

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

Biography

bal·ance

noun \ 'ba-lən(t)s \

a state in which different things occur in equal or proper amounts or have an equal or proper amount of importance

It's always been about balance. That goal, since the beginning when **Five Finger Death Punch** formed in 2005, is now fully realized. The unrelenting hard work of the past eight years is all calibrated as **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell**, an ambitious two-album release that will affect everything to follow.

The title itself defines balance--much like **Five Finger Death Punch**. Their tactical instrumental attack is balanced by volatile lyrics and a voice driven by pain and fury. The reward is three--soon to be more--gold albums and an unprecedented run of **Top 10 Active Rock radio singles** that have been embraced by an audience actually living the teetering emotional balance of the songs.

Working again with producer **Kevin Churko** at **The Hideout Studios** in the band's home base city of Las Vegas, **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell** was written and recorded with an initial mindset of being just one album. The wave of creativity that resulted in twenty-three songs was measured out into a pair of companion albums only after all the tracks were complete.

The point was to release a prolific moment in time as a single body of work--a veritable double album--including matching color-coded cover artwork to thematically link the two volumes, much like **Guns N' Roses** did with **Use Your Illusion** in 1991.

Ultimately, the criteria that determined which tracks were on **Volume 1** and **Volume 2** came down to proper balance. One album could not overshadow the other. "If we managed to separate the songs into two batches, that I can't personally favor [either], then the separation is right," reasons founding guitarist **Zoltan Bathory**.

"**Volume 2** is a little **bit darker and heavier**, but it's still balanced. It's a very **melodic, polished record**, but there's plenty of anger. It's heavy, but very musical."

That musicality is pivotal to the band being able to artistically pursue any creative direction that comes next. The fundamental aspects established by the first three albums--**The Way Of The Fist**, **War Is The Answer** and **American Capitalist**--resound throughout both volumes of **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell**, but the new material is also fresh, a different vibe that frames an exciting progression.

"If you're not changing, you're boring. But are you going to experiment and change, and run the risk of upsetting your fans because they expect something? It's almost like we looked at our strengths and built on that, but evolved, so it's not just like we copied [the] older songs."

The strategy of two albums worth of material provided enough breathing room to take those

chances--like the left field decision to cover **LL Cool J** or drummer **Jeremy Spencer** reinterpreting the 6/8 tempo of "**House Of The Rising Sun**" as a 4/4 rocker, and the haunting instrumental, "**The Agony Of Regret.**"

"All that would have been too much of a departure if we had only twelve songs to play with," **Bathory** admits. "But with twenty-three we could do that."

The new songs are all vintage Death Punch style, but refined and reshaped, they showcase a redefined sound for the band. It's **Five Finger Death Punch**, but broader, more willing to explore new and unexpected ideas going forward.

"**The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell** opens up the door for us to do whatever we want on the next album. If we want to do something different, it's a solid foundation to experiment."

The results were immediate. First week sales of **113,000** landed **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell--Volume 1** at **#2** on the **Billboard Top 200 Album Chart** in the U.S., with comparable chart positions in **Canada, Germany, Australia** and the **U.K.** "**Lift Me Up**"-featuring the metal god himself, **Judas Priest** frontman **Rob Halford**-hit **#1** at **Active Rock** radio and pushed album sales to over **300,000 copies to date.**

Initially, **Bathory's** primary songwriting partner was drummer **Jeremy Spencer**. "He has a keen affinity for song structure and a sixth sense for dynamics, so in the beginning the two of us would shape and mold the majority of the music."

That creative collaboration has expanded. Much of the refined sound of **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell** is a result of the band now being a **fully cohesive, battle-tested unit.** The sessions were the first with **bassist Chris Kael**, and the albums feature **guitarist Jason Hook** at his full potential.

"**American Capitalist** was the first record we all really started working together as a well-oiled machine," says **Bathory**. "And on this one, you can see the full balance now. It's **Jason's** hard rock style--**Eddie Van Halen** and those influences--beautifully fused with my heavy-handed precision metal."

Not only does **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell** represent the balance of a fully evolved band, it also shows a more developed songwriting craft that reflects a greater understanding of human psychology that more effectively connects with an audience.

"If you learn musical communication, and the music tells a story, *and* your vocalist understands the vibe of the music and writes lyrics that correspond to the feeling the music already conveys, then you have a really powerful tool of communication."

More than ever, that shared language of music is the basis for an intense bond between the band and their fans. It's their strength, now to an even greater degree. **The Wrong Side Of Heaven And The Righteous Side Of Hell** is relatable to the audience because the songs tell *their* stories. **It's *their* catharsis, *their* coping mechanism to be able to sing and scream along.**

“It becomes your **purge of anger, aggression and negativity**. You don't have to feel like an outcast. You realize you're not alone with those feelings. It's not just the band that understands your pain--other people who bought the same record also have the same issues.”

Detractors who belittle **Five Finger Death Punch** as tough guy rhetoric miss the real point of their songs. There is a genuine reassurance through the lyrics that vulnerability is not weakness. The strength of **Ivan Moody's** unguarded helplessness is even greater than his more overt lyrics about lashing out. **His uninhibited emotion balances the sophisticated musical complexity**, making a connection that creates a bonding sense of understanding.

“This guy tortures himself nightly,” observes **Bathory**. “He doesn't write fictitious songs about somebody else. He writes his own story. It's real, and because he has to sing it, his mind recreates the memories. He actually has to relive them onstage. That's why sometimes he chokes up on '**Battle Born**' or '**The Bleeding**'--every time he sings it, he relives the trauma, and people can see that.”

The band scored again with “**Battle Born**,” **Moody's** unapologetic narrative about the grueling weariness of the road that was released ten weeks in advance of **Volume 2**, hitting **#4** at **Active Rock** radio, and followed-up with a track-by-track preview of the album as a unique series of webisodes.

That **unity of shared triumph and pain is the balance between the band and its fans**. The almost palatable *us against them* defiance keeps them connected. So does knowing that **Five Finger Death Punch** continues to succeed with only a small staff and crew surrounding them, an impossible feat scenario that ultimately conveys fighting spirit and perseverance.

“This *is* an indie band,” **Bathory** insists. “Still, to this day, we're not a major label band. This is a human connection between the fans and what we created. **Music is a social glue**. People have a real connection because music puts them in a real scenario. The power of that emotion can propel them to a specific mindset and really create a sense of community.”

—Roger Lotring, November 2013