**Biography – 156/Silence – Narrative Album**

*So be still. Have a seat with me and take this pill of happiness. The sky won't open up unless your smile has escaped your lips…The victors chose the narratives but I wrote something for the sick ones.*

A soundtrack for those whose story and struggles are seldom reflected in the glossy pages of life’s shining field guide for success, 156/Silence’s impassioned soliloquy stands apart, skirting the shallow pool of false pleasantries and descending deeper into the ominous yet hauntingly beautiful ruminations of a frustrated conscience.

Having endured the destructive impact of a festering disenchantment slowly eating away at a space once filled with love and splendor, 156 vehemently refuse to mince words when chronicling their own experience. And, as a work distinctly designed for the downtrodden and built to be shouted from the center stage spotlight, it’s fitting that the Pennsylvania quintet’s latest album is dedicated not to the inspirational paragons of light and virtue, but to the often-unexplored reality of those frequently left alone and empty-handed on a far less forgiving path. For although the uplifting escapades of society’s golden children may ring out across crowded halls and seep freely into the collective consciousness, *Narrative* is an ode to the unapologetically grim, the unabashedly emotional, and the surprisingly relatable scars that come with simply being human in a less than perfect world.

Written around two years ago during the height of the global standstill that left the band and many of their peers reeling with a culmination of mixed concerns and inspiration alike, Jack Murray (vocals), Jimmy Howell (guitar), Ryan Wilkinson (guitar/vocals), Kyle O’Connell (drums), and Lukas Booker (bass) gathered to record their third full-length album, armed with both a mountain of material to process internally and even more to put into words.

“Most of the lyrics were created during an obviously dark time for pretty much all musicians,” Murray and Wilkinson recalled with solemn expressions. “We began working on this album right as everything started shutting down and we had to cancel tours in support of our last record [*Irrational Pull*] which we were just getting ready to release. As you can imagine, that was a pretty bleak time for us as a band and there are a lot of angry thoughts strung together to make songs. All of this put us in a really difficult place mentally. But, having to push through this despite everything is what ultimately fueled writing *Narrative*.”

Aiming to represent a selection of raw emotions ranging from painfully falling out of love to giving in to a growing sense of all-consuming apathy, downcast themes stand out as a powerful uniting feature of the album as a whole.

Messages such as the difficulty of amending old habits (To Take Your Place), embracing punishment for the issues we’ve caused (For All To Blame), and recognizing that everything will ultimately lose its power and expire (A Past Embrace), can be found unfolding throughout the tracks. And, as a body of work made to be experienced in full, one can appreciate the balance of each of the album’s eleven tracks playing off the strengths and darkness of their adjacent counterparts like the flowing verses of a single well-executed poem; a feat which becomes even more impressive when considering that the project was temporarily paused in the middle of the writing process to develop and record what would become the quintet’s 2021 EP *Don’t Hold Your Breath*. However, this was not the only influential way in which 156/Silence adapted to the turmoil and conflict surrounding them.

Needless to say, the shift in the band’s environment indeed resulted in areas of cohesion. Yet, this new atmosphere was also responsible for driving an unanticipated fork into 156’s usual plans, forcing the metal outfit to return to the drawing board in terms of their sonic approach.

Describing themselves as “very much a live band,” the distinct lack of in-person events clearly weighed heavily on the minds of the group throughout the last few years, eventually fating them to pivot directions. But, as the band would soon come to discover, while change may receive a bad rap, it’s not in itself inherently negative. Rather, deciding to focus on listening pleasure versus live consumption, the quintet’s redesigned outlook allowed for a pleasantly unexpected silver lining; the ability and willingness to experiment with various new sounds and techniques.

Produced by Andy Nelson (Weekend Nachos) and mastered by Will Putney (The Ghost Inside, Knocked Loose, Every Time I Die), 156/Silence only required a week at Chicago’s Bricktop Recording to track their most experimental work to date. Obviously, with such a short runway, the team was clearly inspired and prepared to make the most out of every moment. But, to truly push the limits, the quintet needed to first assess where they stood and where they wanted to go.

Identifying *Irrational Pull* as an album primarily intended to be enjoyed in the mosh pit of a packed sweaty room, and *Don’t Hold Your Breath* as a prelude to their current listener-centric material, *Narrative* sits at an ideal crossroad as a project both capable of holding its own on a hardcore stage while simultaneously dazzling listeners via an at-home record player, through a quality set of headphones, or even blasted through one’s car speakers as they fly down the road.

Revealing a slightly softer side to the band, 156/Silence were not afraid to lean into elements such as spoken word, electronic touches, and even some vintage tools to scratch their creative itch. And, through the incorporation of these accents, the band was able to accomplish one of their main goals of the album as a whole: create something not only heartfelt and realistic, but a piece of art that catches the ear.

Sharing his favorite studio memory and innovative element, guitarist Jimmy Howell explained his love of older electronic and vaporwave music, recalling his joy when producer Andy Nelson brought out a couple of 80’s analog synths and put in the hours to get the system ready for a few key notes:

“I’ve been trying to sneak them in there for a long time.” Howell stated with a laugh. “Not everyone was really on board at first. But eventually, with not playing live and writing a different kind of album, we all felt that the timing was right. We were more open, and in the end, the songs turned out to be even more special than before.”

Determined to never recreate the same record twice, 156/Silence have found that the power of a great album mirrors that of a great book. Personal, relatable, but never replicable, *Narrative* hits all the marks. As a whole, the record grips listeners like the pages of a psychological thriller you can’t quite seem to put down. And, for literature and music alike, there is no higher compliment.