



THE ILLUSION OF SAFETY

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE OF THE MOST INTROSPECTIVE
BANDS ON THE PLANET GETS LOCKED UP FOR TWO YEARS?
DUSTIN KENS RUE EXPLAINS THE NEW **THRICE** RECORD.

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of the good I was brought up with, and am able to let go of a lot of the bad.”

It’s a response to Carse’s theory, in which he examines the connection between belief and inquiry, and how humans inherently look to make sense of their surroundings. This inquisitive nature can quickly develop into a belief structure built on a person’s immediate situation and experiences.

“Now it has boundaries you can’t go beyond,” Dustin expands.

“You can’t take in the data of the world anymore, and you have to shut things off that don’t fit into your box.”

‘Horizon/East’ opener ‘Color Of The Sky’ immediately presents this theory. Its protagonist questions life within a walled city, told of the uncertainty and danger beyond the safety of its fortification. It sets the tone for the remainder of the album, one that continuously explores the benefit of tearing down the walls and letting the wider world in.

“It doesn’t mean everything within the walls is bad,” says Dustin, “but maybe some things from out there need to come in.” It forms part of the band’s wider ethos to find things to push against and to pull towards. Musically, the record sees Thrice approaching their most diverse, mirroring the steadfast nature of the album’s message in their willingness to explore. Eleven records in, the band are also looking for new ways to be creative.

“We’re always thinking about what we are going to do now, for a little something to spark and push off from,” Dustin nods. These moments allow Thrice space to explore, whilst still retaining the grounded, driving sound that has underpinned their music since 2005’s revelatory ‘Vheissu’. The album’s many references to the natural world hark at their conceptual ‘The Alchemy Index’ collection, with the sound flowing from the thunderous pulses of Earth to the soaring expanse of Air. In sound, ‘Horizon/East’ embodies the tension between the claustrophobia of confinement and liberation.

The album’s songs have taken shape more naturally, too. Dustin equates the process in some way to 2009’s ‘Beggars’, a record built around feeling; both how it feels to hear the songs and how it feels to play them.

“On this record I take the melody and then really try to let the words speak into it. Each song has its own emotion, flow and dynamic. These then interact with the theme, and the song begins to coalesce within that,” he says.

All human thought exists within either a system of belief or one of inquiry, Thrice’s Dustin Kensrue theorises from his Orange County home. Discussing the work of academic James P. Carse, an academic who focused on religion, he lays out the foundations for the band’s eleventh studio album, a heavily introspective examination of Kensrue’s relationship with organised religion. ‘Horizons/East’, he notes, is about individual perceptions of the world. It’s about the things we can’t see, refuse to see, or aren’t able to see.

It continues the turbulent journey intricately documented across the band’s previous two albums. Since ending their hiatus with 2016’s ‘To Be Everywhere Is To Be Nowhere’, Dustin’s lyrics have alluded to his

shifting worldview. That record marks the start of a process of rediscovery, one that continues throughout 2018’s ‘Palms’.

“A lot of things were shifting during that writing process,” Dustin recalls. With ‘Horizons/East’, he finds the space to reflect on the journey, and, for the first time, to look forward.

“I grew up in an evangelical Christian setting for a long part of my life. There are a lot of great things in that, and a lot of things that now - having space from them - are mind-blowing to me. It’s not a judgement on people in that world, but it’s testament to the power of the way our brains shape content that is instigated into our lives,” he starts.

“Having moved beyond that, I would say I’m in a place now where I can hold on to a lot



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DUSTIN KENS RUE

“I do think it’s pretty different to a lot of what we have done before but very familiar at the same time,” Dustin unfurls. “So much of how it’s going to feel is contextual. We’re always playing with the medium, but we have no control over what somebody is going to see in songs or the record. It’s weird because it will end up having an overall vibe and feel that is beyond what we could try to control.” It’s this free-thinking attitude that helps alleviate any concerns over how the record’s theme will be received. Dustin has already battled with his community’s reaction to his shifting faith and feels more grounded for it. He describes ‘Horizons/East’ as standing on top of a hill and looking over the environment he has moved out from. Any apprehension is overshadowed by fulfillment. “The bigger issue is that I feel good about where I’m at,” he smiles. “I’m changing because I think this is a better way to think.”

This new inclusive mindset is what Dustin hopes to offer to others. He acknowledges both the difficulties he has faced, and the length of the journey. “I thought I either had to keep believing or throw it all out. I thought that meant throwing out goodness, truth, and beauty. I thought those things were being supported by those beliefs. I look back and realise that had I had some of the options I have now, I wouldn’t have felt like I had to choose one or the other. It was a false dichotomy.” It was the realisation that he didn’t have to understand everything that helped Dustin re-evaluate his views. Fundamentally, he rejected his fear of uncertainty. “Once that was gone, I got to reassess how I saw life and death. As humans we don’t like uncertainty, but we’ve got to a point in our progression where it’s something we have to start embracing to have a healthy outlook towards the complex reality we live in. I’ve really come to embrace uncertainty about the world. When I dropped the beliefs, the

pillars of good, truth and beauty were still there.” And it’s from here that Dustin has been able to rebuild. “If you get locked up in systems of belief, you have a very specific idea of what goodness, truth and beauty are,” he summarises. “Now, you’re judging everything before you can talk about it. In those systems, you’re taught not to take your own or other people’s experience seriously, but just to believe in the one thing; that if we all believe the same thing, we’re safe. But my actual experience of the world ends up supporting goodness, truth and beauty. And that they mean something. I feel it deeply and it impacts the way I live. I want goodness, truth and beauty at the very base level of how I connect with humans.”

Thrice’s new album, ‘Horizons/East’ is out on September 17 via Epitaph Records.