

AGE OF RUIN – Interview TNT Radio, by José A. Marroquí “Brujo”
Age of Ruin responses by Daniel Ruin - Guitarist

First off, thanks for your time. I'd like to know, a little over a month after the release of your fifth album, *Nothingman*, if you're satisfied with the reception from the public and the press.

I asked this because there's been a significant change in your sound compared to your previous album, *Thieves*, which was much more forceful and heavy than this one, and is much more open to other musical textures. I'd even say that in some songs, *Nothingman* seems to be returning to their roots, to their early compositions. What has changed in how you compose and/or see music?

You're welcome, and thank you for the opportunity. TNT Radio Rock has a really cool website, and from the looks of it you keep really busy! Your website has a really clean layout with images that pop. Outstanding work.

On *Nothingman*, the melodic direction was indeed emphasized. The heaviness is still very much present, but we've merely learned to wield it with more precision. "The Ghosts We Carry" offers a breakdown that merges with an anthemic chorus, a sort of joyous lament. And "The Promise" provides a singalong breakdown at the end, perfect for swaying along with your fellow lost souls. But yes, we've sprinkled in more melody, more tender moments, more dynamic range – the quiet before the storm, the deceptive calm before the soul-shattering crescendo. We took what was set as an endcap and said ok, Lets bring in some dynamic to really make these loud parts explode.

Already in the opening track, *The Fixation*, we notice this change in sound. It seems like one of those songs that could divide fans: it's risky, more melodic, with clean vocals and unexpected changes. Are you worried about breaking certain expectations, or do you feel that's precisely what you should be doing at this point in your career?

The Fixation turned out to be a challenge. It's a real measure of skill in songwriting as the mood shifts from minor to major giving a triumphant feel from the very onset. We've always been devout worshippers at the altar of Iron Maiden, and individually, we've all followed melodeath bands like In Flames and Soilwork. We really see making music as a challenge and with the songs on *Nothingman* we pushed our songwriting up a notch. Playing as a group with that amount of precision takes a lot of practice and good communication. You really want to make sure everyone in the band understands the rhythm and soul of the melody so the song can build around that.

I also notice more heaviness and density in songs like "Lost in Shadows" or "The Ghosts We Carry." In these songs, there's a kind of heaviness that goes beyond the riff: more ambience, more texture, more space. Does this approach stem from new influences, changes in writing style, or simply from trying to make the music breathe differently without losing its impact?

A little bit of everything. We did draw from new influences like Gojira and Sleep Token, but we also leaned towards our roots. We tapped into our love of 90s grunge, having all grown up then, and you can hear that influence. We're also constantly studying music and pulling from advanced theory concepts to make things really interesting. But the bottom line is the songs have to kick ass, and we are all about the riff!

We rediscovered our adolescent infatuation with 90s grunge – a period of glorious angst that permeated our formative years – and its shadowy tendrils can be felt throughout. Furthermore, we are forever poring over musical texts, applying advanced theoretical concepts to make things more interesting to us. But let me be clear: the ultimate decree is that the songs must absolutely *kick ass*, and when it comes to the riff, my friend, we are nothing short of fanatical.

I really liked Nothingman herself. She has a restrained tempo, acoustic guitars, a voice full of raw emotion, and a great solo. What does this song represent on the album? Tell me about it.

Oh cool, very thoughtful critique! This was a tune I worked out on an acoustic some fifteen years ago and kept it stashed away in a secret spot. One day, after blowing off dunes of dust that collected on it, I presented it to Ben as a candidate for the record. We were utterly oblivious at the time, but this unassuming little ditty eventually clawed its way to prominence, becoming the very title track as it matured into its full, melancholic glory. The solo at the end, a stroke of metal genius, was our producer Mike Schleibaum's idea. When we concluded pre-production and subjected him to our material, he demanded nothing less than an epic guitar solo to cap off "Nothingman."

You recorded in three different studios. Going through several studios in different cities over the course of nine months sounds intense, not only technically but emotionally. How did such a lengthy and geographically dispersed process affect the energy of the album? Was it a challenge to maintain the album's artistic vision without it getting diluted along the way?

We made a conscious decision to work our hardest to make the best record we possibly could. So when it came time to decide on a studio, we saw the opportunity to use multiple locations as a benefit rather than a risk. We chose the studios for their strengths. The drum room at The Bakery in Richmond sounds great. And we have worked at Ivakota in DC before. Part of the reason it took 9 months was scheduling. Mike was on tour with Darkest Hour during some of that, and we were meanwhile sketching out the guitar solos during that time. Having that time to reflect during the creative process actually proved to be a perverse blessing, allowing the album's essence to truly ferment.

Who—or what—is Nothingman? A real person, a metaphor? What does this title represent for Age of Ruin?

Nothingman is a metaphor for the shell we live inside.

In fact, the cover art is a hollow bust in a forest, indicating silence, surrounded by flowers. It's like a painting. What did you try to capture with it?

It actually is a painting! It was done in oil by Zack Dunn. By the time I found it, we had already named the upcoming record "Nothingman." I was scrolling through Instagram one day, and Zack posted his just finished "Forest Mother" painting. When I saw it, I instantly knew this would be the cover art. It just says Nothingman when you look at it. The empty face...the "hush" that she is signaling...

What themes or messages did you want to explore on this album? Is there a conceptual thread running through the 10 songs?

Nothingman isn't conceptual in itself, but we did write it intentionally as an album. The dynamics we explored were intentional as was our push to play more technically challenging solos and as a nod to many of our influences growing up. We're all 90s kids, so grunge had a large impact on our taste. One aspect of that sound is big dynamics...soft, quiet sections that explode into big drums, huge distorted guitars, and a wall of bass.

27 years, five albums, three EPs, and a sonic evolution that has gone hand in hand with changes in lineup, era, and approach. When you look back on that journey since Nothingman, what do you feel you've gained... and what have you lost along the way?

It has been full of experiences, good and bad. But the only thing we've lost is unnecessary baggage. That can only be achieved by practicing patience, loyalty, dedication, and mutual respect. I think we've also gained tremendous confidence to write and play music we love without caring how we will be perceived. We know this music is meaningful and it sounds killer. I think you will too.

And over nearly three decades, Age of Ruin sounds different, but still packs the same punch. How do you balance staying true to your original identity and pushing it into new territory without breaking it?

We still love metal. They say your taste is defined early on. I know that not every musician finds "their sound" early on, but I think we were lucky enough to. And that's a sound that has matured, like the people behind the art. We're in different places individually now than we were 20 years ago, and I believe a person's journey toward enlightenment affects the tone of their soul. And that's the tone you hear through a musician's instrument.

Nothingman is already out. What's next for Age of Ruin? Touring, more music...?

We are going to be very busy for a while! Nothingman drops on October 17, and as we close out 2025 into the dawn of 2026, we've got multiple East Coast dates lined up, teaching the ways of the Nothingman. In the interim, we'll be cramming our calendars with writing sessions. We already have one track undergoing a final mixing process, which will follow Nothingman...but we're going to hold onto that track for a few months.

If you had to choose a moment from the album—a line, a riff, even a silence—that represents you as a band today, which would it be and why?

There's a moment in "The Ghosts We Carry" where the guitar solo reaches its feverish zenith, only to be immediately swallowed by the crushing weight of the final breakdown. That particular moment; that exquisite plunge into sonic despair, sends shivers down my spine every single time. It's there to remind you that in the afterlife, a good mosh pit is eternal.

What do you hope will stay with someone who listens to Nothingman in full for the first time?

"Nothingman" is an album painstakingly crafted to be devoured whole, a meticulously arranged feast of sound, with strategic songwriting choice and track placement designed to lead you further into the jungle. The album begins with "The Fixation," where a triumphant guitar harmony, like horns heralding an undead monarch, gives way to the relentless,

breakneck assault of "Heavy is the Crown" and "Lost in Shadows." The latter track concludes with a southern-rock style guitar solo, a fleeting, almost cruel whisper of misguided optimism, before an unsettling odd time signature plummets listeners headfirst into the existential void of "The Traveler." This song unfolds as a monolithic crescendo, leaving behind only the shattered remnants of hopes and dreams. Side A then culminates with the title track, an acoustic ballad that builds to a massive rock guitar solo, a final, desperate, yet ultimately futile cry into the vast, uncaring emptiness.

Side B awakens with "An Awakening," a chilling mirror image of Side A, as if stepping into an upside-down world where all your deepest fears have taken tangible form. The unsettling path continues, eerily familiar yet disturbingly new, before crashing into another wall of guttural noise with an updated, more potent recording of "Bleed for Better Days." "Lovesong" then closes Side B, its melancholic vocals, delivered by the enchanting siren Caitlin Schneiderman, a perfect, ethereal counterpoint to Ben's rugged, almost primal charm – a beautiful, haunting last gasp.

"Nothingman" embodies every element one seeks in a metalcore band, stripped bare and reassembled into a grotesque masterpiece: tight, staccato breakdowns that feel like a brutal fist to the gut, lush, swimming clean guitars that lull the unwary listener into a false sense of security before the inevitable onslaught, a tight, springy bass that vibrates the very soul, and raw, energetic vocals that tear at the eardrums like a banshee's shriek. Listeners, if they dare, will detect the subtle, unsettling whispers of Killswitch Engage, Five Finger Death Punch, In Flames, Darkest Hour, and Atreyu throughout the auditory journey of "Nothingman" – ghosts of influences past, all contributing to our new, glorious nightmare.

Thank you very much for your time and for joining TNT Radio.

Thank you for your time, I enjoyed talking with you!