

LETLIVE COULD BE THE MOST EXCITING NAME IN THE WORLD OF POST-HARDCORE RIGHT NOW. FRONTMAN JASON AALON TELLS US THEY'RE JUST GETTING STARTED...

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**T**he world needs a hero is a lot more than a snappy saying and a mediocre Megadeth album. It's a battlecry for what we as fans want from our musicians and, for the first time since the nu metal days, there are an abundance of characters all capable of adorning your walls and filling these column inches with something worthwhile. Whether it's Chris Motionless, the shock rocker du jour; the Axl and Slash axis of Danny Worsnop and Ben Bruce of Asking Alexandria or the guts, courage and infectious enthusiasm of Of Mice & Men's Austin Carlile, these are just a handful of the blood-pumping, electrifying generation of young rock superstars. The number one guy that the UK rock media have gravitated towards, however, is Jason Aalon (née Butler) of LA post-hardcore trailblazers Letlive. You're probably sitting back and asking yourself, "What's so special about the bloke?" after an extreme introduction like that but the answer is as straightforward as it is complex: it's everything.

If you've yet to see him onstage, this is a man who is a Tasmanian Devil-esque hurricane of aggressive energy, whose antics have seen him launch monitors and what can only be described as a man-sized bin across the stage as well as being thrown off tours for his anarchic antics, only to be quickly reinstated, such is the buzz about the Letlive live show. His onstage inner monologues about his past, his illnesses and his mother's sexual past are some of the most deeply unsettling and, to be frank, uncomfortable things ever seen within the realm of live music; as psychologically unhinged as any of GG Allin's onstage madness.

**T**hat's Jason onstage. Offstage, he's intelligent to the point of making the smartest of us feel like someone who watches *The Only Way Is Essex*. He's charismatic, fiercely passionate about music and his own band and has that indescribable pizzazz that most rock'n'roll frontmen try pulling off but only the rarest of musicians carry with zero effort shown and zero fucks given. Sorry if that makes it sound like we want to put our tongue in his mouth but he's a charming motherfucker. All of which has added up to something that almost made people forget that his band had just come off of releasing the greatest post-hardcore album of this generation in the shape of *Fake History*. (Disclaimer: *The Blackest Beautiful* is just as mindblowing but we'll get to that). For a while now, it's felt a little like all people want to focus on is The Jason Aalon Show.

"It doesn't feel that way to me because I've never courted that side of things but I can see why someone from afar might think that," says Aalon with trademark humility. "It's not in my nature to make people focus solely on what I'm doing or to compete for attention. My life is about balance. I'm happy when I'm on tour and people say some really nice things to us but then I go home and people are dying and my relationships are breaking up. It doesn't feel like I'm someone special when that sort of thing goes on so I'm not about being on a pedestal even though I appreciate it. When it comes to the live show, it's a talking point for me because I'd like to meet that person I am onstage. I'm not that crazed, maniacal person for 97% of my life but I'm not in control when I go onto the stage and those things come out. It's as much a mystery to me what I'm doing as it is to anybody else because I feel like I don't know that person either."

There's a particularly poignant memory that stands out after the band destroyed The Lock-Up stage at Reading festival. As the band stood triumphant after playing the kind



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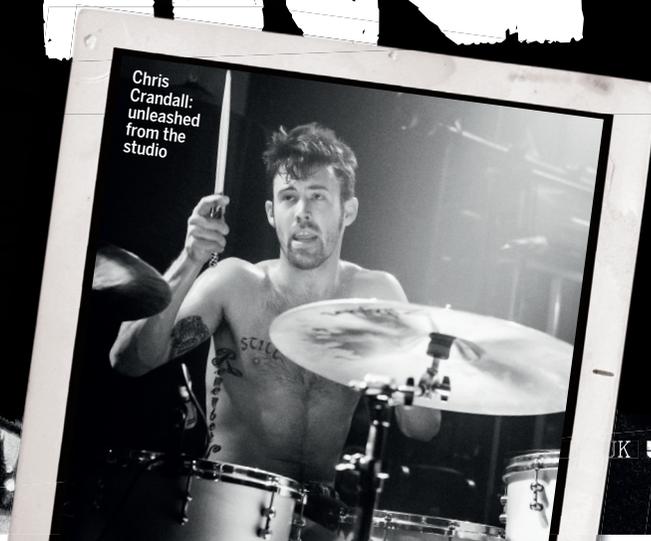
**"I'M NOT A CRAZED, MANIACAL PERSON FOR 97% OF MY LIFE BUT WHEN I GO ON STAGE THOSE THINGS COME OUT"**

**JASON ON THE SECRET TO HIS UNFORGETTABLE PERFORMANCES**



Letlive (left to right): Ryan Jay Johnson, Jason Aalon Butler, Chris Crandall (who played on the album but has since left), Jeffrey Sahyoun

# UPLATTTING NITY!



## LETLIVE

of rip-snorting show that makes you sprint in circlepits like you're Usain Bolt, the crowd were chanting Jason's name as well as his band's. Not a massive deal in the grand scheme of live occurrences, of course, but something that must have been a headfuck for a guy who'd gone from a skateboarding punk rock kid to having his name screamed at one of the world's most notorious festivals seemingly overnight.

"It's just people showing love for what we're doing," says Jason. "When *Letlive* were just a modicum of what we've become since *Fake History* first came out, it was always just about people paying attention to what we were doing. I'm a small part of something and all the parts moving together is what makes us something that people could take interest in."

When the eyes of the world are watching, things go one of two ways. People overthink things, sink into a sea of self-parody and sniff their own farts believing they don't reek and their music suffers or they rise up to the challenge and uppercut said challenge on the chin. The new *Letlive* record delivers a knockout blow just for a laugh. It's an expansive and challenging album that mixes the unpredictability of the most frantic and fevered punk rock, the musical dexterity and reckless abandon of razor-edged funk and wraps the package up with more heart and soul than you can shake an Aretha at. *The Blackest Beautiful* speaks for itself.

"Through changing drummers, recording vocals numerous times and pouring our souls into this album, we only started to feel pressure at the end of the process," says Jason of that infamous 'difficult follow-up album' adage. "But we gave ourselves to it completely and as a unit, so now we can stand back and be proud of this work. Pressure's replaced by excitement. If you're happy and proud with each other in your band, you can't help but feel like you've put together something worthwhile for others to digest and enjoy."

All of this love and hype may have you thinking that we're tipping *Letlive* to be the next big thing. The next Slipknot. The band to grab rock by the throat and hoist it into the limelight where it so richly deserves to be but that is not the case. Leave that to Avenged Sevenfold. A band as complex and confrontational as these Californian innovators are never going to be a band that you're going to see at the business end of Download or Reading and Leeds. Much in the way that Refused only melted the faces of a few in sweatbox venues all over the world in their heyday but, over time, have rightfully been heralded as one of the most seminal and important rock bands of the modern era and played to thousands of people on a reunion tour, *Letlive* feel like a band that are never going to shift a million units but will have millions of band form in their honour. Cult classic not best seller is a line that is fine with the members of the band.

"Success is defined and acknowledged by what people feel when they listen to your music," Jason reasons. "It's not about how many people it reaches but that it makes them feel something. If people believe that it's real and honest then it can reach as many people out there as possible but that's not our goal or mission or whatever. What's most important is that people recognise that what we're doing is authentic."

Perhaps the most endearing thing about this story is how the band are getting somewhere on their own terms. They put out a record to little acclaim outside of those in the know, Epitaph picked it up and gave it the push it needed and away they went. They could've pussied out and made an album for the masses and with a velvet-voiced vocalist at the helm; a commercially viable record is something they'd be able to sell like cheap pizza to people with crippling hangovers. Instead, they're doing things their way. The *Letlive* way.

"Whatever we write, from fast and heavy to something with a pop sensibility, it's always going to be *Letlive* because it has to be that way," eulogises Jason. "I get heart palpitations if I ever think about the end of *Letlive* but for as long as we are a band, we'll be doing what makes us excited about music and you just hope that people will feel the realness." ✪

**THE BLACKEST BEAUTIFUL IS OUT NOW VIA EPITAPH. LETLIVE TOUR THE UK IN OCTOBER**



Jason lies down on the job

## BRING ME A RECORD DEAL

JASON AALON ON HOW BMTH'S OLI SYKES GOT HIS BAND SIGNED.

### SO IS IT TRUE OLI SYKES HELPED GET YOU SIGNED TO EPITAPH?

"Apparently that's true, I've never been granted a good moment to ask him! In 2008, we got invited to play with Bring Me The Horizon when Confide couldn't play and it was in LA. The Ghost Inside were also on the tour, and they're really good friends of ours - I kinda grew up with their singer. So The Ghost Inside got us on the show, and I guess Oli and the guys were into what we were doing. Later on they checked the music out and apparently Oli told [Epitaph owner] Brett Gurewitz about *Letlive*, or at least that's what I was told by the people from Epitaph. So Brett checked it out and then Epitaph signed us. So I still need to say thank you to Oli for that!"

### AND ARE YOU A FAN OF BRING ME THE HORIZON?

"Yeah, we're big fans of them, too. People might think they're a band we're not really into, but I would like to dispel that belief - we actually really dig what they do and think they're great."

