

GATECREEPER

The new wave of American death metal needs a breakout album, and *Dark Superstition* is it.

Gatecreeper's third full-length sees the Arizona death metal specialists—vocalist Chase H. Mason, guitarists Eric Wagner and Israel Garza, drummer Metal Matt Arrebollo and bassist Alex Brown—carving out their own path. The band's first album for Nuclear Blast is more concise, melodic, and memorable than anything they've done in the past. "We refined the song structures," Mason says. "We're getting better at what we do."

Formed in 2013, Gatecreeper have spent the last decade steadily climbing the death metal ladder. Their self-titled 2014 EP established instant credibility as purveyors of the old-school form. The band signed with Relapse, releasing their full-length debut *Sonoran Depravation* in 2016. At once an homage to their desert origins and a statement of death metal intent, the record landed them a 2017 tour with Cannibal Corpse and Power Trip. In 2019, Gatecreeper unveiled *Deserted*, their ripping foray into self-described "stadium death metal." It landed at number three on *Decibel* magazine's revered year-end top 40 list. When the pandemic subsided, Gatecreeper snagged a slot on the 2022 *Decibel* magazine tour alongside Obituary and Municipal Waste. These days, Gatecreeper are headliners in their own right, touring globally under their own banner.

Think of *Dark Superstition* as Gatecreeper's answer to Entombed's *Wolverine Blues* or Dismember's *Massive Killing Capacity*, pivotal albums on which the songs got tighter and more rock influenced. Or even Paradise Lost, who went even further in a rock direction with albums like *Icon* and *Draconian Times*. "In the mid-90s, all those bands were evolving into doing their own thing," Mason says. "I feel like we've incorporated that timeline into Gatecreeper." Dismember played a particularly prominent role in *Dark Superstition*. The band's drummer and main songwriter Fred Estby flew to Arizona to work with Gatecreeper in pre-production, helping them put the finishing touches on their songs. You can hear that classic Swedish influence on "Masterpiece of Chaos," which evokes the tried-and-true Gatecreeper of *Sonoran Depravation*. Mason describes the track as "A nightmarish vision of a broken mirror with an ominous creature that lives within the fragmented web of glass." Thematically speaking, *Dark Superstition* deals with the supernatural, divination, fear of the unknown, and trust in magic or chance. "Many of the songs incorporate supernatural ideas with my own experiences," Mason says. "But the title itself is a reference to the Superstition Mountains in our home state of Arizona. It's a beautiful mountain range surrounded by tragedy and legends of hidden fortune."

Gatecreeper widen their sonic palette on "Flesh Habit" and lead single "The Black Curtain," which bear the mark of UK goth magnates Sisters of Mercy and Fields of the Nephilim. It's still Gatecreeper in all their HM-2 glory, but with a sharper edge. "The Black Curtain" embodies the album's theme with a tale of divination. "It's about being trapped between living and dying," Mason says. "A soul trapped in purgatory begging to be brought back by a supernatural force." Meanwhile, advance single "Caught in the Treads" deals in the kind of high-powered melodic death metal that will surely beef up Gatecreeper's festival game. Along with leadoff track "Dead Star," the song represents an elevated version of the band, primed for the bigger stages that the new album will inevitably take them to.

Dark Superstition was recorded at God City Studios in Salem, Massachusetts, with Converge guitarist Kurt Ballou, who also mixed the album. The record is a direct result of Gatecreeper's experience, musical refinement, and commitment to death metal. "There's a lot of bands in our lane," Mason says. "But we're trying to create our own."