**Godsticks Biography - Inescapable**

**Godsticks** are a four-piece progressive heavy rock band from South Wales. Having toured extensively throughout Europe with The Aristocrats and The Pineapple Thief, they’ve developed into an explosive, high energy live act performing heavy yet melodic progressive rock. Drummer Tom Price and guitarist Gavin Bushell bring an accomplished and aggressive playing style to back up Darran Charles’ unique vocal sound and Dan Nelson’s driving bass. Their fifth full length studio album ***Inescapable*** will be released via Kscope in February 2020.

Although not strictly a concept album, the band wanted a definite theme running through this album, one of a more personal nature. Shining an inquisitive light on **Charles’** struggle with inner demons seemed one way of giving the songs a new level of intimacy.

*“Lyrically”* said Charles *“I’ve always shared personal thoughts, feelings and experiences but in a very ambiguous way. I have a strange relationship with music, and especially playing guitar. I would struggle to survive without either, but equally they have made my life mentally torturous because my own self-worth is completely wrapped up in them. I used to be very much a perfectionist in my early years, and whilst some people may wear that as a badge of honour, I eventually viewed it as huge heavy weight dragging down. It was a long time before I arrived at the realisation that perfection was impossible to achieve. For* ***Inescapable*** *I thought I’d be a little more self-reflective than with previous albums and perhaps examine and expose some of those inner demons.”*

Musically, the band are still their heavy selves, with chugging guitar riffs, pounding bass and drums and but there are simple and catchy melodies aplenty on ***Inescapable*** that the band felt were perhaps not in abundance on previous albums.

*“With each new album we try to better ourselves, which I’m sure is true for all bands and artists, but we wanted to simplify the melodies and phrasing especially with the vocals. With every album I think we’re increasingly embracing a sort of ‘less is more’ approach.”*

It’s perhaps **Charles’** vocals that have undergone the biggest change on ***Inescapable***, largely as result of working closely with Kscope.

*“We really like working as part of a team and having been an independent band for so long, the benefits of working with a family like Kscope are incalculable – they’re tremendously supportive. Johnny Wilks especially was a huge influence and even an inspiration regarding my own vocal performance. Whether it be guitar, song writing or vocals I’m always keen to improve so I listened with great interest when, after digesting the album demos, he appraised my vocal performance. He made me aware of my vocal comfort zone and encouraged me to push myself further into higher registers. He also pointed out parts where I really let the emotion shine through the vocal delivery. As a result of this collaboration and the changes I made, I genuinely think that this is my best vocal performance to date.”*

Instrumentally, things have changed for Godsticks too, and the ‘less is more’ approach filtered through their respective instruments.

*‘’When writing, the aim from the beginning was to constantly ask: ‘Would this song stand on its own, even if it was just guitar and vocals?’. So, we ended up stripping back a lot of these songs to their bare bones as one way of ensuring we have a strong melody and great accompaniment”*

Godsticks once again teamed up with producer James Loughrey [Skindred] to produce the album and tracked parts at the world-renowned Monnow Valley Studios. Says Charles ‘*’We love the drum room at Monnow Valley: it’s so vibrant and brings out the best of any drum kit you set up there. Plus, there’s such a great vibe to the place: it’s in the middle of nowhere so the peaceful surroundings afford an opportunity to solely concentrate on performance. Tom and Dan especially revel in the chilled-out atmosphere and every time we record there their playing seems to go up another level. We’ve worked with James ever since* ***Emergence*** *and I don’t see us working with anyone else anytime soon. There’s a huge level of trust and faith we have in him and he always has an influence over the drum, bass and guitar sounds. He’s invaluable when it comes to producing our sound, and on this album especially I think he’s helped achieve the best vocal sound we’ve ever had.”*

•••

**Band History**

Godsticks burst onto the progressive rock scene way back in 2009 with their eclectic EP, titled simply Godsticks. The sheer originality of the music was greeted with enthusiasm by critics and music fans alike, with the band being considered “a refreshing approach to the contemporary music scene”.

In July 2010, the band released their debut full-length album **Spiral Vendetta**– the culmination of 16 months of writing and a lengthy production process.  The extensive production proved worth it as the album received an unanimously positive response, being described as ‘mesmerising’. As Jez Rowden of DPRP said: *"Spiral Vendetta has it all in spades with chops, emotion, musicality and imagination, the songs pack a breath-taking amount into concise pieces and the album in no way outstays its welcome."*

A worldwide distribution deal was secured on the strength of ***Spiral Vendetta*** and the band completed a number of tours and festivals, supporting such acts as ‘The Pineapple Thief’. In March 2012, Godsticks were also the supporting act on a 5-date UK tour with ‘The Aristocrats’; featuring world-renowned guitarist Guthrie Govan. The tour was a huge success and introduced the band to a much wider audience.

At the end of that tour the band went into the studio to record ***The Envisage Conundrum***. The recent and extensive live work had influenced the newer material and it became much heavier and more guitar driven. None of the band's vaunted originality was lost but The Envisage Conundrum represented a more focused and settled band, still offering an eclectic array of songs, but in a much more accessible package.

***The Envisage Conundrum*** was released in 2013 and packed a hard punch in places, whilst maintaining a steady move forward in musicianship and writing. Kerrang Magazine said: *"From the stuttering hard rock of Caught In A Bind to epic three-parter Borderstomp's electric jazz, we get flashes of innovation and virtuoso class"*. In 2013 Godsticks supported ‘The Mike Keneally Band’ on a 13-date tour of Europe and co-headlined a UK tour with ‘Knifeworld’. A three-week European tour in 2014 supporting ‘The Aristocrats’ followed, and that tour in particular indirectly forged a path towards an even heavier sound.

In April 2014, Godsticks continued to explore the heavier side of their musical style and set to work writing their third full-length studio album ***Emergence*** (released September 2015). A great deal of research was spent in achieving the sound they had in mind for this album. Drums were tracked at Monnow Valley Studio in November 2014, with the incredible and acclaimed live room providing the perfect foundation for the heavy guitar tracks that were to follow.

***Emergence*** was produced by James Loughrey (known for his work with acts such as Skindred, Manic Street Preachers and Def Leppard). It received great reviews and signified a milestone in the progression of the band from complex eclectic prog-rock to a more focused, heavier progressive metal style filled with addictive grooves and memorable choruses. Total Guitar Magazine said, *“Emergence is a rare thing – an album of technically astounding prog-metal replete with hooks and melodies".* Typically for Godsticks, who are difficult to pin down to a specific genre, ***Emergence*** has been likened to a variety of different bands at the heavier end of the progressive spectrum, including Mastodon, Rush, and Alice in Chains.

The band line-up that features on ***Emergence*** had existed since 2010. Drummer, Steve Roberts, was hired by founding member Darran Charles to play on the debut EP and subsequently joined the band. Bassist Dan Nelson was brought on board a short time later (original bass player Jason Marsh left in late 2009), having been discovered by Darran via a YouTube video Dan had posted of himself playing a Godsticks tune. In September 2015 Steve Roberts departed the band and an additional guitarist, Gavin Bushell, joined along with drummer Tom Price.

Godsticks subsequently went on to be signed by Kscope records and released their fourth studio album ***Faced With Rage*** in 2017 (described by Prog Magazine as *“A winning blend of channelled aggression and emotional depth, combining lyrical intelligence and instrumental fireworks”*) in addition to playing headline shows and festivals across the U.K. in 2018. Lyrically, ***Faced With Rage*** explored the theme of people dealing with emotional conflict in different scenarios, and who have a powerful desire to change their behaviour or situation. The four-piece line up with new drummer Tom Price and guitarist Gavin Bushell brought a more aggressive playing style to back up Darran Charles' unique vocal sound and Dan Nelson’s driving bass, resulting in the band’s most successful album release to date.

The band’s fifth full length studio album ***Inescapable*** will be released via Kscope in February 2020 and will be followed by headline shows across the UK along with European festivals slots.

**godsticks.co.uk**