

COLD

YEAR OF THE SPIDER

Scooter Ward : Vocals
Kelly Hayes : Guitar
Jeremy Marshall : Bass
Terry Balsamo : Guitar
Sam McCandless : Drums

Who do you trust?

When sadness becomes a weight on your days and loneliness an alarm in your nights, do you have someone who will listen and maybe help you along?

If you're one of the millions who look to music for meaning, that person might be someone like Scooter Ward, whose performances with COLD have created a bond that's unusual even in the turbulent world of star and fan.

But what if you're on the other side of this picture? What if you're the one singing at arenas night after night, throwing everything you've got through a blaze of stage lights into a dark and hungry room, then leaving to do it again somewhere else tomorrow?

This was Scooter's life, nonstop, for eighteen months, starting when COLD launched a marathon road trek in 2000. His ties to the band are long and tight, but times were especially rough for him during much of this period -- rough enough that he began to seek a kind of connection that even his friends couldn't offer.

And so the search began that would turn COLD's music toward a dramatic new direction, based on a star's decision to believe in his fans as they've believed him.

This is the story behind Year of the Spider, the new COLD album and an extraordinary gesture of trust repaid by an artist to his fans.

"If you can make the world a stage for me, then I hope you can hear me scream."

■ "Cure My Tragedy"

"Scooter's lyrics *always* surprise me," muses COLD bassist Jeremy Marshall. "When I hear what he's written for the music we've come up with, it's like, 'Holy shit! I never expected you to say something like that!' That's always been true, but never like on this album."

Year of the Spider, in fact, caught the whole band by surprise. Of course, when they finally came off the road, took a short break, and then started hashing out new material in January 2002, they sensed an energy level that was unusual even for them. After 15 years together, working up from high school gigs in Atlanta through getting their break on a demo produced by Fred Durst and on through two albums and countless miles on tour with headliners like Marilyn Manson, Weezer, and Limp Bizkit, their tightness had become intuitive, their intensity undimmed.

But even they didn't know what direction Scooter would take lyrically.

On their first two albums, Cold (1998) and 13 Ways to Bleed Onstage (2000), their dark songs were slashed by deadly hooks and driven by body-punch beats, with lyrics whose passionate despair was broad enough to draw massive fan support.

That worked, but only up to a point. Somewhere in the past couple of years, Scooter's life began to change, and even as he rocked packed houses month after month through 2000 and '01, those old songs began to lose their meaning.

More and more, very real and immediate issues intruded on his life. "A lot of things were going on," he says, speaking quietly. "My sister got cancer. She's still really sick, but she's such a strong person. She's like, 'Nothing can get me.' Meanwhile, my girlfriend has gotten cancer too, and I'm trying to give her the same kind of power that my sister has."

These crises profoundly affected Scooter as work began on *Year of the Spider*. "On the previous albums I was doing almost a surreal kind of writing," he remembers. "I'd put myself in other people's positions, trying to feel that kind of pain. What that did, I think, was to make the songs kind of vague; twenty different people could have twenty different interpretations of what they meant.

"On this one, it was much more real pain. ... It was me."

Taking the tracks that he and the band had worked out, Scooter departed from his usual lyric routine. "The music always told me what to write," he explains, "so back in the day I would just wing it. This time, it had to be a lot more personal. I had to tell the truth about what's going on. But I wasn't sure how far I wanted to go. Did I want to let everyone into my life that much? I thought about it, then I knew that this was what I needed to do."

Seeking seclusion, Scooter left L.A., checked into a hotel in Hawaii, and stayed inside for a week and a half, not daring to leave until he had finished every song. When rehearsals began after that, the band was, frankly, stunned with what their singer had to say.

"When I heard 'Cure My Tragedy,' the hair stood up on my arms," remembers guitarist Kelly Hayes. "It still does, every time I hear that song."

"On a lot of these songs, I was like, 'Dude, you're killing me!'" agrees guitarist Terry Balsamo. "I mean, 'Rain Song,' 'Wasted Years' ... a lot of them hit the spot for me."

Committed now to spreading their cards out with total candor, the band turned its approach to recording inside out. The idea now was to present Scooter's singing more clearly than ever, so that each word would fully convey its meaning and emotion. To reach this goal, they had to hook up with a producer who understood their needs and had the chops to make it all happen.

That meant Howard Benson, whose gift for putting muscle into the vocal mix helped drive P.O.D. to the top of the charts. Scooter had already crossed paths with Benson while doing guest vocals on his sessions for Reveille. Impressed, Scooter invited him to produce "Gone Away," the COLD contribution to last year's *WWE Tough Enough: Volume 2*. "We knew he had to do our record, because he makes us sound like we always wanted to sound," Scooter insists. "He really bears down on vocalists; he's tough, but he knows what he wants, and he does a great job."

As Benson focused mainly on the vocals, Mike Plotnikoff became the point man in finessing COLD's instrumental tracks. With a résumé that ranges from Kiss, Aerosmith, and AC/DC through the Cranberries and Van Halen, the veteran engineer had had no trouble highlighting the details of their sound without losing any of its power. "That helped us keep a lot of the old-school COLD feel," Hayes says, "while at the same time sounding like nothing we'd ever done before."

Session went quickly. The band began recording on July 9 at Bay 7 in Studio City; progress was so swift that within four days Sam McCandless had finished cutting the drum tracks. "The band had been playing with Manson and Staind, so I wanted the drums to sound *huge*," he explains, "like dump trucks falling from the sky. Howard and Mike got that right away, and since it usually takes a week or two to get the drum tracks down, I was blown away."

The pace stayed brisk: Kelly finished his guitar parts in two weeks, and four weeks after that, with recording and editing being done simultaneously, *Year of the Spider* was a wrap. In high creative gear, COLD began

ramping up for a new round of live dates, beginning with intimate club gigs in March and then, after Flip/Geffen's album release on April 29, building to larger venues. From that point, the future looks familiar: a calendar crammed with concerts, long miles on the road, long hours on the bus ...

But something has changed -- in the essence of COLD, and in their bond they feel with the kids who pack the house and push toward the stage at their shows. "There's darkness in this music," Scooter concludes, "but because of the inspiration I've gotten from my sister, and the trust that our fans have shown us, there's light too, and this sense that everything's going to be better."

One has to believe...and trust.

COLD
(SOME BACKGROUND)

COLD will follow the gold success of 2000's 13 Ways To Bleed On Stage with their third album, Year Of The Spider, due out April 29 on Flip/Geffen. Marking their first album with producer Howard Benson (P.O.D.'s current triple platinum Satellite), YEAR OF THE SPIDER brings the emotional turbulence of singer, songwriter and guitarist Scooter Ward more into focus than before, in a distinguished sonic mix that's both moody and melodic. The first single "Stupid Girl," features special guest Rivers Cuomo of Weezer.

On YEAR OF THE SPIDER, COLD turn in inspired performances that chart their artistic growth on songs like "Remedy," "Wasted Years," "Suffocate," "Don't Belong" and "Cure My Tragedy."

COLD's first two albums drew praise from the media. In Alternative Press' "The 100 Best Bands Of 2001" issue, Rob Cherry noted that "Corrosive is the single best word to describe the band, from Scooter Ward's nicotine-marinated baritone to the band's heavily processed guitars. Look beyond the contemporary aggro-rock stylings--that low-tuned, over-turning-car-engine guitar thing and Ward's liberal use of expletives--and you'll discover an art-punk-band dying to support Disintegration-era Cure."

As a live act, COLD are noted for their powerful shows. Beyond their own headlining concerts, they've performed with such artists as Limp Bizkit, Staind, Weezer and Marilyn Manson, and have appeared on such high-profile tours as Anger Management and Tattoo The Earth.

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