“I don’t know if people still remember us,” laughs **THE WARRIORS** frontman Marshall Lichtenwaldt. “It’s been a long time.”

Indeed, nearly a decade has passed since the revered hardcore quintet – Lichtenwaldt, drummer Roger Camero, bassist Joe Martin, and guitarists Javier Zarate and Charlie Alvarez – released their last album, 2011’s *See How You Are*. In the time since The Warriors retreated into the shadows, a lot has changed – not just in music, but in the world at large: The rise of social media has left us more connected but lonelier than ever, while the modern music industry has all but devalued the album as an artistic concept in favor of cherry-picked singles.

But, true to their tenacious past, The Warriors’ fifth full-length album, ***MONOMYTH***(released December 13, 2019 on Pure Noise Records) confronts these sea changes head-on – all the while not losing an ounce of the intensity that made them one of the underground’s most captivating heavy acts in the mid-2000s. The result is their most complete work to date: an album that demands your attention from its first note to its final strains, all along the way challenging listeners both musically and in message. It’s an album built for modern times, written by those who’ve carefully lived it from afar.

“It just felt like the right time,” says Lichtenwaldt about The Warriors’ decision to reunite after so many years apart. “We all had other passions in our lives, but the love for this band has *always* been there.”

After forming in the tiny mountain town of Tehachapi, California, in 2002, the band of high school friends endeared themselves to the underground with an urgent, unrelenting blend of metal, punk, and hardcore on their 2004 debut, *War Is Hell*. Follow-up releases further expanded the playbook, introducing new musical elements and influences like hip-hop into the band’s razor-edged sound – and offering them the stamp of approval from their forefathers, like Motörhead’s Lemmy Klimister and Sick Of It All’s Lou Koller guesting on 2007’s *Genuine Sense of Outrage*.

Once again, *MONOMYTH* – produced by Camero – finds the band diversifying their sonic palette, resulting in not only their most refined album, but also their most progressive: “Fountain of Euth” builds from booming beats and effected vocals into groove-heavy breakdowns, while companion track “Tavi öös Yukwenaak (The Sun is Dying)” melds skittering drum machines with bubbling keyboards to create a cinematic, stirring soundscape that serves as a compelling counter to the album’s more crushing tendencies.

But despite these new tricks, The Warriors haven’t lost their edge: “Burn From the Lion” and the album-closing “Last S.O.S.” swerve into the band’s ‘90s-leaning alternative metal influences, and “Death Ritual” distills dextrous guitar work and stomping grooves into a blistering first look at the updated musical vision for the second chapter of the group’s career.

“When you look at your life, from the minute you wake up until you go to sleep, everything you do is a ritual,” Lichtenwaldt says of “Death Ritual,” the album’s lead single. “I know we can be better than that. If you step outside yourself and look at your choices, you have to sacrifice some of these things you’re shoving into your routine if you want to be a better person.”

When writing *MONOMYTH*, the vocalist found inspiration in *The Kybalion* as well as the concept of the hero’s journey, analyzed and popularized by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (which also served as a major influence on Star Wars creator George Lucas). These themes are distilled into the album’s 12 songs, juxtaposed against Eastern philosophies and meditative transcendental teachings that reverberate even louder when placed atop the band’s caustic brand of hardcore.

With its focus on looking inward, *MONOMYTH* ultimately serves to soundtrack each listener’s own personal hero’s journey, ebbing and flowing as life does – while ultimately reinforcing a few key imperatives, chief among them the need to destroy the ego holding us back from being our best self. In the context of a 21st-century culture that finds us building façades as a form of self-survival, it feels like The Warriors have more to say than ever before.

“People tend to get sucked into this vacuum with everything that’s happening in the news” Lichtenwaldt says, “It’s all just a bunch of bullshit. If we wanna talk about hardcore, we need to start thinking in terms of doing things that are *actually* hard: Being nice to someone who doesn’t deserve it. Being kind and compassionate to someone who hasn’t earned it. If you can do that, it causes a ripple effect that reverberates farther than you can imagine. Living for others can be the hardest thing to do sometimes. Once you do that, you start feeling more fulfilled.” **XX**