

GATHERERS BIO

That there's light at the end of the tunnel is a cliché often rolled out to those going through a bad time. But what if that's not true? What if the darkness of that tunnel just stretches on forever and there is no light, no salvation, no hope? Because those are the circumstances of *We Are Alive Beyond Repair*, the third full-length album from New Jersey's Gatherers – sonically and lyrically, it's a bleak, brutal, nihilistic record that's shrouded in such despair and anguish that there's no chance whatsoever for escape. And that's just how the five-piece like it.

"We wanted this album to be as ugly and as horribly truthful as possible," explains vocalist Rich Weinberger. "It has this very human but flawed connotation to it. It's very pessimistic. I was reading a lot of Sylvia Plath at the time we were writing this record and I just like that the fabric of our existence is very meek and it's dull and, no matter what, nothing will ever get better. That was the angle I wanted to explore with this record. It's the idea of being just being completely unfulfilled, that no matter how much time we put into this band it'll never be self-fulfilling."

Plath's poetry was far from the only source of inspiration for the bleak mindset that possesses every sinew of these songs, however. Weinberger took, as he always has done, inspiration from visual art, while the band – completed by bassist Matt Popowski, drummer Adam Cichocki, and guitarists Anthony Gesa and Rob Talalai – sought to create a soundtrack to an imagined palette of colors, to create an atmosphere based on abstractions and turn it into something altogether more visceral and real.

"I was going to the Guggenheim frequently to revisit the same exhibitions in the same month," says Weinberger. "I was in a headspace at the time where I was very hyper-focused on various mediums of art that all had this underlying symptom of cynicism to them. We've always been more of a visual band, so when we write albums, and specifically this one, when we write we'll sometimes write with a music video in mind before the song comes to fruition. Or we'll try to write a song that sounds like a Lars Von Trier film we really love."

The result is an album that flows with the blood of other people, rather than the band itself. "Every Pain In Monochrome", for example, was informed by the story British author Virginia Woolfe, who took her life by filling her pockets with stones and walking into a river, while "The Floorboards Are Breathing" was sparked by the HBO documentary *Every Fucking Day Of My Life* (later retitled *One Minute To Nine*) which tells the tale of a woman who was for years a victim of domestic abuse before snapping and killing her husband with a hammer. Weinberger is swift to point out, however, that these songs aren't *about* those people or their situations. It's more that they served as a springboard for them.

"I like writing with a giant brush of ambiguity," says Weinberger, "and every song on this record is written from some sort of abstract perspective. I love a lot of bands that write from a first person perspective, but I don't like writing like that. It becomes very tedious to me. So these songs aren't about Virginia Woolfe or the woman who killed her husband. That's all ground zero source material. It's more of a vicarious headspace that I want to get people to explore."

It's an approach that has produced a spine-chilling interpretation of what post-hardcore can be, one which is at once familiar but which pushes the boundaries of the genre to extremes. Recorded during most of the month of April 2017 at VuDu Studios in Long Island with Mike Watts and Frank Mitaritonna – who have worked with Glassjaw, The Dillinger Escape and The Dear Hunter, among many others – by a band that are as much inspired by Interpol and Radiohead *We Are Alive Beyond Repair* can be absolutely vicious (just listen to the heavy, breakneck intensity of "Lambs To The Chapel") but wraps the majority of its songs (and their rage, their angst, their turbulence) in a dense but beautiful shimmer of guitars. That constant wall of sound, built around layers of sumptuous but brooding atmospherics, is both

powerful and fragile, simultaneously collapsing while it also holding all the fractured emotions contained within its folds in place. It makes for a complete body of work, a savage but thrilling journey into that dark, never-ending tunnel of nihilism.

“We want to write songs that make us feel how we feel when we watch some of our favorite films,” says Weinberger. “In my little narcissistic fantasy, my wish is that somebody who’s into our band realizes we’re not just a screaming band, but that we’re pulling influence from, say, the photographer William Eggleston, so their reaction is ‘What? That doesn’t make any sense!’ I hope people can respect the fact we’re pulling from very unconventional points of inspiration to write our music. I would hope that our band inspires other bands to think outside the box. We’ve always respected the bands who study what’s going on in any genre and try to do something different and against the grain and I hope we can be that band as well.”

As it happens, *We Are Alive Beyond Repair* is ultimate proof that Gatherers already are that band.