

Nine Lashes

From Water To War

There's probably no better way to introduce Nine Lashes' immensely anticipated new album *From Water To War* than with one of the many morsels of advance praise heaped upon the sophomore project. "Besides expanding upon its alternative rock experimentation with electronic enhancement," reads the pages of the influential *CCM Magazine*, "the group's songwriting captures an intense season of spiritual growth, sure to resonate with anyone seeking authenticity."

Indeed, there's an instantly noticeable evolution on all fronts since the group's Tooth & Nail debut *World We View*, starting with a slew of tangibles, such as tour time with RED, scoring numerous National Football League commercials, earning 1.2 million YouTube video views of the smash single "Anthem Of The Lonely" and that track's subsequent appearance in the big screen movie "Hardflip." Creatively, there's still plenty to love for fans of its recent touring partners or fellow pals Thousand Foot Krutch, but there's also some newfound influences like Skrillex and TobyMac's recent EDM direction entering the mix.

"Evolution is a great word to describe what we're doing," asserts front man Jeremy Dunn. "It's not a change or a shift in direction, but simply a chance to expand what's already there. We walked away from the last record saying we wanted to incorporate more electronic elements into this record, plus it's also a side effect of being on the road in a van or a mid-size bus. There's not a lot of room to hook up a lot of Pro Tools or guitars, so a lot of times we would just mess around with our laptops and punch in some MIDI notes on the keyboard, which added a new dimension and inspiration."

Unlike many bands with a primary songwriter, everyone takes part in the process, leading to an urgently imaginative environment that also pushes all the players to their absolute limits. But rather than ending in some sort of squabble as is also often times the case, the Nine Lashes guys are bonded by impenetrable friendships, which was enriched even more than the last round during the *From Water To War* sessions.

"One person might have the skeleton of an idea, then the rest of the guys come together to put the meat on it," continues Dunn. "We're all very passionate people who can firmly disagree sometimes, but we work through it as friends with understanding, and once we get through it, it's tremendously rewarding. Now that we all just as passionately agreed with the results, we're that much more excited to share them with others and it's an awesome feeling. I know that sounds kind of odd and it's even thrown our producers for a loop, but we're all super involved and in the end it always works for us."

Adding additional fuel to the production fires were the band's reunion with Aaron Sprinkle (Anberlin, Project 86, The Almost), alongside Jasen Rauch (of RED fame) to respectively shape the electronic and aggressive sounds. "We felt like we learned

a lot last time from Aaron, but he still made us look like beginners,” admits Dunn with a laugh. “Aaron’s an expert programming whiz and he’s really an all-around genius when it comes to shaping every aspect of a song. Jasen also really opened up a new horizon for us in his approach, especially lyrically, and we look at writing in a whole different way now. Between the both of them, we learned and grew so much that hopefully we’ll be like full-fledged adults in the studio next time!”

Of course, another major crux of *From Water To War* is the songwriting, which always takes a hopeful tone given the group’s unabashed commitment to being a Christian band (even amidst some budding mainstream attention). In fact, the title is taken from one of the faith’s boldest images of all time, specifically the imagery of baptism and being born again.

“When you come up out of the water, you’re a new creation and you’re part of something that’s literally been going on for thousands of years,” explains Dunn. “But just as much as it’s the ultimate symbol of salvation, Satan is trying just as hard to go in for the kill, so the title is saying there’s still a war waging over people’s eternal destiny. In *Nine Lashes*, we want to inspire fans to grow in Christ and make the declaration to follow Him, but also to equip them for the new war they’ll face after coming out of the water as a new creation.”

Though the group’s earned enormous success over the last few years, notoriety hasn’t made any of its members immune to personal battles, which means *From Water To War* also unfolds with honesty and vulnerability at every turn. Take for instance the electro-rocker “Break The World,” which speaks to those struggling with suicidal thoughts and lets them know they’re not alone, even inserting personal struggles various group members have encountered at various points prior to finding faith.

Then there’s the chilling “Cover Your Own,” which came as a direct result of Dunn’s growing up without a father, his choice of forgiveness over bitterness (despite still not meeting well into adulthood) and eventually seeing God’s unbelievable means of introducing the estranged pair through a series of mutual friends and Facebook just a short time ago. There’s also the introspective “Surrender,” a momentum-building ballad that reinforces the fact that even when everything seems like it’s going wrong, God will never leave anyone hanging or forsake them.

“We just wanted this record to be real and accessible,” sums up Dunn. “No matter what you’re feeling, someone has walked in your shoes before, and in some cases, it might have been us guys in the band. More than all of our latest musical goals, the biggest thing we want to do is inspire people and challenge people—ourselves included—to take the next step in their journey of faith. Everyone may be at different points, but you’re always making progress as long as you’re moving forward.”

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