

Need to Breathe

Ten days. Four songs. One band. That's what formed the genesis for NEEDTOBREATHE's latest musical offering, *Forever On Your Side (Niles City Sound Sessions)* — a new collection of tracks that finds the GRAMMY®-nominated group continuing to push themselves further out on a limb and renewing their commitment to fans, family and one another.

Building off the fresh synth experimentation that defined the band's latest critically-acclaimed LP, *HARD LOVE*, which debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Top Albums, Top Current Albums, Top Rock Albums and Top Alternative Albums charts, in addition to capturing the No. 2 spot on the *Billboard* 200, their highest debut to date, brothers Bear Rinehart (vocals, guitar) and Bo Rinehart (guitar, vocals), bassist/vocalist Seth Bolt and keyboardist/vocalist Josh Lovelace intentionally left the distractions of home behind and headed to Fort Worth, Texas. They spent nearly two weeks holed up at Niles City Sound, a studio helmed by Josh Block, Austin Jenkins and Chris Vivion, the unassuming trio behind Leon Bridges' GRAMMY®-nominated debut. With a studio full of vintage gear and a preference for analog over digital recording, Niles City Sound proved to be just the sonic playground NEEDTOBREATHE was looking for as they set out to craft new music at warp speed.

“We were trying to get as many songs done in a 10-day period as possible,” says Bear. “We really wanted to focus on the immediacy of these songs.”

“It was a quicker process, a little more spontaneous,” Bo adds. “That’s something we really wanted to do after having made a record that was very tightly knit and very meticulous. I think we wanted to unwind a little bit and chase after the mood and the chemistry the band has when we just get in a room and play.”

Recording in real time gave NEEDTOBREATHE the rare ability to capture a current snapshot of their musical odyssey. Even though they entered the studio sessions with a handful of strong song contenders, they rounded out any rough edges in record time, caught up in the nostalgic vibe Niles City Sound provided, a theme that even bleeds into the album's artwork showcasing the band in a classic Oldsmobile.

“The birth of these ideas was rapid fire,” Bo admits. “We didn't try to get in the way of what the song wanted to be. We just wanted to quickly say what's on our heart and speak what's on our mind and get pen to paper as quickly as possible.”

The four-song set opens with “Bridges Burn,” a slow-burn mix of neo-soul with a splash of modern production melding a range of icons from Otis Redding and Ray Charles to current day influences like James Vincent McMorrow. “It deals with mistakes and regrets and moving on

from that toward a different chapter in our lives,” Bo says of the track, which feels like a natural continuation of the band’s story — a narrative filled with its share of ups and downs.

The bluesy “Bullets” also embraces a soulful flavor built around a funk-laden guitar riff. “This is the kind of sound and song we have always wanted to do. I think this is the band playing at our highest level,” Bear admits. “It sounds very tough because the chorus is about bullets, but it’s really about the idea that the things you say and do sometimes can’t be taken back.”

In contrast, bare bones track “Darling” is a raw, intimate look at life off the road. It was a personal song Bear originally penned with no intention of recording it. “It’s a song I wrote about what it’s like being away from my wife,” the frontman confesses. “It’s one of those where when you write it, you think, ‘*I don’t know if this is for the band or not.*’ Then I play it for the guys, and they’re like, ‘Well, that’s kind of how I feel, too.’”

The EP closes with the Americana-infused title track — an homage to those who consider NEEDTOBREATHE their favorite band. “When we wrote the song, we immediately envisioned fans,” Bo shares. “We’re very much a live band and love interaction with the crowd. There are certain songs over the years we’ve been able to share with them where they’re singing with us as loud as we’re singing with them.” With a steady dose of banjo, readymade for a collective singalong, the song embodies a “classic NEEDTOBREATHE” ethos.

Sonically diverse, *Forever On Your Side* effortlessly bridges the gap between *HARD LOVE* and the band’s next full-length project. “Fans should definitely see these songs as somewhat of an arrow pointing toward what we create in the future,” Bear surmises. “It has some elements of what we learned working on *HARD LOVE*, and it has some elements of where we’re headed.”

For their *HARD LOVE* release, the Charleston, South Carolina-based band decided to completely alter their creative approach and break into entirely new sonic terrain. The band brought their sixth studio album to life by delving into the world of electronic effects and instrumentation. That included tapping into new inspirations like the bright textures of modern pop, as well as mining longtime influences like “old church music and soul and gospel and all that rock-and-roll stuff that’s got a certain level of swampiness to it,” according to Bear. The result: a sublimely crafted and expansive sound that still reflects the larger-than-life intensity of NEEDTOBREATHE’s unforgettable live show.

NEEDTOBREATHE first began exploring those influences back in the early 2000s, soon after the Rinehart brothers left their rural hometown of Possum Kingdom, South Carolina. In addition to releasing a half-dozen studio albums and one double live album— all with Atlantic Records — the band has devoted the last decade and a half to incessant touring, building a devoted and

growing fanbase that has followed them from their early days playing small clubs to outdoor amphitheaters and arenas they sell out today. In 2017, they embarked on their most ambitious outing yet, the “All The Feels Tour,” a three-part stint that found the band playing more than 30 hits each night across a mix of fully electric shows and their first-ever acoustic tour.

“As much as it was to give the fans a lot of the things they wanted and have been asking for when it comes to acoustic shows and longer sets, the whole point of the All The Feels Tour was really about challenging ourselves to be better, to work harder and to do things in different ways,” Bear asserts. “We’re not settling. I think we’re in a time where it all has to be new, it all has to be a challenge; and we gain a lot of confidence in doing that.”

NEEDTOBREATHE isn’t interested in chasing a certain sound or recapturing past success. They always want to be reaching for more, stretching their limits, all the while staying in tune with the people who matter most — the people who make their music the soundtrack to their lives and eagerly fill thousands of seats at their shows.

“I think the band is aware of the relationship we have with fans now more than ever. We’ve been doing this a long time, made a lot of records, and some of the fans have stuck with us from the first record until now. I think that plays into the kind of music our band makes now,” Bear shares. “The goal of what we create it to inspire our fans and continue that relationship. I think that’s really what this EP is about, us mining things that we feel like our fans would enjoy, and that’s really the main focus of why we make music.”

Discography:

Daylight (2006)

The Heat (2007)

The Outsiders (2009)

The Reckoning (2011)

Rivers In the Wasteland (2014)

Live from the Woods at Fontanel (2015)

HARD LOVE (2016)

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