**Thoughtcrimes – Altered Pasts bio**

As accidents go, the forming of Thoughtcrimes was a very happy one. The brainchild of former Dillinger Escape Plan drummer Billy Rymer, it all just started as a bit of fun for when he was home on Long Island in between Dillinger tours. After joining that band in 2008, he soon stopped playing guitar, because, as he puts it, he “had two of the craziest guitar players of all time playing alongside me.” There was, he thought, just no point. But, one time when he was home, his longtime friend and now Thoughtcrimes guitarist Brian Sullivan thought otherwise, and convinced Rymer that he should pick up the instrument again.
“Guitar has always been my second instrument,” he explains, “but while I was in Dillinger I just stopped riffing. I stopped playing guitar altogether. But then Brian was getting on my case to riff more. I hadn’t picked up a guitar in years, but I did – and then we wrote our first ever song.”

The song they wrote together is called “Misery’s A Muse”. It might only be a bonus track on this album, but it turned out to be the inadvertent start of the band. In 2019, some two years after Dillinger called it day, Thoughtcrimes – completed by vocalist Rick Pepa, guitarist Russ Savarese and bassist Cody Hosza – digitally released their debut EP, *Tap Night*, a record they wrote in just one week. Now, Pure Noise are not only putting that record out on vinyl, but will also release the band’s debut album, *Altered Pasts*. While the full-length in some ways feels and sounds like a natural sequel to *Tap Night*, Rymer says it’s much less intentional and deliberate than that.

“Honestly, it’s just us developing our sound,” explains Rymer, who played both guitar and drums on this record. “I’ve been more hands-on making this record than any record I’ve ever made or participated in. I was in there playing multiple instruments – most rhythm guitars, a couple of bass things, a lot of the synths, programming stuff. I even went down to the beach to record ambience on my phone and threw it in there and made a little piece of my home in this album.”

The result is a wild whirlwind of a record. Recorded and engineered by Mike Watts at VuDu Studios (for the most part, anyway) at the start of 2020, *Altered Pasts* is the perfect soundtrack for the quasi-dystopian times we find ourselves in. At times an intensely savage listen, at times gracefully gentle, its 11 songs flow together to create one of those rare records that takes you – literally, metaphorically, spiritually – on an actual journey. It’s an album that creates its own world, an alternative universe, a monochrome vision of reality where the air is heavy with despair and the weight of human existence. That’s conveyed with brutally violent, visceral explosions of noise such as “Panopticon”, “Dare I Say” and “Deathbed Confessions” as well as through more elegant and hypnotic swirls of sound such as “New Infinities” and closer “Lunar Waves”, all propelled by Pepa’s cathartic and visceral vocals, which don’t just match the dynamics of the music but elevate them. There’s also the spoken word track “Hai Un Accendino”,which features poet and Michael Clarity reading a poem he wrote specifically for the band as he found himself stuck in Vietnam at the very beginning of the pandemic. Sometimes, as on the monolithic and majestic “Deathbed Confessions”, those two extremes combine to create something that sounds like the slow-motion end of world and all existence, powerful and nuanced, soothing and terrifying, in equal measure.
“I feel like when you’re on 10 all the way it’s less impactful,” says Rymer. “I think dynamics are crucial in music, and having those moments makes the heaviness more profound.”

That’s something the band has been able to get exactly right, because they have the artistic freedom to do so. For as much as Thoughtcrimes has become something a bit more serious, its members are still just friends hanging out and having fun. There’s no pressure, no expectations. Except, that is, for the fact that this is the most personal music that Rymer has ever made.
“There’s no guard,” Rymer explains, “and there’s total freedom of outcome. No-one’s asking the typical questions like ‘What are we doing? What does it pay?’ We’re just stoked to hang out and do this. But at first I was a little nervous to share it, because it was so personal. I was definitely feeling the butterflies. But I’m also excited. I know I like this stuff and I know my friends in this band enjoy it, and that’s what matters.”

He’s being too modest. *Altered Pasts* is a stunning record that captures the chaos of the present world – all of its horrors, but also the beauty that remains – and channels it through its unique vision and mix of genres and moods. Needless to say, it’s an album that should resonate deeply with anyone and everyone who hears it. It’s a primal and cerebral reflection of the world we live in and the dark future that faces us. Not that Rymer has the hubris to admit that.

“We don’t know what we’re doing,” he chuckles. “We’re just making music. This is how we feel. I don’t know what it’s going to do to people, but hopefully good things. Hopefully people like it and it becomes someone’s favorite record. I want people to find relief in it, because these are incredibly hard times. We’re all going through some really fucked up shit right now, and music’s one thing where people can come together and find healing and happiness and relieve stress. It was super therapeutic for all of us to make this record, so I hope it serves the listener the same way. Or they could get a workout in. Really, though, I just hope people listen to it and go ‘Fuck yeah! This band rips!’”