

MEET THE BAND
 OPENING FOR SHINEDOWN
 AFTER RELEASING ONLY AN EP...

AS LIONS

STORY: TAYLOR MARKARIAN PHOTO: JOHN MCMURTRIE

LONDON, UK **SELFISH AGE**

(ELEVEN SEVEN; elevensevenmusic.com)

WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW 'EM: Their debut record sounds like they've already been at the top of the rock 'n' roll game for years. As Lions have a sound that could fill stadiums—and they're just getting started.

ONE LISTEN TO U.K.-BASED BAND As Lions is all it takes to understand that it's a more-than-fitting moniker for the five-piece. Their brand of rock can be described in one word: *big*. Their debut LP on Eleven Seven Music, *Selfish Age*, roars with the confidence of longtime professionals from beginning to end.

"We love to do things big," insists vocalist Austin Dickinson. "We love to do things cinematically and atmospherically. A lot of it was just taking a second to consider the possibilities. Obviously, in a lot of rock bands, you've got two guitars, bass, drums and vocals, and it could be sort of straightforward. It was really us considering what different instruments we could use, what sorts of electronics we could incorporate to really flesh out the emotions of the songs. It's [about] composing more."

Prior to this full-length, the band had only released their debut EP, *Aftermath*. With those four songs, they were able to attract some major attention and establish the backbone of what would become *Selfish Age*. The band—Dickinson, guitarists Conor O'Keefe and Will Homer, bassist Stefan Whiting and drummer Dave Fee—found themselves on a huge tour with Shinedown and Five Finger Death Punch. Yet Dickinson remains incredibly humble and centered.

"Selfish Age,' for me," he says of the LP's title track, "was about

the idea of relentless consumerism; taking things you don't want and don't need to feel some semblance of wholeness or completeness. I feel like we are a consumer-driven culture and the world is spinning on a very, very selfish axis these days. We're moving away from togetherness in a very terrifying and rapid manner. And that scares the living shit out of me, because I think that human beings have got so much more in common with each other than they'd like to think."

Being half-English and half-American, Dickinson finds himself affected by both Brexit in the U.K. and the recent Trump victory in the U.S. Speaking with AP just days after the presidential election that sent shockwaves throughout the world and sparked riots and protests in virtually every major American city, Dickinson's reflections on his band's new record could not be timelier. "Being out here and noticing the difference of everyone on the tour," he says, "the mood just crashed right after. It's like a complete funeral. Everyone's just completely shocked by it. It's a very sad state of affairs, but there's always a way through it. Whether we like it or not, we've got the prick for the next four years. It's not about who you voted for [anymore], it really is about coming together and coalescing as people and moving forward. It's scary, but I think that is the saving grace that we have."

Even though As Lions spend a lot of time focusing on how selfish this world has gotten, it's not all negative. They always make sure to put a positive message forward in the end. Consider the song "White Flags," which was also on the band's EP. White flags, of course, are traditionally a symbol of surrender. "We sort of rechristened it as something about keeping faith and having hope," Dickinson says. "Really, we want this music to bring people together. We are all so very, very alike, but the way that the world is moving, there are divides being put up everywhere. So, *Selfish Age* to me is a very poignant title."

While the future looks uncertain and turbulent in the grand scheme of things, the future for As Lions looks promising. The band can't reveal specifics yet, but they are solidly booked from now through the summer. "The plan is to just go everywhere," Dickinson says excitedly. "Wherever is willing to put up with our general nonsense of us making a nuisance of ourselves, we'll show up and have a good time!"



L-R: WHITING, O'KEEFE, DICKINSON, FEE, HOMER

**YOU LIKE? YOU'LL LIKE:
OF MICE & MEN
COVER YOUR TRACKS
BRING ME THE HORIZON**



“
WE ARE ALL SO VERY ALIKE,
BUT THE WAY THAT THE
WORLD IS MOVING,
**THERE ARE
DIVIDES
BEING
PUT UP
EVERYWHERE**

”
**WHAT RECORD
HAS HAD THE
MOST
INFLUENCE
ON YOU?**



**“The End Of
Heartache by
Killswitch Engage,”**
says Austin Dickinson.
“That was possibly the
first time I had heard
something so heavy
but at the same time
so vibrantly melodic. It
was a marriage of all
of the different things
that I loved that I had
never really heard
put together before.
The theatrics and the
extremity of it mixed in
with the sheer beauty
and melody of the
guitars and the vocals
just really caught
my ear when I was
younger.”

f t **ASLIONS BAND**