

## Wolves at the Gate

Wolves at the Gate, whose metallic music operates off the push and pull, tension and release principle, have quite a unique and colorful history in only six years as a unit.

But from day one, the band has maintained a clear vision and that is to use music as a vehicle to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have never strayed from that singular goal and remain as focused as ever with their newest album, *VxV* (pronounced "Five by Five.")

WATG formed in a college dorm room in 2008 at Cedarville University in Ohio, recording their first demos in the basement of a funeral home. The band released the *We Are the Ones* EP in 2010, recorded while at an impasse that found them wondering if they should continue. They caught the attention of Tooth & Nail/Solid State, for whom they released a properly recorded full-length album (2012's *Captors*). They issued a Christmas single ("The King"), and recorded the *Back to School* EP to pay homage to bands that have inspired them and to help fans understand the influences that shaped WATG's music.

Now, WATG are prepping for their release of their sophomore set, *VxV*.

"We make every attempt to be clear about the fact that we want the Gospel to saturate everything we do from our interviews to social media, songs, shows and music videos," says guitarist and vocalist Steve Cobucci. "People's greatest need is for Christ, not another Christian band. Music is just a form of how we have been equipped to get the Gospel out to the lost who do not know saving grace of God."

But WATG are not preaching.

Cobucci continued, "For as much as we preach and desire to make clear man's need for saving, it is only because we first recognize that severe need in our own lives. We do not speak of a Savior who has not come into our own lives and saved us from the depths of our disgusting sin. We do not sing about a God who has not shown us grace in spite of our constant failures and sins. We are not inviting people to a salvation that we did not need so badly ourselves. What I am driving at is this: We needed to be saved from our sins, too, and have not forgotten that. I need God's grace every second of my life. This is no frivolous cliché; I am dead without Christ. There is nothing better about us as people that warranted our salvation besides the grace of God. 1 Corinthians 4:7 says, 'For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?' We have nothing to boast in besides what Christ has done for us. So for all of the hecklers and skeptics, we stand on no pedestal claiming to be better than anyone else. We just now can see what a dire need we had for saving and hope that the grace of God may find it's place upon your hearts."

With their faith firm and utterly unshakable, WATG craft songs that communicate emotion and dynamics, with an emphasis on a strong, sturdy structure.

"We want to write songs that can be played on the piano or an acoustic guitar easily because there is clear melody to the song," Cobucci said. "The traditional breakdown is not something that we have ever really enjoyed or appreciated. I do not believe that songs tuned to the lowest note possible, amps with the gain cranked to 11, and lyrics that are shocking and controversial are the only indicators of how heavy a band is."

The build up and subsequently riffy release of sonic tension in WATG's music is what makes the band heavy in an entirely different way. Heavy doesn't mean "loud" or "crushing" in this case; it means emotive, much like it does with bands like Coldplay or This Will Destroy You.

With *VxV*, the band used both lyrics and sonics to make its points.

WATG had to put the *VxV* writing and recording process on pause to head to Germany for a festival. The song "Relief" was born of this trip, which helped Cobucci clear his head. An experience he had influenced the song. "I woke up early to get some coffee and while waiting in line, I could tell that the cashier was sincerely depressed," he said. "When I placed my order, I looked down at her arms and saw that her arms were tattered with scars from cutting herself. My heart broke not only due to her clear emotional and physical pain, but because she believed that her needs could only be met with sin. This was not an uncommon sight as we see that quite often with kids that come to shows and only thing I am ever really able to say is, 'You don't have to do that.' Sadly, cutting is just the visible manifestation of what everyone does to themselves with the sins that we dive into whether it is alcoholism, drug addiction, pornography, lust, gossip, self-righteousness, theft, lying, cheating, false religion, anger, hatred. Our desire as a band is to cry out to all that are not resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ."

"The Father's Bargain" is a song based on a page-long short story of the same name penned by 1600s-era Puritan writer John Flavel that supposes a conversation between God the Father and God the son about the plan of redemption for sinners prior to the world's foundation. Upon the initial read of the story, Cobucci wept. "The more and more that I continue to gaze upon the redemptive work of God in saving sinners, the more beautiful it becomes," he said. "Flavel captured the vast nature and attributes of God in merely a page." Thus, Cobucci was inspired to encapsulate the story in a song.

"My goal was to write these lyrics in a way that the listener would feel as if they are watching a live dialogue between God the Father and God the Son and then at the end of the conversation, they both turn to the listener and say, 'This glorious plan, this plan of redemption, is for sinners like you. There is nothing you can do to earn this. It is a gift. I bore all manners of hell for you sinner because you cannot save yourself. But I can and I am willing. Believe that my work of redemption is sufficient for your salvation.'"

"The Bird and the Snake" is another song with layers and depth. It tells the story of a barter between a hungry bird and a cunning snake, where the snake trades a worm for feathers. The bird trades so many feathers that he is rendered unable to fly away from the snake, thus becoming his prey."

"We hoped to build a series of levels of tension for the listener so that they might join the bird in these emotions for the purpose of the listener realizing their own need for lasting fulfillment in Christ so that they might not also be devoured by their sinful acts and cast into hell for their sins against a good God," Cobucci said. "It is with no joy or arrogance in my heart that I say these things, but with the hope that there would be those who would come to Christ in repentance over the truth of the Gospel."

He continued, "This is the first time we wrote a song that had an unhappy ending. It was something that was really hard for me to wrestle with. But I came to a conclusion that is a grievous one -- that not everyone comes to the saving faith of salvation through the work of Jesus. We want people to know that sin only leads to death."

Wolves at the Gate have a defined mission with their music and that's ministry, but it's hardly done from a soapbox. They creatively use the talents with which they have been blessed to spread the Gospel of Christ. That's has always been their goal and they accomplished it yet again with VxV.