

DREAM THEATER

Each chapter of life prepares us for the next. As seasons come and go in cycles, we gain invaluable experience, beginning anew from a place of wisdom.

It's as if we get to start over with all of the knowledge that we wish we had the first time around...

In one respect, Dream Theater have returned to their roots as James LaBrie [vocals], John Petrucci [guitar], John Myung [bass], and Jordan Rudess [keyboards] once again unite with Mike Portnoy [drums] during the fortieth anniversary of their formation. At the same time, these five old friends enter a bold new era fueled by some of the most focused, formidable, and fiery music of their career. In essence, they're celebrating how far they've come by forging ahead together once more. They're also harnessing the memories of the past and the promise of the future in order to make the most of the present.

Ultimately, the GRAMMY® Award-winning group's sixteenth full-length album, *Parasomnia* [Inside Out Music/Sony Music], represents both where they came from and where they're going as not only bandmates, but as brothers.

"When you listen to this, I hope you're able to hear, the excitement, the camaraderie, and feeling of being reunited as brothers," affirms Petrucci. "All of that is reflected in the music. It's very driven and purposeful. I hope it sounds like the Dream Theater you remember and recall when Mike was in the band, but maybe even a little more elevated."

The last four decades saw Dream Theater quietly morph from a collective of college buddies into progressive metal trailblazers. Beyond selling millions of records worldwide and gathering over a billion streams, their unprecedented journey has been earmarked by one unforgettable milestone after another. The career-launching *Images & Words* graced *Rolling Stone's* "100 Greatest Metal Albums of All-Time," while *Awake* claimed #1 on *Guitar World's* "Superunknown: 50 Iconic Albums That Defined 1994." In addition to emerging as *Classic Rock's* "15th Greatest Concept Album," *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes from a Memory* toppled a fan-voted *Rolling Stone* poll as the "Number One All-Time Progressive Rock Album." They also shook the charts with three Top 10 debuts on the *Billboard* 200 and headlined sold out shows everywhere from Radio City Music Hall to Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

Out of three career nominations, the band garnered a GRAMMY® Award in the category of "Best Metal Performance" for "The Alien" from 2021's *A View From The Top of the World*. The latter also incited widespread critical applause. *Guitar World* professed, "there's a palpable sense of discovery throughout *A View from the Top of the World*," and *PROG* raved, "Not just proper Dream Theater, then, but something ever-so-slightly bigger and better." *Consequence* attested, "*A View From the Top of the World* shows that the quintet is still offering music that is easily on par with their earlier efforts."

You could say the stars aligned for their next phase. The band hadn't recorded an album or toured with Portnoy since 2009's *Black Clouds & Silver Linings*. However, he never left their orbit. 2020 saw him hold down the drums on Petrucci's solo album *Terminal Velocity*. A year later, he reteamed with the guitarist and Rudess for the instrumental *Liquid Tension Experiment 3*.

With the fortieth anniversary nigh, the opportunity presented itself for the group's most celebrated lineup to reform and record.

"The time was right," says Petrucci. "We had finished the last album and tour cycle, and we were about to go back into the studio. If it was ever going to happen, it had to happen when we could do it at the start of another record. We've been personally intertwined with Portnoy since we were teenagers. We were in each other's wedding parties, and we even had kids at the same time. Our families are completely connected. We've known one another for so long, and it was a natural conversation."

With sights set on a new body of work, the musicians entered Dream Theater HQ during February 2024. Expanding the live room, beefing up the studio, and hanging up some of Portnoy's personal Dream Theater memorabilia, the guys locked into a creative flow. Throughout the process, they opted to follow a lyrical thread for the entirety of the project a la seminal work such as 2002's *Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence*. This time around, they actually dove into the darkest recesses of sleep itself.

"Parasomnia is a term for disruptive, sleep-related disturbances including sleepwalking, sleep paralysis, and night terrors," Petrucci elaborates. "Since our band name is literally a theater that plays while you're dreaming, it's crazy we didn't think of this sooner," he laughs.

The album opens with the instrumental overture "In The Arms of Morpheus," which introduces musical themes utilized throughout the album. The buzz of an alarm clock, the crunch of an eight-string guitar (*making its sole appearance on the LP*), and the dread of the keyboards plunge listeners into the dark embrace of *Parasomnia*.

"In particular, the sound effects signal someone drifting into a dream state and experiencing different parasomnia events," says Petrucci. "We decided to connect the record not only lyrically, but also musically. Some of these motifs find their way back throughout the entire seventy-two minute listening experience."

The guys kickstart this next era with the single "Night Terror." Ominous keys dissolve into a menacing guitar melody punctuated by a thunderous drum pattern. The guitar launches into a pinpoint-precise thrash barrage as LaBrie sets the scene, "*Headed for the slaughter, angels cry for her tonight.*" Cinematic keys lock into a classic call-and-response with a fret-burning solo accented by powerhouse percussion.

"That was actually the first song we wrote together," he notes. "I think you can hear the excitement of what it was like for Mike to be back. We were firing on all cylinders. Right away, you can tell it's going to be a heavier and darker record. '*Night Terror*' is the first disturbance. You wake up partially awake *and* asleep, so you panic and scream. The song pulls you through this experience."

Meanwhile, "A Broken Man" storms out of the gate on a pummeling avalanche of jagged riffing and furious drumming offset by soaring keys and skyscraping vocals.

"It hits you over the head right away," he grins. "James wrote the lyrics about sleep disturbances stemming from PTSD. So, it adopts the perspective of a combat veteran. The source of this vet's sleep disturbance is trauma experienced in battle."

Then, there's "Dead Asleep." A pinch harmonic squeals over a fluid and fiery riff, stirring up the oncoming sonic and emotional storm. "It's based on true events," he reveals. "This sleepwalker inadvertently kills his wife. In his dream, he's being attacked by robbers though. He wakes and realizes what he's done. He calls the cops, and they arrest him. However, he's acquitted with a sleepwalking defense because he has a history of reported sleep disturbances."

"Midnight Messiah" comes to life on the trail of a spider-y riff crawling through a hypnotic haze. It marks Portnoy's first lyrical contribution since 2009 and hinges on the thematic inversion of "*a person who became alive and felt the most powerful inside of the dream and looks forward to falling back to sleep to be this 'Midnight Messiah'.*"

The interlude "Are We Dreaming?" collates a choir of eerie and ethereal voices speaking to the traumatic events possible during sleeping as we work to distinguish reality from dreams.

"Bend The Clock" allows light to pierce the darkness. The group switches gears with a ballad-size vocal and hummable outro solo. "Lyrically, it wonders, '*If I could turn back the clock or bend time and experience life without these nighttime traumas, would life be better?*' The music is uplifting, but the lyrics are bittersweet. It's a different vibe."

They conclude this trip with "The Shadow Man Incident." Clocking in at just under twenty minutes, it soundtracks a confrontation with an apparition (*who may or may not be in the room*) underscored by a military-style snare roll, Latin-inspired breakdown, unconventionally unnerving chords, and big screen-worthy orchestration spiked with the chug of a seven-string.

“We had planned to write an epic for this record,” he recalls. “It doesn’t happen accidentally, but it also sounds like a band playing live, really jamming, and going for it. Sleep paralysis is when you are awakened while you’re still in REM sleep. You can see, but you can’t move. It’s a phenomenon that has happened for centuries, and it’s documented by countless people. It’s like a demon is sitting on your chest. Some of these accounts claim to have seen the same figure known as ‘*The Shadow Man*’ or ‘*The Hat Man*.’ The final words are, ‘*Maybe leave a light on tonight*’. You don’t want this guy to come for you, so it was very fitting.”

In the end, *Parasomnia* is dynamic, dramatic, and definitive Dream Theater.

“When you listen to this, it would be great if you feel like you actually experienced these events with us,” Petrucci leaves off. “We want you to immerse yourself in it. This band means the world to me. It’s my creative identity, and it’s the basis for my career as a professional musician. Not everybody gets to make music their life, record, and see the world. The best part is that this is a brotherhood. When a band has been together for forty years, that’s a legacy, a history, and a family.” – *Rick Florino*, October 2024

LINE-UP

James LaBrie – Vocals

John Petrucci – Guitar

John Myung – Bass

Jordan Rudess – Keyboards

Mike Portnoy – Drums

SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

- *A View From The Top Of The World* (2021)
- *Distance Over Time* (2019)
- *The Astonishing* (2016)
- *Dream Theater* (2013)
- *A Dramatic Turn Of Events* (2011)
- *Black Clouds & Silver Linings* (2009)
- *Systematic Chaos* (2007)
- *Octavarium* (2005)
- *Train Of Thought* (2003)
- *Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence* (2002)
- *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes From A Memory* (1999)
- *Falling Into Infinity* (1997)
- *Awake* (1994)
- *Images And Words* (1992)
- *When Dream And Day Unite* (1989)

BOILER

Beyond selling millions of records worldwide and gathering a billion-plus streams, Dream Theater have quietly evolved into progressive metal trailblazers over the course of an unprecedented journey earmarked by one unforgettable milestone after another. The career-launching *Images & Words* graced *Rolling Stone's* "100 Greatest Metal Albums of All-Time," while *Awake* claimed #1 on *Guitar World's* "Superunknown: 50 Iconic Albums That Defined 1994." In addition to emerging as *Classic Rock's* "15th Greatest Concept Album," *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes from a Memory* toppled a fan-voted *Rolling Stone* poll as the "Number One All-Time Progressive Rock Album." They shook the charts with three Top 10 debuts on the *Billboard 200* and headlined sold out shows everywhere from Radio City Music Hall to Red Rocks Amphitheatre. The band garnered a GRAMMY® Award in the category of "Best Metal Performance" for "The Alien" from 2021's *A View From The Top of the World*. Of the latter, *PROG* raved, "Not just proper Dream Theater, then, but something ever-so-slightly bigger and better," and *Consequence* attested, "A View From the Top of the World shows that the quintet is still offering music that is easily on par with their earlier efforts." Now, Dream Theater have returned to their roots as James LaBrie [vocals], John Petrucci [guitar], John Myung [bass], and Jordan Rudess [keyboards] reunite with Mike Portnoy [drums] during their fortieth anniversary. Simultaneously, these five old friends enter a bold new era fueled by some of the most focused, formidable, and fiery music of their career. They're harnessing the memories of the past and the promise of the future in order to make the most of the present. Ultimately, the group's sixteenth full-length album, *Parasomnia* [Inside Out Music/Sony Music], represents both where they came from and where they're going as not only bandmates, but as brothers.