

SONDER

*“Your life is written in indelible ink. There's no going back to erase the past, tweak your mistakes, or fill in missed opportunities. When the moment's over, your fate is sealed. But if you look closer, you notice the ink never really dries on any of our experiences. They can change their meaning the longer you look at them…”* – John Koenig

The world is changing. As a species, we’ve never been more conscious of who we are or where we are going – our minds circling with questions that are no longer exclusive to the more philosophical among us. It’s a revelation that inspired much behind **TesseracT**’s latest full-length, ***Sonder***. The UK-based progressive metal pioneers, who were instrumental in paving a new wave of exciting and heavy sounds the world over, purposefully chose a title that had no orthodox meaning whatsoever. When you think about it, this is something that marries perfectly with their non-conformist approach to music…

“I stumbled across the word ‘***Sonder***’ a few years ago,” reveals singer Dan Tompkins. “I assumed it was an actual word taken from the dictionary. When I was thinking over the concept and titles for the album, I looked the word up in the dictionary but couldn’t find it anywhere. Lo and behold it was coined by a wonderful writer that was beautifully putting into words, the thoughts and feelings that nobody had officially considered, it seems.”

The writer in question, John Koenig, is someone who has been at the forefront of reimagining how we communicate, much like **TesseracT** have been doing through sound. Author of ***The Dictionary Of Obscure Sorrows***, he created his own terms based on research on etymologies and meanings of used prefixes, suffixes and word roots, ultimately filling in the linguistic gaps we never realised were there…

“The word ‘***Sonder***’ is a name given to the seemingly ineffable emotions we experience when realising that each of us are simultaneously living vivid and complex lives,” continues Dan. “Everyone has a story, a unique story that is shaped and created within a plethora of emotion. This realisation, or rather perspective, can leave us conscience-stricken with regards to any sense of self-importance, and render us insignificant to the world and people that we’re surrounded by. There has been a huge generational shift in technological advances compared to when all of us in **TesseracT** were children – disconnection from each other can only be a bad thing in my eyes, the art of communication is more important than ever. In a volatile, aggressive and ignorant world, maybe it’s this very perspective that is missing and much needed: these are the notions of ***Sonder***. Very deep to say the least…”

The eight tracks that make the tech-metal quintet’s fourth album could very well be their best yet, expanding on parallel contemplations within their musical philosophies. The notion carries far indeed – we live in an age where many artists are only too happy to settle for the old words and **TesseracT** sit within a select few actively seeking new ones. This time round, however, things are more streamlined than in the past – amidst all of the dreamy atmospherics and sumptuous reverie is a new sense of urgency. From the bending grooves of opener ***Luminary*** to ***The Arrow***’s concluding reversed samples, clocking in at 37 minutes in total, here is a band that never sounded so honest and direct…

“Whilst we do have lofty ideals, **TesseracT** has always been a project that is chasing its own momentum,” offers bassist/backing vocalist Amos Williams. “The cohesive vibe stems more from the short time period in which the album was produced by Acle [Kahney, guitars] rather than any conscious effort. It’s no secret that the majority of **TesseracT’s** general output has always been from Acle. This put a lot of pressure on him, so this time around we had a wealth of ideas shared in an online vault and started building tracks out of these sketches. I would also argue that we nearly always absorb the attitude of the bands that we tour with in the lead up to a new album session. More recently it’s been Megadeth and Meshuggah, so maybe read into that what you will, but there was definitely a refreshment in our musical and sonic reference points.”

As the bassist explains, the band were very hands-on with the overall creative process – himself overseeing the artwork, their guitarist handling the mastering and various members of the band getting stuck in with the engineering that took place at their own 4D and Celestial Sound studios. The methodology has served them well thus far – allowing the musicians to keep their art as pure as can be, without being watered down or infiltrated by outside influences…

“This started out as a necessity but has developed further down the line into something that actually defines our sound and look,” continues Amos. “I guess we are a collection of inspired people, who also can’t sit still. Have to keep moving and have to keep learning. Douglas Castro from the preamp manufacturer Darkglass recently asked a question online: Who inspires you? My answer was simple: perpetual people. Those of us that keep learning, changing our minds based upon new knowledge, unafraid to head out into the storm. My own personal goal is to be one of these perpetual persons, and I would hope that shows in my work with **TesseracT**.”

For **TesseracT**, the future is looking bright indeed. The quintet has arguably become the UK’s biggest metal proposition since Bring Me The Horizon and thanks to the digital world that helped them spawn a movement along with American comrades Periphery, it’s a status that speaks on a global level. From performing to massive crowds in India to making history as the first band to play on top of an igloo village in the Arctic Circle – it seems no place is off-limits for the five members. Where many artists struggle for recognition outside of their home territories, **TesseracT** could very well be the opposite extreme – sometimes even *bigger* in cities thousands of miles away from the one they call home…

“As touring artists we’ve been lucky enough to travel the world, meeting new people at every turn and experiencing many different cultures and traditions,” explains Dan. “This brings with it a greater sense of perspective on how we view the world at large. As a group of individuals within **TesseracT** we are all very different people with varying views on philosophy, politics, science, faith, religion and world affairs but at the centre of it all we are peaceful, respectful and creative individuals that are not necessarily held back by the ‘normalities’ of life. The concept of ***Sonder*** is something we can all relate to; the realisation that we are all playing a part in a greater story – musically as well as conceptually. It includes elements from all three-previous full-lengths – the harsh abrasiveness of ***One***, the ethereal elements of ***Altered State*** and the accessibility of ***Polaris*** all moulded into a hybrid **TesseracT** sound.”

The singer pauses for a moment before letting us further inside his head. He articulates his thoughts with a strikingly grounded level of determination – one where the pursuit of their dreams, and unrivalled success in doing so, doesn’t distract from the bigger picture…

“I feel there is a depth to our music that resonates with people,” he shrugs, when asked about their invitation to headline one of Download Festival’s stages this summer – a luxury very rarely afforded to homegrown talent.

“It’s something that *isn’t* immediately accessible or identifiable but rather something that simply grows with time,” adds Dan. “And that can also be said for **TesseracT**’s growth as a band. We have worked constantly on improving all areas of the project and with that we’ve seen steady growth in our fanbase as we’ve continued to tour. We are definitely not a ‘flash in the pan’ overnight success, we are absolutely working towards a long-term goal.”

The only outside influence helping them realise that long-term goal this time round was long-serving front of house engineer Aidan O’Brien – arguably the only person that understands the key to **TesseracT**’s intricate yet monolithic wall of noise outside of its five members. It was a collaboration not to be taken lightly, reveals the sound maverick…

“The biggest challenge is probably living up to their reputation,” he reveals. “Totally separate from working with them, they’re one of my favourite bands – so it can be a little intimidating submitting a song idea or adding arrangement ideas to something someone else has written, knowing it might end up on the album and shape what **TesseracT** is to people. I was constantly aware of not wanting to drop the ball and screw up a great song, so I had to try and set my own standards pretty high!”

The band and engineer can rest assured the standards were most certainly kept and then raised for good measure. The burning question of who will replace the likes of Metallica or Iron Maiden and headline the biggest celebrations of rock music once they retire is one that has long weighed heavy, but finally it feels like there is an answer. Make no mistake – with a world tour beginning in North American in Spring – 2018 will be remembered as the year that belonged to **TesseracT**.