

Experiences sharpen Sevendust's edge

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Atlanta hard rockers play Exposition Gardens before new album debuts

BY BRAD BURKE
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PEORIA — Sevendust co-founder Morgan Rose says the band's forthcoming album is the saddest, darkest and angriest effort of the group's career.

And he couldn't be happier about it.

During the past two years, the Atlanta hard rock band has endured bad business deals, nasty divorces (both personal and professional), family tragedies and accusations they were selling out. But Sevendust, and especially Rose, have found contentment by expressing their disenchantment on a cathartic new album, "Alpha," due in stores next month.

"There were just so many things going on with me

that I just really used the piece of paper as a shrink," Rose, the group's drummer, said in a recent phone interview.

If the studio doubled as group therapy, then the road has brought about recovery. As Sevendust prepares to headline a concert at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at Peoria's Exposition Gardens, Rose said he feels the band finally has "come full circle."

"It's funny," he said, "because I was talking to someone who is high up in our record label, and I said, 'You know, I really, really hope everything goes good this time around, just for the sake of me being able to stop (complaining).'"

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Of course, he has had reason to complain. Though Sevendust was a consistent force on the hard rock scene in the late 1990s and early 2000s, releasing a handful of gold records and hit singles, Rose said things began to unravel about three years ago.

It was then, according to Rose, that the group's then label, TVT Records, demanded a more mainstream sound. And the band, locked into what Rose describes as a horribly one-sided contract, relented.

"What they didn't realize is that we were starting to sway in a direction that the kids who liked us on our first record were starting not to like us anymore," he said. "They were starting to get bothered that we were a predominantly heavy band with a decent message, and all of a sudden it turned into, 'They're getting soft.' And then it sounded worse than soft. It sounded like it was being contrived. It was like, 'This isn't them, this is somebody telling them (what to be). This is them trying to sell out and not doing a good job of it.'"

More hardships followed. In 2004, original guitarist Clint Lowery split. Plus, the already fragile relationship between TVT and Sevendust fractured, and the two sides parted ways.

That was just the beginning for Rose, who over the next

If you go

What: Sevendust, with Diecast.

When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Peoria's Exposition Gardens, 1601 W. Northmoor Road.

Cost: Tickets are \$23 at the door or \$20 in advance at Co-Op Records stores, Ticketmaster outlets, by phone at (800) 514-3849 and online at JayTV.com.

two years would see his father go to prison and his marriage crumble. The pain from those experiences found their way onto "Alpha," which Rose describes as a "conceptual" album about "someone losing their mind, deteriorating."

Even after its completion, Rose said he felt emotionally shattered. Until, that is, the band performed the new material at a handful of gigs.

"I realized after a few of those shows that I was a whole new person," he said. "I was happy again."

Rose said the goal now is to keep performing — Peoria is an early stop on a 57-date tour — and to win back any fans who were turned off by Sevendust's inconsistent sound on those final TVT albums.

Said Rose: "Now we're trying to piece (expletive) Humpty Dumpty back together."

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