

◦ From left: Ryan Neff, Justin Aufdemkampe, Levi Benton, BJ Stead, and Jerod Boyd



MISS MAY I

OHIO METALCORE GROUP CHANNEL THEIR **INNER BATMAN**

IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS since Miss May I frontman Levi Benton went bankrupt because of mistakes made by the band's former business manager. And while they are all still working to move past those dark times, the metalcore group's latest, *Shadows Inside*, expounds upon the themes of betrayal and frustration which were brought out by their 2015 LP, *Deathless*. But—there is a huge difference between the two records. For one, Miss May I depended on two different producers for *Shadows Inside*—Drew Fulk for vocals and Nick Sanchez for instrumentals. For another, this record sounds like nothing they've ever done before. Known for always being fast and furious, the band has added a new dimension to their sound by incorporating slower songs, more clean vocals and a profound sorrow they've never tapped into.

Q: What made you want to go in this new musical direction?

LEVI BENTON We didn't know the record sounded this way until it was finished. You don't think about it when you're in the moment and you're writing, and then you step back after a long day's work and you're like, "Holy crap! This is totally different than what we thought we were doing!" It was exciting and fresh and it was cool because the sound came out organically. Those [songs] literally came out of us jamming. I kid you not, it was straight up high school-basement-teenage boy room vibe. This feels like we're starting all over again.

Q: Conversely, the lion that has been prominent in Miss May I's previous album artwork is back.

We made the lion [into] a mask. It symbolizes hope and inspiration. It basically represents all the trials you go through, all the changes you go through in your life. The whole story of the mask is it goes through torture, it goes through battle, it goes through getting forged in metal. You bring it with you your whole life and you go through these changes as you grow old. It's very, very cool that someone can touch the actual symbol and not just draw it on a piece of paper. It stands for all the shadows inside; whether they're good ones or bad ones, you went through those.

Q: Other than the sound, what else is different about this record?

When we did records in the past, I would write lyrics as I'm recording them just to make them fit or just to make the song complete. This time I didn't have to rush. I had an entire month to just sit with [each] song and go over every single word. My favorite song is the last track ["My Sorrow"] because that song makes me want to cry every time I hear it. The vocal take Ryan [Neff, bassist/vocalist] did is just the saddest vocal I've ever heard.

Q: In "Lost in the Grey" you say you're "hopeless not helpless." What are you referring to?

We lose a lot of hope sometimes but that doesn't mean we can't try harder and do better. That really is sort of a Miss May I staple. I think it's because when the times get hard we don't really give up, even if in our minds we're like, "This is so not worth it." That sort of brings in how the record as a whole is because we were at a breaking point and it was just nice to push through it.

TAYLOR MARKARIAN