



The Realists of Extreme Rock?

THE ORANGEBURG MASSACRE'S BEAUTY OF BRUTALITY

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In 1968 a terrible event unfolded on the South Carolina State University campus in Orangeburg. Protestors, police and gunshots were a recipe for disaster, one that materialized with three dead and twenty-seven wounded. Perhaps this tragedy isn't one that comes to memory first among so many over the last few decades, but that is exactly why the members of one particular hardcore band decided to adopt such a brutal name. "Our purpose is to open people's eyes," declares vocalist Brandon, "in our own way, to what they don't pay attention to in the outside world." Pointing to a the misinformation or lack of awareness much of society endures, he adds, "All you really have to do is look; there's all kinds of stuff going on that people don't know about."

Recalling the 2004 formation of The Orangeburg Massacre, Brandon felt the band was going to have a purpose beyond the trends cropping up in the genre. "We put out a couple EPs, played the garden variety crappy shows, and finally found a solid lineup after releasing our debut album on Pluto Records." Maintaining a sharp focus, avoiding the trends and using music to explore issues much bigger than themselves certainly wasn't easy, he readily admits. However, the band endured and delivered *Moorea*, a full-length album filled with directed anger, melodic interludes, and plenty of social and political topics for further debate. "It has a very clear message, and I think the songs stand on their own, and there's enough variety for what we're trying to do," he says emphatically.

Moorea was also intentionally recorded on analog tape, a decision Brandon says was necessary to achieve "the most raw sound we possibly could." And while raw brutality in this genre is certainly expected, The Orangeburg Massacre's design intends a greater experience for listeners. Conceding that "Level 7 Destroyer" was purely a track to showcase the band's ability to create the most brutal song, Brandon speaks of the whole composition's depth. "Musically it follows a cohesive journey as far as my observations of the world." Not limited only

raised. Intentional and fitting is how he views the name *Moorea*. "We're trying to create something beautiful that at the same time is dark and realistic." Offering a brief look into his mindset of the time, Brandon recollects, "I was fortunate to be taken on a trip for my grandparents' fiftieth anniversary. We went to the island of Moorea and it's an amazing beautiful tropical place, but there is a darkness." Noting the element of the potentially nefarious and mysterious history, he continues, "There are things that happened there that you don't know about. It's one of those places with a palpable tension and I think that's what we tried to create with this album."

Ultimately though, being equipped with a strong sense of social and political awareness, and brandishing the aural weapons needed to fight upwards isn't all it takes to make it. Brandon is also a realist, one who can acknowledge the difficulty of pursuing a career in the hardcore music scene. "The problem right now with the hardcore punk-rock genre," he says, "is it has become a fashion trend." Being a relatively young band, the members of The Orangeburg Massacre seem to know they still have much to learn, but having witnessed the ups and downs for several year now, and consciously choosing to continue on with a strong work ethic is indeed something Brandon feels will help them survive the business's dark side. "The most important thing to us, as a band, is our honesty. In the end, that's all you have. With all the craziness that surrounds bands, again, all you ever have is who you are." ○

