

rock on the rise

The members of Zero Hour gaze optimistically into a future filled with solos. Lots and lots of solos.



ZERO HOUR Prog-Metal That'll Keep You Awake

Story: Bear Frazer

Everyone has the occasional weird dream, but thinking about murdering someone in your sleep is exceptionally disturbing, and that happens to be the preface to Zero Hour's fifth studio album, *Dark Deceiver*. On the extreme title track, the Pleasanton, CA-based quartet narrates a tale of a sinister nightmare accidentally becoming a catastrophic reality.

"It's about a guy who goes into a dream state and as he falls asleep, he has a nightmare about killing his girlfriend," explains Jasun Tipton, the group's keyboardist and guitarist. "As he wakes up, he sees she's next to him and she's covered in blood, and he actually did kill her. His brain just faded out and went to the other side – the dark side."

Although the beginning of *Dark Deceiver* appears a tad sinister, the four-piece (also including Jasun's broth-

er Troy on bass, drummer Mike Guy and vocalist Chris Salinas) sprinkles in empowering messages throughout the disc, culminating at the very end. "There is inner spirit, resurrection, and the power to believe is very uplifting," Jasun admits.

That positive outlook has kept Zero Hour going for the past 15 years. Originally formed in 1993 by the Tipton brothers and Mike Guy, singer Erik Rosvold was added to the lineup three years later and shaped the band's 1999 self-titled debut and their sophomore set, 2001's *Towers Of Avarice*.

The progressive metal outfit achieved some independent success, but turmoil soon followed. "We had our good moments, with *Towers* doing great, but a year later, a lot of chaos was happening in our personal lives," says Jasun Tipton. "We actually tracked all the music for *Fragile Mind* in 2002, but when it came time to do the vocals, we were waiting on Erik for a long time. It came to a point where we lost communication."

Unfortunately, Rosvold's mother lost a battle with leukemia, and he wasn't mentally ready to continue with the band. Though Fred Marshall took on vocal duties for the group's third full-

length release, Chris Salinas would become the permanent frontman in 2005. One year later, he made his studio debut on their fourth album, *Specs Of Pictures Burnt Beyond*.

Now, Zero Hour carries their music even further forward on *Dark Deceiver*, which is a prog-metal carnival ride, loaded with spiraling guitar melodies, intricate harmonies and surprising riffs. Although songs like "Lies" and the inspirational "Resurrection" could be embraced by radio, the quartet frequently opts for lengthier exploration, most notably on "Inner Spirit," a 12-minute epic featuring stellar musicianship, with thumping basslines and solos galore.

While longer compositions like this could easily turn away today's generation of ADD metalheads, Jasun Tipton believes music aficionados are craving those type of records. "I think people are starting to dig that now. I think they're listening to the music more," he says. "Of course there are some people who will want nothing to do with it, but the listeners out there now are digging it. They want to hear more music." Who knows? Maybe they even want to hear songs about murdering people in their sleep. ☘