



# In The Far Northeast There's a Sonic Storm Brewing... Westland

by Thrust™ Magazine Contributing Writer Al-  
isha N. Perella/photography by Eric Riley



I don't know about you, but for me at least, songs are life defining. When you can't make heads or tails of the world, you can always throw on the right record and for an hour or so feel complete; even if your feeling of completeness is just an illusion. Likewise, life is music defining. Life's events and idiosyncrasies affect our songwriters and the music they produce. It irks me when people complain and distress when their favorite artists' new album doesn't sound like their last one. Variety is not a bad thing. No one can stay in one place for too long and if by some strange voodoo they do, well it isn't healthy. Life is a progression, every chord ends. And so it is with Westland's upcoming album.

Hailing from Boston, Westland is fronted by founder and lead singer

Aaron Bonus with Matt Perreault on lead guitar, Alex Wagner on rhythm guitar, Cody Wagner on drums, and Nick Karidoyanes on bass.

For fans already familiar with the band, they will soon be witnessing a Westland which has matured into a totally different bear. "It's time to move past the teeny bop and into the real world." The legendary Shep Goodman [Universal Motown Records, Former VP of A&R] is on board, helping them realize their aspirations for their new EP and Album.

Of course, there are those who will raise their hands when asked, "Is this the first time you've heard of Westland?"

That's why while speaking to Aaron by telephone for this interview, I asked

him about the band's history. He says that the band's first record *Don't Take It Personal* [2009] and EP *Demos, B-Sides, and Lullabies, Oh My!* [2011] were made from a backlog of songs that he had written as far back as age 16. In his 20s now and humbled by the world, Aaron's lyrics are deeper in meaning and more mature. Westland's new material no longer will brim with teenage angst or immature sentiments.

"Our new EP is about being a bridge instead of a tower, we've realized that our music isn't the destination, but the vehicle to the audience's destination. The album's content is much more current and relevant with lyrics firmly rooted in our transformative growing up experiences. Where as before, our original fan base was mostly teenaged in the past, currently we're shooting for

a larger, more varied, adult audience. We've grown and expanded at a remarkable pace and hope our audience will grow with us. To give you an idea of what to expect, we are going for a Third Eye Blind/Coheed and Cambria/Silversun Pickups kind of sound. We want to bring back the spirit of the '90s in the sense that the '90s [all hail, all hail] were all about being unique, experimental, and having something worth saying. Nearly everything on the radio these days tends to sound re-manufactured and overly contrived. Our upcoming album is our baby; and even if everyone hates it, we'll still love it and not give a damn. Our heart and soul has been poured into this project.

"Comparatively, concerning *Don't Take It Personal*, by the end of the first

promo tour, I had lost interest and outgrown the music, it wasn't me anymore, I felt like a fraud ... not to mention that I wrote all the musical parts and had them played in the studio by studio musicians.

"Now, Westland is a real band and each of us writes our own parts for each song. My bandmates are so talented, I mean, I've seriously become a fan of them. Being able to collaborate with others is so much more fun and rewarding, I'll never go back to being a one-man band.

Some of the themes we'll be discussing in our lyrics are compromise, positivity, venting out frustration over the state of the music industry, buy ons, and realizing that in regards to the planet, and the Universe, we are but small little blips."

When I asked about Westland's participation in this year's Vans Warped Tour, Aaron and I got into a passionate discussion about buy ons. As most people know, Warped Tour became a corporate entity in 1995 when Vans officially began sponsoring Kevin Lyman's vision for bringing extreme sports and music together. With corporate comes a new way of doing business. Bands that you have never heard of and all of a sudden have 15 dates on the Warped Tour, most likely paid a fee, essentially paying for their stage time or "buying on[tol]" the tour. Buy buying on and buying up stage time, out-of-the-blue bands are taking opportunities away from bands who can barely afford to eat, let alone come up with a lump sum. It is riskier business to give

bands stage time without any assurance that they will attract ticket sales. Buy ons are by far a safer option that guarantees income. Now without commenting on the issue too severely, the point that Westland's lyrics will be focusing the most on, is that you can't buy skill; talent is one thing, but being able to handle your talent responsibly in the public eye without losing sight of your music takes experience. If you buy yourself on to a platform that you aren't ready to stand on, you're most likely going to fall off of it. Buy ons are a controversial hot button issue among musicians, and Westland is not immune. Dubbed one of the hardest working bands in the industry, it is reasonable that the band would experience frustration with the fact that no matter how hard you work, someone

can flash some cash and become more relevant than you, no matter for how brief or long a time.

Despite it all though, Westland is proving that hard work and skill combined with talent will get you where you want to go, "We're playing seven dates on the Vans Warped Tour this year. However, we won't be playing any of our old stuff except for fan favorites like "I'll Pray For You," and covers like "Where Is My Mind," by the Pixies. Out with the old and in with the new as they say. We see ourselves becoming a festival band, like Group Love. We want to use our sets and shows to bring quality music to the masses. Westland will be playing on the Our Stage, don't miss them!

