

BLINDSIDE

Being in a band for 10 years, you learn a thing or two about inspiration, chiefly that when it hits, you go with it. The members of Blindside weren't planning to release a new album so soon after 2004's high-charting "About a Burning Fire". But when frontman and lyricist Christian Lindskog returned from a deeply affecting trip to South Africa earlier this year, inspiration hit, the band followed and "The Great Depression" was born.

Songs literally started spilling out of Lindskog when he returned from the beleaguered nation, where he met person after person – from the 10-year-old boy who serves as namesake and inspiration for "Yamkela" to the dying older man he remembers in "This Time" – whose lives were being ripped apart by AIDS. While journaling Lindskog's experiences, *The Great Depression* is also an album about the universal struggle to find happiness. In songs like "We Are to Follow" and "You Must Be Bleeding Under Your Eyelids", it takes a look at the dark and damaging side of life in the Western world at the start of the 21st Century.

"It's partially about finding a space and time in this really weird and stressed society, and not taking part in a lot of things that our going on in this environment," Lindskog says. "We're constantly bombarded with what you're supposed to think about yourself and what you're supposed to do, and all these things. And I think it's very unnatural for human beings to be in this kind of environment, where all the commercials are coming at you all the time. It's almost like you have to create your own space, and not be a part of it, and it's really hard."

Slackjawing in its range, *The Great Depression*, the Swedish band's fifth album, was produced by Lasse "Lars" Marten and proudly displays its musical diversity on part *Rage Against the Machine*, part *Franz Ferdinand* opener "This Is A Heart Attack," before diving into melodic crunchers, classic, punk-propelled hardcore and Thom Yorke-ian, almost gothic confessionals.

Written starting in late fall 2004 and recorded between March and June 2005, *The Great Depression* is Blindside's most lyrically revealing and introspective album since 2000's *A Thought Crushed My Mind*. "I've always been into that really personal way of writing", Lindskog says. "When there's lyrics that hit me in the heart, that's when I get interested. I'm not so interested in being cool or whatever. When it's bleeding, that's when I'm interested."

And while the album is unquestionably dark, it's strung through with hope on songs like the romantic "Ask Me Now" or the disc-ending "When I Remember": "Sunshine breaks through the clouds/I can cry out of sorrow and joy/I'm not forgotten/I'm in your thoughts and I feel sunshine in the rain. To this day nobody moves me like you."

"Please choose life with its sweet and sour," Lindskog sings on "We're All Going to Die," which draws parallels between his experience in South Africa and the depression filling America's suburbs and high schools: "When I went to South Africa, I met all these young people who were dying way too early. But up here, in the Western society, a lot of people are dying way too young but for different reasons: There's a lot of suicide and the suicide rate is going up. I found that interesting. Non two continents people are dying young."

"Some people might think this is a depressing title for a record," Lindskog continues. "But this record is not simply about depression. We all walk through difficult times in our lives. We have learnt that there is reward in the journey. To be lost and then found brings the greatest joy."

Blindside – Christian Lindskog, guitarist Simon Grenehed, drummer Marcus Dahlstrom and bassist Tomas Naslund – was born a decade ago in the suburbs of Stockholm. When they formed the band in their late teens – inspired by American metal and grunge and the then-burgeoning alt-rock music scene at home – they weren't very accomplished musicians, to say the least, Lindskog laughs: "The good thing was that we sucked equally. And we started growing together."

The band's rise was as organic as it gets: First they got a rehearsal space in a run-down area of Stockholm, and then they secured regular gigs at an alcohol-free local youth center. Because the venue was funded by the government, the shows were free. And, with each gig, the band's audience would build, eventually hitting some 500 people. Linking up with friends in other bands, Lindskog, Grenehed, Dahlstrom and Naslund held down jobs while hitting pretty much every major city in Sweden on the weekends.

After pressing a self-financed demo in 1996 and selling it at shows, the band debuted in April 1997 in Sweden with their self-titled debut, a collection of old and new songs that serve as a snapshot of Lindskog's life at the time. The disc was released later that year in the U.S. by Tooth and Nail. "That's when it felt like a real band for the first time, that's when we toured the U.S. the first time," Lindskog says.

In 2000, Blindside returned with *A Thought Crushed My Mind*, a more aggressive album featuring deeper, more vulnerable lyrics. “It went into a darker, deeper place, and was more self-expanding about who I am and what I’m dealing with in my life, and how I relate to the people around me,” Linskog says. “It’s also about the thoughts that we’re carrying around, and the impact they have on our lives. When that album came out, I remember being really scared because I felt really naked.”

Both albums were recently digitally remastered and re-released with four bonus tracks apiece, and featuring special new artwork designed by Linskog.

With its momentum building, Blindside became the first band signed to Elektra’s 3 Points imprint, and in 2002 released *Silence*, a tighter, more produced record on which the band marked its musical growth and dabbled in more mainstream fare. The move worked, as two years later, after tours with Hoobastank, P.O.D. and Linkin Park, the band returned with the melodic, meaty *About a Burning Fire* which hit the top 40 on The Billboard 200 albums chart. Produced by Howard Benson (who also helmed *Silence*), the album found the band settling into its new dynamic style, sporting the bite of the band’s early hardcore and the polish that comes with time. “If we all like it, then it’s Blindside,” Linskog says about the band’s songwriting process. “We don’t put boundaries on our music.”

“I think we see music a little bit differently,” Grenehed says, reflecting on the band’s first decade. “When we started, we were just having fun. We’re still having a lot of fun together, but you just want to dig deeper.”

Adds Linskog, “Our friendships have grown stronger over the years, which makes it easier to write music together, because we know how to connect with each other emotionally and musically.”

But while the band’s music and relationships have changed and evolved, its goal has remained the same, says Grenehed. “For us,” he says, “it’s always been about trying to get a positive message out there, some kind of hope. That’s the main purpose in both writing music and playing live. That’s the thing that we always come back to.”