After 20 years, Bleed from Within have reached their *Zenith*. The Glasgow firebrands are one of the hardest working acts in metal: playing shows globally with everyone from Megadeth to Slipknot, all while writing and regularly releasing monstrous, exhilarating songs. The upward journey reaches new heights on their seventh album, which contains the band’s heaviest, catchiest and most intrepid music to date.

Bleed – vocalist Scott Kennedy, guitarists Craig “Goonzi” Gowans and Steven Jones, drummer Ali Richardson and bassist Davie Provan – have long been Scottish metal’s most valued sons, constantly at the vanguard of muscular-sounding music. First albums *Humanity* (2009) and *Empire* (2010) made them cult figureheads in the deathcore scene, before *Uprising* (2013) broadened their palate with groove metal adrenaline and melodic death metal prowess. It also marked their major-label debut, catapulting them onto tours with heavy royalty.

In 2018, the band returned with the ferocious *Era*. Then, follow-ups *Fracture* (2020) and *Shrine* (2022) proved their greatest triumphs to date, intertwining Scott’s snarls with Steven’s majestic singing. The millions of streams gathered by such singles as ‘The End of All We Know’, ‘Into Nothing’ and ‘Levitate’ proved Bleed had become the next big thing. Now, on *Zenith* – announced ahead of career-affirming tours with Slipknot, Trivium and Bullet for My Valentine – the quintet are primed to leap into superstardom.

*“We came up with the name* Zenith *because, if somebody or a band is described as being at their ‘zenith’, then they’re at their highest point so far,”* says Ali. *“We’re acknowledging everything that we’ve done to get to where we are now, but also recognising the space above us and how far we still have to go. There’s been so much growth, but we still have so much to experiment with.”*

Across 11 songs, *Zenith* explores the parameters of what pulse-pounding metal can do. ‘Violent Nature’ is the most attention-demanding opener Bleed have ever penned, accelerating from a distorted intro to an onslaught of drums, blitzkrieg riffs and layer upon layer of screams. Single ‘In Place of Your Halo’ is a heavier counterpoint: its hulking groove leads up to a surprising bagpipe section, keeping the band in touch with their homeland as they affirm themselves on the world’s stage. From the bold string sections throughout the album to finale ‘Edge of Infinity’, which rises from acoustic guitars and singing to an almighty crescendo, Bleed’s horizons have never been broader. Yet, their songs have never felt so invigorating across the board either.

*“There’s a fearlessness that comes with how long we’ve been doing this now,”* Ali says. *“There’s been stuff that we wanted to do in the past, but we’d been worried about how it would be interpreted. We’ve put it all out here. That’s what I think a lot of people will notice from the record.”*

Just as empowering as *Zenith*’s music are its lyrics. The choir-backed chorus of ‘Known by No Name’ commands the listener to *“rise from the grave”*, while ‘A Hope in Hell’ implores them to pick themselves up and carry on after falling to adversity. Elsewhere, ‘Dying Sun’ commands, *“Don’t stand in my way! Give me the strength to take your pain away!”* As well as powerhouse metal tracks, these are songs of endurance, their motivational messaging inspired by the band’s intense work ethic.

*“It’s recognising the time and effort put in,”* says Ali. *“The top of every mountain is the bottom of another, and that’s where Bleed from Within are at. It never fucking stops, you know? As soon as this record’s out, we’re going to be writing the next one and, again, we’re gonna be pushing ourselves. That’s what* Zenith *is. That’s what this writing process was about. We’re recognising and enjoying that struggle.”*

Proving Bleed’s place as rising heroes of metal is the array of talent attached to *Zenith*. Ex-Periphery bassist Adam “Nolly” Getgood returned to record drums, while Sikth guitarist and lauded producer/songwriter Dan Weller helped with the vocal production. Wes Hauch, of US death metal darlings Alluvial, and shredder extraordinaire Rabea Massaad (Toska, Vower, Frog Leap Studios) contribute guest solos. Most apparent and prestigious, though, are the guest vocals from Ali’s Sylosis bandmate Josh Middleton on remixed single ‘Hands of Sin’ and Brann Dailor of prog metal idols Mastodon on ‘Immortal Desire’.

*“It goes without saying that we are massive Mastodon fans, every single one of us,”* Ali explains. *“They just get better and better. They seem to fly the flag for, this far into their career, consistently raising the bar. That massively inspires me.”*

He continues, *“We did a set on Headbangers Boat [2023] and I’ll never forget playing, looking up and going, ‘Fucking hell, Brann Dailor’s watching me!’ Later that night, Kennedy’s at the bar, and Brann approaches him and says, ‘Your band are great. I’ve heard you guys and I thought you did a great set.’”*

Songwriting for *Zenith* started in the spring of 2022, and after that the album was recorded over a year, meticulously tracked between tour dates. The result of all that graft is unquestionably Bleed’s finest music to date. With its release surrounded by mammoth support shows, and due to be followed by the band’s biggest-ever festival slots and headline concerts, their ascent to metal’s top tier is imminent. And, once they get there, the genre will have one of its most creative, exciting and prolific forces leading the charge.

*“In metal, there’s been a change of the guard,”* Ali observes. *“Lots of our peers are headlining festivals and going up bills. I feel that, as part of this new wave of metal, Bleed from Within are one of the important bands. What we are doing is not like the other bands out there.”*

**– Matt Mills, November 2024**