



Growing up as a Bay Area thrash fan makes you part of a very elite group of metal fans, but in the not so distant past a few bands started to mold genres of thrash and metal-core together to create a brand of thrash that has created bands such as Darkest Hour; their intent? To boldly go where no band has gone before. Darkest Hour does it so well that it has earned them accolades on almost every album they've done, as well as a new label to boot.

By Josh Pierson

Darkest Hour seems to fly pretty under the radar at times because they don't consistently get to be on big tours such as Ozzfest and the Rockstar Mayhem Festival, but they do consistently offer up insanely brutal guitar riffs along with almost brilliant lyrics. Whenever I hear that Darkest Hour is coming around I almost dread going because you're almost guaranteed to see hardcore teenie-boppers dancing around in the pit, when in fact they need to learn how to mosh the right way because this band is not one to dance to (ex. See Exodus).

I was able to catch up with the band on an off date in Sacramento from their current tour with The Dillinger Escape Plan, and was very pleased with what I saw and heard; I was also able to catch up with guitarist Mike Schleibaum for a few minutes before the show.

How's the tour going?

Well we have one more show left on the current tour with The Dillinger Escape Plan, Animals As Leaders package that went around the U.S. and Canada. Then we have four dates back with Periphery from Washington D.C., and we're going to end this album cycle, the Eternal Return, the Victory [Records] era is ending at this kid's house, he won a contest to have us come play there. I think they're going to move it to some other space because Mom was trippin' but anyway, we're going to play in this kid's honor and then we're going to go into hibernation, write the next record.

Heard there was some tour trouble coming down from Portland..

Yes, snow, it's crazy, we had to put chains on the van. I had to drive today, the first time ever with chains on a vehicle, but it was sick dude.

too from what your tour manager said...?

No, that was a unique freak accident, but that's hopefully going to get fixed. We have van problems, our van has been with us since 2004, she's a Ford Econoline, grey E350, I love her, takes synthetic oil only, and has done us right, so I really hope she hangs in there. But dude, we abuse this thing and this band that I recorded a song for Dead To Fall had a song called Sleeping Bag and it was about their van, I always thought it was an amazing interpretation about being in a band but also in a van.

Any big tours this summer or just recording?

No, we'll probably play some dates. It's go time, we're finally away from Victory Records and we just want to go out and write the sickest record ever and we just want to go do it.

We signed to E1 as of, announced today. If you were to google Darkest Hour today you probably would have seen it. The Eternal Return was the last one on Victory. It was time for it to end, so it finally did.

Where do your influences come from?

The band has changed a whole lot over the years, in the beginning the influences were like early 90's metal, metal hardcore like Earth Crisis, Snapcase, Damnation A.D. all birthed Darkest Hour. In that time I kind of got into Swedish Metal, that's when I kind of found In flames, At The Gates and got into that style. I met Ryan in '98, and he was already into that kind of metal, so when those styles collided you got the sound of Mark of the Judas, and then Hidden Hands we took to Sweden. It's kind of evolved from those early bands, to the Swedish bands, now to all types of bands.

What would you tell newer un-signed bands that are trying to mold these kinds of metal together as well?

As someone who's tried to meld punk and metal together, which other people have done successfully- Thrash- I mean, thrash was done a certain way in the 80's and then metal hardcore kind of revived the idea of what was metal and what was hardcore and what was a combination. But that is the direction to go, copying anything that's been done just sucks, and there's so much shit happening, just fucking get over it. Go in your little room, don't make touring, don't make being rockstar's important to you. Make writing good songs that you and your buddies like, nobody else has to tell you they're good, only you and the dude's that are in the band, then, they'll rock. But pay attention to the music and try and do something creative because I think it's just lost, there's such a machine now, people don't think of it as just getting in a room and jamming with dude's.

What do you think E1 can do for you that Victory could not?

I don't know, I think we just have a way to regroup and re-present the band. Victory had a way of presenting the band that was tied to the way we were in the 90's, and we're a totally different band

now. The music's different, the show's different, I mean it's sick dude, we worked a long time at it. We're stoked on it, we're getting there, the playing is, you always feel like you want your playing to be somewhere else but it sounds way cooler. This E1 gives us a chance to just take a rag and wipe it off and be like, here's the fucking new burrito from chipotle, not the old one.

Undoing Ruin was critically acclaimed across the board...

Is it that that was more critically acclaimed than the other records, or was it that it was marketed and shipped the most, because we don't know. They've all been critically acclaimed, the only one that sold seemed to be the one that got presented and distributed right. We've seen a lot of bands, we've toured with a lot of bands, and to me it seems like more of timing and networking than it is writing the right record, but some bands rise above that and right a sick record, some bands, they don't have to play that game, and we hope to do that.

Do you ever check out and hear local bands you play with?

Never, this is weird, we never play with local bands, this is an off date. When you're on tours now, tours are packaged kind of pushing local bands out because the local bands are forced to do the promoters job and forced to sell tickets. The promoters look at it as a way to be the ringleader, the pimp, the one who outsources to local bands, who love the music so much they'll bleed for it and that's just not cool.



