

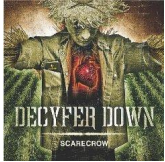
## Decyfer Down – Scarecrow (2013)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 10 January 2014 16:46 - Last Updated Monday, 15 January 2018 20:50

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01. *Memory* 02. *Westboro* 03. *Worst Enemy* 04. *Say Hello* 05. *Bleeding Lies* 06. *Fight To Win* 07. *Scarecrow* 08. *The River* 09. *Some Thing Never Change* 10. *So In Love* Chris Clonts – guitar, vocals T.J. Harris – guitar, vocals Paul Ebersold – bass, guitar John Radford – drums Nick Buda – drums Timm Jones – drums Brandon Mills – guitar Seth Mosley – guitar Sadler Vaden – guitar

I have to say when Caleb Oliver left Decyfer Down abruptly in 2009, I was skeptical of whether or not they would be able to find someone that was capable enough of not only taking his place, but someone who was able to take the band to the next level. My question was answered when former Fighting Instinct front-man TJ Harris became the band's new singer, just before the release of their second album, *Crash*. Well it's been nearly four and a half years since *Crash* released and fans may have been wondering, will another Decyfer Down release a new record? Well it's finally here! A new Decyfer Down record. And when I say new, not only is it a new album, but the band has managed to recreate themselves musically and delve more into the source of their musical influences with this one.

Upon early listens of the samples that were released by the label for *Scarecrow*, my first response was "What happened to the heavy drop-C tuning of *End of Grey* and *Crash*?" My first thought was "Uh oh". But as I continued listening, I found myself liking the new sound more and more. The record tears open with the heavy rocker, "Memory" – the first song that TJ wrote as a member of the band. The second track, "Westboro" is probably one of the most blatant stands against the hate fueled (and so-called) church Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, KS that I have heard in a while. It's great that the band wasn't afraid to step up here, fed up with the ridiculousness! The lyrics from the chorus speak volumes of how they feel, "Just go back to Westboro baby/Where they love to hate/Just go back to Westboro baby/Devil said you can stay/In hell is just the same". No mystery in opinion there. "Say Hello" is probably one of the most personal songs on the record, according to TJ Harris. With a melodic grunge rock sound reminiscent of Soundgarden, the song talks from the perspective of Harris' wife Nancy and a

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friend of hers from her teenage years who, while trying to commit suicide after a long bout with drug addiction, accidentally shoots her grandmother through the wall in another room. Through the seemingly senseless tragedy, the young girl is painted as the town outcast. The words of the chorus should be re-affirming to this girl, that she is still loved and prayed for, as the chorus says “I still love you like yesterday/I still hope for your tomorrow”.

The first time I heard TJ Harris sing, as part of his previous group Fighting Instinct, I thought, “Wow, this guy sounds a lot like Chris Cornell (Soundgarden)”, wonder if he’s a fan or was it just a striking coincidence? While interviewing him recently, I found that my assumptions were true – he is a fan. You can really see this similarity on the track “Bleeding Lies”. The message to me talks about struggle – one which I am sure we have all dealt with in life. It’s through Christ that we can truly be mended and healed. The title track “Scarecrow” starts out with a low rumbling rock assault before jumping into the first verse with “Hey you Mr. Holy One don’t let no dirty soul get through that door/Stand tall as the wicked ones drag their dirty sins across your floor/I see right through the emptiness in you/Hollow shell straight from hell”. The song speaks about the often labeled hypocrites who appear as Christians on the outside, but often times on the inside are so overly critical about others that they don’t notice that they’re ‘chasing’ people off from the cross. It’s these ‘scarecrows’ that give Christianity the black eye and really keep people from getting saved. It’s a realization of Matthew 7:5 which says “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Sadly, it happens more often than it should and all this destructive behavior does is lead people astray.

One of my favorites on the album would have to be “The River”, which starts out with the ‘good ole’ country feel before progressing into a full-fledged rock number. One could argue that this one could be the ‘worship rock’ song from the album, as it takes many elements from the hymnal and adds some sweet guitar licks and a self-analyzing message which reaffirms that “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” to God, (Isaiah 64:6) therefore leaving us dirty and in need of a good spiritual cleansing. The album wraps up with the softest (if you want to call it that) offering from the album with “So In Love”, which is also one of the AC singles from the album. With a message of longing for God, finding one’s true identity in Him and proclaiming love for the Him. It’s a great way to end the album on a positive note.

Decyfer Down took a huge risk with Scarecrow in changing a lot of the core sound that most fans have been used to and loved from the previous records, End of Grey and Crash. As a band, they grew tired of being boxed in to one kind of sound and through a huge leap of faith, stepped into unknown, not really knowing how it would be accepted by the masses. Is everyone going to be accepting of this new direction musically that the band has taken? No. But I for one think that Scarecrow is one of the best solid rock records to come along in years. It was not only entertaining, but had a great message and the overall feel really took me back to my own rock

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influences – a path I had not ventured down in a quite some time. With Scarecrow, Decyfer Down delivers another solid rock record and redefines themselves still, as one of Christian rock's most talented groups. --- Jay Heilman, christianmusicreview.org

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