just also love making fun of each other (laughs).

When it comes to sports, I'd say baseball and football are the most popular amongst the band. Matt (Greiner, drummer) likes soccer, but he's alone in that. If we are on tour in the States, there is always a game on TV in the bus. We root for Philly in everything, and some of us take our sports quite seriously, myself included.

A couple of the guys enjoy playing video games on the road, your standard Call of Duty or whatever. I am not personally into video games on tour as that simply occupies a TV that I could be watching sports on. We play a lot of Mafia on tour; it's basically an elaborate who-done-it game that forces us to debate for hours and accuse/defend each other until we are blue in the face. Mafia is an especially popular pasttime when we are overseas.

Sometimes it's easy to complain to each other when facing adversity and working together. Thinking back through the various stages of your band, what have been some of the complaints you had in the beginning up to now? How have your complaints changed?

The complaints at the beginning were about whose turn it was to sleep on the sofa at some random kid's house. Whose turn it was to drive the first shift of an overnight drive. Whether or not we should stop at Taco Bell after the show. Now we complain about who gets to have a middle bunk spot on the bus. Who gets what storage drawers on the bus. Who left their wet show clothing laying in the back lounge.

All of our major arguments usually stem from money, like in a marriage (laughs)! I remember our first accountant telling me years ago that the bigger we grow, the more money will get in the way of our personal relationships. We have done a good job of separating business decisions from our friendships, but I think all of us cringe a little bit when we have to discuss something that will directly affect everyone's finances. Things are more fun when you don't have to discuss that kind of stuff together.

How are the crowds in Europe responding to ABR? How would you compare the crowds in different countries at your live shows?

Crowds in Europe aren't terribly different from the USA. I think you will commonly see way more black t-shirts in the crowd in Europe, and the vibe in the metal scene is simply "darker" than it is in the States.

Australia is a lot like California, and the shows there are quite comparable to what you'd see in the States. Places like Japan, Southeast Asia, and Latin America are way wilder than the States. The crowds are rabid, probably because they don't get as many shows. They really seem to buy into the concept of viewing bands as celebrities, and they will bend over backwards to get a photo, autograph, or guitar pick.

It is fun and flattering, but I am thankful that not every country is that way. It would be frustrating to not be able to go anywhere outside the dressing room without being surrounded by people who want a picture or autograph. I can't imagine how big pop stars and movie stars must feel on a daily basis trying to go anywhere. What we experience in places like Latin America would only be scratching the surface of what real celebs are dealing with all day, every day.

What's the worst onstage mishap that's ever happened to you guys? How did you fix it and carry on?

These are the shows I have regular nightmares about. When everything goes wrong on stage, it is the most helpless feeling. It's completely embarrassing.

I can think of one such moment that happened recently at the Impericon Festival in Leipzig, Germany, this past April. We were playing a late slot at the sold out festival—over 5,000 people were in the building. Besides your standard playing errors caused by rocking and rolling, everything went smoothly for the first half of our set.

During our fifth song, my guitar randomly started cutting in and out. It was like someone was flipping a light switch on my signal. Neither Kevin (our guitar tech) nor myself knew what was going on. I have had a zillion different tech problems on stage over the years. Kevin and I are great at quickly diagnosing and solving these problems, but this one wasn't falling into any quick-fix scenario. So, Kevin just ran a cable directly from my guitar to the amp, so I was playing with a completely dry, unaffected tone. This is, like, the worst case scenario for me as I have a bunch of pedals running at all times that are a big part of helping me to get my sound live.

My tone was so dry and awful. I was furious, but what else could we do? We were on a strict schedule and there were 5,000 people there,

EACH SONG HAS ITS OWN IDENTITY. THAT WAS THE GOAL WE SET OUT TO ACHIEVE.

— JB BRUBAKER

bobbing their heads regardless of what my guitar tone sounded like.

We finished off our set with the songs "Empire" and "White Washed" and I basically stood in place and stared at my frets doing my best to not mess up and lose my cool any further.

This might not sound like that big of a deal, but I was seeing red when we finished the show—and I am really good at rationalizing everything in these situations. I hate feeling that way; it took me a good half hour to accept what had happened and get over it. I was just embarrassed and frustrated because we hadn't fixed whatever was causing the problem.

The next day, when setting up before the show, the same problem occurred. I fixed it in about five seconds. The wireless cable that went from the receiver into my guitar was slightly unscrewed. It's always the simplest thing. Bah!

What has the theme of this new album turned out to be?

The theme to this record would be diversity. I don't think any of the songs talk about the same topic lyrically, and I don't think any of the songs sound terribly similar musically. Each song has its own identity.

That was a goal we set out to achieve when writing for this record. We want people to open their minds a bit, both musically speaking and in regards to the lyrics.

Which songs (if any) went through the most changes from initial song idea to final recording?

The song "Treatment" went through some changes in the writing and recording process. I had originally written three different endings to this song. I showed them each to our producers, Carson Slovak and Grant McFarland, before we arrived at the ending that is on the album. There was also a large "happy" sounding thrash part in the middle of the song. Jake (Luhrs, singer) hated it, and we debated for a while in the studio: I liked it because it was so different from anything else (due to it being in a major key and happy instead of minor), and Jake hated it for the same reason. We eventually nixed the whole section and rewrote something a little safer in its place. I am happy with the new part we wrote, and now "Treatment" happens to be one of my favorite songs on the record.

What were some of the highlights when you were recording these songs in the studio?

One of my favorite moments of being in the studio is listening through a song for the first time with all of the elements in place. We did only three rough pre-production demos for this record, so most of the songs we were hearing recorded were for the first time. Hearing a completed song for the first time is one of the most rewarding feelings you will have while being in a band. It's fun to hear the song progress from just naked drum tracks to a finished product.

What was a challenge you guys faced when recording and/or writing this album?

A challenge for me was to physically write the album in a timely manner. The writing and recording of *Sleddin' Hill* set me back from my normal writing schedule, and I found myself with a lot of writing to do in the second half of 2012. Coincidentally, we also had an intense tour schedule planned for the last three months of 2012, and I am horrible at writing while on the road. I made writing my full-time job after our touring ending in December and finished the last two songs literally days before Matt started tracking drums.

I'm not a fast songwriter, so the months leading up to the recording were quite stressful for me. But everything came together, and I'm really proud of how *Rescue & Restore* turned out.

Another difficult process is the choosing of lyrics. ABR has always had a very open format to writing lyrics. Anyone in the band can contribute, and we then put all of the potential lyrics on the table and talk about which ones we think are the best. We had over 25 sets of lyrics to read and evaluate. This is a tough process because everyone is obviously going to be somewhat attached to their own writings. It is a humbling experience to bring something to the table that you're stoked about only to have it shot down by the rest of the band. While this isn't a fun process, it does help us to get the best lyrics we can for each song.

Finally, guitar tuning always poses a challenge in the studio. Our producers were extremely thorough with the tuning throughout the entire recording process. I think we spent more time making sure each chord was perfectly in tune with all the correct harmonics and over-

I'M THANKFUL FOR EVERY DAY I GET TO CONTINUTE DOING THIS FULL-TIME. I DREAD THE DAY IT ALL COMES TO AN END.

—7B BRUBAKER

tones present than actually playing the guitar. While that was frustrating at times, it was worth it in the end.

Who produced this album? How did that decision get made? How did the selection process take place?

Carson Slovak and Grant McFarland produced Rescue & Restore. They were also responsible for the production of our holiday album, Sleddin' Hill. We have been working with Carson since we first signed to Solid State. Carson recorded the demos of Thrill Seeker that got us signed to Solid State, as well as all the pre-production for Messengers. He also mixed our live album *Home* and produced all but two of our Christmas singles. Needless to say, we had a lot of history with him, and we enjoy working with each other.

Grant has been a long-time friend of the band. He used to play drums for a band from Lancaster called This or the Apocalypse, but he put down his drum sticks to work full-time as a producer at Atrium Audio in Lancaster, PA.

Grant was responsible for all the vocal production on this album. He recorded three pre-production demos with Jake before we gave our final seal of approval to work with him on vocals. Jake and Grant have great chemistry. They spent a ton of time working on vocal patterns and making sure everything was delivered the best it could be.

Carson and Grant also mixed the album, which was the hardest decision for us to all agree on but a no brainer now that we are finished. There was some concern from the powers that be about using a fairly unknown name to mix the album, but we had confidence in their work, and I think they knocked it out of the park for us.

Going back to the discussion about writing for this album, what sort of thinking went on about what your goals would be? I'm curious if you paused to think through what you wanted to accomplish with the record.

My main goal when writing *Rescue & Restore* was to make every song unique from the others. I made a conscious effort to use different tunings and keys for a lot of the songs. I have a real problem with how sterile metalcore has become, and I don't want to contribute to the drivel. There are a lot of trends that are currently popular in this genre that I'm personally not into at all. I specifically avoided some of the flavorof-the-week elements bands are doing right now.

We've always tried to do our own thing as a band regardless of what seems to be the hot ticket at the moment. I think a lot of people are becoming bored with the genre, and it's our goal to keep things as exciting as we can. That was the goal.

How has August Burns Red's popularity affected the way you think about this band? You guys have been blessed with a loyal and ever-growing fan base. Many of your peers have probably come and gone while you are continuing to sell albums and play to big crowds. How does this impact what you do and how you approach your craft?

I'm thankful for every day I get to continue doing ABR full-time. I dread the day it all comes to an end. Every time we put out a new album, I am really nervous and anxious thinking, "I hope people still like us after this record." So far, every record seems to be well received, so I can only hope that continues.

Our listeners are the only reason we have had any success at all. If people didn't care, we wouldn't be able to do what we do so we are forever grateful.

We certainly consider what our audience likes and dislikes about us. While we are always pushing the boundaries of our sound, I don't think we've lost the elements of this band that made people like us in the first place. I'm so thankful that our fans have been open to us pushing our sound, and at this point, I think most of them would be disappointed if we were content to just release a carbon copy of a past album.

There will always be naysayers—and they seem to talk the loudest but overall I think we have some of the more open-minded listeners in the metalcore world.

How has the perception of ABR as a "Christian band" affected you guys? In your opinion, what are the positives? What are some of the detriments to being associated with that scene?

Right out of the gates, our connection with the Christian metal scene was helpful. Those people embraced us from day one and helped us get off our feet. We are forever grateful for that. One thing I've always noticed about this scene is that people are, for the most part, very open to differing views

'ABR' CONTINUED ON PAGE 44 ▶

REVIEWS



After three albums, Paramore's self-titled release tops them all



Paramore *Paramore*



It's sad the Farro brothers left, but it almost always happens when the weight of a band (even just in perception) is carried by a sole individual—just ask Beyoncé or Justin Timberlake. And if Paramore and the remaining band can write an album like this self-titled one, it may be more of an implication that in order for the band to grow, Williams had to take over anyway. The attrition may have been necessary, sad

Paramore does their best when they're doing Paramore. This statement is ironic because—on their fourth full-length release—it would seem they needed to shed

almost half their weight to make the album they were meant to make. And if you include the recent evidence in the band's war of words—mainly the first-hand account

of Justin and Zac Farro's departure—you may be inclined to believe Paramore is, quite literally, just vocalist Hayley Williams and doesn't need a band at all.

Williams (and bandmates guitarist Taylor York and bassist Jeremy Davis)

announced the departure of the Farros on their website with the distinct implica-

tion that the brothers' hearts weren't into it. If you flip the coin, the Farros were

standing there saying the band was just a puppet for Williams' master plan-she is,

after all, the only one in the band signed to a major label.

or not, we all benefited in the fallout.

According to the powers that be, Paramore's first single "Now" is a song that's a little more reminiscent of the conventional Paramore sound. "There's a time and a place to die," Williams sings, "but this ain't it." On the heels of the band's real life drama, it becomes more than just a lyric; it flirts with being an anthem. Messy guitars and screams echo in the backdrop. It feels a lot like Paramore grown up, like when you see your cousin for the first time after five years and he's drinking a beer. Follow that jam up with the hook, "Some of us have to grow up sometimes" from the song "Grow Up," and Williams might as well be on her own crusade of emotional release.

But who knows? Williams is a lover, and the lyrics could be about anything, right? Heck, their second single, "Still Into You," is a pop-modernlove song and, as the title implies, is a heavy dose of never-leave-your-side, the opposite of crawling back

The best song on the album, "Ain't It Fun," is almost a perfect pop song, peppered with sing-alongs; a gospel effort on the bridge and closing; upbeat, staccato guitar riffs; and snarky lyricism. Truly a complete song.

If Williams grows up anymore-whether it be solo or with anyone elselet's hope there's more of this to come. Growing up may be hard to do, but thankfully Paramore's older now.

-DAVID STAGG



David Thulin Reconstruction



Dream

There is nothing quite like the "they're the Christian version of..." phenomenon. A non-secular version of everything-but it's OK! They're Christian!

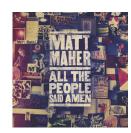
David Thulin is that.

electronic dance music) to the world. To be fair to Thulin, if you're on board with the Christian-alternative movement, that hole is there waiting to be filled. Thulin is a great producer (and, interestingly enough, a former commercial air pilot); he's released a couple of independent albums prior to Reconstruction, but for his first major label release, he's taken a number of Christian hits and given them the EDM renovation.

But the album is still simply remixes. And if your source material isn't Grade

high schooler who was once a rapper is now a DJ. It won't be long before he has competition, and labels realize that CEDM can sell, too. We'll see what's left when that happens.

-DAVID STAGG



Matt Maher All the People Said



ESSENTIAL

Mix part Derek Webb, a lot of Scott Farris, a bit of John Davis (from Superdrag) with Rich Mullins, and you've got a fine blend of rootsy, bluesy, and heartfelt Gospel. It's fun, basic, and live worship that can sit alongside the Chris Tomlins and the Matt Redmans of the praise and worship music world, but you'll have to slide a couple steps sideways (like well-worn boots across a wooden floor) to find this

Earthy, rustic, and full of character, it succeeds at an authentic, organic vibe that formulas can't touch. Maher's written a couple of today's "worship hits"—the simple Chris Tomlin hit "Your Grace is Enough" and the powerful anthem "Christ Is Risen"-both of which are on here with several live cuts and between-song direction. Like John Mark McMillan or the new

album by Citizens, All the People Said Amen has the best of both worlds for discriminating believers that love worship but hate

-DOLIG VAN PELT



Mayfairgrin Surface to Air ***

INDEPENDENT

Andrew Latham has been making electronic music as mayfairgrin for a number of years. While the styles vary from one recorded project to another, the quality is consistent. One might hear ambient, industrial, experimental noise, or, as in the case of Surface, all of the above. As the subtitle suggests, Surface to Air is a collection of previous Mayfairgrin tunes, this time re-mixed and reworked-and with pleasing

Complete with obscure movie speeches, worldbeat samples, and the occasional inclusion of all out weirdness, the sounds Latham creates would be deemed electronica, yet this isn't really dance music. Yes, there are danceable beats, but they're generally overlaid with ambient soundscapes. In fact, at times this is similar to yesterday's acts like Ambient Theology or Bubblebaby Experience. Still, the material on this collection is much further

Earthy, rustic, and full of character, it succeeds at an authentic, organic vibe that formulas can't touch.

-DOUG VAN PELT ON MATT MAHER

but for EDM. (If your home is somewhere under a rock, EDM is short for "electronic dance music." It was all but pioneered in the mainstream in the 1990s and 2000s by acts like Daft Punk, Chemical Brothers, and Prodigy, but is more intensely famous now with DJs and performers like Skrillex and Deadmau5 earning six figures a night performing in places like Las Vegas and Dubai.) The sound has expanded as well, incorporating a number of sub-genres like trance, house, and club.

Thulin's major mission is to bring CEDM (yes, that's short for Christian A, you're starting the day in a hole. You don't make the best sushi with fish from yesterday.

The major issue with Christian alternatives is that they rarely do it better than their secular counterparts. In fact, due to the niche market, a lot of times they don't have to try too hard because of the built-in marketplace.

I believe that Thulin tried on this record, but with the ubiquitousness of the sound, cheaper laptops, and freely available instrumental and acapella tracks on the Internet, the remix world is getting larger and larger. Every

HM **MAY 2013** out there. In a good way, of course. It's the sort of music you'd want to put on while you relax in a very long, very hot bath (Available from mayfairgrin. bandcamp.com)

-LOYD HARP



This City **Awaits** Said the Liar



RED CORD

For better or worse. radio rock is a formulaic genre. The mold can be broken and it can be done right (see: Slipknot, System of a Down), but if it's done wrong (read: just like everyone else), you could take any band's song, pass it off to their contemporary, and you'd never know who the original performer was. Being able to break that mold or not is an important difference: the former solidifies staying power. Bands like Thrice and Chevelle wrote some incredible music and had commercial success, but their records fade into

I'm worried the same fate might befall This City Awaits. The music is good; there are some solid movements in the songwriting. It has the moments where you stop what you're doing to focus on the music—a great trait in a record, proving it doesn't become literal background

music-but Said the Liar's intro-verse-chorus-verse style seems to blend the songs into one overall umbrella. (And throw in the acoustic song to prove you can do it.)

The radar blips of head-turning show hope, but if you get the record, you'll most likely listen to it for a few months and then move on to the next hot band in the genre.

-DAVID STAGG



Silverline Lights Out

Silverline's highly anticipated new album delivers a really solid record. Produced by Ben Kasica (formerly of Skillet), Lights Out allows the listener to be encompassed by the uplifting atmosphere it sets out to create.

This is the type of album you turn up loud in the car and sing your lungs out to. Silverline has a true pop-rock style with catchy guitar riffs and driving, catchy hooks.

One issue (that may not be an issue at all for some) is that it seems like it's stuck a little between a praise and worship record and a rock record. "Lights Out," the first single, has already gone to No. 1 on the Christian rock charts, but I don't

Lights Out is the type of album you turn up loud in the car and sing your lungs out to. True pop-rock with catchy hooks.

-BARRY STAGG ON SILVERLINE

think it's an accurate representation of the album. However, I can absolutely envision that song being played during the encore of a headlining tour and changing a lot of lives.

The simplicity of the record is refreshing. Each song has a clear message and the record really puts you into a good place listening

-RARRY STAGG



Foreverlin Long Lost

RED CORD

In what apparently took a Kickstarter effort to get off the ground, Foreverlin's Long Lost is a sweeping, almost self-centered debut-in the honest sense of the word, that's not necessarily a negative thing. The record is full of repetitive instrumental tracks (a little Explosions in the Sky mixed with shoegazer rock); towering,

reverberating vocals; and extended themes. The record is written for the sake of the band, and they're inviting you to come along with them. The band took a walk through the woods—a wandering trail where you inevitably look up at the stars, spirit-questing, all but forcing introspection-and I don't think it's a coincidence the album artwork reflects that. The name implies an "all those who wander are not lost" mentality, the band name suggesting they don't care how long.

I don't have all my research done on the Wyoming rock scene, but, hailing from Cheyenne, I can only imagine the epic plains of where they're from influenced the wide open spaces on the record. The grandiose mountains and space mirror the lay of the record.

Long Lost can be enveloping sometimes, but don't throw it on when you're not ready for a trip-it would be like turning on a Quentin Tarantino movie halfway through and asking questions about the characters. It's like getting on a phone call with that friend that turns into Socrates everytime you talk-you can't just say hello. You

love them because they're your friend, but you know you sometimes hit the ignore button.

-DAVID STAGG



Fallstar Backdraft

Fallstar's Backdraft is metalcore at its heart, but still seamlessly pulls from a myriad of genres-melodic hardcore, punk, rap-rock, electronic-to create an album that's hard not to

Songs like "El Rey," "It's In Our Blood," and "The New World" are layered with a subtle complexity that makes you want to hit repeat. Vocalist Chris Ratzlaff expertly transitions from guttural screams to clean vocals, and the ample use of gang vocals will beg for crowd participation at shows. "Alexandria 363" is definitely the odd track on the album, using chaotic rap/spoken vocals and a hint of electronic sounds, and yet—it works. It shows that Fallstar isn't afraid to experiment with elements that are not typically found in metalcore.

Favorite song: "Millionaires." It perfectly showcases Fallstar's ability to blend genres into an exquisite track. Backdraft is a solid Facedown Records debut release for Fallstar.

-SARAH BREHM



Glenn Kaiser / Joe Filisko Live Cornerstone 2012



Those of us who have missed Rez since their retirement from the business have consoled ourselves with the fact that frontman Glenn Kaiser usually has some kind of blues project going on-his famous electric jams with Darrell Mansfield and others, the GKB trio. his solo work-and still performs live, often nearby at the Cornerstone Festival, where he's an annual staple of the event.

Since, sadly, Cornerstone is no more, it's fitting that Kaiser's performance last year was memorialized in CD and DVD format for posterity. Glenn plays acoustic blues, armed with his acoustic and famous cigar box guitars, accompanied on harmonica by Mr. Joe Filisko, whose prowess on the instrument is demonstrated on "Amazing Grace Train." This serves nicely as a live version of the recent solo album Cardboard Box, where Glenn's main focus was on the plight of the homeless with a couple blues standards thrown in. CD and DVD are sold separately and

come in eco cardboard

-CHRIS GATTO



Hillsong United Zion

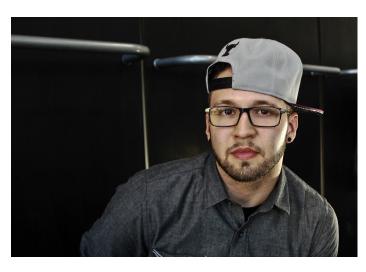


HILLSONG MUSIC

In the history of praise and worship music, there have always been leaders, the ones in their era writing the songs that everyone else ends up singing. Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman, tobyMac, Third Day-it just seemed like anything they put out turned to gold and people would end up singing it across the nation every

Hillsong United easily belongs in that group. Having penned hits like the guitar-driven "Lead Me to the Cross," the epic "Mighty to Save," and the beautiful "Hosanna" (which might be the most perfectly written praise and worship song), their place in the annals of Christian music fame isn't going anywhere. (I'm sure there's a special place reserved for them next to Darlene Zschech.)

The thing is, Hillsong United are forward thinkers. When Christian music was getting stale, they reinvented it with powerful guitars and a new arena-rock slant on praise and worship. And as it always goes with



Mineo melds styles for a complete debut



Andy Mineo Heroes for Sale ***

REACH

Andy Mineo has built up a rep through the typical hip-means of mix tapes and guest appearances. On his first proper album, he's transparent to a fault, which is probably his point. The dude's earnest like Drake without the queasy-making self-aggrandizing and rampant libido satiation.

Plus, he varies his flow, from slow and low for the head-nodders to the kind of hyperspeed word-cramming that fans of Twista and T-Bone can appreciate.

Mineo's narrative voice is close to consummated, but it should prove compelling to hear him develop in that regard. Musically, Heroes for Sale runs the gamut of styles to complement the differing couplets. Reggaeton, dubstep, New Orleans second line marching band rhythms, acid jazz, psychedelic funk, and jack swing collide and coalesce behind the mic Mineo and his several guests hold. Would the whole affair have been better without an abundance of sung choruses? Maybe, but this is still a solid debut.

-JAMIE LEE RAKE

early shakers, it's merely a matter of time before the public responds and the sound sticks, or if life takes a different direction and it doesn't pan out.

Zion is like that. If you were expecting the praise and worship music that's popular today, you're going to be in for a surprise. It's got a severe electronic

bent—and not the trancestyle EDM stuff the kids are listening to these days. It's much deeper in scope, the band utilizing the digital aspect as almost a

metaphor for reaching the digital age on a different level.

While I respect the direction, the record is long and it's rough to listen to for an entire 90+ minutes. (There are 10 people in the band so "expansive" may be very deliberate.) I suppose the good thing about their genre, though, is that most of the songs will be cherry-picked and played individually anyway. Whether they wrote it knowing that or not, the public has been responding in incredible favor for Zion. I don't know how much that speaks for people yearning for new praise and worship music, or if it means they follow what the leaders are telling them, but commercially it's stellar. As a piece of work, it's grand in scope-to be respected for sure—but it could have easily been pared down to at least an

-DAVID STAGG



ALERT312 Of Vice & Virtue

HUMBLE BEAST

The trippy minimalism of Moral One's production on his and Boogalu's full-length debut as Alert312 recalls the street psychedelia of Eric B. & Rakim, Divine Styler and Pete Rock & CL Smooth

without summoning a spirit of retro revivalism. Selling Of Vice & Virtue all the more is the combination of steely-eyed grimness and compassionate hope with which they spit their evangelistic, apologetic, and autobiographical rhymes.

They're more for the backpacker and crate diggers than the masses satisfied with more commercial hip-hop, but the brothers have hooks, too. And those are apt to be found in the atmospheres, textures, and samples as they are in the couplets, tight as those are.

Their prior work as soloists and together show ALERT312 to be among the most musically omnivorous of heads within or without the Church, but a good barometer of that catholicity of taste comes through here, with tracks that sound like pure percussion, interstellar cosmic discosynth pulsations, and what might be an Iron Butterfly organ solo.

Some use of a word that may be deemed an expletive by some may take a smidgen of explanation, but beyond that, it might be difficult to imagine a more fully-realized and creatively aspirational hiphop album this year.

-JAMIE LEE RAKE

and Rakim.

-JAMIE LEE RAKE ON ALERT312

The trippy minimalism of

Of Vice & Virtue recalls the

street psychedelia of Eric B.



Iron and Wine *Ghost on Ghost*



Nonesuci

Iron and Wine is one of those amazing artists that share his faith in his music in a way where he gets to play his songs on national TV shows like The Jimmy Fallon Show. His new record Ghost on Ghost is no exception. Singer-songwriter Samuel Beam, better known by his stage moniker, just knows how to capture that classic '70s folk sound.

There has been some bad stuff said about this record, claiming Ghost on Ghost is just rehashed music from an era that did it first and did it better.

I don't care. There are not a lot of people doing amazing music like this with Christian undertones, and Beam is one of them. This record is one of those road trip records, the one you make memories with when you're out in the country with your friends or your lovers. It's not that any particular song stands

out, it's that the record as a whole is full of amazing songs you will be listening to for the long term. The only thing that could stop it is itself—when Iron and Wine decides to put out another record.

-ROB HOUSTON



Apparitions *Kiss Me Sleeping*



Indianola

Don't get me wrong, I actually like the debut release from Apparitions Kiss Me Sleeping. It's a modern sounding, melodic metal-infused ride from top to bottom. It's well produced and executed.

If you like staccato rhythm patterns with heavy guitar stabs and high range singing vocals (akin to Circa Survive and 30 Seconds to Mars), then you will like it too.

The problem I run into is after the first few songs is that the record blends together creating the feeling of one really long song. Apparitions could benefit from utilizing more riffage and less lead guitar noodling on top of big, open chords. Standout tracks: "Mascara Queen" and "Fall to Arms." This is a solid album, especially considering Apparitions are relatively new to the game.

—JEF CUNNINGHAM



Ark of the Covenant Self Harvest

FACEDOWN

Self Harvest, the fulllength debut album from Ark of the Covenant, is flat out heavy. First off, I love the production on this record. It's heavy, low-tuned guitars and crisp, clean drum tones. It's mixed with what I would consider the perfect amount of electronic flair. They combine to create a huge record that sounds produced without sounding fake.

The only negative about Self Harvest is that by the time you reach the ending, the vocal styling is a little on the grating side. It's only slight. The band displays excellent taste in their use of dynamic range and progressive riffage so songs differentiate themselves. It allows the band to hold the attention of the listener longer than most bands in the genre.

Aot C also doesn't lean on the modern elements prevalent in today's modern metal scene, but they are able to incorporate them into an overall sound, uniquely their own. It gives the record a pretty cool vintage metal vibe without sounding stale.

The thing I like the most about Self Harvest are the riffs—there are a lot of memorable ones. Big thumbs up on this one; keep a look out for these guys.

—JEF CUNNINGHAM

▶ 'CRABB' CONTINUED

Perspective, which is differentiated each from the other.

As God is, in both His Unity and Diversity, changeless (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8), we, who live in the changeable, mutable creation and are subject to the passage of time (with a created beginning, history, and end), cannot truly replicate the Lord's changelessness in its essence. However, we can symbolically represent God's changelessness within time's boundaries by enacting continuity across time, emphasizing the same across the changes in history, the things which are most changeless in humanity's experience. As change is constantly experienced by humanity, the contrast between change and the most changeless aspects of human life itself emphasizes the difference between them, as well as the shared enactment of those things in human

This is pertinent to worship, in that we should enact in our worship a Trinitarian balance of continuity and change, with elements that stay the same and elements that vary.

As for continuity in worship, we see in the Heavenly Worship a song endlessly repeated by the angelic living creatures, which is endlessly responded to by the twenty-four elders (Revelation 4:8-11), and we also see the Song of Moses recorded in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 31 repeated in the Heavenly Liturgy in Revelation 15:3-4, which shows the utilization of a song

across thousands of years of human history (and beyond). These are elements of continuity in worship.

However, we also see elements of change in the Heavenly Worship, as Revelation 5:9-10 and Revelation 14:3 both record the introduction of new songs into the worship, of songs new in their employment in the worship in God's Presence.

Now, these respective worships of continuity and change are both present in the same worship service in Heaven: a Trinitarian balance in the worship revealed by God in His Word as a model for us who still worship on

Today's Evangelical worship is obsessed with the novel, with the new, to the detriment of the element of continuity in worship, which is not only a (hopefully unintentional) assault on the representation of God's Tri-Unity (and thus a displeasure to the Lord), but also causes our worship to not fulfill God's intended ministry to the worshipers themselves, who are also created in God's Triune Image, and, thus, are to be ministered to on deep Trinitarian levels, on levels both of continuity and change, in a balanced fashion. If these elements are not both present in worship in a balanced fashion, there is a massive failure in worship's pleasing of and fulfilling the purposes of God, especially as they minister to God's image-bearers, humanity.

More implications, this time of the Incarnation of Jesus, next article, Lord willing.

▶ 'ABR' CONTINUED

on lifestyle choices, be it religion, diet, etc. I think that comes from the punk/hardcore ethics of this community. For that reason, we never felt like black sheep on a tour.

We never felt judged because of our Christian background. It's nice to be a band that can go play a festival like Hellfest in France or Cornerstone Festival in Illinois and be received well at both.

The only detriment of being referred to as a Christian band is the microscope you are put under by some people. It sometimes feels like people are just waiting for you to screw up so they can call you out.

I'm 28 years old, and after traveling around the world a few times and seeing a lot of different cultures, my worldviews have changed. When I was 14 and in youth group, I had a very narrow view of the world and an extremely legalistic approach to Christianity. I sometimes hear from fans that are just like me when I was 14. They are quick to judge without a whole lot of experience living outside the neat little box their parents have constructed for them to live in.

As you grow up and start living on your own, you begin to see things a little differently. One of the most controversial subjects is the consumption of alcohol. Can a Christian drink alcohol? The 14-year-old me would've said never. But the 28-year-old me says, "If you're of age and it can be done responsibly, sure."

Our take on Christianity varies from member to member. I think that's only natural. We have had in-depth discussions about whether ABR is a "Christian band" or "Christians in a band." If you ask me, that question is splitting hairs and is a silly topic to debate. Jake and Matt are the most outspoken individuals when it comes to their faith.

Jake is especially vocal as his life was in turmoil before he turned it over to Jesus. For that reason, he has the urge to shout it from the mountaintop, so to speak. Jake would probably be happy to get on stage every night and preach the good news to our audience, but that has never been ABR's approach. We are on stage to

What we believe is no secret and we don't feel the need to explain that every time we bit the stage."

-August Burns Red guitarist JB Brubaker

put on a great show and entertain you.

What we believe is no secret, and we don't feel the need to explain that every time we hit the stage. I'd rather win over a new fan with a great show and have them dig a little deeper into our lyrics than to stand on stage and preach.

Jake does a little ministry on the side called Heart Support. This is a separate entity from ABR where he is able to quench his thirst of talking to others about his faith. The band is cool with Jake doing this and I think it's great that he is working so hard on his own to positively impact impressionable minds.

What sort of changes has adulthood or, as you said, evolution in your lifestyle (marriage, kids, or just plain getting older) brought to the band?

Well, we are getting to a new phase in our band where life is beginning to get a little more complicated. Brent and Jake are married. I think I'll probably be married before the end of the *Rescue & Restore* album cycle. Brent has a baby on the way. It can get a little tricky trying to juggle the busy tour schedule with obligations at home, but at the end of the day, the most important people in our lives understand how a relationship with a touring musician works. It's certainly not for everyone, so when you find someone who can tolerate you being away from home half the year, you lock them down (*laughs*).

What are your thoughts on new technologies and how they deliver music to the fans?

First of all, I can say with confidence that without the Internet and people downloading our music, ABR wouldn't be where we are today. Like any band, we prefer when people acquire our music legally since we do see some money from our sales, but had people not pirated our music left and right when we first hit the

scene, I don't think word would have spread about our band.

Music streaming sites like Pandora and Spotify are extremely convenient for users. Spotify is almost too good to be true. All the good is targeted at the user as they pay a small fee to listen to basically whatever they want whenever they want. As a music fan, that is amazing!

As an artist, it's kind of a bummer because we see fractions of a cent from plays on Spotify. At the same time, this is what the industry is moving towards, and I think it'd be really silly to try to keep our music away from something like Spotify.

A band's music is becoming more of a marketing tool than a source of income. Someone downloads your album illegally or listens to it on Spotify and gets into the band. Now you have a new listener who might come to a show and buy a t-shirt. Touring is the only really consistent source of income for most artists these days.

I think in the next few years you are going to see more and more of this fan-funding stuff instead of bands relying on record labels to loan them money to make albums. I have mixed feelings about this. While it's great to be able to operate independently, the concept of begging your fans for money kind of sucks. I'm really interested to see where this trend goes in the next few years.

Michael Vick or Nick Foles?

I like the upside of Michael Vick with Chip Kelly running the offense and a healthy offensive line. I think Vick can be a huge weapon with some protection, something he hasn't had in recent years.

Nick Foles looks to have some potential, but he obviously needs the snaps since he doesn't have but half a season of NFL experience. I don't think the 2013-2014 season will be the year Foles gets that experience.

YALTARS' CONTINUED

By the end of the conversation, he said that he felt more peace, and it was awesome because it was the first time that we had talked to anyone that way.

Who wrote the tracks on the new album?

Everyone. Musically, I can give input, and I am very opinionated about certain pieces being placed in certain places and having a certain structure, but (vocalist) Canaan Smith does the majority of the songwriting and creating the structure. (Drummer) Ben Reno wrote all of the drums on the record, and (guitarists) Seth Munson and Brock Williams clean up Canaan's work and add leads. Seth produced our album again, and, as producer, he was able to do a lot.

You have been quoted as saying, "This is not a cry to the ignorant public, but a statement of ourselves." Elaborate.

I wrote that to say that this is not us crying out to people saying that we want to change them. We really don't want to change people; we just want them to think in new ways and receive some kind of peace. It's kind of intense, but we want to love people, and we want people to love our music.

Any last words?

My favorite musical influence when it comes to writing on this album is *The Devil and God Are Raging Inside Me*. I'm obsessed with that CD.

We really don't want to change people; we just want them to think in new ways."

-Altars' bassist Mike Searle



Features





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Metal is in the air.

Greetings, headbangers! Spring is in the air here and change is afoot. Can you feel it?

This month we made a deliberate attempt to focus on bands that do not appear on a short list of the "usual suspects." We welcomed a new writer in to the fold, Mr. Dale Huffman of Metal Pulse Radio, and then put him to work immediately, scouring the world (from his desktop) to bring you news of faraway bands from faraway lands.

We bring you For ChristSake, an extreme metal band from Northern Ireland; Onslaught, from India; catch up with Sunroad, to whom we introduced you back in our famous Brazilian metal issue; and American newcomers Far From Sanity.

For our album review section this time, we've heavily mined the black metal underground. Is it true the writers of the karew have all donned corpse paint? No, not all of us, but there were a lot of great black metal releases recently, and I'm happy that we're able to tell you, the reader, all about them this month. Long live the King!



-CHRIS GATTO, HEAVEN'S METAL MANAGER

SPINNING AT HEAVEN'S METAL

Matt Maher

All the People Said Amen

An old singer is back and the results are incredible.

Grave Declaration
When Dying Souls
Scream Praise
Worshipful
black metal.

Tourniquet

Voiceless

No vocals, just masterful

metal precision.

Saving Grace
The King is Coming
Welcome the NZ boys to
the US for the Hard and
Relentless tour.

Heaven and Earth
Dig
Impellitteri/Magdalen
alum Chuck Wright's new
hard rock band.





INDIA'S METAL ONSLAUGHT

I keep pontificating about how metal is an international language, but it's still a shock to me some of the strange places bands pop up. India is no surprise, though, thanks to an Indian pastor friend of mine whose first remarks upon meeting me and seeing my band shirt were: "I always loved heavy metal back in India! My favorite bands are Judas Priest and Deep Purple." I knew then that we'd be good friends. New Heaven's Metal writer Dale Huffman is hard at work again, this time introducing us to Onslaught, a young band from India. He had the opportunity to speak with drummer and vocalist Rueban Issac.

Where are you from? When and how did the band get started?

Onslaught is a two-piece Christian alternative rock band from a city in South India called Hyderabad. Onslaught is comprised of Rueban Issac on vocals and drums and Yohan Issac on lead/rhythm guitars and bass. Onslaught started in the month of October, in 2007, and was the brainchild of Rueban. Having played in secular as well as gospel bands, we decided to compose our own music rather than play someone else's music. We decided to bring two of our favorite elements together, which included the ultimate "in your face" style of

rock/metal music as well as gospel. We drew a lot of inspiration from Christian bands and decided to do the same.

Onslaught was originally a three-piece band that was comprised of Johnny Abraham David on vocals and rhythm guitars, Yohan on lead guitars and Rueban on drums. Back in the day, we did manage to record a track with Johnny titled "House of Pain," which should be floating around on the Internet. However, due to personal commitments, he had to leave the band. We did carry on composing music, going all DIY on the recordings, and still do to this day. Ever since Johnny's depar-



India is a land of many religions and cultures. There has never been discrimination or supremacy between religions. -RUEBAN ISSAC

ture, the lineup has remained unchanged.

Is India open to Christianity or hostile to it? Is there a strong presence of Christians in metal music there?

India is a land of many religions and cultures. There has never been discrimination or supremacy between religions. Christianity has always been well-accepted, and a good percentage of the Indian population are Christians. There is a strong presence of Christians in metal music here in India.

What is the Christian metal scene in India like?

The Christian music scene here is still in its grassroots stage. We have a great number of Christian rock/metal bands here in India, but do not have a solid platform to promote the music. There are Christian bands like us, who have material in the form of demos, albums, and/or EPs out. In terms of the gigs that happen here, we do not have dedicated Christian music festivals like Cornerstone or Meltdown happening here. Most of the bands here try very hard to get stage time with secular bands at gigs. On the plus side, we are progressively growing as a scene and should be able to overcome all odds with God on our side.

Why did you choose to name the band Onslaught?

The name, to be honest, is totally derivative, which is funny to us in a way. We were listening to a lot of Demon Hunter back in 2007. We love their music, and we love the name of the band as

well. We liked the whole idea that they were a bunch of hardcore musicians churning out "anti-lucifer/satanic (storm the gates of hell)"-themed songs and I had this bright idea where I thought we should have a name like theirs and sound like them (which never happened). That's the truth of it all.

But if it was to be said on a serious note, all jokes aside, it would go something like this: "The meaning of Onslaught is an offensive against the defensive. We, as believers in the Almighty, are stronger than all evil in this world, and, with God on our side, we can crush all evil." That is why we are called Onslaught. You are free to go with the funny version or the serious version.

How would you describe your music to someone who has never heard it before?

The mutant cousin of grunge and metal, "gretal," with a lyrically positive message.

Tell us about the recording process for your new album, *Leap of Faith*.

We had a great time composing *Leap of Faith*. It was great for us, because we were finally able to get our sound straightened out. Through the years, we have always found issues in gelling as musicians due to musical differences. But we have finally passed all that and have achieved what we wanted.

The songs were typically structured to be a heavy, "in your

face" comeback for Onslaught, following the poppy EP called Metamorphosis that we released in 2010. Drawing a lot of inspiration from grunge and hard rock bands, we decided to keep the structure of the songs as simplistic as possible. We tried to build on an easy structure, ensuring that the instrumental sections sounded catchy. The recording of the album took a total of 67 days, which also included the mixing and mastering process. The entire album was a total DIY effort. We utilized Ableton Live as our interface to record our music and Ozone Izotope to master the tracks. We completely relied on taking a very guitar-oriented approach in recording our songs and structured our songs around the riffs churned out by Yohan. The lyrics were written last and were structured based on the overall feel of the song.

Do you perform live shows in your home country?

Since we are only two guys running this whole operation, we have not had the opportunity as of yet to go live. If we do find "able-bodied," like-minded musicians to join our platoon to storm the gates of hell, we would definitely do it.

What are the main goals you would like Onslaught to accomplish over the next few years?

Our bucket list of goals is quite long. But some of the important ones include:

a) Get cracking on the new album. We are currently busting our brains composing new music, and we intend on getting a concept album out that should be a step up from *Leap of Faith*;

b) get signed to a label;

c) get a full line-up sorted out to go live, and, lastly and most importantly:

d) to keep our relationship going strong with God. Righteous living, faithful to the core.

Are you looking for a label?

We are currently looking to get signed by a label. We have been trying for quite awhile, since the release of *Leap of Faith*. Whatever the case, we have received a lot of support from The Almighty, fans, friends, radio, and online platforms and are glad that people like our music.

Do you have any distro in the United States? If not, it is sad that people are missing out on a great band...

We do not have a dedicated distro distributing physical copies of our *Leap of Faith* CDs in the United States. But we do have OM Books retailing CDs all over India in their stores. In terms of distribution on an international scale, we have our album being sold as a digital package on iTunes, eBay, Amazon MP3, Rhapsody, eMusic, and Spotify.

Is there anything else you want to share with our readers?

We might be broken down by lies that bleed our minds, but, for what it's worth, we have to leave it all behind. Despite all this chaos, in the face of confusion, always remember, our God is steadfast. Many thanks for the support. God bless.



The Inmates are Running the Asylum

FAR FROM SANITY IS AGGRESSIVE MUSIC, AND THEY WANT YOU TO SINK YOUR TEETH INTO IT. THE BAND'S NAME MAY SOUND LIKE A HOUSE WITH FOUR KIDS ON ANY GIVEN DAY, BUT THEY ARE NOWHERE NEAR CHILDISH. DALE HUFFMAN RECENTLY CAUGHT UP WITH THEM FOR HM.

When did you form the band? What inspired you to make music together?

Mark and Eddie: We got the band back together a little over two years ago and simply thought it would be fun to jam a little bit. Things just started moving from there.

Jamie: FFS was a previous entity before I came into the band. I joined in late 2010. Horace and Aaron joined us about a year ago. For me, my inspiration was simply an opportunity to share my passion for music with a group of dudes who were of the same heart.

I was reading the band's bio on Facebook and noticed that there didn't seem to be anything related to your faith on the page. Is there a reason for that?

Mark: No reason, really. Our faith is part of who we are, how

we live our lives and how we carry ourselves, both on and off stage. Most people know we are a Christian band. And it's pretty obvious in our lyrics. For those that don't, walking in love has a better impact on people than just preaching at them. That doesn't mean that you condone everything that others do around you, but you can love people and be accepting of them without approving of the things that they do. That's the example that Jesus set before us, as

I read it.

Eddie: Around this part of the country, actions speak way louder than words. So for me, you shouldn't have to "advertise" your faith. People should be able to tell you're different by your lifestyle.

Aaron: The way I look at it is, why should that matter? We live our lives according to God's will. If we do that day to day, then that's

EVEN AFTER BEING A CHRISTIAN FOR 18 YEARS NOW, I STILL FIND AND RESPONSES THAT I KNOW SHOULD BE BETTER, BUT I

all that really matters. Then, it (our faith) will be pretty easy to see.

I see the genre of your music is Christian metal. How would you define your music style?

Mark: Aggressive groove metal. We jokingly call ourselves Not-Core, as we really don't seem to fit into any sub-genre of metal or even hard rock. If it rocks, if it makes our heads move, if we like it, then it works for us. It's just pretty cool that others like what we're doing.

Horace: Our style is evolving. While some of the earlier music is of the groove metal genre, we have now incorporated more thrash and nu metal elements into the material we are currently writing.

Jamie: Each of us is inspired by a wide array of musical styles... some metal...some not so much. In fact, while there are some commonalities.....each of us do not really listen to the same bands. This is a good thing when creating music, because it lends to creating a sound that stands on its own. In the end though, we definitely want heads moving when we hit the stage.

What is the theme behind your lyrics? Are there any specific topics you are passionate about?

Mark: The songs on our current set consist of:

"Crucified Again," inspired by the words of Paul when he wrote about how he keeps doing the things that he knows that he shouldn't be doing, and he can't seem to find himself doing the things that he knows that he should be doing. Even after being a Christian for 18 years now, I still find myself struggling with less than Christ-like attitudes and responses that I know should be better, but I find myself giving in to my flesh again and again.

"R.P.G." is about hypocrisy, people only playing at being a Christian instead of actually living

In "Apokolypsis," the lyrics were inspired by the Nightmare, which is an outreach that the church Eddie and I go to (Guts Church) has been doing for the last 20 years on Halloween.

"That Which Compels Me" is a new song about how God's love is compelling.

"Chernobyl" is the newest song we're working on at the moment, and it is about bitterness.

Jamie: We normally close our set out with our rendition of a song called "You Can't Break Me." It was originally written by an early '90s Christian band called

Precious Death, and it's our way of paying homage to those who came before us, but the lyrics to that song are as relevant today as the day they were written: "If everything is relative and nothing is absolute, then why don't I take this gun and blow your head off?" We cannot get more "in your face" than that.

Mark: We actually added the "and blow your head off?" part, but it always made sense when I listened to the song. I think it really puts the moral argument for the existence of God into better context.

You already have an EP, The Lockdown. What was the experience behind the recording?

Jamie: Bob (Recondite Recordings) was awesome, helpful, and knowledgeable. We go back over 15 years, so that made him the easy choice, but he's also got a sick metal pedigree through his history with former Solid State band Still Breathing. We feel like he is well-equipped and can take our sound where we want it to go and look forward to recording our full length with him.

Mark: Pretty amazing and fun. But we all get along and enjoy hanging out. Bob Hensley, who we recorded with, also fit right in and is an old friend of Jamie's and mine, so, yeah, the whole experience was fun.

Horace: At first it was a step into the unknown due to the fact that we had never worked with Bob Hensley (the producer) before. But the experience was awesome, and we learned a lot about the recording process as well as establishing a relationship that we will continue to work with in the future.

Eddie: Very cool. Very laid back. Bob is an amazingly cool dude

Aaron: The recording was a blast. Getting to hang out with everyone and play music over and over. What else could you ask for? Bob was amazing and really laid back.

Has there been a good response to The Lockdown?

Mark: Yes. It's been pretty humbling in that everyone, Christian and non-Christian, old friends and new friends, all seem to love it.

Aaron: I would say the response has been pretty darn good. It has also been heavily marketed.

Jamie: It's been well received. "Apokolypsis" (our first single) has been taken up by several radio stations, which, for any artist, is always exciting. I also believe we

MYSELF STRUGGLING WITH LESS THAN CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDES FIND MYSELF GIVING IN TO MY FLESH AGAIN AND AGAIN.

-MARK GOODNIGHT

are almost sold out of the first batch of CDs.

What are your plans for 2013? Will you be recording an album? Perhaps a tour?

Mark: Write more songs. Play bigger shows. We've talked about recording some more songs and doing another video.

Eddie: Just wait and see. We kind of take it as it comes since we are all family guys and not starving musicians anymore. Mini tours, maybe. Family first, and, with limited amounts of vacation, we'll see what pans out.

Aaron: We'll cross that road when we get there. We all have jobs and families, so we have to keep our priorities straight. We have been writing some new songs, and we would like to get them down, but it's all about finding the right time.

Jamie: As you can see... in our camp, it's family first (laughs). In our lives, we understand that God places a higher priority on the care of our families than He does on being the next rock star. We pray and seek His guidance, work to be very professional and take the opportunities we feel provide us with the best opportunity to reach the goals we've set as a band. God is good, and He's

blessed us. I know we're talking about the possibility of a minitour, and we're definitely working toward a full-length release. We are also looking at some regional metal festivals as well as a show with War of Ages.

Since you are brand new to the Christian metal scene, what are your first impressions and opinions on it?

Jamie: As indicated before, FFS has been around for quite a while. But this entity is really a new animal, especially in the "Christian metal" scene. My opinion is that there's good and there's bad. We really try to focus and keep our eyes on Christ and to be an example in the area that He's placed us in.

Do you have a favorite song that you like to play live?

Mark: The new song I mentioned earlier, "That Which Compels Me," is a blast to play. We really enjoy it. The people love it as well, which is always a bonus.

Eddie: "You Can't Break Me."

Aaron: As of right now, it's "You Can't Break Me," but our newest song is called "That Which Compels Me", and that one is gonna rip some faces off. We are very excited as a band about this one.

Jamie: For me, I think "You Can't Break Me" is my favorite. It's our sing-a-long. It also has a very universal feel to it. It does not matter what your day has brought you.

When you can yell at the top of your lungs, "You can't break me!" it just allows you to really make a personal declaration to whatever you're dealing with right now. We have an audience participation interlude where we invite our audience to sing with us. It's definitely one of the highlights of my night.

This question is for Jamie. I see you posted on Facebook about something called "MPact Events". Could you tell us about that?

Jamie: Our foundation is James 1:27. If you read this Scripture, you will understand our heart.

MPact Events grew out of a seed that was planted many years ago when my wife and I volunteered at a Christmas party for a church we were attending in Houston, TX. It was our way of getting involved in our community. Little did we know that its effect would be felt many years later. We did not know we were volunteering for an organization called Court-Appointed Special Advocates. This group advocates in our court systems for children who have been removed from abusive situations. One

thing to note is that they throw a Christmas party each year for these kids, because they will be without many of the comforts that so many of us take for granted.

Now, fast forward and we have MPact Events. Our primary ambition each year is our Not-So-Silent Night. We throw a full-on rock show, and all we ask for is a new, unwrapped toy to give to these kids. Today, we still reach out to our local CASA. It continues to grow each and every year, and I am so proud of the work we do in our community.

Our motto is "Step outside of yourself, stand up, and be involved." For anyone interested in knowing more, we can be found on Facebook and on the web.

Thank you for taking the time to do this interview. I greatly appreciate it. Any last words?

Band: Thank you for taking your time to interview us. As for our last words, we know that it's not all about us. There have been so many people who have supported us, and, though we cannot name each and every one of them....we simply want to let everyone know that we are really grateful. We think it would be fitting to end with one of our favorite Scriptures, and we'll let you research it: Romans 8:28.





I know Sunroad has been around for a while. Could you tell us how you got started?

Sunroad started in August 1996 when my cousin, Danillo Vee, an acoustic guitar teacher, called me to form a rock group. In our early days, we used to play covers of our influences—groups such as Scorpions, Led Zeppelin, Uli Roth, MSG, UFO, Van Halen, Triumph, and more. In 1997, we started to compose our own material, despite the fact that Danillo Vee quit the band that year.

How did you come up with the name Sunroad?

The band was originally named Baptized by Aliens, but one year later, we decided to change it to something positive. Sunroad was taken from Uli Jon Roth's (ex-Scorpions) previous band, Electric Sun and Dawn Road. When I got converted in 1999, the name seemed to fit like a glove.

Is Sunroad working on any new music? If so, when could we see a new CD?

We're actually recording the framework for our next album, *Carved In Time*, our seventh (including the EP and the collection).

We are still recording the album and are working on the guitar solos as we speak. We are working hard on releasing this new album. We really want to release it this June (11 tracks.)

You guys have been around for 17 years. Why do you think there is not a big following in the USA?

I think it's a lack of distribution and publishing. Our last recording labels didn't try to license our albums in the USA; they only sold some copies to Radrockers and Shaver Audio stores in the USA. It sold great in Brazil; we sold about 5,000 copies.

What is Sunroad's mission?

In the early days, we wanted to keep to the traditional hard 'n' heavy school, because we felt that, in the '90s, most every band was playing alternative rock. Then, two or three years later as I got converted deeply into Christianity, the lyr-

ics started to reflect the ethical way of life. We began to look for inner and reflective messages. We wanted to support helpless children, women and animals around the world, with page links to connect our fans that share a mutual view and interactive actions.

What would you like for Sunroad fans to get out of your music?

A positive and deep view of reconciling our human internal perceptions of God in the face of a modern world, as well as a message of ethical ways and the rights of abandoned people and animals.

What do you think of the Christian music scene these days?

THE ROAD TO Redemption

It's been three years since Brazilian metal band **Sunroad** released their last album, Long Gone. Dale Huffman from Metal Pulse had a chance to catch up with Frederico Mika to discuss their upcoming release Carved In Time.

In Brazil, when you talk about Christian music to people outside Christian music, they think of traditional gospel music. But the growing number of dynamic groups has been increasing in several directions. I mean, today, you can find Christian groups in all styles: pop rock, heavy metal, reggae, soul, blues, funk, etc. There's no excuse not to hear some of your favorite style without hearing some Christian groups. In the early days, there wasn't this kind of selection and diversity within Christian music. It's easier today, thanks be to God.

Does Sunroad do a lot of live shows? I see you played a few shows with Mad Max. What was that like?

Sunroad does not play a lot of shows, but we do play some good and important ones. The shows with Mad Max were really good. They are very simple and humble people, very professional. We had a fun time together, and we made a lot of great contacts.

How do you feel about sharing the stage with secular bands?

Many times, the problem is not on the stage, but, rather, in the dressing rooms or backstage. We have heard and seen many things that we don't approve of. As much as possible, we talk with them about the other side and a more positive way of facing things, but we're not radical. When it's not possible to talk with them, we keep our faith and concentration and do the best we can.

Thank you very much for your time, Fred. Any final words for our readers?

Reflective thinking and actions are important in all areas of life today, especially in a world with global, hyper-connected media. If you seek deeply, you'll see that God gives all the answers. In this way, you're transgressing without aggression. Thank you, Dale, and goodwill to all the people. Peace to all, and classic rock lives forever!









While the name ForChristSake may not ring many bells, the band has been getting attention in their native Northern Ireland and abroad in Europe since 2008. From playing with Horde to having opportunities to open for the notorious Gorgoroth and ex-members Venom, FCS are already making waves. They've also been featured in Terrorizer Magazine's "Band of the Day," been interviewed by a Belfast atheist blog and, all the while, trying to form a community of like-minded musicians in their region. Recently, I had a chance to speak with surname-less drummer Ignatios, bassist Mark, and guitarist Simon.

Tell me about how you formed.

Ignatios: I was playing drums in another band called Still Small Voice. The guys and I had differing points of view, and, needless to say, I left the band. There were also some personal things going on. At that time, I started up ForChristSake. Christians who like heavy music in this country are hard to find. I'd met Mark in a previous band, a blues-rock band.

So the two of you founded FCS?

Ignatios: Yes, the two of us and a previous guitar player, but he declined.

When was this?

Ignatios: It was 2008 when the band came together.

Interesting-that's the year I moved to the U.K.

Ignatios: So that's a significant year then! (laughs) We didn't have a singer at that time. We recorded the EP, but eventually re-did the vocals and lyrics.

Mark: We had some problems with a previous guitarist, and we wanted a clean streak.





Ignatios: He was struggling with his faith, and his lifestyle wasn't in the place it needed to be. Everyone knows ForChristSake is a Christian band. So we re-did all the vocals at that time. That EP was recorded over two days, which is a huge difference from our current recording experience. So far, it's taken three months. It hasn't actually gone according to plan. The drums have been recorded last. The engineer is using a new, space-age recording device. First, you map out the songs and decide the tempos, and then we do the guitars with the click track, which is completely backwards to what we normally would do, recording the drums first. But, to be honest, it's been a lot more hassle than it's worth. So we hope to have it all sorted out by May 7, when the album is supposed to come out on Roxx. But, at this point, we're not sure if that's going to happen.

Mark: The majority is finished now; we're just putting on those finishing touches. But they're essential finishing touches, if you know what I mean. We've got the cake, but we need to add the icing.

So you released the EP independently. How did you come to be associated with Roxx Productions?

Mark: This was a real bridge for us because there are more opportunities in America than here in Northern Ireland. We sent Bill Roxx a video. We looked at several other labels.

Ignatios: We had on our hearts to sign with a Christian label. As far as we know, we're Northern Ireland's only Christian metal band. In the '90s, the metal scene in Belfast was okay. There were a couple of Christian metal bands—Noah's Ark, Redeemer, Crusader. I

was in Redeemer. That was in the start of the '90s.

Where did things go from there?

Ignatios: Those bands broke up and a few years down the road, I was in another band, a nu metal band, called Sif. We had an EP and sold a few copies, but the band didn't go anywhere. After that I did Still Small Voice.

So you've been around Christian metal for a long time.

Mark: Just to give you some background, there's a local scene that supports bands like us. We supported a local band called Desecration, a Welsh death metal band. And that was a bit controversial, because they were a secular band. But we felt we needed to be light in the darkness. We're kind of seen as underdogs, but we come in and beat the audience over the heads with our music. People are often surprised.

How often do you guys do gigs?

Mark: We try to as much as possible, but with the promotion companies here, the gigs can be very spread out. So, we try to focus on festivals, even outside the country. Our next festival is Meltdown in the UK. We've got a bigger fest in Belfast coming up, where we're playing with ex-members of Venom. And the promoters asked us if we were okay with that, understanding their beliefs, which was actually really considerate of them.

What is your general approach to working out those sorts of tensions?

Mark: We try to discuss things as a band, but, often, I'm mean, and I take a gig without letting the other band members know, so they don't have a choice in the matter (*laughs*). Ideally, we are trying to get our message across.

Ignatios: Basically, we'll play with any band. But, many bands, because we're Christians, those bands don't want to play with us. We actually had a chance to play with Gorgoroth.

Wait—Gorgoroth? The black metal band?

Ignatios: Yeah! But the promoter wanted us to pay to play the gig, so we said no way. Another band came and took the spot, paid around £500, and still got treated like second-class citizens.

I'm not surprised.

Mark: I don't know if you know, but we actually got covered in Terrorizer Magazine once, as their "Band of the Day." I was really surprised we got in, considering how kind of "black" they are. And they even used the song called "O."

Ignatios: On the back of the cover, they just labeled us as FCS, but it was a kind of a blessing that they put us as track 7. I don't know if they meant to do that or not. When my grandfather died, December 2011, there was another sign like that. On the hearse, the number plate read FCS 777. I honestly believe that was a sign from God telling us to carry on. It was only a month after that, in January, when we got signed to Roxx.

There are a few songs on the album. There's one called "Our Shadow" that is about suicide. And it's written from the viewpoint of someone who is not a Christian. And I know views differ, depending on what denomination you come from, and it can be controversial. One of our band members struggled with the song, because he knew someone who had committed suicide.

But, at Meltdown Festival last year, there was a young teenage girl who was struggling with suicidal thoughts. One of the pastors at the festival came up and told us about this girl and how our song had really touched her and made her think about things. Even that day, our band member was struggling with whether to play that song or not. We had an in-depth conversation earlier that day. What FCS stands for is "dismantling hell, brick by brick."

Ignatios: Thanks for taking the time to speak with me. I still have issues 6, 7, and 8 of Heaven's Metal, black and white issues. I've got them tucked away. So this is a huge blessing to me. I grew up listening to Sacrament, Vengeance Rising, Believer, Deliverance, Living Sacrifice.

Ah, wow, so you're not only a musician, but a veteran Christian metal fan! Okay, just for fun then, let's have your top 5 Christian metal albums of all time.

Ignatios: Tourniquet, *Psycho Surgery*. Vengeance Rising, *Human Sacrifice*. Believer, *Sanity Obscure*. Deliverance's self-titled. Mortification, *Scrolls of the Megilloth*.

Mark: Becoming the Archetype, *I Am.* Extol, *Undeceived.* Mortification, *Scrolls of the Megilloth.* Tourniquet, *Pathogenic Ocular Dissonance.* Horde, *Heilig Usvart.*

Simon: Crimson Moonlight, *The Covenant Progress*. Antestor, The *Forsaken*. Horde, *Heilig Usvart*. Renascent, *Through Darkness*. Divinefire, *Glory Thy Name*.

Any final thoughts?

Ignatios: We get asked a lot, "Are you a 'Christian band' or 'Christians in a band'?" We tell them we are both.

REVIEWS



Pyrithion The Burden of Sorrow



METAL BLADE

I'm going to call this three-song EP a blue chip demo for a couple of reasons. First, the band is going to sell units based on name recognition of two of the members' "other" bands: As I Lay Dying and Embodyment/ The Famine.

Secondly, Pyrithion is already signed to Metal Blade, perhaps because of reason one, so this EP serves more as a demo to get the band's name out there for the fans, and less to garner label interest in recording a debut album.

Now, Pyrithion being Tim Lambesis' baby, you're going to want to know if this sounds just like his main band AILD. Much like his other project Austrian Death Machine, the answer would be no.

Tim shows us that his metal rep runs deeper than metalcore and puts out a traditional death metal vibe on the first two tracks that is- dare I say- heavier than his normal fare, and perhaps closer to early sounds of Embodyment/The Famine. The third track reminds me of thrash titans Testament's death metal phase, which is never a bad thing either. Will this become more than a project? I don't know, but these 3 songs show a lot of promise.

-CHRIS GATTO



Drottnar Stratum



ENDTIME PRODUCTIONS

Drottnar sure takes their sweet time putting out albums, with six or seven years between full-length releases. This time, it was definitely worth the wait.

I was a fan of the first album, Spiritual Battle, but found 2006's Welterwerk too chaotic and have rarely listened to it after the first few spins. Stratum seems to have taken the best of both of those releases and melded them

Grave Declaration outdoes expectations



Grave Declaration When Dying Souls Scream Praise



Bombworks

This album is amazing—symphonic unblack metal with great guitar riffs, awesome arrangements, and beautiful keyboards.

I loved their 2008 EP *The Nightshift Worshiper*, but this album far exceeded my expectations. The vocals are more blackened and slightly less guttural than the EP, and the arrangements flow nicely. Overall, this was better than expected and will probably end up being one of my favorite albums of the year.

I can honestly say that the only thing lacking was a full-on symphony. This album is a must-have for all fans of the genre!

-MICHAEL LARSON

together into a furious sonic fury. There is still plenty of technical playing involved, maybe even more than in the past. Yet it never seems to get too chaotic or noisy, as those parts are juxtaposed with a more subdued grind and some atonal chord work, of all things—and it works. Add to that the stellar production, and this album shines.

It's already been a great year for extreme Christian Metal, and Stratum does its part to contribute.

-MICHAEL LARSON



Imperial Dusk *Riders of Vikings*

SANCTUS GLADIUS

This is the sixth fulllength album by Brazilian unblack metal band Imperial Dusk. The keyboard sounds on this album are a real struggle at first, and they mixed them loud so you can only hear them. Once you get used to them, it's easy to see that this album has some good music on it. I admit that the cleaner "Viking"-style vocal sort of threw me at first, but the more I listened to them, the more I liked them. This is underground unblack and not commercialized in anyway, so if you are looking for something with easy hooks and stellar production, steer away. This is war against hell! Now, if only someone would give them a good keyboard.

-MICHAEL LARSON

MEIAL REVIEWS



Vials of Wrath Seeking Refuge ****

INDEPENDENT

What a brilliant album this is! I absolutely love everything on this. It's well crafted and meticulously put together. This project is no longer trying to imitate the genre that inspired them, but actually ends up creating something amazing that surpasses even those that inspired them to begin with.

If you like black metal, if you like atmospheric music, both beautiful and cruel, if you crave something that sweeps you away-this is for

I actually found myself dimming the lights, turning it up, just listening, and being thankful that a release like this exists. There is an aspect of God that is so extreme that He held all of creation together while His very Son died for our sins.

It is hard to convey such a thing through the sounds used in conventional worship, but listening to a soundtrack like this, an understanding of God's heart comes through, if you are inclined to hear it,

-MICHAEL LARSON



Tourniquet **Antiseptic** Bloodbath: **Voiceless**



PATHOGENIC

American legend Tourniquet was best described by another writer years ago: "Consider Emerson, Lake, and Palmer-with power tools."

They've always been known as a technical band. In their latter years, they've become even more progressive, flirting with styles well outside the normal parameters of metal. Their long awaited Antiseptic Bloodbath was released last year to rave reviews, and someone struck upon the genius idea to see what the album would sound like as an instrumental-only album.

Quite honestly—astounding! Instead of Luke Easter's voice, we get Aaron Guerra's guitar narrating us through full thrash metal attacks (replete with guest guitars aplenty) to classical symphonies, on through a bluesy interlude of "Onward Christian Soldiers."

You've heard the band. You love them. But you haven't heard them like this. Put on some headphones, settle down for a long play and see just how many brilliant nuances you missed with

the "normal" version of this album.

-CHRIS GATTO



Agonal A Suffering Complete ***

SANCTUS GLADIUS

I recently stumbled across Agonal as I was perusing through the Internet and was just stunned by how good this project is. This album is beautifully composed melodic doom metal, with both heavy and clean vocals.

There are also some death, atmospheric, and rock influences in here, too, and this has been done with a real spirit of excellence. This album is not perfect; I wish that the lead guitar had been done

with a tube amp and that you could hear the tubes sizzling, but, with that said, I did not expect Agonal to be anywhere near this good when I found themand they turned out to be

A Suffering Complete is actually now the third album in a trilogy. Thankfully, the first two albums are available for download from the band's Facebook page. I hope that the label eventually gives the first two a proper release, but for now I am content that this one is available on CD.

-MICHAEL LARSON



Abated Mass of Flesh Brutal Death ***

ROTTWEILER

This project is no longer trying to imitate the genre that inspired them, but actually ends up creating something amazing that surpasses even those that inspired them to begin with.

-MICHAEL LARSON ON VIALS OF WRATH

Abated Mass of Flesh slam us hard with this aptly named EP. Brutal Death, AMOF's second EP release, features crushingly heavy grooves, indecipherable vocals, and is mixed with an arsenal of drums. The production and mastering are solid; this is heavy, and it sounds good. I really love groovy (read: slam without the breakdowns) death metal, and it didn't take much effort for this to work its way into my heart. It was on repeat and played for a couple of hours, which is surprising, as this release only clocks in at around 18 minutes. Sadly, we're still waiting on the full-length version of this release, but if MP3s don't scare you, they are available now.

-MICHAEL LARSON



Soul Embraced Mythos



ROTTWEILER

Soul Embraced are back with a vengeance. Mythos is their fifth album and, arguably, their best

This month, there have been some great releases, but I did not expect Soul Embraced to be one of them. First off, everything on this album is solid. Vocalist

Chad Moore seems to have improved over time, and then, they have these supremely placed guest vocals.

The most notable thing about this album is that Rocky Gray is no longer playing guitar, but is instead behind the drums. Cody Smith is now handling the guitar duties.

This works great, and the album has some amazing riffs, which are what make it work. The riffs and songwriting feel right, there are some classic SE moments, and now there are new SE moments where they show that they have stepped up their game and come out slugging with a fury.

-MICHAEL LARSON



Forfeit Thee Untrue Blood Soaked Splinter

INDEPENDENT

South Africa's Forfeit
Thee Untrue is an amalgamated construct consisting of late '90s hardcore, a bit of attention deficit disorder, and some serious Demon
Hunter worship, with a few odds and ends thrown in just because they can.

By the end of the first listen, I really started to enjoy the EP. The production is good, yet still on the raw side. Any fan of the metalcore genre will enjoy this; it's solidly done and interesting to listen to. Don't judge this album by its cover; there is more here than you may expect.

-MICHAEL LARSON



Jagged Doctrine To Whom it May Concern

(ME3)

To write off Jagged

Doctrine as behind the

Don't judge this album by its cover.

-MICHAEL LARSON ON FORFEIT THEE UNTRUE

times or, worse, irrelevant, would be to miss the point. JD is not a band that is used to playing for the masses, anyway. If you want commercial appeal, look elsewhere. Or not? To Whom It May Concern dwells in the no-man's land where the nations of industrial, rock, metal and alternative used to collide, particularly in the mid- to late-'90s. But repeated listens show a bit more depth. The lyrics, while not necessarily cerebral, are challenging in their content. Although this

style of rock has lost some of its commercial appeal in today's plastic music environment, the irony of it is just how accessible Jagged Doctrine's metallic dance beats are. Whereas other industrial/rock/metal hybrid bands rely on shock factor or extremities. TWIMC's subtleties are simultaneously part of the appeal of JD and what will ultimately keep them from being bigger commercially in the era of Gaga, dubstep, and ever-splintering black metal hybrids.

-MICHAEL LARSON

