

# COMETH THE HOUR, COMETH THE BAND

Zero Hour's Jasun Tipton delivers the goods on 'Dark Deceiver'...



Zero Hour's latest album features all the bands usual trademarks – intricate arrangements, first-class instrumentation, terrific vocals and songs that lodge themselves deep inside your head – but, this time around, possibly the first thing you notice about 'Dark Deceiver' is that it is, well, very dark.

cal in areas. We just wanted to deliver a very aggressive album with 'Dark Deceiver' – it's all about pushing the limits. We approached it differently to our past CDs. My brother Troy [bass] and I did a lot of bouncing back and forth writing parts in and out of the studio. We would basically have the whole song structured before bringing Mikey [drummer Mike Guy] into the mix. Everything was well thought out in terms of making sure the material, to our ears, had longevity. If we wrote a part and it didn't have the same excitement two weeks later we would replace it with something that had a longer lasting effect to us.

"After getting a really positive response from 'Specs Of Pictures Burnt Beyond' my bro and

ence. "As I said, everything was well thought out in making sure the material to our ears had longevity, but I think the biggest thing is that Troy and I took control over 'Dark Deceiver'. That wasn't by choice but we knew we had to keep moving forward with the material and not let it come to a standstill. We had that happen before in the past with 'A Fragile Mind' and didn't want it to happen again. For instance, my bro and I wrote all the lyrics and melodies to 'The Power to Believe', 'Dark Deceiver', 'Resurrection' and over 90 percent of 'Inner Spirit'. These were the last four songs written for the CD. We had the music written for 'Lies', 'The Passion of Words' and all of the music and lyrics written for 'The Temple Within' before 'Specs...' was out to the public. Chris [Salinas



"Absolutely," agrees guitarist Jasun Tipton. "Our outlook before starting the writing process for 'Dark Deceiver' was to be heavier, darker and more techni-

I knew that everything needed to be stepped up. For us it was all about making a better CD, not trying to make a better CD," he says, emphasising the differ-

– vocals] fell behind due to having personal issues he needed to deal with in his private life. **1** Troy and I knew in order to

get this CD done and out to the listeners that the both of us had to step up and finish the lyrics and melodies.

"The three songs 'The Power to Believe', 'Inner Spirit' and 'Resurrection' follow a concept. The story is about a young Native American tribe leader who is risking his life by leading the enemy into uncertain territory

ed his parts the day after getting back from the PPC Festival in Hanover, Germany. Sixteen hours of flying and airports and he just comes in the next day tired as hell but knocks it out. He's been dealing with very bad tendonitis for many years too. My tracks took less than a day to record. Mikey was a few days, and vocals were a few days as well. It came out amazing and

cover', but that's all. For us the artwork just captures the storyline and the music."

Zero Hour have been together in one shape or another for quite some time now. "Yes," says Jasun, "Troy, Mikey and I have been playing music together for over sixteen years. When we formed the band our out-



so that his tribe is not exposed. When he feels he's pushed to his limit he looks to the sky for guidance. The spirits of his parents help him clear his mind and find the answers. Musically speaking it's a dynamic chapter that is built with landscapes of movement. When Troy and I solo it creates tension to the visions and chapters to overcome the struggles on land and at sea. Against this, the lyrics to 'Dark Deceiver' were written by Troy and they follow a horror format... So the music and lyrics are all over the place which always makes things interesting! "The recording of the album was also a little challenging at times. Troy was finished with his tracks in three hours, if that. He's basically a one-take player and it was very inspiring to watch his tracking. I should add he record-

I'm very happy with it. A big part of that is because we work with, I think, the best producer and recording engineer in the business. Dino Alden is the real deal: we've done all our CDs with him, and he's all quality and such an amazing talent."

The cover art is pretty bleak, to say the least. "The cover artwork follows the story of the song 'Dark Deceiver'. Troy wrote the lyrics and told Bjoern of Killustrations his idea, and Bjoern captured the story perfectly. I'm not worried about possible backlash or boycotts from suppliers, distributors or the public. The music and lyrics of Zero Hour are all over the place: positive, uplifting, horror, inner-struggle and sci-fi. I've had a few parents of my guitar students say, you know, 'that's a pretty graphic

look was to write dark, heavy, intricate material. My bro and I are very inspired by The Pat Metheny group so we like to incorporate lush clean tone passages to add dynamics to the material. A few years later we found a great vocalist and writer with Erik Rosvold. We released our self-titled CD in 1999 which received a lot of praise from magazines, fanzines, webzines, all of which helped gain attention from labels and listeners. We signed a deal with Sensory Records in 2000 and released 'The Towers of Avarice' which is the CD which put the band on the map. We toured Europe doing some amazing festivals – ProgPower Europe, Westfalen in Germany, Headway in Holland – played ProgPower USA 1 and 3, the biggest festival for power and progressive **2**

music in the States. We went through some vocal changes in 2004 and 2005 but found a great vocalist in Chris Salinas.

'Specs of Pictures Burnt Beyond' was released in 2006 and we did a bunch of great shows in the States and Europe. We gained a lot of momentum and now we're very pleased and excited to have 'Dark Deceiver' out to the listeners and we're excited to have some great events coming up. There's the Bay Area Rockfest with Liquid Tension Experiment and the South Texas Rockfest with Queensryche and Dokken; we're coming to Europe to play ProgPower Europe in The Netherlands, ProgPower Scandinavia in Denmark and The Insanity Prog Fest in Poland later this year. And we are looking to put together some shows in Germany and the UK as well."



I ask if he had any recollections of their trips to Europe. "ProgPower Europe in 2001 was funny," Jasun laughs. "Our singer at the time Erik and a fan of ours, New Jersey Dave, walked into Anathema's – awesome band I should add – backstage room. Anathema said, 'Hey, Zero Hour from the States; have a beer!' Erik had drunk more than his share already, went to open the fridge door and lost his balance. Next thing you know he's laying flat out on the floor, passed out, with the fridge door on top of him!"

Moving back to the present, I asked Jasun how 'Dark Deceiver',

their fifth album, compared to their earlier releases. "'Dark Deceiver' is our heaviest CD to date and you have Troy and I doing a lot of interacting soloing wise on the disc. 'Specs of Pictures Burnt Beyond' is real riff monster: lots of cool chunky parts interacting with clean passages. 'The Towers of Avarice' is the coldest CD of the bunch; it's a conceptual disc that creates a real dark, cold vibe and the CD start to finish musically and lyrically really paints a great picture to the material. And it's really the CD that set our sound apart from other bands in the genre. 'Metamorphosis' [a re-titled re-issue of the band's first limited edition album] was our first CD and that's where it all started for us. It's very melodic and we had keyboards in the material. This was the CD that made Zero Hour known for its creative vibe in the

genre."

The band's song-writing techniques, says Jasun, "Change from album to album. It can be really organic in the way we just come into the studio without any ideas and just jam. My brother and I can collaborate with parts and structure a song. We can even just gain ideas watching movies or TV shows by muting the sound and playing to what we see on screen. Inspiration can strike at anytime. It could be when you're in your car and all of a sudden a musical idea is singing in your brain. You could be messing around on an instrument and you stumble on a few

notes or chords that are enjoyable to your ears. So it's all over the place when it comes to writing. I find the ideas come to me while I'm trying to fall asleep. I end up waking up and tracking the simple idea so I won't forget it the next day."

I wondered how healthy Jasun saw the US metal scene these days. "Well, I remember in the mid-1990s there wasn't a scene for metal in the States at all," he replies. "We would be playing and people would always give the backhand compliment – 'you guys are amazing but you're not marketable'! To me it's always about the music and being real with what you love. Now we have lots of new listeners and fans going out and getting CDs of Zero Hour, and it's a great feeling. I recently went to see Megadeth and the place was packed. They played Iron Maiden over the sound system and everyone in the crowd was singing along with 'Wasted Years'. My bro and I couldn't help but smile.

"It's great to have metal back in the States. That's why I respect Europe so much because metal never left. I want to say to those who go out and support the artist by buying the product, YOU RULE!" he shouts. "The music business has changed so much and it's hard on the labels and artist. If you go out and buy the product it gives underground bands more of a chance to have, at the very least, recording budgets to put out future CDs. A lot of artists like myself don't make a living with their band but if people buy the product and the label will still support the band in recording new material, we'll always do it because we're in it for the love of music."

'Dark Deceiver' was released on 26th May 2008 on Sensory Records  
For more information go to [www.myspace.com/zerohourband](http://www.myspace.com/zerohourband) or [www.zerohourweb.com](http://www.zerohourweb.com)