**Knocked Loose**

***You Won’t Go Before You’re Supposed To***

As Knocked Loose chipped away at what would become their third album, they felt the pressure from all sides. Internally, there was the need to challenge themselves as songwriters while retaining the merciless intensity and unflinching honesty that have always been their calling cards — and to also live up to the sizable expectations that followed in the wake of 2019’s *A Different Shade of Blue*, one of the most acclaimed metallic-hardcore albums in recent memory. Externally, there was a whole new set of eyes on the hard-touring Louisville quintet, following a banner year on the road, during which they’d brought their underground-seasoned sound to some of the world’s biggest stages, finding themselves the unlikely viral darlings of both Coachella and Bonnaroo.

The creative process was arduous, with the band writing close to 40 songs across a span of four years before locking in the 10 tracks that make up new LP *You Won’t Go Before You’re Supposed To*. But in the end, vocalist Bryan Garris, guitarists Isaac Hale and Nicko Calderon, bassist Kevin Otten and drummer Kevin “Pac Sun” Kaine honed a diverse, cohesive and savagely aggressive album that both sums up the massive strides they’ve taken during their decade as a band, and asserts their boundless potential going forward.

“We worked so hard on it and doubted it so much that I think we ended up with the perfect record,” Hale says of the LP, out May 10. “And we didn't know it until it was done. I think that the doubt and the struggle is what made it so special.”

The idea of struggle has been central to the band from the start, from the themes of intolerance, addiction and betrayal that featured on their 2016 debut full-length *Laugh Tracks* through a frank unpacking of grief on the 2021 EP *A Tear in the Fabric of Life*. From opening track “Thirst,” *You Won’t Go Before You’re Supposed To* follows suit, plunging the listener into a cauldron of mental and spiritual anguish. But the album’s title contains a note of reassurance amid the turmoil. The phrase originates from an experience that Garris, who suffers from what he calls a “borderline phobia of flying,” had during a particularly trying flight. As he battled his nerves during takeoff, the vocalist found himself talking to a woman seated next to him. When he confided in her about his anxiety, she said, “You won’t go before you’re supposed to.”

“She didn’t realize it,” Garris reflects, “but she took me out of my fear, and she put my mind in a different place.”

Then again, glossing over negative emotions isn’t what Knocked Loose are about. The new songs find them plumbing new depths of loathing — directed both inward and outward — and tortuous anguish. Raging lead single “Blinding Faith” skillfully wields whiplash tempo changes in service of a scathing indictment of religious groupthink, and the hypocrisy that can sometimes accompany an outwardly pious life. “It was just hilarious how many people showed up to church that I knew were rude, horrible, selfish people,” Hale reflects of attending church with his mother in his younger years. “They knew that it made them seem like a better person — or if they said the words, it would redeem them of any negative quality just because they showed face.”

Seething anger also fuels “Don’t Reach for Me,” a track that combines the band’s signature frenzied attack with deliberate catchiness and refreshing sonic variety. After one listen, the song’s refrain — “I dream of a cleansing wave,” roared out by Garris in his patented piercing, rueful bark — loops in the listener’s mind like a prime earworm, setting the stage for future live shout-alongs.

“It took a while to get right because it basically stemmed at first from being like, ‘OK, let’s write a song with a chorus in it,’” Hale explains of the track. As catchy as it is, it’s also one of the band’s most experimental efforts to date, featuring a mid-song left turn into a ghostly funk groove, complete with clean-toned, reverb-heavy guitar. Lyrically, Garris says, the track “may be the meanest song I’ve ever written,” a seismic takedown of “someone who tried their hardest to come into my life and mess with two out of the three closest people I have.”

“Suffocate” also finds Knocked Loose taking on new musical challenges. A major catalyst: pop-meets-metal trailblazer Poppy, who reached out to Garris and proposed a team-up. The admiration between the parties was mutual, and the collaboration inspired the band to venture into uncharted realms for the song, which finds Garris and Poppy trading verses about, as Garris puts it, “someone stabbing you in the back.” The track contrasts an oppressive heaviness befitting the title — from chugging half-time to bludgeoning blastbeats and chaotic, Converge-like fury — with a dance-y, syncopated groove and, midway through, the most concussive reggaeton rhythm you’ve ever heard. “It was so fun because it allowed us to expand the palette a little bit and do some weird, off-the-wall things that we maybe wouldn't do in another song,” Hale says of the track. “We felt that because we had Poppy’s voice involved, it allowed us to kind of push the boundaries of what we thought was feasible.”

Other boundary-pushing textures pop up throughout the record, from the sample of what sounds like meditative singing bowls that opens the album to “Take Me Home,” with its spoken-word intro, ear-catching auxiliary percussion and brief yet evocative concluding country-song snippet. Elements like these only make the breakneck blur of a track like “Moss Covers All,” a song that Garris says deals with his ever-present longing for the comfort of home, feel that much more urgent.

“On this album, we go the fastest we've ever gone; we go the scariest we've ever gone. We also go the catchiest and the most melodic that we've ever gone, and that's the point,” Hale says. “Instead of branching off into a specific direction, we want to encompass *all* directions.”

Emotionally too, the album stretches far beyond the strident venting the band is known for. On closing track “Sit and Mourn,” over a hurtling black-metal-esque riff, Garris howls, “I will break your fall / I will shield you from disdain / I will get us both home / I will do whatever it takes,” applying his ferocious delivery to a surprisingly tender sentiment.

Producer Drew Fulk, a.k.a. Wzrd Bld, who first teamed with the band on their *Upon Loss* singles in 2023, helped the band bridge its roots with its growing ambition. His résumé includes years’ worth of work with high-profile heavy acts like Bad Wolves and Motionless in White, as well as credits with prominent hip-hop artists such as Corpse and Kevin Gates. (Motionless in White’s frontman, Chris “Motionless” Cerulli, turns up on *You Won’t Go*’s “Slaughterhouse 2,” a sequel of sorts to a 2022 Fulk-produced MiW track that featured Garris.) “We’re all hardcore kids and metal kids, and we wanted someone who was from that world, but also had a background in other things,” Hale says of the collaboration with Fulk, “that knew how to write a hook, maybe had some dabbles in more popular styles of music.”

There’s no ceiling for hardcore in 2024 — even an outfit as uncompromising as Knocked Loose can turn up in mainstream-adjacent spaces and win over new fans. But there’s a center to what they do that will never change.

“Knocked Loose is always going to be a heavy band,” Hale asserts. But, he adds, growth potential is also key: “I want to be able to play the festival to 10,000 people, and then I want to be able to play to 50 in a pizzeria. It needs to come across in both environments. At the same time, in order to grow, we all have all these different influences and different highbrow ideas of where we want to take things. The whole thing has been, how do we add those influences tastefully into what’s still, in essence, a hardcore song that has mosh parts and breakdowns?”

Across 10 tracks and 27 gripping minutes, *You Won’t Go Before You’re Supposed To* answers that question time and again. These songs are still hardcore, still Knocked Loose, but they explore new vistas of emotion, texture and sonic strategy. Everywhere they’ve been is here on this record, but so is everywhere they may yet go.