

SPOTLIGHT



ANTHRAX

Heavy-metal survivors put turmoil behind them for a return to furious fighting form

Rob Caggiano, Charlie Benante, Joey Belladonna, Frank Bello, Scott Ian

THRASH-METAL GIANT ANTHRAX HAS survived a number of challenges, from lineup changes and record-label headaches to the public-relations nightmare caused by a 2001 series of deadly terrorist attacks using the bacteria for which the band was first named 30 years ago. But the last few years have been especially uncertain, as Anthrax's lead-singer position became a revolving door through which its '80s-era singer Joey Belladonna, '90s frontman John Bush and short-timer Dan Nelson all passed at least once. Fans waited and wondered if they would ever bang their heads to a new Anthrax record again.

When the revolving door finally stopped turning last year, it was Belladonna behind the mic—and the result is *Worship Music*, his first album with the group since 1990's

Persistence of Time. Belladonna's third and latest Anthrax stint started when drummer Charlie Benante—who writes much of the group's music, with guitarist Scott Ian handling most of the lyrics—was tinkering with a side project. "I had these songs that were different from Anthrax, they were more mellow," Benante says. "I was looking for people to sing on them, and he seemed right for one particular song." One thing led to another, and by May 2010 Belladonna was once again onstage with Anthrax.

Worship Music had been completed with Nelson in 2009, then scrapped when he quit (the singer maintains he was fired). While on the road last fall with fellow thrash titans Megadeth and Slayer, Benante and Ian continued developing those songs and coming up with fresh ones. "Every day on

that tour we would work on the material," Bronx native Benante says. "Some of the songs were totally torn apart and redone, and it made the album 100 percent better. When Joey sang on them, he made them another 100 percent better than that."

At 48, Benante says he feels no physical need to slow down the fast-and-furious drumming for which he's known. "Not yet," he says with a chuckle. "It hasn't hit me like that." But he does note that *Worship Music* purposefully broadens the group's scope. "This isn't just a one-dimensional thrash record," he says. "There are layers to this record, there are different emotions. You can make a record that's all just extreme stuff if you want, but at the end of the day that's all it's going to be. You still need a song."

—Chris Neal



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