



SUBTRACT

LESS IS MORE

"THE FIRST BAND I WAS IN HAD A RECORD OUT, AND AT THAT NAIVE TIME OF YOUR LIFE YOU THINK THERE'S OBVIOUSLY GOOD THINGS ON THE HORIZON, BUT REALITY KICKS IN — YOU'RE UP TO YOUR EYE BALLS IN DEBT, THE STYLE OF MUSIC YOU'RE PLAYING IS NOT ENTIRELY YOU, AND AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT'S JUST NOT RIGHT," SAYS HARVEY JACKSON, BASS PLAYER AND MOTIVATING FORCE BEHIND AUCKLAND HEAVY METAL BAND SUBTRACT,

"So I decided that if I ever did anything again, it would be a total no-compromise thing for people who totally shared the same vision."

With *Quench*, a half hour mini-album recorded at Auckland's York Street A and B studios, this ambition has finally been realised.

Self-financed and released on their own Ultrasound Recordings label (distributed by BMG), Subtract's debut is an intense and focussed blast of corrosive, soul-tearing late 90s metal, combining the precision of Helmet, the gut-wrenching kick of Machinehead, and the roar of Pantera.

But getting to this stage has been a combination of single-minded determination and hard work, that stemmed from a chance meeting. Disillusioned after his experiences with his previous band, Jackson had shifted his attention away from music when drummer Mark Rees (whom he'd previously met in Christchurch a couple of years earlier) moved to Auckland. Realising their musical ideas were on the same wavelength, they took advan-

tage of the opportunity presented and began putting Subtract together — something, Jackson says, that happened very quickly.

"We didn't even need to audition anyone. We met with Joel [Facon, vocals/guitar] and Nigel [Murphy, guitar], and we just understood where to go. Two years later, we're at this point."

Subtract spent a lot of that time behind the closed doors of the rehearsal room, writing, tightening and polishing songs to completion, rather than taking the more traditional path of trial and error public road-testing before working on a release.

"We consciously did it the other way around. We didn't want to spend two years trying to build up a following — we wanted to come out totally prepared, with the songs ready to go, and hit hard. I'd rather take the time to make sure it's done properly."

Subtract demonstrated their perfectionist tendencies even at the demo stage. Reeling in some favours, they borrowed a decent

desk to record in their practice space — the results of which came out so well they took them to York Street for mixing, and at one stage even considered using these versions on *Quench*. While that was eventually vetoed, the buzz the demos created assisted in securing a couple of high profile supports with visiting internationals, whose audience Subtract certainly had the potential to appeal to.

"Getting to play with Helmet was a huge break, and the chance to support Ozzy Osbourne was momentous, we're all huge Sabbath fans. Those shows definitely gave us a bit of a vibe."

But Jackson doesn't necessarily only want to play with heavy rock bands, or to that type of audience.

"Our philosophy is to play with anybody. We've played with Propeller, Balance, Future Stupid, Kitsch, and on the Vans Warped thing. The problem is with everything having to have a label so people can identify with it, and we just want to mix it up. It's all about music, a local music community, and it's worth

everyone trying to support each other."

Still, that doesn't exclude the possibility of shifting their operation overseas at some point, but that idea is a long way off — in fact, Jackson considers the cost of even a national tour prohibitive.

"It has to be financially viable, and I can't really see that at this stage. The only way would be to do the weekend tour thing. We all work, so the band's daily running costs come out of our wages as well as trying to live."

But there's no sense of anyone owing Subtract a living, and it's the intrinsic worth of the band that's the most valuable to the four.

"We don't have to do any of this," says Jackson, "we're doing it because we want to. We believe in the music, we love playing, and that's the most important thing. As far as we're concerned, this is the most successful thing any of us have ever done, even if it had never got out of the rehearsal room. I'm proud to have got to this stage."

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