

THE ADVOCATE

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MUSIC

Sevendust gets rare chance for a new beginning

BY JOHN WIRT
Music critic

The latest album from Sevendust brought the rock-metal-hardcore band home to Atlanta. Sevendust gathered there to

THE BEAT make its sixth album, *Alpha*, a tougher collection than the more commercially driven few albums that preceded it.

"We tried to get back to our roots, for sure," drummer and songwriter Morgan Rose said from Atlanta. "This was the record we always wanted to make."

Pressure to achieve mainstream success had led Sevendust in uncomfortable directions.

"People were trying to make us into a different band," Rose said. "In their defense, they're probably saying, 'We wanted you to evolve.' But to evolve as a band, you have to stay true to what you're doing. You can't reinvent the wheel if that's not how you're feeling."

Some Sevendust singles directed at radio eroded the band's credibility, Rose said.

"The modern-rock people, the alternative people, they looked at us and said, 'Who do you think you're fooling?' And then the active-rock people said, 'Wow, this is kind of wimpy.' Our crowd felt the same way. It sounded like a sell-out a lot of the times."

But if huge radio success had happened, Rose said, "I'm sure I wouldn't be complaining too much. But it didn't happen for a reason. You can't fool the kids."

Sevendust/Diecast

WHEN: Monday, July 9 (8 p.m.)
WHERE: Texas Club
ADMISSION: \$25

Changing record labels helped Sevendust concentrate on its strengths.

"When we finally got away from those people," Rose said, "it became real easy to do the record that we wanted to do and be true to why we got together in the first place."

Sevendust moved to Asylum Records in December, a division of the Warner Music Group.

"Great people over there," the drummer said. "The first people who gave us the chance to make it a joint venture. It's so much easier to get a band to agree to, or not be so bitter about, decisions a label makes when they at least ask you what your opinion is."

Chasing trends is the modus operandi of many major labels, Rose said.

"They'd go, 'This is good this week, so we better make it sound like that.' And then, 'No, no, no. Get rid of that. It's gotta sound like this.'"

"But we're in a good place now, where the people don't do that. They just talk business. It's another world."

Even so, making *Alpha* had its challenges, particularly for Rose. In recent years the drummer experienced divorce, a custody battle, near bankruptcy, death in the family and his father going to prison.

"It was a tough record emo-



Sevendust

Photo by FRAN STRINE

tionally," he said. "Yeah, without really giving away too much, it's a trip through a person who's losing his mind. It was really easy for me to write the lyrics because I was losing it. There was a lot going on for the band and a lot going on for me, personally."

But not even *Alpha*'s completion came without a price.

"I was engulfed in that album for so long that when it finished I almost felt like the baby I'd raised was gone. I had a major depression. When it was done, the only people who were there to pick me up off the floor were my seven-year-old child and

my wife."

Rose's life has since changed for the better, including marriage to the woman he credits with saving his life.

"She came into my life and made everything better," he said. "I owe her everything. I feel incredible now. I realize what I needed was a deep breath, one breath. Things are gonna happen in everybody's life that are hard to handle. You just get through it the best you can and hope to live another day to make it right."

"I was asked the other day if I was happy, if I would have done anything differently. I

wouldn't do anything differently because it all led me to land right where I'm at. I'm the man in the world."

A co-producer of Sevendust's past few albums, Rose sees more production work for other artists in his future.

"I have a much better time writing and producing other people's material than my own," he said. "I'm definitely using that as my next move. But I'm not finished at all with what I'm doing now. I'm definitely excited about the next Sevendust record and we've got a lot more touring left to do for *Alpha*."