

BLUE OCTOBER

Blue October's seventh full-length studio album, *Any Man in America*, is a new beginning.

An unexpected and unsettling personal shift sparked the music that would become *Any Man in America*. Singer Justin Furstenfeld found himself mired in the end of a marriage and a tenuous custody battle that consumed him to the breaking point. Instead of falling further, he turned to the studio and began documenting moments in his life in 2008 as the band was working on their last offering, *Approaching Normal*. The result is thirteen new songs that tell a cathartic tale of heartbreak and healing through unbridled lyrical honesty, anthemic modern rock hooks, and melodic soundscapes.

"I was separated at the time, and my daughter was in Nebraska while I moved back to Texas alone," he explains. "I decided to document everything. If I messed up along the way, I'd tell that too. We called the album my 'Audio Journal' as I began writing. I didn't want the music to just be about me though. I wanted it to help other people in who might be going through the same thing."

That "Audio Journal" follows the dissolution of his marriage, the horrible fallout that resulted, and the closure that finally came. With the crack of a power chord, a haunting piano melody, or the texture of electronic despair, Blue October builds an immersive and often infectious "real life" emotional roller coaster.

However, the band neglected to simply wallow in the negative aspects of this ride. Rather, the music became a tool of empowerment. Justin goes on, "The most important thing in my life was the birth of my daughter. That changed me into a man. This record is my chance to speak my heart because I never got that opportunity to do that in the court system. When my world was turned upside down and my daughter was being taken away from me I was being told 'you know it is not right but you are going to have to accept it.' In America, the system makes it easier to be a deadbeat father than a man who wants to provide for and love his children. This is my deposition."

Along the way, his band mates were there for him. Justin wasn't alone, and that unity makes for richer, fuller music. "We're in a band together, but first and foremost, we're family," adds his brother and drummer Jeremy. "The album evolved into one man's journey through a really harsh time, but any man could be put in this situation of being kept away from his family. There's nothing that you feel like you can do to change it. However, we've always been right there for each other to deal with what comes along in life."

Since 1995, Blue October has been a refuge for its members and fans worldwide. Over the course of five albums, achieving platinum sales with singles like "Hate Me" and "Into The Ocean" along with non-stop touring solidified the band's presence in the music world. They've had high-profile film and TV placements on *The Sopranos*, *Saw III*, and *NCIS* to name a few. Justin was also featured in a unique tour alongside *Twilight* author Stephanie Meyer in 2008. Plus, they've played to fans in nearly every corner of the world. However, it all simply set the stage for *Any Man in America*.

After two years of Justin documenting and recording the demos of what would become *Any Man in America*, the band retreated to an Austin, TX studio with mixer and producer Tim Palmer [Grammy award winning mixer for U2's 'All That You Can't Leave Behind, David Bowie, Pearl Jam, and Robert Plant]. Co-producing with Justin, Palmer helped the band capture each and every instance that the lyrics describe so vividly. As Justin puts it, "Palmer allowed me the freedom to be that open and honest."

Any Man In America is an album with a beginning, a middle and an end. It's a "concept" album, except that this is not a concept, it is Furstenfeld's reality. The story begins with "Feel Again," a sentimental cry out to a lost love, a wanting for return to the way we were.

The album's first radio single, "The Chills", espouses the truthful storytelling that Justin and his band mates hold as paramount. A propulsive backbeat morphs into one of the biggest hooks of Blue October's career as Justin urges for change in the relationship. The singer exclaims, "I'm pleading, 'Why do you have to act like that? Why do I always feel these chills?' Those chills are how you know you love someone. The song is about me trying to prove my love because of those chills."

After a melancholic orchestral segue and harrowing voicemail messages, the album dips into "The Flight (LNK to MSP)." A heavy dark beat burns underneath a volatile verse colored with searing anger and emotion. The song recounts when Justin received life-changing news while boarding a flight to speak at a suicide prevention event on Capitol Hill. This news would crush "any man in America."

"The song is a centerpiece for the album, and it was a pivotal point in this four year period. At that moment, I realized I had to think of my daughter's future first and foremost instead of focusing this relationship," he says. "I had to write something that got those feelings of rage out so I could stop giving it so much attention."

The title track also illuminates the band's evolution. Blue October seamlessly infused nuances of hip-hop into their patented sound, yielding intriguing, infectious tunes. "I've always been a fan of smart hip-hop," declares Justin. "There's a confidence that comes from rap that definitely inspired me. Artists like Paul Wall, Eminem, Jay-Z and growing up around Houston's Swishahouse empowered me because they had no fear of speaking their minds. Nobody in rock is that honest. We definitely tried to incorporate that frame of mind on this album." A chance meeting with Austin/San Antonio poet and rapper Ray C, who had just gone through a similar family experience, led to a guest appearance on the title track to express his personal views on how this subject matter has even touched his life.

The experimentation didn't stop there. Certain nights in the studio would lead the band to push the envelope further. Jeremy adds, "We'd put five drummers in a room each with a single drum and do tracks where five guys end up being this huge drum corps. We were able to open up and experiment in this new sound. You can still tell it's Blue October, but there's maturity. Justin is talking about super important subject matter that could hopefully be life-changing for other people. He's standing up for this larger purpose, and it's wonderful."

The album itself leaves off with on an uplifting note with "The Follow Through." It's an utterly epic final word that sees some closure for Justin. Patricia Lynn of The Soldier Thread gorgeously delivers the lines "Let me help you live on," and it's truly inspiring.

Justin delves deeper into the song, "The last words had to be something positive. I needed to hear a female's voice saying that. I needed to believe that there is love out there still for my daughter and for everybody. I thought that was really important, and I didn't want to end with my voice."

The loudest voices will be the audiences everywhere that sing along to these songs with Blue October. Ultimately, that's who the band continues to write for. The frontman sums everything up, "This happens every day in America. I just want to show you can make it through, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel."

Any Man in America can feel that. - Rick Florino, May 2011
