WAGE WAR

Deadweight

(FEARLESS)

If you think that you've already heard it all when it comes to heavy music, you just haven't heard Wage War. The group -- which is composed of vocalist Briton Bond, guitarist/vocalist Cody Quistad, guitarist Seth Blake, bassist Chris Gaylord and drummer Stephen Kluesener -- formed in Ocala, Florida, in 2013 and instantly started playing all over the area, quickly getting signed to Fearless Records the old fashioned way: By sending a song to the label. From there the group linked up with the production team of Andrew Wade (Neck Deep, Motionless In White) and A Day To Remember vocalist Jeremy McKinnon who produced their 2015 debut *Blueprints* together and returned to produce the sophomore full-length *Deadweight*, which the band started writing immediately after they finished their debut.

"I'm very proud of *Blueprints* but a lot of those songs were written seven years ago so who we are as people and musicians these days is drastically different," Quistad explains -- and a listen to *Deadweight* confirms that statement. "I think a big strength of this new record is the continuity of sitting in a room together and playing instead of trying to send files back and forth," he continues. "We were truly grinding out songs and I think this album still sounds like Wage War but at the same it has some of our most melodic moments as well as some of the heaviest." The latter is evidenced on songs like "Stitch" which is certain to incite frenzied mosh pits for years to come and displays an aggression that the band have only hinted at in the past.

"We really tried to not overthink things on this record and just do whatever worked for the song, even if it was something that people might not necessarily expect," Quistad says. For this reason the band decided it made sense to enlist the aforementioned producers who truly understood Wage War on a deep level. "There were so many early mornings and late nights making this record and it was such a pleasure to work with Andrew and Jeremy again because you could tell that they really cared about it and would go to any ends to make it the best that it could be." From the explosive production to the alternately screamed and sung vocals of "Don't Let Me Fade Away," all seven of the people involved in the making of *TBA* worked as one unit in working toward the same collective goal.

Lyrically, *Deadweight* sees the band exploring both personal to political issues in a way that's as raw and honest as the music that supports them. "This record is very much a snapshot of the past year; we are all very positive people but in 2016 we went through so much from seeing the world for the first time to scraping the bottom at some point emotionally or with relationships," Quistad admits. From 3 a.m. run-ins with refugees in Europe to flying home only to be confronted with the aftermath of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, there was no shortage of content to draw from this time around. "We didn't hold anything back when it came to this record, so hopefully it's as therapeutic for listeners as it was for us."

In a heavy music scene that's increasingly formulaic, Wage War pride themselves on the fact that they listen to a diverse range of music. "I'm a big fan of country music which surprises a lot of people and other guitarist Seth is really into pop music," Quistad explains. "We have an appreciation for all kinds of stuff and I think that all of it bleeds into the album in some way even if it's not always blatant." Take the song "Johnny Cash" which recalls the country tradition of paying homage to a pioneer of a genre while still retaining the heaviness of the act. "We get called metalcore a lot but we've never pledged allegiance to any genre because we always want to do something beyond that in the sense that we just listen to what we love and try to incorporate that into Wage War."

More than anything though, the band can't wait to get back on the road and start playing the songs from *Deadweight* live. "We played three hometown shows at the end of last year where we would include a new song and it was so cool to see the crowd react to the new material," Quistad says – and it's obvious that palpable excitement goes both ways. "This album is the truest representation of Wage War in the sense that we wanted to put every part of us under the microscope and come up with something that we're not only proud of but also encompasses what we want to be as a band and the kind of musical statement we want to lay down," he summarizes. "I would say this is a defining album for our band."