

Aaron Baylor (bass), and
Ryan Folden (drums)



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BURN HALO

EIGHTEEN VISIONS FRONTMAN JAMES HART'S NEW LOOK

JAMES HART HARBORS NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF MAKING A NAME FOR himself in a music industry starved for sales but clogged with competition. When his So-Cal metalcore band Eighteen Visions called it quits in 2007, Hart's immediate plan was to make a solo record with help from a handful of familiar faces including Synyster Gates of Avenged Sevenfold, members of Papa Roach and Puddle of Mudd, and Zac Maloy, an Oklahoma-based songwriter-producer who's worked with the likes of Chris Daughtry and Hoobastank.

After only a couple of sessions with Maloy, though, "Zac and I came to the conclusion that if we had too many different writers, the record might end up sounding a little jumbled," Hart says. So he and Maloy hunkered down at the producer's Tulsa studio and recorded an album's worth of material on their own. Once they'd finished, Hart had another realization. "I don't have a résumé as long as some solo artists in the rock world," he admits. "And even when guys from big-name acts go out on their own, their solo records don't always do as well. It just made more sense to do this album as a band."

Burn Halo is the group Hart put together, recruiting guitarists Joey Cunha and Allen Wheeler and drummer Ryan Folden on a tip from Papa Roach's Jacoby Shaddix. Hart met bassist Aaron Baylor through the band's original guitarist, Neil Tiemann, who left Burn Halo when his old pal, *American Idol* winner David Cook, offered him a gig. Now the group is on the road supporting Burn Halo's self-titled debut (*Rawkhead*), which features Gates on lead single "Dirty Little Girl." With a new band, that's a vision wholly his own, Hart is looking at his career differently.

REVOLVER Burn Halo's music is a lot hookier and more rock-oriented than Eighteen Visions' was.

JAMES HART I definitely didn't want this to sound like an Eighteen Visions record. When I was in Eighteen Visions I was always pushing the limits as a vocalist. We started off as a metal and hardcore band, but I'm a big fan of all sorts of rock music, from the early '80s to the present day. I was always pushing us to do more rock, so the band could cross over and have a career and some longevity. But it didn't pan out the way I had envisioned.

Was that difference in opinion part of what led to the group's breakup?

Everyone in the band was all about doing rock tours, but some people still wanted to keep doing metal and hardcore tours to keep the core audience happy. But those old fans weren't really there anymore; I think we pissed off a lot of them when we started making records like [2004's] *Obsession*. There was definitely a clash of ideas in terms of direction. You've been in a band together for so many years and eventually you find yourself chasing your own tail. It gets frustrating.

You called the shots while making the Burn Halo record.

It was awesome. In the past we had three chief songwriters and five opinions; everyone was always trying to make everyone else happy, so everybody

had to compromise. Whereas with this record I felt like there were no compromises. I had a clear-cut vision of what I wanted the record to sound like.

Playing live with musicians you hired especially for the job must be a very different experience than being in a band with guys you've known forever.

It's a breath of fresh air, really. It's all about having to come together really quickly. Everyone's still getting to know each other, but it's kind of like a new relationship where everybody's stoked.

Is now a good time for the kind of crossover you were aiming for with Eighteen Visions?

For sure—look at the success of Buckcherry, working up to being a Top 40 band. Or Avenged Sevenfold. Bands like that are definitely opening the eyes of program directors in the radio world, as well as listeners, who are getting more exposure to that type of music. I think they've opened the door for up-and-coming rock bands.

Because you have a history in the music scene, you're not necessarily starting over from square one with Burn Halo. But you're certainly taking a few steps back. Is that daunting?

It's a little stressful at times. I know there are some old Eighteen Visions fans who'll like what I'm doing with this—people who were onboard for the last couple of records. But I'm not too worried about where I came from; to me it's all about trying to build on that.