



# GREAT GNASHING Of Tooth

2015 MARKED A GREAT DEAL OF PERSONAL AND INNER  
TORMENT FOR **BEARTOOTH** MAINMAN CALEB SHOMO.  
SO WHAT DID HE DO WITH ALL OF THAT ANGST AND RESOLUTION  
HE MADE ONE OF THE YEAR'S HEAVIEST RECORDS.

INTERVIEW: Taylor Markarian

**"It's really getting old writing negative songs,"** Beartooth vocalist Caleb Shomo sings on "Burnout," the fifth track off the band's new record, *Aggressive*. Of course, no one can be positive 100 percent of the time and certainly not in the heavier music genres, it seems. But the second Beartooth full-length sees Shomo in a brighter, freer state of mind. It's been a crazy ride for the multitasking frontman, who came up through the scene as electronic programmer-turned-vocalist for noted metalcore act Attack! Attack! before breaking away and starting Beartooth. The follow-up to their 2014 debut *Disgusting* finds Shomo steadfastly refusing to chill out after achieving more than a few personal breakthroughs. So why is he so angry?

Where does the new album's title come from?

**CALEB SHOMO:** The reason it's called *Aggressive* is because I'm pretty violently angry about how I wasted six years of my life to depression and anxiety. A lot of the themes in the album *Disgusting* and that writing process [were] pretty awful. Life's been very good lately, so it's really frustrating that I had such a hard time making [that] first album and that I had a really awful time with life for a while. So [*Aggressive*] is just me being really pissed off about it.

The new record is still heavy like *Disgusting*, but it does sound a lot more positive and uplifting. You said you're in a better headspace: What marked that transition for you?

Probably the touring cycle. The last two years of touring on *Disgusting* really helped turn my mental state around. People received the first album well—which was cool—and the fact it was something so personal but people took good things from it, that really kind of helped me see there's no point in me just being stuck in a depressing rut. I have a lot of stuff to be far and a lot of better songs to write.

You started your music career so young. How did growing up in that environment influence your mental health?

It wasn't the music or that environment necessarily; it was just a lot of people I was around, a lot of situations I was thrown into at a young age surrounding the music scene and watching a lot of people involved in music become angry for the wrong things and lose the reason they started making music. For me, that just was a huge bummer and shut me off for a while. But at the same time, I am so glad I was able to go through all that stuff at a young age because now I know what I wanna do with music. I know what *not* to do with my music, and it helps me keep my head on straight.

Do you have a favorite track off the new record?

I guess my favorite song right now is probably "Hated." I just like that the dynamic's a little musically different. There's a lot more singing involved in that song and that was a deliberate choice I made for that track. I just wanted to see if I could still really get the point across without yelling so much, and I think it worked out really well. Honestly, to me this album feels

way more pissed off than the first record. The first record was very self-deprecating, but this record—even though there's a bit more and some of the songs are a bit lighter—all the content of this album is way more pissed off. Even though it's a bit more hopeful, to me it's a more intense record.

What would you say to someone who is currently suffering from any of the kinds of things that you've had to go through?

I would say that life gets better, but [for it to get better], you have to have a choice for yourself to get the things out of your life that are holding you down. And it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort but at the same time, it's always worth it. And you're never stuck in the rut that you're in. Honestly, we are the only people that hold ourselves back, and we have to violently push forward through life to get it where you want to be. And when things like depression and anxiety are holding you back, there's usually a root source of that, and you just have to find that and cut it off. Start trying to make decisions based on what's going to make you happier that day and what's gonna make your life better.

So many people don't know how to come to terms with their pain, but that sounds like what this record is trying to do.

Yeah, that's *absolutely* what this record is. It covers topics from childhood to even current events and a lot of that is just me coming to terms. I don't need to feel that way anymore. I held myself back with a lot of things, and it really, really pissed me off. So I wrote an album that's just me.

Both this record and *Disgusting* end with tracks that are as heavy as anything you can get. On the previous record, it was "Sick And Disgusting." On *Aggressive*, it's "King Of Anything." Why do you like that approach to ending Beartooth records?

Out of the gate, that's what Beartooth was supposed to be. "Sick And Disgusting" was supposed to be—*is* supposed to be. Me expressing my most honest, raw form I can get to.

Honestly, on *Aggressive*, I didn't even expect "King Of Anything" to be a track on the record. That was one of the last songs written for the album. I wrote that with John Feldmann and before I worked with him, I wrote that with [producer] David Bendeth, and we were just having a conversation and was thinking with all this intensity on the album, maybe it could use a little to let it breathe for a second; strip you down to a more personal level. I really think that that was something I wanted to do, but I was thinking about it and Feldman said the same thing. So I said, "Alright, let's go with it." But before then, we were just sitting there and I was writing a really out-of-tune riff on guitar. Feldmann recorded it and we just started writing lyrics and it turned out really cool. "Sick And Disgusting" for *Disgusting* sense, just because that album is so sad, self-deprecating and nihilistic. But at the same time, "King Of Anything" [and] the way it ends, I think [makes it] a bit more easy to listen to and a bit more relatable. It's still probably the most personal song on the record for me because it's such an intense subject matter.

“Honestly, we are the only people who hold ourselves back, and you just have to violently push forward through life to get it where you want it to be.”

—Caleb Shomo

It makes the listener feel like they know you, more than something polished would have.

Yeah, I always want that to be a thing with people. Just because of some of my anxieties with meeting a bunch of people and having conversations, it's way easier for me to express myself in a song. I do want people to know me for who I am, and I want people to understand that Beartooth are supposed to be a tangible thing. In no way are we one of those bands that want to seem like we're on some level you can't reach. That's the complete opposite of what we are. We're just normal people and I'm just a dude who writes music that I feel. If you can relate to that, then that's amazing. I would never want Beartooth to be something that feels like you can't relate to it or you can't understand what I'm saying or you feel like it's something you can't grasp.

f t BEARTOOTHBAND



What do you think is the biggest misconception about hardcore and aggressive music in general?

I think a big misconception for a lot of people is that it has no purpose and that people are just trying to do it to be violent. The reason I do it is it's a really healthy outlet for me to express myself and I feel comfortable doing it. With this type of subject matter, I wouldn't just want to sit down with an acoustic [guitar] and write about all this crazy, pissed-off stuff. It just wouldn't feel right. But crazy loud guitars and fast drums and yelling about it and singing at the top of my lungs just felt like the way that it should be. I think that's how it is with most intense bands: They have something to say or they're just trying to express themselves in the way that they see fit. And a lot of people are really pissed off. A way a lot of people express their anger is through this type of music and I think that's a really healthy way to do it. alt

# Beartooth

