

Seventh Day Slumber bio – “The Anthem of Angels”

Seventh Day Slumber frontman Joseph Rojas has an image in his mind. You might even call it a vision. Angels and saints are in Heaven, surrounding the throne of God, singing anthems of praise. At the same time, here on Earth, praises ascend skyward. They are the anthems of the imperfect children of God, expressions of hope from a place much darker than Heaven, songs of honesty and victory.

And in Rojas’s vision, they’re set to pounding drums and scorching guitars.

Rojas calls “The Anthem of Angels”, the band’s eighth release on BEC Recordings, “one of the most honest records we’ve made. We’ve opened ourselves up more, and been vulnerable. On this record, we pull no punches.”

Honesty and candor have been trademarks of Rojas’s path from the depths of a cocaine-fueled suicide attempt through miraculous salvation in the back of an ambulance to the top of the Christian music charts. Seventh Day Slumber has long been heralded as a band that refuses to sugar-coat the struggles of real life. As the band has matured over the last 15 years, they’ve faced newfound challenges head on, and today their perspective and relevancy are as strong as ever, and their anthems of praise are even more profound.

Were it not for the resiliency of Rojas, Seventh Day Slumber’s story might be far different. In the early days, he knew his band needed a way to build awareness and name recognition, so he started his own label, signed his own band, and managed to get a single added on just two radio stations. Undeterred, Rojas launched a radio tour, wound up in the top ten, booked 30 shows, and got a distribution deal. The band’s first independent release, “Picking up the Pieces”, sold 40,000 units out of the gate and word of this scrappy Christian rock band was getting around.

By 2005, Tooth and Nail Records came calling with an offer to sign the band to BEC, and since then Seventh Day Slumber has not only found chart success and a string of top ten singles, they’ve seen the power of music and the gospel to change lives. “The stories we hear are amazing,” says Rojas. “Emails that say, ‘I was on the verge of pulling the trigger, and I heard your song on the radio, and it gave me hope, and I put the gun down.’ It’s just crazy to me, that a guy once filled with so much pain and hurt could write songs that touch people’s lives and make them feel like they can go on.”

Rojas’s musical beginnings were fostered in that context of pain and hurt. His abusive father had left and his family was poor. When he was 12 his mother bought him a spindly copycat B.C. Rich guitar from the Sears & Roebuck catalog. “I thought it was the coolest thing ever. She got me an amp for twenty dollars at a pawn shop. It was basically four pieces of wood and a speaker in the middle. It didn’t have distortion, so I had to crank it all the way up and make my own distortion.”

Rojas learned six Metallica songs and was ready to start his own band, even as his life was crumbling. As a teenager he was a drug addict and a convicted felon. He started writing songs to help him cope with the anguish in his heart. “If I was depressed, I’d write songs about it, and they were really depressing

songs. If I was in pain, hurting, struggling, that's what you got out of me." Before he found Christ, those songs were devoid of hope and offered no solutions. Today, Rojas knows the answer. It's telling that the band's recent boxed set compilation was entitled "A Decade of Hope". As Rojas puts it, "All the songs I had written prior to becoming a Christian could be called 'A Decade of Pain'. Now, I still write about hurting and how I make mistakes, but I know that God has taken us from nothing and given us hope and life."

A particularly poignant confessional song, *One Mistake*, is a prime example of the band's willingness to share their faults so that others might know victory. Rojas is a family man now, with a wife and three sons and the associated responsibilities. One night, he slipped. He let his eyes stray too long on a computer screen. "I looked at something I shouldn't have looked at that night, and I literally felt sick to my stomach. Here I am, lead singer of a Christian rock band, a lot of people look up to me. I felt like I had just made a huge mistake. I could have hidden it, but I know you cannot hide from God.

"I woke my wife up, and told her what happened. She saw how distraught I was. She was amazing, encouraging me that tomorrow's a new day, a chance to start over, and reassuring me that she loves me. I went to my studio and sat with an acoustic guitar, and started crying. I felt like I had let God down, let my wife and kids down.

"I started writing this song, questioning why God would want to stay with me. I struggle with this lie of myself telling me God's done with me, and the truth is He will never leave me."

As the song's triumphant bridge declares, "I'm not too far away / Still covered by your grace / And You came to take away my shame / I'm not one mistake away!"

Such openness about the struggle with sin resonates with listeners, particularly in a musical landscape that tends to hide from difficult issues. Seventh Day Slumber fans love to sing along with their music, perhaps because it's so meaningful to them, and, as Rojas promises, "'Anthem of Angels' has so many songs you can sing along to. You'll hear catchy melodies and hooks and big riffs. From beginning to end, it's a full rock worship experience."

Maybe that's what Rojas was picturing all along: a concert. A sea of people, joining their voices together in an anthem of praise, forming a beautiful union with the anthems of the angels, proclaiming not just doubt and struggle and fear but hope in a God of grace who will never leave us. That's an anthem we'll all want to sing.

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