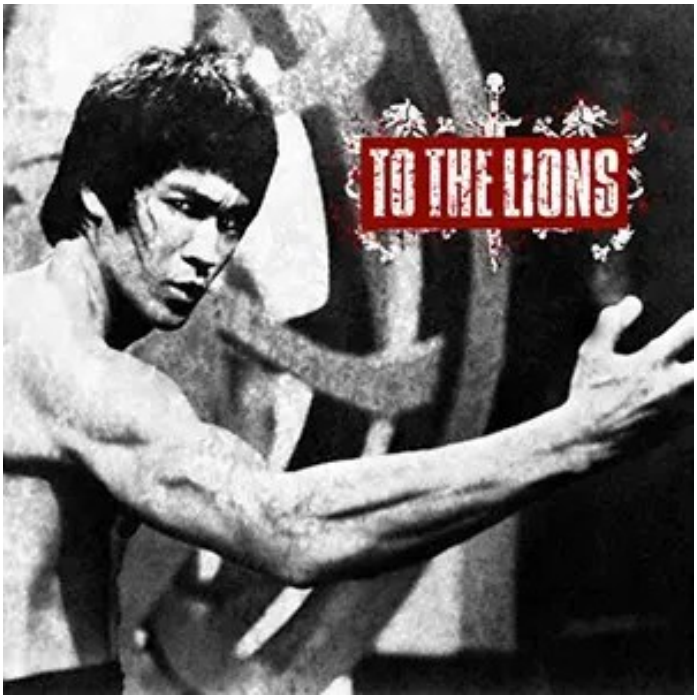
To the Lions Official Biography

To the Lions was probably the epitome of Ontario's 2000 chug-core revival. They were based in Burlington and featured some all-star cast. A while after Grade broke up, Matt Jones and Shawn Magill went to a Bane show on September 11, 2004 at The Kathedral in Toronto and were re-energized to get back into writing hardcore music. They both started jamming together that fall and Matt immediately contacted Ian "Sparkie" Clarke and asked him if he would be interested in being in this new band, as they had gone to the same high school and had similar influences. Sparkie had previously played in Enter the Dragon with Matt's brother and later on got his fame signing in Confine. Sparkie was in but was waiting on the side-lines until a few songs were written and he could easily add his vocals.

To the Lions' demo, digital artwork, December 2005.



To the Lions' demo, Bruce Lee artwork, December 2005

They then brought in another Grade ex-member, Chris Danner, to play drums. Chris had never played metalcore before but after being convinced, he was up for the part. However by then Shawn was too busy to commit to a band and Matt got yet another ex-Grade dude, Brad "The Spazman" Casarin to play guitar, knowing he was heavily into metal and had a strong affinity for Integrity (Brad was actually asked to play for them at one point). Influences came directly from Integrity and Chokehold. The trio started jamming at Brad's house in November of 2004 and quickly wrote a couple of songs, including what would become "Amnesia" and "From Fear and Hate Set Free". Brad's had renovated his basement with a full sound proof room that would be their jam space and demoing studio.

To the Lions, live

In February 0f 2005, Matt told Sparkie that the band was ready for him to come in. He was working at a law firm and showed up in a business suit, while Brad was dressed in band shirts and hair passed shoulder length. It was quite a first introduction. Sparkie initially proposed bringing in Neil Hamilton (also from Confine) as a second guitarist, but Brad had already brought in one of his friends and neighbor, Steve Youngblut (from the band Beaumont), to get an impression of the songs with dual guitarists. After this jam, they all realized that the members were perfect as is, and the band was complete. On February 15th 2005, they brain stormed band names by email and settled with Matt Jones' suggestion, "To the Lions". Other names that were suggested were "Kill Traitors", "Hostage Calm", "SeaGrave", "Shadowmakers", "Voicekiller", "Mouth of War", "Social Justice", "Cheetah on Fire" and "Ride the Apocalypse", which would later be used as a song name.

The first To the Lions show, at the Formac, July 27th 2005. With Mental, Justice, Urban Blight and Devil's Advocate. Thanks to 14thFloor.

To the Lions started tracking 6 songs in their jam space, on their Apple Powerbook with Garageband, through out the summer of 2005. When the 6 songs were done, they burnt them on a few CDrs for their first show on July 27th 2005, at the Formac in

Burlington with Mental, Justice, Urban Blight and Devil's Advocate. The band played the show for free and gave the demo CDr away for free. The next day, they listened to the demo again and didn't like it so Matt remixed some of the songs and had few more copies ready to give away at their future summer shows. By October, after handing out more free demos at a Terror, Converge, Cursed and Mare show, they decided that they wanted to get the songs mastered, but when they got it back, they didn't like the mastering job, so they remixed it, again, and mastered it themselves. By then it was late November 2005. Matt Jones designed the artwork, one digital version and 6 different for the CDs; Dimebag Darryl, Fighter Plane, Tank, Skulls, Bruce Lee and Spartacus. Most of them were photocopied in black and white on red paper. The band finally released the official demo, digitally on December 5th 2005, for free download and a couple of hundred were pressed on wallet-type CDs, which were given away for free at their shows. In the mid-2000's, it was rare to find bands that weren't trying to sell their merchandise for tons of money. But To the Lions gave it away. They also sold all their shirts at cost price! For them, this was a hobby and a way for "older" hardcore guys to still have fun in the scene. They didn't care about money.

To the Lions at CIUT Studio 3, January 8th 2006. From left to right: Steve, Brad, Sparkie (sitting), Chris and Matt.

On January 8th 2006, Stephen Perry invited the band to his radio show on CIUT. To the Lions were the feature of the show, which opened with airing the song “Chokehold” from their demo. After a half-hour of regular programming, To the Lions blasted out a 6 song live set at Studio 3. The songs played were “From Fear and Hate Set Free”, “The Forsaken”, “Amnesia”, “Fallen”, “Fracture” (unreleased song) and “Riding the Apocalypse”. This was followed by airing a second song from the demo, “Illumination of the Damned” and an hour interview. The interview talked in great detail about the ending of Grade, Brad’s vision of commercial labels, and what the band was all about (having fun and not focusing on money). The show closed out with two more songs from the demo, “Riding the Apocalypse” and “Amnesia”.

To the Lions show on January 26th 2006 at Sneaky Dee. With Cancer Bats, Fever Out! and Whore for a Heart.

Even with a new demo out, the band didn't stop writing. Throughout early 2006 they wrote dozens of songs. Or rather pieces of dozens of songs. As the band was part of the digital age, they would write some parts, email them to each other, work on it, and sometimes jam them together to build them into new songs. During this song writing hype, in March 2006, they announced that they were working on two full-length albums, though this may have been tongue-in-cheek as it was posted on their blog. Over the course of TTL, their perfectionist issue would again come to slow them down as they could have easily had 25 songs in the bank and recorded the two full-lengths. It

was also this early on that Goodfellow Records showed tremendous interest for this band. From the start, when Matt Jones sent Chris Logan (they had played in SeventyEightDays together) pre-prods of the demo in 2005, he loved the band. He was very interested in releasing whatever album the band could come up with. However the band wanted to keep it a secret because they were far from having any type album done.

To the Lions show on September 22nd 2006 at Sneaky Dee. With Sudden Impact, Dirty Tricks and The Bayonettes.

To the Lions show on October 21st 2006 at Koryo Hall. With About to Snap, Gunnar Hansen, Sarnia, Death in Custody, Blackbirds, Trying Times and CA-13.

Unfortunately, for To the Lions, Grade would reunite for a one off show at the Opera House on July 21st 2006. Chris Danner and Matt Jones were both part of this reunited line-up and therefore devoted most of their time for two months to only practicing with Grade. To the Lions slowed down to a complete stop. By September 2006 To the Lions was motivated again and got back to playing shows. They opened for Sudden Impact that September and then played at the About to Snap "Already Dead" album release show on October 21st 2006. The CIUT fanzine, Equalizing Distort (by Stephen Perry), printed an 8 page spread and interview with the band on their Volume 6, Issue 6 edition in September 2006, which was based on their interview from January. On October 28th 2006 they entered Charles Moniz's (who had also played in Grade) home studio to start

tracking their new album. To the Lions were producing it themselves, which meant they were paying for it themselves too. It took the band four months of on and off recording to finish the album. Members were perfectionists but also had family lives, full times jobs and even house renovations to take care of, and this was a part-time band. The recording sessions had the band re-record every song from the demo except “Fallen”, as they felt the song was too weak to keep, plus five new songs.

“Black Eyes and Broken Bones”, Under Pressure Records, November 2006

In the middle of recording the album, Under Pressure Records contacted the band about having one of their song from their demo on a compilation entitled “Black Eyes and Broken Bones”. The compilation came out in November 2006 and featured the song “Ride the Apocalypse”. In February 2007 their first full length album “Baptism of Fire” was done being recorded and Matt Jones started working on artwork. They had an official band meeting on March 9th 2007 to sign the album CD release contract with Goodfellow Records. It was announced that the release date would be June 19th 2007. It was also announced later that March that About to Snap vocalist Tim Drew’s label,

Specimen32 Records, would release the vinyl edition of “Baptism of Fire”. Unfortunately the label would fold before this could happen.

To the Lions “Baptism of Fire”, Goodfellow Records, June 21st 2007.

Goodfellow Records ad for “Baptism of Fire”.

Goodfellow Records ad for “Baptism of Fire”

Goodfellow Records on the other hand wasted no time in getting the album ready, which would be out three months after signing the band. By May 2007 promos were already out to the reviewers and they were raving about it. One of the song from the demo that was re-recorded for the album, “Chokehold”, was now retitled “Final Chapter”. The reasoning behind this is simply that when the band was giving titles to their songs, they were often called “song 1”, “song 2”, or “Chokhold song”, “Integrity song”. By the time the album was ready, they felt “Chokehold” needed a better title and therefore titled it as the last song on the album, “Final Chapter”. Goodfellow also got ready an album release party on Friday, June 15th 2007 (because back then, record labels always released the albums in stores on Tuesdays, in this case June 19th). This took place at Sneaky Dee’s, where TTL had played countless times, with The Kill Decibel (their last show ever), Crimson Mire and No Orphans.

Release party for “Baptism of Fire”, June 15th 2007 at Sneaky Dee’s. With The Kill Decibel, Crimson Mire and No Orphans.

The CD came out on June 19th 2007 and immediately sold well. Chris Logan later admitted that this was the first release the label did that distributors did not send back any overstock copies. The band hardly played shows to support the album because they were so busy with their lives, especially Matt who got married that July. After the album came out, the band slowed down to playing only one show a month, which was considerably less than the usual one to four shows a month average throughout 2005 and 2006. One of the important shows from that period was About to Snap’s last show on August 10th 2007, with Pulling Teeth, Death in Custody, Fathers Day and Eating Glass. Even with lack of touring, the album did so well on its own that by October 2007, only four months after coming

out, it needed a second pressing! The band wasn't pushing their music on anyone. From the start they always openly said they would play anywhere, so long as they were asked. They often played for free, or just enough to cover their travel budget. They were however rehearsing steadily and Brad announced in October that a new song had been composed and more were on the way. But Brad had a baby that November and things slowed down again. However December proved to break the trend by booking two shows, one being the Juggernaut Fest on December 8th 2007, within the same week, which they also played for free (this time not by choice). To the Lions ended 2007 with a total of 6 shows played in a period of six months, in support for "Baptism of Fire".

Poster for To the Lions mini tour with Strife, Reign Supreme and Fired up. Last date in Toronto.

In January of 2008, Chris Danner’s dedication had faded and it had become apparent that his heart wasn’t in it anymore. He was always down to play shows but the routine of rehearsing wasn’t cutting it. The band put an ad up on their site looking for a new drummer, and Spencer Arnott was the first to try out. At the same time, Steve got in touch with ex-Beaumont band mate, Ted “Soft Hands” Paterson, who also started jamming with the band. It became a matter of who would learn the songs quicker and allow the band to get back to playing shows sooner. It only took one rehearsal with each and Ted Paterson was officially welcomed into the band in February 2008. With a new drummer the band was motivated to finally tour in support of the album. They were always getting offers to play shows but throughout 2007, it was extremely difficult to get all five members who had “grown up lives” to all be free for out of Ontario shows. But they made that happen in 2008.

FRIDAY MARCH 28TH 2008 @ THE CASBAH

306 KING STREET WEST,
HAMILTON ON

(REUNION/CD RELEASE)

TAKEN
CURSED

(CD RELEASE FOR IID)

HOOSIER POET - TO THE LIONS
VATICAN CHAINSAW MASSACRE

DOORS @ 8:00PM

$10ADV/$15DOOR — ADVANCED TICKETS AVAILABLE @ DR. DISC(HAMILTON) THE CASBAH LOUNGE, LOONEY TUNES (BURLINGTON), SUNRISE RECORDS (PEN CENTRE), AND WWW.TICKETSCENE.CA

Cursed album release & Taken reunion show, Match 28th 2008. Featuring To the Lions, Hoosier Poet and Vatican Chainsaw Massacre. Thanks to Chris Geoghegan.

To the Lion's first show with Ted was on March 28th 2008 at the Casbah in Hamilton for Cursed's first show after the release of their album "III: Architects of Troubled Sleep". Also playing that night was Taken, as part of their reunion tour for "This is Forever", Vatican Chainsaw Massacre and Hoosier Poet. It was a true Goodfellow Records event. They then played a mini tour with Strife, Reign Supreme and Fired Up, which kicked off at L'Anti in Quebec City on May 9th 2008, followed by Café l'Inconditionnel in Montreal on May 10th, to finish in Toronto, on May 11th at The Kathedral. After this they had a second mini tour with Carry the Torch and Heavily Hearted starting June 18th 2008 at The Dungeon in Oshawa, The Reverb in Toronto on the 19th, the Mass Pool Hall in Barrie on the 20th and finally the Good Time Cafe in Brampton on the 21st. In between these tour dates, they played a bunch of local dates in St. Catharines, Sarnia and Toronto. In the spring of 2008, they were asked to contribute a song to a Kid Dynamite tribute, by Get Outta Town Records (for the CD) and Black Numbers Records (for the vinyl, who had released albums by Brad's previous band Trunk). They recorded a cover of "Rid of the Losers, Bring on the Cruisers" and sent it off to the label. To the Lions chose to cover that song because everything else they wanted to record was already taken up by another band. After reconsideration, Brad and Matt felt that "Rid of the Losers" had the best potential to be "metalized". It took over a year to finally get it released, and by then the band was broken up.

“Carry the Torch: A Tribute to Kid Dynamite” compilation featuring To the Lions, Get Outta Town Records/Black Numbers Records, 2009

In March 2008 they announced on their blog that they were “deep into writing a new album”. This was partly true. Since TTL finished recording “Baptism of Fire” in February 2007, they never finished a new song that was played live (nor would they before breaking up). The way Sparkie saw it was that the song writing was led mostly by Matt Jones and Brad Casarin. Matt would write Integrity inspired hardcore songs while Brad would write Pantera influenced metal ones, which led a debate

as to the direction the band would be going in. Some new songs would be exchanged via email but nothing would ever get passed sharing it in rehearsals. This would be the case for the remainder of 2008. Nevertheless a lot of material was demoed. Brad would often joke about wanting to do a concept album based on vampire uprising, the the idea didn’t go well with the other members. On November 16th 2008, TTL played with Agnostic Front, Eating Glass and The Carrier at The Kathedral in Toronto. After the show they all told themselves they needed to get together and finally record the new songs and get things going, as an amicable way to end the night. But the band had run its course and they all instinctively stopped practicing, without having a final farewell or even an email saying they were done. They all knew it in their heart. It was in the summer of 2009 that Brad got Steve, Matt and Chris back together and started jamming again. They wanted to get a few new songs together and then tell Sparkie they were ready for him, but it only lasted two jams and stopped again. They had since all moved on to other things in their lives and To the Lions was never going to get back together.

Download To the Lions’ discography