**THE AMITY AFFLICTION**

**Joel Birch – vocals**

**Ahren Stringer – bass, clean vocals**

**Dan Brown – guitar**

**Joe Longobardi – drums**

With a musicality as heavy and hard-hitting as singer Joel Birch’s intensely emotional lyrics—about suicide, gun violence, religion and mental illness—*Not Without My Ghosts* finds The Amity Affliction at their brutal best. With four vocal features, including rising Los Angeles talent Phem, the band’s first female feature, on the title track, the Australian quartet’s eighth LP pushes the boundaries and genres of heavy music**.**

The album’s 10 songs wereself-produced at Grove Studios in New South Wales. *Not Without My Ghosts* follows 2020’s *Everyone Loves You... Once You Leave Them* and several non-album singles in 2021-22. For *Not Without My Ghosts,* “We wanted to go as heavy as possible,” says bassist/clean singer Ahren Stringer. “On “I See Dead People” (which features Louie Knuxx, the New Zealand rapper who died unexpectedly in 2021), we just went balls-to-the-wall to show off that side of us, letting people know we’re not a one-trick pony.” Proof positive of TAA’s versatility is the song “Not Without My Ghosts” ft. Phem, which closes the album with a decidedly spooky and softer energy. From start to finish, TAA’s whisper-to-a-scream energy, clean and unclean vocals and Dan Brown’s masterfully dynamic guitar work underscores each track’s dramatic ups and downs.

The album’s first single, "Show Me Your God," dropped in November 2022 with an incendiary music video. The song uses “God” as a metaphor for another three-letter-word, as gleaned via Birch’s lyrics: “Show me your god / Does he come with a clip / Are his teeth made of steel / Is there death in his grip?” Reflecting on the track, the front man notes that “America has become like a second home. It has the best and worst of everything you can imagine, and their unique gun culture means that guns makeup the lion's share of methods used in suicides; while I don't have the solution, I wanted to reflect on what it would have meant for me personally had I grown up there."

In everything they do, The Amity Affliction are about connection, with themselves and others. “I don't believe that people are as different as the media would have us believe,” says Birch. “I think the biggest thing that Ahren and I have been able to do with the band is help people connect with a feeling they may have. I write for myself, but I write knowing that I'm not the only one going through it, and that not everyone can articulate their feelings in the same way.”

Mortality, on both a world-wide and intimate level, is addressed via several songs on *Not Without My Ghosts.* Birch wrote the 2021 single “Like Love” for Stringer, who was grappling with the suicide of his close friend SK. The pummeling new track, “It’s Hell Down Here” with its haunting underlying melody and clean vocals’ chorus, is about the suicide of one of Birch’s own friends. “I’m 41. I’m bipolar. And I'm pretty tired of it,” Birch says. “That’s where lyrics like “like a snake I tire / the cold dark clouds, they steal my light” come from. The song is wrapping up how I feel daily, and reflecting on the time leading up to my friend killing himself. I'm sure a lot of people who have experienced that guilt at not seeing what becomes glaringly obvious after the fact.”

Birch is grateful for the catharsis that writing and performing with The Amity Affliction offers him. As for those who don’t have an outlet and ultimately choose to not go on living? “That's where a lot of the lyrics on this album stemmed from,” explains the singer. “The semi-desperate feelings of guilt and always asking ‘why?’ ‘Should they be here instead of me? Do I deserve what I've got?’”

The Amity Affliction’s honest exploration of those questions strikes home. The appreciation of one YouTube commenter reflects the many, as he thanks the band for “Show Me Your God,” posting: “As a military veteran who fights demons, who fights to stay alive, who almost ended my life in the summer… This song hits so deep to my core, that I thank you guys for saving me to stay alive!!!”

Birch is aware that his own struggle with mental illness can keep him mired in self-doubt, but also knows he’s not alone in those feelings. Over the last nearly 20 years that openness has garnered The Amity Affliction millions of fans who deeply resonate with the band, driving both streams and kudos for the lineup. Four records in a row—2012’s *Chasing Ghosts*; *Let the Ocean Take Me* (2014); *This Could Be Heartbreak* (2016); and 2018’s *Misery* (2018), debuted at #1 on Australia’s ARIA Charts. In the U.S., *Let The Ocean Take Me* [2014] and *This Could Be Heartbreak* [2016] both debuted in the top 30 *Billboard* Top 200, while 2018’s *Misery* [2018] elevated the band to new critical heights, helping the band reach a total stream tally that has surpassed a billion.

Since a teenaged Stringer formed The Amity Affliction while in high school back in 2004, the band’s influences have been myriad, their growth prolific. “We go through phases where what we’re listening to is coming out through the music,” says Stringer. While the bassist grew up on bands including Primus, lately, he says, “Me and Dan have been listening to a lot of death metal. And Joel, he probably has pandemic anger coming through.”

Giving *Not Without My Ghosts* an even wider scope are the vocal features on “Death And The Setting Sun,” with Andrew Neufeld of Canadian band Comeback Kid; and ”When It Rains It Pours” ft. Landon Tewers, of The Plot in You and ex-Before Their Eyes. “He’s a good friend,” says Stringer of Tewers. “He's got those really brutal metalcore vocals. We realized we hadn't really done a lot of features the last few records and we were excited to mix it up.”

With everything they create, The Amity Affliction are about their fans, and take feedback to heart. Stringer hopes the band’s intense efforts on *Not Without My Ghosts* are clear. “We listen. We know what people want to hear. We try our hardest to weigh our musical integrity with how we want people to enjoy the music.” That said, he concludes, “it's a balancing act; you can't please everyone, and we’ve got to expand our horizons and try new things.”

*Not Without My Ghosts* (a phrase that Birch saw on a gallery wall in the UK and felt it summed up his state of being and songwriting) seems poised to excite existing fans and engage new ones. If Birch is “pulling all this shit behind me that I can't seem to let go of” and writing lyrics about how these “ghosts” weigh on him, he hopes fans won’t attach directly to his own personal story or inspirations.“I don’t want listeners to take away my specific meaning,” he explains of the lyrics. “They same way I can't build a house, perhaps a carpenter can't write a song. We all have something of our own that we're able to give to people. Listeners can take from the songs what they will. This is the thing I can give. And that's what I want to keep doing.”

**ALBUM DISCOGRAPHY:**

*Severed Ties* (2008)

*Youngbloods* (2010)

*Chasing Ghosts* (2012)

*Let the Ocean Take Me* (2014)

*This Could Be Heartbreak* (2016)

*Misery* (2018)

*Everyone Loves You... Once You Leave Them* (2020)

*Not Without My Ghosts* (2023)