

Seether Bio

Shaun Morgan is a changed man. For the front man/guitarist and principal songwriter in hard rock frontrunners Seether, a new outlook on life and music has resulted in *Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces* (Wind-up). Easily the South Africa-bred, L.A.-based hard rock band's strongest and most innovative studio offering yet, Morgan and his bandmates – drummer John Humphrey and bassist Dale Stewart – have delivered a succinct album built from twelve superlative songs.

Cherry-picked from the sixty tunes Morgan brought to the band and producer Howard Benson (My Chemical Romance, Three Days Grace), the concise end-product affirms Seether is boldly inventive and on their A-game. With no fewer than five potential singles, “Fake It” – the infectious hard rock smash that launches the disc – is front and center. Taking aim at the plastic people that share the Los Angeles landscape with Morgan in his adopted hometown, the track was built around a swing drumbeat and is driven by a surging, inescapable riff.

Ironically, Shaun never expected the song to be a single, and says it almost didn't make the record. “I originally wrote it as a joke,” the Johannesburg-area native admits. “But there was something I found endearing about the song. And the more we all started to listen to it, the more we realized it had to be the first song off of the record. And I like it because it's got a different kind of feel to it. It's a catchy song, but in a good way.”

“We wanted to create songs that are a little different,” Morgan continues. “At the same time, there is nothing on this album that would make people go, ‘Whoa. I can't tell who this band is.’ They can't say we're doing something too dissimilar. If fans are concerned that we've gone all pop, I assure you we haven't. It's not like “Fake It” is a complete departure from what we've done before.”

What Seether has done since 2002 – when it released its U.S. debut *Disclaimer* – is capture the attention of music fans across the globe with its epic riffs, thunderous rhythms and conscience-invading choruses. Certified gold the first time out by the RIAA on the strength of radio favorites like “Fine Again” and “Gasoline,” a reworked version of that album (known as *Disclaimer II*) went platinum when a new rendition of the ballad “Broken” which became a Top 20 pop hit.

Seether's success carried forward with 2005's *Karma and Effect*, which debuted at 8, going platinum and boasting hits like “Truth,” “The Gift” and “Remedy.” Although the latter topped the Billboard Mainstream Rock Chart for eight consecutive weeks), it was a considerably darker effort than its predecessor(s). “That album was really dim and really heavy and acerbic because we were trying to get away from the ‘Broken’ connection,” Morgan admits. “We wanted to take back our identity.”

This time out, there's still plenty of heavy rock music to be found. For starters, *Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces* hosts the cathartic, scream-driven “Fallen” and the vitriolic, angst-laden seven minute “No Jesus Christ.” But Morgan admits, “I wanted to write songs that were more melodic this time around,” he continues. “I've always loved the Beatles and I've loved pop music – which is, by definition, music that you can remember and whistle or sing along to.”

“We wanted to experiment. And because it was just the three of us [guitarist Pat Callahan exited in 2006] there were fewer minds involved to stymie or halt the whole process. I didn't always feel the need to scream as I might have in the past and I felt like I could use sitars if I wanted. And I felt like I could explore as much of the melodic side of myself as I wanted while staying true to what Seether has always been about.”

The most evident example comes with “Rise Above This,” an enduring song Morgan wrote about his brother Eugene in advance of his tragic death this past August. With it, Seether sounds unexpectedly and ironically optimistic, unveiling a bona fide crossover smash-in-waiting that should throw fans for a loop in a good way.

“I used to think more about what the fans thought, but ultimately I wound up stunting myself creatively,” Morgan explains. “The point of being a musician and writing music and being in a band is that I can write an optimistic-feeling, accessible song if I want. Even though it wasn't written about an optimistic experience, I opted to see a positive in the situation. Rather than my usual reaction, which would be to get all piss-y and moan-y about it.”

Bolstered by that creative freedom, Seether is armed with a bevy of potential chart contenders. From the highly-charged roar of “Like Suicide” to the soaring, reflective drive of “Breakdown,” the men in Seether attribute much of the vibe on *Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces* to the project's producer.

“I love working with Howard Benson,” Seether's brainchild exclaims. “He's amazing at what he does. It's the first time in my life that I allowed myself to trust a producer. In the past, we've had some that seemed to have an ulterior motive, whereas with Howard he'd tell me what his motive was at the outset. He's an honest guy from Philadelphia. When he takes the raw material away and he comes back with it and it's polished, I almost always think he's done an amazing job. Of course the songs start with me. But it's very much teamwork. And he can bring a song to a different place.”

If much of Shaun Morgan's outlook and approach to his song craft has become lucid after his August 2006 rehab stint, he admits he's still just a man with primal urges. Hence “FMLYHM,” an abbreviation for the chorus to what is clearly *Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces* most animalistic (and amusing) track. It's a tune both men and women alike can identify with, even if its salty language sabotages any chance to hear it on the airwaves. “With “Fuck Me Like You Hate Me,” Morgan explains, “I was allowing myself to be a male and at every point in a man's life, I'm sure that idea comes to him. I just thought it was a funny thing to say. It's obviously not one of the higher brow songs on the record. But I think it belongs there, if only to remind me not to take myself too seriously.”

From a sonic standpoint, “Walk Away From The Sun” is equally ballsy and unconventional. With its unique acoustic introduction matched by a drum machine, the song is distinctive but still resides with the boundaries of what Seether can be. Morgan says he has had the music for the disc's finale for five or six years. “I never got around to finishing it,” he confesses. “That was one of the songs that I finished in rehab. And when I came out it sort of fell into place. Everything just worked. And John came to me and said, ‘Man that sounds really grown up.’”

To which Morgan explains the significance of *Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces*. “At some point in my life I decided to see the good in the bad,” he admits. “I was driving home from the studio one day and the title hit me. It's an ambiguous art euphemism. Growing up I was told the negative space in art is as important as what the objects are. But it has a double-sided meaning. Kind of like, I lost my leg but I still have another one. Or, my girlfriend left me and took all the furniture, but I still have my guitar and a mattress.”

As for his ultimate goal with Seether's third studio disc for Wind-up, Morgan concludes, “I wanted it to be as powerful as one of those live albums, with nine singles on it. And that's a product of condensing sixty tunes down to ten. And then we worked extremely hard on those ten to make them really good songs. I wanted to have an album that was that powerful, something that I was really proud of from start to finish.”

Mission accomplished.