

Reaching. Yearning. Struggling. Wanting. Needing.

The epic quest of finding one's identity might be one of the most universal themes found in the pursuit of art. The hopeless wandering replaced by the hope-filled breakthrough has been chronicled time and again in painting, sculpture, prose, poetry, film and, certainly, music.

The men who make up the rock band RED have been through those trials themselves. They've taken those experiences to heart, mixed them with a plethora of influences – be they observations on art they admire, or communications with fans they adore – and now burst forth with a dynamic new set of songs geared toward finding who we truly are, inside and out.

The time is now for *Until We Have Faces*.

"We had the title before anything else," says RED bassist Randy Armstrong. "And we didn't set out to make a concept record. But as I sat and listened back to the final record, it's amazing how much of the content, pretty much unintentionally, deals directly with the title of the record. From start to finish, it's about all the emotions people go through trying to find their identity."

It takes some doing to meld divergent inspirational resources as author C.S. Lewis with the stylings of Sevendust and Slipknot. But that's exactly what RED has done with *Until We Have Faces* – merge those ideas that inspire with experiences that inform, and craft face-meltingly driving tracks as the end result.

From the out-of-the gate relentlessness of "Feed The Machine" and "Faceless" through the roller coaster of emotion of the song cycle of "Let It Burn," "Buried Beneath" and "Not Alone," to the hope and comfort (even in the midst of mourning) of "Best Is Yet To Come" and "Hymn For The Missing," RED compels the listener to walk through the fire of confusion and pain to emerge confident and strong in their identities.

Simultaneously, the members of RED – **Randy Armstrong**, bass; **Anthony Armstrong**, guitar; **Michael Barnes**, lead vocals and **Joe Rickard** (named one of 2010's up and coming drummers" by *Modern Drummer* magazine) on drums– have had to go through a season of rediscovering who they were as a band, with Rickard as the newest member, both a live force and contributor to the songwriting process for *Until We Have Faces*.

The result of that introspection is a cleaner, more focused RED in the live space, and an injection of new energy in the writing and recording situation, as Rickard made his presence felt with authority.

Many of the tracks on *Until We Have Faces* were based on his drum parts, with the rest of the band and production team (with producer Rob Graves again at the helm) building from them; something quite rare in the rock realm, and certainly a working departure for RED.

"Joe was writing an entire song the way he would hear it as a drummer; structure, pre-chorus, chorus, turnaround, everything," Anthony says. "And I told him, 'If that's how you write, that's how I write. If you give me your drums, I'll write over it."

"There's a symmetry to everything now," Randy elaborates. "We've kinda settled into this as four guys with a very serious focus. We get on stage, and it just feels different. It's very clean and more intense. When we started out doing this, we were punk kids who just wanted to make noise," he continues. "Now we're really concentrated on being a great band."

So while the ferocity of the musical attack has been amped up, so too the emotion and messages conveyed via the songs on *Until We Have Faces*. The job and passion of bringing those emotions to the surface falls to vocalist Barnes, a quiet and unassuming man offstage but an undeniable force on stage and in the vocal booth.

He knows the goal: connecting those hard-earned fans with the stories being told through RED's music. "I like to think about our audience and what they're going to feel the first time they hear the record," Michael says. "What are some of the emotions that may impact them? I try to get that emotional feeling stirred up inside me."

In the making of *Until We Have Faces*, Barnes was charged with quickly finding his place within these songs, as accelerated recording time frames meshed with playing packed shows didn't give the band and its oft-screaming vocalist a lot of down time.

"We had so little time to get ready, because we were all doing 10 different things at a time," Barnes says. "One of the things I did on this record was to try to push my voice to a whole other limit. It's a lot raspier, a lot more impactful style of singing."

"I just remember showing up at the studio, watching Michael track," Randy says, "and on the last record, we did all the vocals first, and the screams dead last, because we knew if we did them at the same time, Rob wasn't going to get out of Michael what he needed. "But I'd show up some nights, and Michael would be in the midst of recording the entire song, and I told Rob a number of times that Michael sounded really strong. His stamina is there."

"There's one song – 'From The Outside' – where the timbre of my voice makes it sound like I'm about to actually lose my voice," Barnes continues. "I did 'Watch You Crawl' that night, and then I sang 'From The Outside.' We never would have done that in the past, but I think it really adds to the emotion of that song."

"Part of me feels like this record would not have been captured the way it was if the timeline hadn't been as tight as it was," Anthony says. "I feel like the time pressures made us all step up to the plate like we never had; yet another way we had to find our identity through this project."

Another crucial aspect of RED's overall identity is the band's relationship with its fans. Through feedback and support received with RED's first two Grammy nominated projects, *End of Silence* (6/6/06) and *Innocence & Instinct* (2/10/09), and the five-plus years of near-constant touring, the members knew they could reach out to the fan base for inspiration and direction for *Until We Have Faces*.

"When we first started writing songs for this record, we put a post on Facebook asking what our fans wanted to hear songs about," Randy says. "We got over 1,000 responses to that, and just to see what they wanted or were struggling with was incredible."

It's part of that ongoing and ever-changing process of trying to find out who you are, as the circumstances and definitions of the world morph around you. And it's in that continuous examination that new answers can continue to be found, even for a band that's been asked the origin of its name a million times.

"People ask what the name RED means and where we came up with it; it's a power color, a very emotional thing," Barnes says. "And I think our music gets to the core of that. We're really trying to flesh out and draw out those emotions that may have been stagnant or just stirring up in people."

The thing is, the members of RED really don't mind the questions. And they're inviting fans to help them find the answers. They know it's in the reaching, the yearning, the struggling, the wanting and the needing that new identity is formed, emerging forged and strong, powerful and loud.

There's little need to wait *Until We Have Faces*. For that time is now.