

OUR LAST ENEMY

Oliver Fogwell (vocals), Jeff Ritchie (keys/samples), Matt Heywood (bass), Bizz (guitars), Zot Cillia (drums)

It would be almost too easy to classify Australia's Our Last Enemy as an "industrial metal band." While that's an accurate description of the band, it's oversimplified, since Our Last Enemy are so much more than the sum of their base parts. Our Last Enemy make music that's akin to a soundtrack or mix tape designed for surviving and navigating an apocalyptic wasteland. There's a machine-like grinding of guitars and shrieking synth lines --many of which sound like they were designed expressly for a horror movie--that populate their songs. Our Last Enemy's music is dark, it's heavy and it will grab you by the scruff of your neck and hurl you around a room. And that's just how most fans of aggressive music like it.

The band's humble beginnings can be traced back to 2006. The lineup is currently comprised of Oliver (vocals), Jeff (keys/samples), Matt (bass), Bizz (guitars) and Zot (drums). Bizz was once a member of Genitorturers, a visual metal band that also featured Morbid Angel's David Vincent; he relocated Down Under to join Our Last Enemy. The band takes its name from a Biblical quote: "Until the day when we meet our last enemy, death itself..." But as is the case with all elements of the band, there is a deeper, more complex meaning beyond that which you see on the surface, since the pulling of the death card in tarot symbolizes rebirth. "It represents the duality of life and death," the band said about its name. "It can mean death itself, which can be a negative thing, and also the symbolism of rebirth, which is positive. It also represents the inevitability of life --that it will end--which reminds you to make the most of it before you face your last enemy."

Through the years, the band has enjoyed their last album *Fallen Empires* going No. 1 on the iTunes Metal Chart in their native country, while their song "10,000 Headless Horses" was featured in the Rock Band video game. They've played support gigs for the likes of Static-X, Dope, Fozzy, Mnemic, Hanzel Und Gretl and more. But they've stepped into the spotlight and the forefront with their newest full-length album, *Pariah*. For this album, Our Last Enemy relocated to L.A. to record with Christian Olde Wolbers, formerly of Fear Factory, a like-minded, kindred spirit. The band moved in with the bassist and producer, recording at Temple studios, once owned by members of Fleetwood Mac and currently co-owned by Cypress Hill's B-Real and Raymond Herrera of Fear Factory fame. On the technical side of things, working with Wolbers was of particular significance for the band, as he brought a wealth of experience along with his professional perspective and opinion. He also brought a piece of metal history. "One night, we were doing takes on my triple picking, and I said to him, 'Dude, this pick is flimsy; I need one with a bit more strength to it,'" Matt said. "So out came a whole box of picks and we were going through them one by one. He said, 'Check this one out.' Not looking at the pick, I just started playing and thought, 'This one works!' We did a couple of takes until he looked at the pick and said, 'Dude, that's Dime's pick! Give it back.' So, I got to use Dimebag from Pantera's pick on the album...well, on a couple of takes anyway!" Matt tore up a fingernail--an occupational hazard--and Wolbers taught him how to use acrylic nail glue to protect his digit while triple picking. The band likened the overall experience to being back in school, since it learned so much from the producer.

Thematically, *Pariah* has a loose concept threaded throughout. The *Pariah* "is this unlucky person who seems to be continually reborn at the center of times crisis or upheaval, whether they are there as witness or catalyst." The *Pariah* appears multiple times throughout the record and some of the tracks are penned from his point of view or from the perspective of those around him. Sonically, *Pariah* is the truest representation of the band. Songs like "Wolves of Perigord" leave a mark, thanks to the scarring sound and rich lyrical narrative. "This song was a product of our fascination with different animal fights and attacks on YouTube," the band said about the curious subject. "We came across a story of a pack of wolves that plagued a place in northern France called Perigord, which no longer exists. In 1766, wolves killed 18 people in one month and injured more. Louis XV even wanted them dead, and put out a reward for anyone that could kill them. The wolves were eventually killed one by one." That story has transformed into a metaphor for the band, since a pack-like social structure applies to bands. "Each member has a specific job to do, in order to keep the pack going," Oliver said. "When touring, we are essentially a pack: crammed into a bus, travelling from city to city, sometimes eating, sometimes not eating, sleeping on floors, looking after each other, fighting with each other...pillaging cities and moving on, so to speak!"

The music for this song was painful to construct, but like any pursuit in life, no pain, no gain. "We wanted to really push this one," Matt said. "We kept pushing the BPMs up to where Bizz and I were calling it 'Arm Pain' as its working title. When we were writing it, doing those same riffs over and over again took a toll on our arms. Although we wanted this to be a brutal, in-your-face track, we also wanted to keep a groove to it, and give the track some atmosphere and let it 'breathe.' We got that with the rhythm of our triple picking and the sounds of keyboards, which almost have a movie-like quality to them." Then there is a song like "10,000 Headless Horses," a play on the idea of The Headless Horseman, which boasts fast-paced double kicks, harsh electronic sounds, atmospheric keys and pulsating guitars, along with a constant thumping in the chorus. The riff is driving and propulsive, meant to replicate a stampede of horses. "Devour the Sun" is impact, barreling over the listener like a freight train -- literally! The drums and guitars were purposely arranged to mimic the sound of an oncoming train. There is also a nod to Psycho that astute fans will be able to trace and pick up on. "Low" is the most accessible track on the record, meshing huge choruses with double bass and grinding guitars, while the demonic "Internus Diablos Verni" lands like a series of punches to the face, and boasts a sample in which a girl screams in pain. It's terrifying and chilling, and will make the baby fine hairs on your neck stand on end. Like most Our Last Enemy songs, you won't be able to expunge it from your brain. There is also "Pariah AD" and "Pariah BC," a two-part song that "deals with the frustration of being a soul trapped in an endless cycle of catastrophe, appearing at different times across history and also in different emotional dramas as well as fallen empires," according to the band."

Clearly, Our Last Enemy's music is skillfully crafted, which makes it powerful and immediate, while the stories and subjects contained within require the listener's undivided attention. Their music is also the product of multiple, and at times, disparate influences, which leads them to create a wholly unique end product and sound. Zot is a DJ at nightclubs, while Bizz likes a lot of Japanese punk and pens score-like music. Oli tends to dig noise that doesn't even sound like music to a non-discerning ear, while Jeff is a hybrid drummer/keyboardist so he hears things in a way most don't and can't. Matt also enjoys orchestral sounds. Their sole common influence? Faith No More. But even with these varied tastes, the connective tissue is the desire to create balls-to-the-floor metal cross-pollinated with harsh, electronic sounds, held together by good songwriting. There is no "metal for the sake of being metal" on the record. "For Our Last Enemy, it's not just about writing heavy riffs, horror-like synths, mad samples, technical drum parts and dark lyrics, although these elements are a big part of our sound," the band said. "We spend a lot of time arranging the music. We pay close attention to detail when we write, because we want to write music that could convey a message or vibrate accurately, even if we didn't include lyrics or vocals. So by the time vocals are added to the equation, the music will transport you to a different world, sort of like a movie does with its background music and dialogue. But the world we'll take you to is a world in ruins." The band furthered, "We have, in some way, tried to meld together the harsh, dark elements of industrial music with the hard hitting slam of metal. We often try to incorporate soundscapes or cinematic elements as well to add atmosphere... while still remaining super heavy."

As stated previously, it would be convenient to call Our Last Enemy "industrially-influenced metal," but Our Last Enemy stands out, thanks to complex songwriting. They don't simply put one or two riffs under a drum loop. That would be too easy. And nothing about Our Last Enemy is easy or simple. They carefully craft the type of hard rock that can cause tectonic plates to shift, while maintaining an artful bend. They also like to rip your head clean off your neck. That's not easy to do, but nothing worth creating or listening to in life is

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