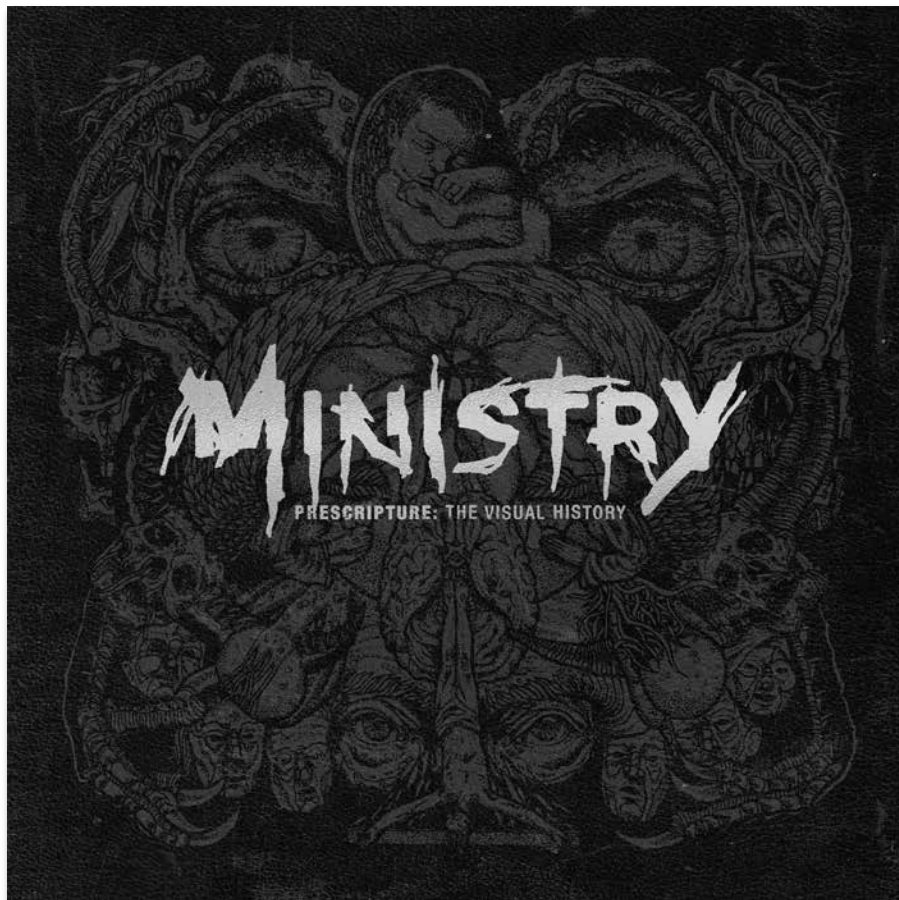


Ministry: Prescripture



Author **Aaron Tanner** compiled images and statements from many who collaborated with down-to-earth yet iconic front man **Al Jourgensen** to make the definitive retrospective that is **Ministry Prescripture: The Visual History**. The scope expands beyond Ministry and Jourgensen's application of pop sensibility to heavy riffs, to their far-reaching cultural impact through Wax Trax! Records.

interview by **Elizabeth Rhodes**

From Ministry's beginnings as a synth-pop act during the ill-remembered period under Arista Records to the uncompromising grit and intensity found in the seminal releases *The Land of Rape and Honey*, *The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste*, and *Psalm 69* to Ministry's many collaborations and latest release *AmeriKKKAnt*, this book covers it all with words from creative co-conspirators and friends. A special foreword by Jello Biafra (Dead Kennedys, Lard) captures what makes Al Jourgensen so remarkable, saying, "It isn't just the sound, it's those riffs. You can't not remember them; you can't not go wild. If it weren't for Al's well-honed 'pop sensibility', applied to the savage and heavy, their music wouldn't be anywhere near as good."

Anyone covering the history and catalogue of Ministry would be remiss to exclude Jourgensen's involvement in Wax Trax! Records and this book honors that connection with a statement from Julia Nash, daughter of Wax Trax! Records co-founder Jim Nash and director of the documentary film *Industrial Accident: The Story of Wax Trax! Records*: "The deep mutual love and respect Wax Trax! And Al Jourgensen had for each other gave Ministry the freedom to experiment and collaborate in ways no other artist and record label relationship could achieve."

What led to you deciding to create this book?

Aaron Tanner : I feel that creating a book on Ministry was a natural progression from my last, *Butthole Surfers: What Does Regret Mean?*. Not to minimize anything that Al Jourgensen has done before or after, but his collaboration with Gibby Haynes on "Jesus Built My Hotrod" was a massive success. And besides, I've always had a ton of respect for Al and how fearless he is with experimentation. There are so many bands that owe him a huge debt, and I did my best to illustrate that with *Ministry: Prescripture*.

How did you approach acquiring images, contacting people for statements and designing *Prescripture*?

AT : Like with all of the books I produce, I work with the band, their management, and their biggest fans to help track down all kinds of visual ephemera. Even though he's lost or given away a lot of his things over the years, Al had me over to his house to go through his briefcase of photos and notes he's managed to keep. As for the design, I wanted to distress the imagery to showcase the raw nature of Al's music but also contrast it with the clinical precision in which he operates by introducing sharp edges and clean lines.

What was Al's involvement in the development of *Prescripture*?

AT : Al loved the way I captured the Butthole Surfers in their book and gave me full creative control of his.

Why were you interested in doing this book specifically on Al Jourgensen?

AT : Ministry is all Al! Some major players have come and gone throughout the years, but it's his baby. He founded it solely back in 1981.

How and when did you become aware of Ministry and become a fan?

AT : I had heard of Ministry back when *The Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Taste* was released. But I didn't become fully hooked until *Psalm 69* debuted.

How has Al's approach to music, how collaborative he has been as well as his approach to writing and recording, impacted other musicians in the mainstream and dark alternative genres?

AT : Al is just that: a pioneer. The way he uses technology along with the dub techniques he learned early on from Adrian Sherwood [English record producer credited with popularizing dub music production techniques with Ministry and other alternative artists] brought a whole new perspective to not only heavy music but other genres as well.

Of all the side projects Al worked on through the years, do you have a favorite collaborative side project?

AT : This is a tough one, because they're all great! But if I have to choose, I'm going with Lard. Having been a fan of the Dead Kennedys prior to my exposure to Al and Ministry, it was the ultimate supergroup in my mind! Even my favorite t-shirt back in the day was the one with the "insect band photo" on the front and "Mate, Spawn, and Die" on the back. Praise the Lard!

You cover all the chapters of Ministry's catalogue, so it must be asked: what is your favorite Ministry album?

AT : Al experiments heavily on each of his releases, but the one where the experimentation really cuts through is *The Land of Rape and Honey*. And for that reason alone, it'll always not only be my favorite Ministry album, but one of my favorite records of all time.

Al has recently said in interviews that he has softened his antipathy of the debut album *With Sympathy*. What is your take on the general dislike of this album and what is known as the "Arista phase" of Ministry?

AT : Al seems to work best when he's calling the shots, and he didn't get to on this one. It only makes sense that he isn't as proud of it.

As you assembled the images and statements from fellow artists for this book, what were you surprised by?

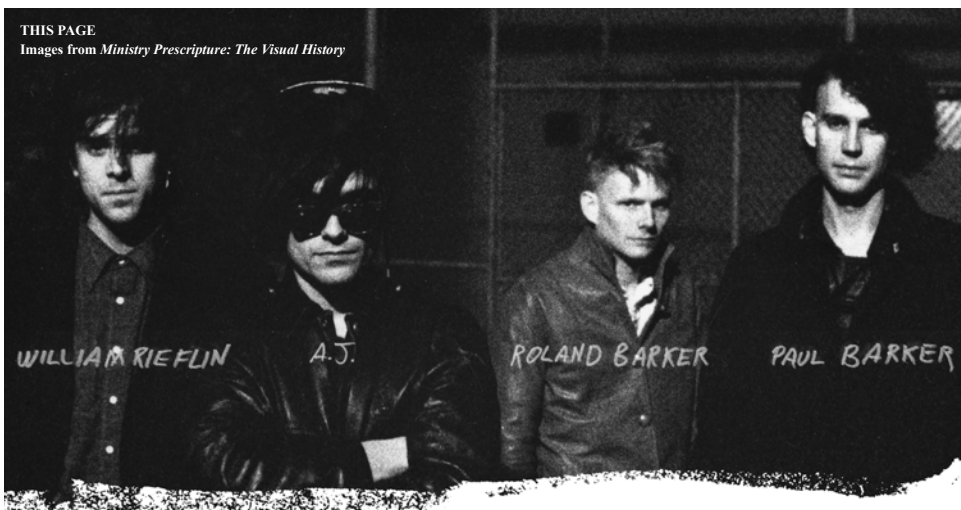
AT : Nothing really surprised me visually. However, I was pleasantly surprised with how many of his friends consider him family. Page Hamilton's quote in the book furthers that sentiment by telling us about how Al invited all of the bands he was touring with over for Thanksgiving dinner with his actual family. In complete contrast to his aggressive band, Al couldn't be more down-to-earth, funny, and sincere.

What do you hope readers will take away from this book after reading it?

AT : I think Al said it best: "A snapshot of a historical time in music, which Ministry was a part of, that no longer exists as we know it today."

Ministry Prescripture: The Visual History can be purchased at Melodic Virtue melodicvirtue.com/products/ministry-prescripture. Follow Ministry on Facebook at [facebook.com/WeAreMinistry](https://www.facebook.com/WeAreMinistry) and the official Ministry website ministryband.com.

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