**Pridelands – *Light Bends***

“There can be no hope without despair, no love without loss,” Pridelands’ vocalist/lyricist Joshua Cory explains of *Light Bends*’ core lyrical concept. “The chaos is the balance and we must bend toward its will, accepting the shadow as part of the light.”

“I never in a million years would’ve imagined that our debut album would end up this way,” Liam Fowler, the band’s guitarist/primary songwriter, proudly admits. “Being our debut album, we wanted it to be ‘perfect’. We wanted every song to be worthy of being a single – no filler whatsoever.”

Mission accomplished! As soon as you press play on *Light Bends*, you’ll be glued to the spot; all ears and powerless to this album’s extreme impact.

For the follow-up to this Melbourne-based, five-piece metal band’s second EP, 2018’s critically acclaimed *Any Colour You Desire*, Fowler’s aim was to create something “more moody, more artistically free”. Once *Any Colour You Desire*was out in the world, he noticed a shift: “My passion for music was reinvigorated. There was still a lot that I had to deal with personally in order to be giving it my best, but the way it all panned out felt like I was meant to be making music again, which I hadn't truly felt for a while. And I started feeling this way around the same time as I started writing material for the debut record.”

Opening track*I Reach Into Your Heart*mourns the devastating impact humanity has had on our planet. Kicking off with rhythmic bleeps that evoke heartbeat monitoring, layers of instrumentation gradually build to a crescendo of screaming riffs, galloping drums and unclean vocals: “*Anoint thee stains of humankind!*”

But Fowler says it was track three, *Parallel Lines* – the first song he started writing for Pridelands’ audacious debut record – that reignited his creative spark. “*Parallel Lines*set the tone for the album in the sense that, at the start of writing, a lot of this song’s parts articulated the feelings that I wanted to explore – instrumentally – in the record overall, which really helped me with some direction to kick off with,” Fowler recounts. *Parallel Lines* is a reeling beast of a track, boasting enough sonic ideas and seismic dynamic shifts within the one track to fill an entire album. Sinister bass thrums, shimmering riffs and alluring clean vocals soon make way for relentless drumming before unclean vocals take a vice-like stranglehold: “*I CAN’T LET YOU GO!*”

As spoilt for choice as Pridelands were in terms of choosing a lead single, they eventually decided on *Heavy Tongue*. Heavy both instrumentally and in terms of its message, this song shines a harsh spotlight on the corruption and mismanagement of the devastating bushfires that raged through Australia from 2019 to 2020. An ominous drone introduces the song, like a shame spiral spewing forth rapidfire riffs and pelting drums. Simultaneous clean and unclean vocals spit unanimous vitriol: “*By the time that you accept*/ *That we’re on fire*/ *The midnight oil spills out from the urn*/ *But all our beds are damned to burn away*.”

Pridelands shifted away from their usual songwriting method to embrace a “more internally collective” approach while creating *Light Bends*. “Rather than just me writing demos and then working closely with Jamie [Marinos, producer] on them, then Josh and Joe working from that, it was a lot more collaborative from the ground up this time around,” Fowler explains.

Drummer Joe Lipsham, who joined the band at the start of 2017, also brought a lot of killer ideas to the table for *Light Bends*: “Joe is very fast becoming an incredible songwriter. He had been writing demos and messing with a lot of sounds in the year leading up to [Pridelands] going into the studio. He was just pumping out all of this music and so it ended up being a completely different process – a lot more of Joe and I working together which was really, really cool. The ideas that Joe contributed ended up turning into the best tracks on the album, in my opinion. Without his input, the album wouldn’t be half as dynamic as it turned out to be.”

Although creating *Light Bends* was “a very long process, very on and off”, Fowler, in retrospect, is thankful that his band was afforded the luxury of time. “It allowed me to reflect and process the things that I was writing about in different ways; I could articulate myself and everything that was going into the record as best I could,” he points out. “Walking away for a week or two at a time would actually completely change the process and the moment I’d come back to something I’d have it, because I just knew what to do.”

Marinos sat in the producer’s chair for *Any Colour You Desire*and returned to the fold for *Light Bends*, with Pridelands heading up to Joe’s hometown of Tathra, New South Wales to record their debut album.

“Jamie is someone that I’ve always really looked up to when it comes to playing, writing and recording music; he’s one of the most creative people I know,” Fowler extols. “The way he manages to get the best out of me, even when I didn’t know that existed – he’s just incredible. To have him there to bounce ideas off creates this new energy that just isn’t there when I’m by myself.”

Even though COVID-related lockdown meant that Pridelands were forced to complete this album without Marinos, Fowler reflects, “In terms of us creatively, the lockdown really did throw Joe, Josh and I in the deep end when it came to producing and engineering the rest of the record, and we came out of that on top; without any of that happening, we wouldn’t have progressed as far ahead.”

*Light Bends* was mixed by acclaimed producer George Lever at G1 Productions, UK (Sleep Token, Loathe). “Working with him was an absolute dream,” Fowler enthuses. Pridelands are also thrilled to reveal that their debut album was mastered by Ermin Hamidovic at Systematic Productions (Architects, Northlane, Periphery).

The arrangements throughout Pridelands’ striking 11-song collection are supple, lurching, unpredictable and exhilarating. Prepare to be blown away by sudden shifts in tone as serene moments are invaded, unexpectedly, by brutality and chaos. An undercurrent of unease simmers menacingly below the surface, but there’s a sense that catharsis is just out of reach. Pridelands take aim and really take it there on their debut record.

After winning the triple j Unearthed competition to perform on UNIFY Gathering’s main stage in 2019, Pridelands ticked off a major band goal early on in their career. “Playing on stages like that is what we wanna be doing,” Fowler confirms, “so to get the opportunity to play UNIFY was just out of this world.”

*Light Bends*is one hellavu wild ride; prepare for the best possible kind of mayhem when Pridelands deliver these blistering songs in a live setting.

**PRIDELANDS IS:**Joshua Cory (clean vocals), Mason Bunt (unclean vocals), Liam Fowler (guitar), Daniel Lohrey (bass) and Joe Lipsham (drums).