



By Josh Pierson

Shadows Fall is a band that has gone through a ton of trials and tribulations, one lead singer change that proved to be the best move for both parties, and major record label changes. In the midst of all of this, they've somehow been able to maintain their hierarchy at the top of the metal food chain. If there's one band out there that hasn't necessarily revolutionized metal or hasn't done something that's never been done before - that's Shadows Fall. Instead, they bring a brand of metal that hasn't been seen since the mid 80's, but making it a bit heavier and faster.

After the release of their newest album 'Redemption,' I will admit that even I, an avid Shads Fall fan was a bit skeptical after their last release 'Threads of Life,' which proved to be a much softer side of this incredibly heavy thrash band. But the second I popped the album in to my CD player I knew that not only was this the Shadows Fall that we're accustomed to hearing, but it had a new added sense of darkness, or even an urgency to reclaim their rightful spot at the top of metal.

They are also one of those metal bands that not only brings us great albums time and time again, but their live performance is one that's not to be missed, and from start to finish an absolute "metal massacre." But I urge anyone out there that's never heard Shadows Fall to go out and listen to the song, "A Fire In Babylon," as that song will sum up every brand of metal and every influence from Metallica, Megadeth, Testament, and Northeast Hardcore all in one. When asking Brian Fair once what kind of metal genre they preferred, he responded with, "We're just metal." For the first time in my career, I was able to sit down with Brian from Shadows Fall, and I must say that it was the best, most entertaining interview I've done to date.

Threads of Life was a much more melodic album than Redemption, what was the process going from that to the new one in Redemption that is much heavier and darker?

It's usually about where our heads are at at that time, we had just come off the road with Iron Maiden for the summer, so if that doesn't inspire you to write a melodic album, nothing will! It was just the headspace we were in, more of that over the top arena rock, a lot of old metal, Priest. With this new record, when we started writing, more of the tunes were just that aggressive kind of vibe. The first song we wrote was Public Execution and that kind of set the tone. We did a lot of writing in the practice space at full volume and gives you that live feel.

This tour with Five Finger Death Punch and Otep is a bit different from past tours, how did it come about?

I think us and Five Finger Death Punch definitely share some common ground with similar influences. We always try and tour pretty eclectic bills; we've toured with everyone from King Diamond to Glassjaw. We're luckily a metal band that's never been painted in a corner with one sub-genre. We're just kind of a metal band with all these other things involved, so it really allows you to mix it up. But for me, doing a tour with five bands that all sound the same just drives me fucking crazy! It also gets you in front of new people, or else your just preaching to the converted. This is a very eclectic bill - should be cool.

What are the chances of an All That Remains, Shadows Fall, Killswitch Engage tour?

Oh man, we've always joked about the kissing cousins tour, where you have all the bands that have everybody from those bands in it, it would be Killswitch, Us, All That Remains, but then we'd have to get Overcast, and Aftershock. But to get us all together would be fucking awesome.

What were the pros and cons with creating your own label?

The cons are, it's alot of work, but honestly we are very micro-managing anyway, so we drove record label people crazy anyway, so it wasn't that big of a change

for us. What was great is with our Atlantic deal, it was 1 with an option, so we started negotiating and got a lot of up front money from them to do a distribution deal, and where we now own the record, which flipped the royalty rates. What happens is that they give you a loan, they wait however long it takes - years it could be until the label gets all their money back and pays everybody first, and the band gets whatever is left. We flipped it to now we have that 70-80% that they used to have, and we also know whatever money we spend and whatever decisions we make are not only about the bottom line, but it's also about our long term. We have a major label in Warner Bros. putting it in stores.

What are the chances of you signing some bands on your label?

It's a part of the future. We down the line do want to sign bands and probably more of the same wave where we have this platform and business model, where you guys are pretty much going to have to do it yourself, but we'll give you this kind of jump start. We may sign some younger bands, but I could see us doing some digital only kind of releases for younger bands at first. We're trying to be proactive and change the way it's done.

What would you tell the younger bands that are just 'trying'?

Honestly, if you love it, you'll deal with all the bullshit. You'll tell the bands that are in it for the wrong reasons pretty quick. The road's tough. Right now if you're in a metal band, you're not going to make tons of money, you can probably survive if you get lucky, that's if you get lucky. There's one Metallica, there's one Iron Maiden - that's it. If you really want it, you just gotta go out there and hack it out.

What are some of your favorite experiences playing shows with Shadows Fall?

We've been pretty lucky. The highlight is our tour with Damageplan. You usually have the last night of the tour where everything's crazy. Well, that was like a week. Dime was just fucking crazy; he would do those last night stunts like every fucking night. The last night in Albany we all did a few songs where by the end of it Jay (Jason Bittner) was behind the drums dressed as Vinnie Paul. Dime gave Jon (Donais) his guitar and Jon's just shredding all over it. It was total bedlam, that's probably one of the highlights. Getting to sing in a tribute to Dime, I sang "A New Level" (Pantera) with Anthrax when they did their reunion thing out in Astoria in London; that was pretty crazy. And spending a whole summer with Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden, that's kind of awesome. Bill Ward hanging out asking how your day was, drinking one of your beers.

Where do you think Metal's at right now?

It's pretty crazy, the resurgence is pretty awesome. To see how it's grown, it's pretty ridiculous. When we first were touring, you had to set up your own shows, bands from Europe didn't come here as much. To see now that there's a full touring cycle, and you got bands like Killswitch selling gold fucking records, Lamb of God playing arenas, it's crazy. To see the thrash, retro thing coming back...I never thought in a million years I'd see kids in denim vests and white reebok hightops that weren't the sketchy old dude in the back of the show.

Is Overcast planning on doing a tour?

We did a small East Coast tour. It's a scheduling thing. Overcast is for the 'love of.'

The new album is the first album where you're swearing.

Yup, first album with a swear and a guest appearance all

in one! I take lyrics pretty seriously, and positive, even the angrier songs on the new record are usually more of a warning or a response to something as opposed to just needless rage.

It's difficult for bands nowadays to keep the same lineup, and besides you and Jason almost ten years ago, it's pretty much been the same lineup...

Yeah, Jason came in right after me. Everyone really understands their role in the band, it's a very common goal, we share a lot of common goals and background, we all grew up in the same small scene. We've all known each other for years before we ever played together. Overcast took Shadows Fall out on their first tour when Phil (Labonte of All That Remains) was still singing for 'em. You fight all the time; it's just like having five brothers you always want to out do, get the last word.

Do you think you've hit the point in your career where you've done the best song you can do, or the best album you can do?

No, no...I feel this record was a step up playing wise, sonically as well, and I think we've learned how to use the studio to our advantage every record, and just feel comfortable in our own skin. You start reading each others minds after a while. I think there's always room for improvements. When I listen to 'Of One Blood' still now I can't believe how much we've grown as it is.

'A Fire In Babylon' is my favorite song by you guys, and everytime I see you I bug you to play it, and you never do.

We used to bust it out all the time; the problem is that it's fucking ten minutes long, it's like, "There's goes the set." Not playing it tonight either...it's one that we haven't rehearsed that much...it's not happening!

Zakk Wylde (BLS, Ozzy) has given you guys much praise for years and years...

He's one of our biggest supporters. He always complains whenever he sees Jon, he's like "Jon, you have to get huge so I can fucking retire. I gotta hand the torch, I'm gettin' old, man!" He's always supportive, which for Jon is huge cause that's one of his favorite guitar players. It's funny cause when you see Zakk you never know what the fuck is going to happen. We ran into him in El Paso randomly in a fucking hotel bar. He comes up to us, "Hey, I just got these on the other side of the border," and slams down a bag on the hotel bar full of brass knuckles and says, "Anybody tells you Shadows Fall sucks, you fuckin' hit 'em with these." I hope he's feeling better.



