

WITHERFALL

Curse of Autumn

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By Chris Dick



WITHERFALL are unstoppable! The dark melodic heavy metal juggernaut from Los Angeles are blazing new trails and weaving new tales on spectacular new album, *Curse of Autumn*. Although two years separate WITHERFALL's third opus from their celebrated *A Prelude to Sorrow* album, it feels like a long time. Even with the *Vintage* EP bridging the gap, the wait has been cruel. Well, WITHERFALL legions the tease of what's to come is out there. Fronted by a riveting, high-budget Zev Deans (Ghost, Behemoth) video for "As I Lie Awake," a visualizer video for "The Last Scar," and the premiere of the utterly wild "Another Face," the *Curse of Autumn* finds vocalist/keyboardist Joseph Michael (Sanctuary), guitarist Jake Dreyer (Iced Earth), bassist Anthony Crawford (Chon), and drummer Marco Minnemann (The Aristocrats) with a genuine metal classic in their collective midst.

"We wanted to out-do ourselves on *Curse of Autumn*," guitarist/songwriter Jake Dreyer says. "That's really it. We brought on Jon Schaffer to produce. He wanted a heavy, dynamic sound for *Curse of Autumn*. The guitar tracks alone are way more insane than anything we've ever really done. We also had Jim Morris come in. He's a legend in the engineering field. He's such a pro that it made everything smooth for us. Then, we had Tom Morris do the mastering. Having Kristian do the cover again completed the cycle. We're creating our own little world with Kristian. The visual aspect works so well with the music we're creating."

"We want everything we do in WITHERFALL to be its own piece of art," adds singer/songwriter Joseph Michael. "The paintings are commissioned by us and therefore serve a symbolic purpose. Our merchandise also has equal importance to us. We're not a slap-on-a-logo type band. We want to put stuff out into the world that we would want. For instance, we put out sheet music, we've released our own wine, called Tempest Red Blend, and we spend a lot of time on the packaging of our albums. I mean, look at Ghost. They do merch very well. They have an art to what they do—a verifiable aesthetic. Look at Ghost's 'Dance Macabre' video. You can tell it's Ghost right away, but it's also cool to watch over and over. The song becomes something else with the video. That's exactly what we were looking for when we did the video for 'As I Lie Awake.'"

The level up, so to speak, is evident from the moment the *Curse of Autumn* comes into view. Whether it's with WITHERFALL's first-rate video output and superlative production crew or Kristian Wåhlin's (King Diamond, Dissection) enchanting cover piece and accomplished studio musicians (featuring drummer Marco Minnemann and percussionist James "Timbali" Cornwell), WITHERFALL have pushed the edges of every boundary on *Curse of Autumn*. Where it matters most is in the songwriting, however. Michael and Dreyer spent the better part of

the last two years writing, refining and perfecting their distinguished and musically-adept dark melodic heavy metal. Tracks like the thunderous "The Last Scar," the dramatic "Another Face," the somber "The River," and the group's Miltonian epic "...And They All Blew Away" are pedestaled to the highest standards. But it might be the heartfelt cover of Boston's "Long Time" that seals the greatness that is the *Curse of Autumn*.

"Songwriting in WITHERFALL never begins or ends," says Dreyer. "OK, we did start writing right after *A Prelude to Sorrow*, but there's one song, 'The Other Side of Fear,' was written—at least the chorus—during the *Nocturnes and Requiems* days. So, songwriting in WITHERFALL is pretty fluid. We don't have a calendar to mark songwriting begin or end dates. That's not how it works."

"We don't know which direction the writing is going to go or end up until we're right in the middle of it," Michael concurs. "That's when the ideas start flying. I mean, 'The Other Side of Fear' was supposed to open *A Prelude to Sorrow*, but that was an album that evolved into being about Adam, and that song wasn't really about him. It didn't fit."

Nocturnes and Requiems was WITHERFALL's take on Stephen King's *Nightmares & Dreamscapes*, and *A Prelude to Sorrow* was an orchestrated requiem to former drummer Adam Sagan (R.I.P.), but *Curse of Autumn* is a pivot into very personal territory. Throughout the lyrical vista, Michael pours over with red-faced rage and somber acknowledgment the trials and tribulations he and Dreyer have been through trying to launch and be successful with their labor of love. Songs like "The Last Scar" and anger-ballad "...And They All Blew Away" venomously detail the people and obstacles he'd like to push into the inner walls of the fiercest storms. Indeed, Wåhlin's red-hued cover art complements both sides of Michael's wrath.

"A lot of the songs are about pure anger," Michael offers. "The straight rejection of naysayers. There are people in life that do not like you. They don't like the fact that they have to deal with you. They don't like the way your hair smells. They hate you for no reason. The song, 'The Last Scar,' is about meeting people like that and casting them aside. When you meet them, the only reaction you can have is to hate them back. '...And They All Blew Away' is like a [Anton] LaVeyan wish fulfillment fantasy. You wish you held the power of the wind to cast everyone who's been against you in your life into oblivion. We do have the standard WITHERFALL topics, too. 'The Other Side of Fear' is about anxiety, where there's no escape from it. 'Tempest' is about that also, but it's a different reflection of anxiety. That's the calm part. Calm in the face of coming to terms with the end of your life, even if it's all in your head."

"After we finished writing, we think of colors," says Dreyer. "It's important, to me, when writing that the album cover has to reflect the music. We wanted red this time around—some version of red. If you listen to 'The Last Scar,' it's a super-aggressive song. That song is pure red. But then it transformed from red to burnt sienna. So, just as the color for the cover developed from different shades of red, so too did the music. It's not all anger and frustration."

For *Curse of Autumn*, WITHERFALL hired the best of the best. Jon Schaffer (Demons & Wizards, Iced Earth) was brought on to helm the production duties, while Jim Morris (Savatage, Death) was sourced to engineer and mix at Independence Hall and Morrisound Recordings, respectively. The duo then enlisted Bradley Cook (Slash, Foo Fighters, Chris Cornell) to track the drums at Doghouse Studios. To master, WITHERFALL appointed Tom Morris (Trans-Siberian Orchestra) to master at Morrisound Recording. The diadem of talent, as conducted by Michael and Dreyer, spent almost 30 days collectively on the sonic marvel that is *Curse of Autumn*.

"We have full control over the production," Michael reveals. "We have all the say on where we want to go to record WITHERFALL. We have all the say on who we want to work with while doing WITHERFALL productions. We're not tied to anything but our own limitations as far as the production is concerned. The label supports and wants us to have full control over everything."

"Jon is a fan," says Dreyer. "I remember he was listening to some of the mixes for *A Prelude to Sorrow*—we were on tour in Europe—and really dug a few of the tracks. He said to me, 'I'd really like to be a part of your team someday.' Not long after, Jon said to me, 'OK, dude, you have to let me produce the next WITHERFALL!' So, I talked to Joseph, and we felt, 'Let's give it a shot!' Jon gave us a set of honest ears. He was on the outside looking in, which is exactly what we needed this time around. We had our battles as all professionals do, but they were the right battles."

From the expressive songwriting and the group's ability to transform popular song into the album's narrative to the outstanding class of contributors and overall artistic vision, WITHERFALL are destined for the highest (heavy metal) highs on *Curse of Autumn*. Perhaps hyperbolic now but a hindsight view on the accomplishment contained herein will posit WITHERFALL among the impressive ranks of Opeth, Queensrÿche, Dream Theater, and Megadeth. As for the next chapter in the group's impressive story, it's being written as we speak.

Line-Up:

Joseph Michael - Vocals/Keyboards
 Jake Dreyer - Acoustic and Electric Guitars
 Anthony Crawford - Bass
 Marco Minnemann - Drums
 Alex Nasla - Live Keyboards

WITHERFALL online:

www.witherfall.com/
www.facebook.com/witherfall
www.instagram.com/witherfallofficial/
twitter.com/witherfall
www.youtube.com/witherfall

WITHERFALL "Curse of Autumn" (56:20):

1. Deliver Us Into The Arms Of Eternal Silence (00:50)
2. The Last Scar (04:56)
3. As I Lie Awake (05:33)
4. Another Face (05:34)
5. Tempest (08:17)
6. Curse Of Autumn (01:26)
7. The Unyielding Grip Of Each Passing Day (02:44)
8. The Other Side Of Fear (04:38)
9. The River (03:11)
10. ... And They All Blew Away (15:24)
11. Long Time (Acoustic Version) (03:35)



Photo by Stephanie Cabral



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