

NEEDTOBREATHE

South Carolina rock band NEEDTOBREATHE has seen their fair share of ups and downs over the course of their career, but their latest chapter left them on a particularly high note unmatched by any of their previous work. Their blockbuster 2014 album *Rivers In the Wasteland* landed the band their first-ever Grammy Award nomination, topped Billboard's Top Rock Albums and Top Alternative Albums charts, and earned their highest-charting single yet with the RIAA Gold-Certified Top 10 hit "Brother (feat. Gavin DeGraw)." But when it came time to record its follow-up, the Charleston, South Carolina-based band decided to completely alter their creative approach and break into entirely new sonic terrain.

Building off the impassioned, anthemic alt-rock dynamic that's come to define the band, brothers Bear Rinehart (vocals, guitar) and Bo Rinehart (guitar, vocals), bassist/vocalist Seth Bolt, and keyboardist/vocalist Josh Lovelace brought their sixth studio album *HARD LOVE* to life by delving into the world of electronic effects and instrumentation. The result: a sublimely crafted and expansive sound that still reflects the larger-than-life intensity of NEEDTOBREATHE's unforgettable live show.

With its lavish arrangements and sweeping melodies, *HARD LOVE* radiates an unbridled energy that's got much to do with the pure joy that powered the making of the album. "Working with synth for the first time, there was a sense of wonder that was almost mystical," says Bo. "It was like when we first picked up our guitars and every chord we were striking had this huge impact on us." Adds Bear: "The unfamiliarity led us to rely totally on feeling, and we all felt inspired in a whole new way."

Along with dreaming up that vital new sound, NEEDTOBREATHE instilled each of the songs on *HARD LOVE* with a resolutely hopeful spirit. "We were in a dark place when we made the last record, but to me this album is mostly a story of redemption," says Bear. "Most bands would've broken up ten times by now if they'd gone through what we went through, but I think it made us stronger than ever."

"MOUNTAIN, Pt 1," the album's opening track, is unlike anything the band has previously done and immediately sets the tone. Urgent yet soulful, *HARD LOVE*'s exhilarating title track perfectly embodies the album's theme of redemption through perseverance. "If there's a greater good that you want to be a part of, you're gonna have to suffer some punches in order to get there, and the song 'HARD LOVE' is partly about recognizing that," says Bo. On lead single "HAPPINESS," with its soaring vocals and Southern gospel flavor, NEEDTOBREATHE gives a closer look at the personal toll of pursuing that greater good. "Every dream costs you something, so it's incredibly important to chase it for the right reasons," says Bear. "HAPPINESS is about how the people around you are the ones who get hurt the most by you going after your dreams—but it's also about knowing that the people who really love you will stick by you through it all."

With its fiery horns and Motown-esque backing vocals, “MONEY & FAME” finds NEEDTOBREATHE joyfully defying the pressures of success. On “GREAT NIGHT,” the band keeps up that triumphant mood and joins Charleston-based folk duo Shovels & Rope in delivering a bold and bluesy party anthem. Switching gears, “LET’S STAY HOME TONIGHT” unfolds as a tender tribute to the simple pleasure of hiding away from the world with the one you love, while the powerfully charged “TESTIFY” offers an intimate meditation on restored faith. And on “CLEAR,” NEEDTOBREATHE closes out *HARD LOVE* with a seven-minute-long epic shot through with ethereal harmonies and cascading guitar work. “When I first wrote ‘CLEAR,’ it felt almost like a wedding song, but it ended up becoming something deeper than that,” says Bo. “Instead of some fairy-tale, dreamlike thing, it’s more about the focus and clarity of realizing what’s most important to you in the world.”

Co-produced by the band, *HARD LOVE* sees NEEDTOBREATHE teaming up with producers like Jon Levine (Melissa Etheridge, Cher Lloyd) and working again with “Brother” producer Dave Tozer (John Legend, Kimbra). But before heading into the studio, the band spent nine days writing and demoing at a rented house tucked away in the mountains of North Carolina. Working from sunset to sunrise every night, the band set up four recording stations throughout the house and dedicated themselves to pursuing any song idea that sprung to mind. “You could be eating breakfast and hear someone playing guitar upstairs. Suddenly, you get a spark of inspiration, and go running to their nearest station to get that idea down,” says Bo. After coming up with nearly a dozen new songs in those nine days, NEEDTOBREATHE threw themselves into another intensive writing session back home in Charleston, before settling in at their own Plantation Studios to start recording.

“Once we got in the studio, we went from being a bunch of redneck hippies jamming around the mountain house to buckling down and focusing on nailing the exact sounds we were looking for,” Bo recalls. That included tapping into new inspirations like the bright textures of modern pop, as well as mining longtime influences like “old church music and soul and gospel and all that rock-and-roll stuff that’s got a certain level of swampiness to it,” according to Bear.

NEEDTOBREATHE first began exploring those influences back in the early 2000s, soon after the Rinehart brothers left their rural hometown of Possum Kingdom, South Carolina. In addition to releasing a half-dozen studio albums and one double live album – all with Atlantic Records – the band has devoted the last decade and a half to incessantly touring, building a devoted and growing fanbase that has followed them from their early days playing small clubs to outdoor amphitheaters and arenas they sell out today.

Throughout their journey as a band, NEEDTOBREATHE have strived to create music that’s part of an ongoing, all-encompassing conversation on life and love—an ambition that’s even inspired details like the stylization of their new album title. “There’s something very tough and bold about the concept of *HARD LOVE*—it’s about full-on commitment, and it’s a statement that we want to sing proudly and loudly,” explains Bo. “When people listen to our records, it’s like being invited into their home, and we take that very seriously,” adds Bear. “We want to make the kind of record that impacts people’s lives, the way they love and work and dream and

live. We hold that in our mind when we're writing, and we keep on refining everything until we feel like it's in a place that absolutely deserves to be a part of that conversation."

Discography:

Daylight (2006)

The Heat (2007)

The Outsiders (2009)

The Reckoning (2011)

Rivers In the Wasteland (2014)

Live from the Woods at Fontanel (2015)

HARD LOVE (2016)

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