

= The Sword =

The Sword is an American heavy metal band from Austin , Texas . Formed in 2003 , the band is composed of vocalist and guitarist John D. Cronise , guitarist Kyle Shutt , bassist Bryan Richie and drummer Santiago " Jimmy " Vela III . Originally signed to Kemado Records , the group released its debut album Age of Winters in 2006 , which had been largely written by Cronise prior to the band 's formation . Gods of the Earth was released two years later and gave the group its first entry on the US Billboard 200 chart .

In 2010 the band released Warp Riders , a concept album centered on an original science fiction narrative , which marked the first time the band had enlisted an external producer in Matt Bayles . Wingo left the group later in the year and was replaced briefly by Kevin Fender , before Vela joined in 2011 . After signing with Razor & Tie in 2012 , the group released its fourth album Apocryphon which was promoted worldwide on the Apocryphon Tour . The band 's fifth album , High Country , was released in 2015 .

The Sword is commonly categorized as a stoner rock or doom metal band , and is influenced by groups such as Black Sabbath and Sleep . The band has toured with a wide range of fellow metal artists , including ... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead , Year Long Disaster and Metallica on multiple occasions . The Sword 's first album Age of Winters failed to chart , but subsequent releases have all gained increasing commercial success , with Apocryphon charting in the top 20 of the Billboard 200 .

= = History = =

= = = 2003 ? 2007 : Formation , early years and Age of Winters = = =

After writing and recording music on his own for " a few years " , vocalist and guitarist John D. Cronise formed The Sword in 2003 with guitarist Kyle Shutt and drummer Trivett Wingo . Speaking about choosing the band 's name , Cronise claims that he researched the moniker first and found it " unbelievable " that it hadn 't already been used ; two bands did already have the name Sword though , including a Canadian heavy metal band , and the frontman states he " narrowly escaped litigation hell " before The Sword was finalised . The trio played their first show together on June 19 at Beerland in Austin , and released their first demo , entitled Age of Winters , before the end of the year . Bassist Bryan Richie joined to complete the four @-@ piece lineup of the band in early 2004 . Prior to the formation of The Sword , Cronise and Wingo had performed together in the group Ultimate Dragons , based in Richmond , Virginia , while Shutt and Richie had worked with multiple bands in Texas " united by a love of Led Zeppelin " . Cronise had also performed with a local band called Those Peabodys , but left as he felt he " needed to do something heavier " . After their first live performance together as a four @-@ piece at Austin 's Sound on Sound Records on March 17 , 2004 , the band released their second demo , The Sword , which was followed the next year by an extended play ( EP ) entitled Freya .

After performing at the 2005 South by Southwest festival , The Sword was signed by New York @-@ based record label Kemado Records , following a recommendation by Lamb of God guitarist Mark Morton . The band released its debut album Age of Winters in February 2006 , for which much of the material had been written by Cronise before the band 's formation and featured on the band 's early demos . In support of the album the band toured throughout 2006 and 2007 , with support acts including Lacuna Coil and Trivium in the United States , Nebula and Clutch in Europe , and Lamb of God in Japan . In November 2006 a cover version of the song " Freya " was featured as a playable track on the video game Guitar Hero II , and the original track was later released as the band 's first single in September 2007 . Age of Winters did not chart , but received widely positive reviews from critics including AllMusic 's Eduardo Rivadavia , who described the album as " remarkably well @-@ balanced and almost suspiciously immediate " .

= = = 2007 ? 2009 : Gods of the Earth and first chart success = = =

In June 2007 the band contributed a new song , " Under the Boughs " ( which was later included on their second album ) , to the Kemado compilation *Invaders* . The group also released a split EP with Swedish doom metal band *Witchcraft* that month , contributing new track " Sea of Spears " and a cover of Led Zeppelin 's " Immigrant Song " to the record . Gods of the Earth was the band 's second album , released on April 1 , 2008 . The album , which is much more of a collaborative writing effort than its predecessor , provided the band with its first Billboard 200 chart entry , reaching number 102 . In support of the album , the band completed the Gods of the Earth Tour supported by artists such as Machine Head , Lamb of God , and Clutch ; the quartet also supported heavy metal veterans Metallica on their 2008 European Vacation Tour in July , and returned as the opening act for a number of legs on their World Magnetic Tour which continued through the opening months of 2009 until May .

A two @-@ disc box set containing the band 's first two albums *Age of Winters* and *Gods of the Earth* was released on November 25 , 2008 , and the song " The Black River " from *Gods of the Earth* was later included on the video game *Guitar Hero : Metallica* , released in March 2009 . The band 's music was also featured in the 2009 films *Jennifer 's Body* ( " Celestial Crown " ) and *Horsemen* ( " Maiden , Mother & Crone " ) , and in March 2009 *The Sword* won two local music awards : the High Times Doobie Award and the Austin Music Award for Best Metal Artist .

= = = 2009 ? 2010 : Change in style and direction on *Warp Riders* = = =

The *Sword* spent the rest of 2009 writing material for their third album , which took the form of " a concept album centered around an original science fiction narrative " , and had more of a hard rock sound than the band 's previous releases . Some of the new songs were debuted at the 2009 Fun Fun Fun Fest in November , and were also played on " a short regional tour showcasing the new songs " in January . Recording for the follow @-@ up to *Gods of the Earth* began in Austin at Wire Recording in February 2010 ; Matt Bayles was hired to produce and engineer the album ? a first for the band , as Cronise and Richie had respectively produced and engineered both *Age of Winters* and *Gods of the Earth* . Recording of the album , titled *Warp Riders* , was completed by April .

In May , the band contributed to a split release for the second time , covering Thin Lizzy 's " Cold Sweat " for a Volcom Entertainment Vinyl Club release with Year Long Disaster , who covered The *Sword* 's own track " Maiden , Mother & Crone " . In July , *Warp Riders* lead single " Tres Brujas " was released as a digital download , and a live EP entitled *iTunes Festival : London 2010* ( recorded at the iTunes Festival in London on July 3 ) was also released as an iTunes @-@ exclusive download . A week after the album 's August 24 release , *Warp Riders* surpassed the commercial performance of *Gods of the Earth* when it debuted at number 47 on the Billboard 200 albums chart , selling almost 9 @,@ 000 copies in the first week of its release . The band supported Metallica again on a series of September tour dates in Australia , New Zealand and Japan as warm @-@ up for their own *Warp Riders* Tour , which began the following month .

= = = 2010 ? 2012 : Drummer changes and *Warp Riders* Tour = = =

Five shows into the opening North American leg of the *Warp Riders* Tour , The *Sword* was forced to postpone all dates due to the departure of drummer Trivett Wingo . Explaining his decision to leave , Wingo commented that he felt " physically and emotionally unable to continue on as part of [ the band ] " , and later revealed that he had predicted he would eventually leave the band for " probably a couple of years " , justifying his decision by explaining that " my level of anxiety pertaining to being on tour got to the point where medication was not the answer . " Upon Wingo 's departure from The *Sword* , the remaining members of the band released the following statement :

For the later rescheduled tour dates , Austin @-@ based drummer Kevin Fender was enlisted to perform with Cronise , Shutt , and Richie as a temporary touring member of The *Sword* . The second single from *Warp Riders* , " ( The Night the Sky Cried ) Tears of Fire " , was released as a

limited edition picture disc at the beginning of November backed with previously unreleased B @-@ side " Farstar " , and later in the month the video for " Lawless Lands " ? part two of the Warp Riders trilogy ? was released online . A number of European dates were rescheduled for May 2011 , and the third and final Warp Riders music video " Night City " was released in March . The Sword returned to North America in the summer , extending the Warp Riders Tour and performing with Kyuss Lives ! and MonstrO until October .

In October 2011 , Fender was replaced with Santiago " Jimmy " Vela III , and the band saw out the rest of 2011 touring in the United States . Guitarist Kyle Shutt later spoke about the drummer changes in an interview in 2012 , claiming that Wingo " took a shit all over [ the band ] " when he left , and that Fender was chosen as he already knew how to play the group 's songs .

= = = 2012 ? 2014 : Record label change and return with Apocryphon = = =

In March 2012 it was announced that The Sword had signed a multi @-@ album worldwide deal with New York @-@ based label Razor & Tie , with plans for a fourth album starting with recording in June and a projected late @-@ 2012 release . In May the band released the single " Hammer of Heaven " , a song originally recorded in 2003 for the Age of Winters demo and later submitted for inclusion on the soundtrack to the film The Avengers . In the run @-@ up to the recording of their next album , the group only played a few shows in 2012 , most notably the Metallica @-@ organised festival Orion Music + More in June .

Working with producer J. Robbins , the group recorded the follow @-@ up to Warp Riders at Magpie Cage Studios in Baltimore , Maryland between June and July 2012 . The resulting album , Apocryphon , was released in October 2012 ; it debuted at number 17 on the Billboard 200 albums chart , selling over 16 @,@ 000 copies in its first week and providing a new chart record for the band . The album was released throughout Europe by Germany @-@ based label Napalm Records . The promotional tour for the album , the Apocryphon Tour , commenced the following week in the US , and continued across the world throughout the rest of 2012 and 2013 .

2012 and 2013 also saw The Sword expanding into business ventures outside of music , beginning in September 2012 with the release of the band 's own brand of hot sauce called Tears of Fire . The hot sauce , which is made with the ' ghost pepper ' Bhut Jolokia , was first announced and revealed on the Travel Channel series Anthony Bourdain : No Reservations on September 3 , before going on sale to the public the following day . This was followed in October by the release of the band 's first line of beer , Winter 's Wolves Beer , produced by Baltimore , Maryland @-@ based brewery Oliver Ales , and in July 2013 by a second line of beer , Iron Swan , produced by Texas @-@ based Real Ale Brewing .

In 2014 the band released lyric videos for Apocryphon tracks " The Hidden Masters " and " Arcane Montane " . Both were also released together as a set of 7 " vinyl singles , featuring remixes of each by Dylan C. Later that year , the band also worked with BMX company Subrosa on its own branded model , featuring artwork by Apocryphon artist J. H. Williams III and named after Apocryphon track " Eyes of the Stormwitch " .

= = = 2014 ? present : International recognition with High Country = = =

Writing for The Sword 's fifth album began in late 2014 , which was recorded between March and April 2015 with former Grupo Fantasma guitarist Adrian Quesada as producer . Prior to starting recording , the group also embarked on a short tour between March 11 and 14 , visiting four cities in Louisiana , Tennessee and Oklahoma . High Country was released on August 21 , 2015 and the High Country Tour began in Europe on the same day . The album was the band 's first to chart outside of the US and UK , reaching number 74 on the Australian Albums Chart and number 91 on the German Albums Chart ; it reached number 30 on the US Billboard 200 . In 2016 , the band released a recording of " John the Revelator " for Record Store Day .

= = Style , songwriting and influence = =

While commonly labelled as a doom metal band , The Sword has also been identified as an example of the ' classic metal ' movement of stoner rock artists influenced by early metal bands such as Black Sabbath , Led Zeppelin and Blue Cheer . In addition to Sabbath , to whom the band is commonly compared , artists such as Sleep , Melvins and Slayer have been cited as influences by members of the band . With the release of Warp Riders , members of the band acknowledged that fans with a more " narrow @-@ minded " view of heavy metal may feel alienated by stylistic changes . Eduardo Rivadavia of allmusic describes the band as being " at the forefront of ? the ' heritage ' or ' retro metal ' movement , " comparing their style to that of heavy metal veterans Black Sabbath and vocalist Cronise to Ozzy Osbourne . Rolling Stone also likens the band to Sabbath , as does AbsolutePunk.net in its review of Gods of the Earth , claiming that " It 's impossible not to compare [ the album ] to the works of Black Sabbath . "

While every member of the band contributes to the musical compositions , Cronise is the primary writer of the band 's lyrics . He often uses Norse mythology as a topic in his lyrics , notably in the song " Freya " , but cites literature as his main influence , identifying such authors as George R. R. Martin , Robert E. Howard , H. P. Lovecraft and Arthur C. Clarke as inspirations . On Warp Riders , Cronise was again credited for writing all the lyrics , and only guitarist Kyle Shutt was added to the credits for the musical compositions .

The band has cited Black Sabbath as a major influence , in addition to doom trio Sleep , sludge band the Melvins , thrash veterans Slayer , and heavy metal icons Iron Maiden and Deep Purple , among others . The band 's guitarists , in discussions of their musical influences , have identified ' classic ' metal guitar players such as James Hetfield of Metallica , Pantera 's Dimebag Darrell and Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath , and Cronise has also described Billy Gibbons ( of ZZ Top ) as a " huge influence . " In an interview with entertainment newspaper The A.V. Club , Cronise also revealed that local metal band HRM , rock musician Bob Seger and R & B singer Michael Jackson have been influences on The Sword 's sound .

= = Band members = =

= = Discography = =

Age of Winters ( 2006 )  
Gods of the Earth ( 2008 )  
Warp Riders ( 2010 )  
Apocryphon ( 2012 )  
High Country ( 2015 )