**THE ACACIA STRAIN — *SLOW DECAY* — BIO**

After the dust settles and the apocalypse runs its course, art will still persist in the wake of insanity. Society may crumble, but music endures and even thrives. The Acacia Strain document this deconstruction from the front row. The metal institution—Vincent Bennett [vocals], Kevin Boutot [drums], Devin Shidaker [guitar], Griffin Landa [bass], and Tom *“The Hammer”* Smith, Jr. [guitar]—survey humanity’s fate with seasick grooves, thrash precision, doom vulnerability, and vocal convulsions in 2020 throughout a series of five digital and physical two-song seven-inches. These releases ultimately comprise their eighth full-length offering, *Slow Decay* [Rise Records].

Unveiled in three-week increments, the music and the rollout itself adhere to a calculated vision.

“The whole concept is reality breaking down around us,” explains Vincent. “We’ve done our time on earth, broken through the boundaries of what reality actually is, and we’re now witnessing our collective descent into madness. Lyrically and sonically, everything reflects that. You’re getting the vision piece by piece. The whole theme is a slow dive. By the same token, it organically becomes one record instead of just one big push out of the gate. As soon as you think you’re getting the hang of it, we throw out a wrench with the full-length. There’s no evidence to suggest we’re aren’t actually in a living hell. The things happening around us could be out of a comic book or a movie. The idea is, *‘This can’t be real’*. Maybe something happened. Maybe we’re all dead and we don’t even know it. Maybe we’re just living in some augmented reality hellscape of actual planet earth.”

Founded in 2001, such ponderousness always crept between the cracks of the band’s menacing maelstrom of metal and hardcore. As such, they engendered diehard fandom within a cult audience and put up unprecedented numbers for an extreme act. The 2010 opus *Wormwood* spawned standouts “Beast” [3.8 million Spotify streams] and “The Hills Have Eyes” [1.4 million Spotify streams]. Meanwhile, 2014’s *Coma Witch* staked out a spot in the Top 35 of the *Billboard* Top 200. In 2017, *Gravebloom* soared to the Top 5 of the *Billboard* US Independent Albums Chart and yielded “Worthless,” which exceeded 1.7 million Spotify streams to date. Along the way, they toured with the likes of Architects UK, Hatebreed, and Crowbar in addition to selling out countless headline gigs.

Capping off 2019, they surprised fans everywhere with the seven-song conceptual EP, *It Comes In Waves*. Not only did it tally 1 million total streams in less than a month, but it engendered some of the best reviews of the group’s career. In a 9-out-of-10 star review, *Metal Injection* claimed, *“It’s 30 minutes of doom, death metal, atmosphere, and storytelling that is hands down the best thing they’ve ever done*,*”* and *Decibel* dubbed it, *“the most interesting and varied record of The Acacia Strain’s nearly-twenty-year career*.*”*

With *It Comes In Waves* as a launchpad,they ramped up this momentum in 2020.

“We fully experimented on *It Comes In Waves*,” Vincent continues. “It made us grow musically. When we got back in the studio, we didn’t follow a typical formula. We integrated the sound of *It Comes In Waves* into what we normally would’ve done. *Slow Decay* is a culmination of everything that The Acacia Strain is mashed into twelve solid songs.”

Throughout September 2019, The Acacia Strain recorded at Griffin’s studio alongside producer Randy LeBoeuf [Kublai Khan, Left Behind] in Des Moines, IA. Even though they tracked drums at the same spot for *It Comes In Waves*, it marked the first time they cut a whole record in Iowa and worked with Randy. Additionally, they expanded the soundscapes with wooden frog and other *“weird percussion instruments*.*”*

As a whole, they also perfected their patented approach.

“We were able to write emotional doom songs,” states Vincent. “We’re trying to evolve, and we hope people evolve with us.”

They introduced this chapter with the seven-inch *D* in February. “Feed A Pigeon Breed A Rat” slips from an ominous ticking into a crushing chug as the vocalist screams, *“It feels like hell*.*”* Meanwhile, the accompanying “Seeing God” [feat. Aaron Heard of Jesus Piece & Nothing] teeters between a gnashing riff and guttural growls.

“These two tracks bridge the gap,” he goes on. “*‘Feed A Pigeon Breed A Rat’* is about how certain parts of society are just ignorant to the norm. Sometimes, you have to follow the rules in order to survive though. *‘Seeing God’* is the beginning of the explanation of what’s to come. It’s a style of death metal we’ve hoped to do for a long time. We’ve also wanted to showcase guest vocalists, and Aaron killed it.”

In March, the *E* seven-inch touts “Solace and Serenity” and “The Lucid Dream” [feat. Jess Nyx]. According to Vincent, *“Those two songs plunge you deeper into this world*.*”* April’s *C* seven-inch boasts his two personal favorites: “Crossgates” and “I Breathed in the smoke deeply it tasted like death and I Smiled” [feat. Zach Hatfield of Left Behind].The latter hinges on a hulking beat as it builds towards a hypnotic and haunting refrain warped and wrapped in a delicate doom-scape.

“It’s about a very emotional time in my life,” admits Vincent. “I recorded it last, so I could make sure I was emotionally available to record it. The time didn’t break me, but what I was going through shines through.”

During May, *A* unleashed “Inverted Person” and “Chhinnamasta” as June’s *Y* delivered “One Thousand Painful Stings [feat. Courtney LaPlante of Spiritbox & iwrestledabearonce] and the finale “EARTH WILL BECOME DEATH.” LaPlante’s inclusion widened the scope yet again.

“Courtney’s got a beautiful voice,” the singer affirms. “What she did really blew us away, and it added another dimension.”

These seven-inches ultimately form on *Slow Decay* and a statement for The Acacia Strain.

“I want people to know we’re still here,” Vincent leaves off. “2021 will be 20 years of The Acacia Strain. We’re still making music, growing, doing new things, and encourage others to do the same. We want everyone to be more creative and aware of the way they do things. It’s art after all. There’s more out there than what’s in front of our faces. I’ve been doing this since I was 19. The band is my life; I’m going to keep pushing.”