

AUGUST BURNS RED

Jake Luhrs *vocals* JB Brubaker *guitar* Brent Rambler *guitar* Matt Greiner *drums* Dustin Davidson *bass*

"I definitely don't feel like we're the 'new guys' in the scene anymore. We have our sound figured out at this point," says **AUGUST BURNS RED** guitarist JB Brubaker. "But it was time to break some rules."

Since the release of **AUGUST BURNS RED**'s 2009 breakout album, *Constellations* – which landed the metal juggernauts at #24 on the Billboard 200 – the Lancaster, PA-based genre giants have found themselves in some rather unexpected places. From the cover of Alternative Press to Fox's "American Dad," from the sands of Dubai to the Warped Tour, from Japan to Australia to South America, **AUGUST BURNS RED** crisscrossed the globe time and again on the road to the top of the hard rock heap.

When it came time to record their fourth full-length album, *Leveler*, **ABR** could have played it safe, could have simply cashed in on their previous success by making *Constellations II*. Instead, after eight years and a quarter of a million albums sold, **AUGUST BURNS RED** scrapped the old game plan and followed their sound where it led them. The direction, as it turns out, was both forward and backward. On *Leveler*, the band recaptured the hungry, ferocious heaviness of their earlier albums, and at the same time bravely indulged some of the more creative impulses they had previously stifled. The breathtaking result is nothing short of a game-changer.

"The biggest risk we took on this album was not limiting ourselves to stay inside the standard metalcore box," says Brubaker. "If there was a part that didn't sound like a traditional metalcore part, we ran with it and made it as wild or unorthodox as we wanted. We've been motivated to progress as a band and push **ABR** in different directions, while maintaining the characteristics that made us the band we are in the first place." Illustrating that point is the album's second track, "Internal Cannon," arguably *Leveler*'s most out-of-the-box track, which manages to stay utterly brutal while employing a samba clean section, a salsa-esque solo, and another section seemingly destined for a Quentin Tarantino film. It's definitely metal, but the jury's still out on the "core."

"I think that's one of the advantages to being on your fourth album," Brubaker says of the band's experimentation. "We have a dedicated group of listeners who are supportive of us trying new things and breaking some of the unwritten rules of metal. It's a luxury we are very thankful for and do not take for granted."

Balancing out a rich surplus of inventive clean guitar sections and blistering solos on *Leveler* is crushingly heavy riffage not heard from **AUGUST BURNS RED** since 2007's *Messengers*. Also present is the virtuoso playing of Matt Greiner, already one of metal's premier drummers, who takes his craft in even more dynamic directions. "The drumming is more technical on *Leveler*," Brubaker says. "I'm confident that this is the best performance Matt has ever given on an album."

Also making strides on *Leveler* is vocalist Jake Luhrs, whose personal journey from a life of substance abuse to the frontman of one of metal's most talked-about bands was well-documented in **AUGUST BURNS RED**'s band-defining cover story in Alternative Press. In reuniting with producer Jason Suecof, who also manned the boards for *Constellations*, Luhrs pushed himself to deliver a profound and emotive performance. "Suecof is great with vocals and I personally connect with him well," Luhrs says. "We do have our tiffs when it comes to producing vocals, but it's because we really have a heart for lyrics and vocals. We end up hugging it out!"

"It was like stepping back into a laboratory with a mad scientist two years after that chemical explosion incident," Brubaker says of reuniting with the metal wizard. "We went with Jason again because we love how clean and crisp he makes our albums sound. His production is top notch and he brings great ideas to the table in all facets of the process."

With the release of *Constellations*, **AUGUST BURNS RED** became a band that could no longer be ignored. They debuted in the Top 25. They toured alongside peers like A DAY TO REMEMBER and LAMB OF GOD. They co-headlined the AP Tour and, this summer, will serve as headliners for the entire 2011 Warped Tour, and will be touching down for tours in Southeast Asia, Europe and Russia. Most importantly, they grew and connected fiercely with a colossal legion of fans, as the three-quarters of a million "likes" on their Facebook page attests. And that is why, with the release of *Leveler*, **AUGUST BURNS RED** will prove to be an absolute pillar of their genre.

"Our fans keep this band above water. If we have fans, then we have **ABR**," says Luhrs. "I honestly didn't know if we'd get to this place, to call myself a touring musician and it be my only source of income AND it being my dream... wow! Music is our passion and it's what we want to be doing. We intend to keep doing it as long as we can."



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