

# PSYCHAS

## Perseverance: The Psychas Story

### The Catalyst:

Psychas was born from the ashes of the late 2001 breakup of Chicagoland metal trio, Condition 1. Believing that their brand of aggressive metal was outdated for the time period, singer/guitarist Eric Babcock had been attempting to modernize the sound of the band for the last few months of its existence. As it turned out, Condition 1 had been driven too hard for too long and it all came apart before any such overhaul had a chance to take place. Founding members Eric Babcock and bassist Jason Hoyt parted ways with no particular intention of playing music together again. Discouraged by the untimely demise of Condition 1, Eric Babcock dropped out of the music scene altogether and spent the following year away from organized musical collaboration.

In the spring of 2003, Eric was motivated to return to the live music scene and worked alone in his home studio to develop the new sound he originally envisioned for Condition 1. Working under the name "Harm's Way", Eric produced a four song demo EP, consisting of songs that would eventually become known as "The Alpha", "Highest Order", "Isolation" and "The Light". Satisfied with the originality and feel of the new songs, Eric began the task of finding band members to bring the project to life. Before the logistics of that task were set into motion, Eric had a chance encounter with former Condition 1 bass player, Jason Hoyt, who was promptly handed a copy of the demo. Jason listened to the demo, liked what he heard and was quickly on board.

### Over Before It Began:

Eric and Jason decided to work on some additional material prior to finding a drummer for the project. Long distance and numerous challenges in the personal lives of the two men threatened to derail the project several times and nearly succeeded in doing so. No sooner than Eric and Jason felt the coast was clear enough to make some real progress, the May 2004 death of Eric's father dealt the finishing blow, and it was over. At the time of his father's death, Eric was also involved in an extensive video submittal audition process for Metal Blade recording artist, Tourniquet. Having received two consecutive calls from the band indicating further interest in his abilities, Eric dropped out of that contest as well, simply unable to focus or maintain interest. Eric escaped into his career and eventually sought grief therapy to help deal with the loss.

Another 5 months would pass before Eric picked up a guitar again, which eventually occurred in resumption of the Tourniquet pursuit. Tourniquet drummer Ted Kirkpatrick and singer Luke Easter contacted Eric about submitting a final video audition of acoustic material to be considered for the vacant guitar spot. The process of learning and recording those two Tourniquet acoustic songs reunited Eric with his musical passion and the original music project was resurrected.

### Back in Business:

Eric and Jason got back to work, re-acclimated themselves with the material and were anxious to get moving again. Eric established [www.eb-music.com](http://www.eb-music.com) as the face of his musical endeavors and the temporary home of the new music project. Through that website, Eric and Jason were contacted by former band mate and Condition 1 drummer Jeremy Smirnoff. Jeremy expressed interest in the new music and the three men were set to meet for a jam in October of 2004. The news section of [eb-music.com](http://eb-music.com) reported a possible "Condition 1 Reunion" later in the same month, but it never materialized.

During the same time period, while reading a book recommended in grief therapy, Eric came across the word "Psychas"; an ancient Old Testament term meaning "Lives" or "Souls". Based upon his recent experiences, Eric knew that the lyrical content of the project would run much deeper than it had in the past. Eric and Jason both agreed that the message of the band should mirror the originality of the music. The two men had no interest in furthering the

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cliché negative vibe of heavy music and favored a more realistic and diverse depiction of human life, defaulting towards positive energy. Eric felt that the name “Psychas” represented those ideals perfectly. Armed with a new found attitude and an official name for the band, Psychas placed an ad in the Illinois Entertainer for a drummer and... waited.

### **The Final Piece of the Puzzle:**

Responses to the ad were few and far between for the next four months, but the wait would soon be over. After only the second official audition conducted for the band, Psychas struck gold; memorized by the energy and undeniable groove of drummer Marty Blake. Marty’s drum style did not represent what Eric had originally envisioned for Psychas, but he could not deny that Marty introduced an entirely new original aspect to the music. Immediately following that audition in late February of 2005, Marty was invited to join Psychas after very minimal discussion between Eric and Jason. Marty was “the guy” and there was little cause for speculation. The three men worked on the existing four-song catalog in the bedroom of Eric’s condo in Carpentersville, IL, affectionately referred to as “EB Studios”. Adorned with the humble accommodations of an electronic drum kit and a crude headphone amplification system, the conditions were not ideal for Marty’s introduction, but the sessions served their purpose.

### **Homeless and Frustrated:**

The band quickly moved rehearsal sessions to ETH Studios in Crystal Lake, IL for the first authentic, full volume sessions in the band’s history. The band made significant progress at ETH Studios until November of 2005 when the studio closed its doors for good. Psychas would spend the next several months bouncing between different rehearsal studios without a consistent identity or platform for forward progress. This agonizing process took its toll and brought forth the beginning of instability regarding the lineup of the band; a demon that would return to burden the band several more times in the future. During discussions to rent a monthly rehearsal spot in the city, Jason Hoyt explained that he could not contribute monetarily to the effort and was briefly out of the band as a result. A short period of time passed before Marty Blake realized the importance of the three specific people involved in Psychas and urged all parties to reconsider. Marty’s efforts were successful and work resumed shortly thereafter. The band’s stay at the monthly rehearsal spot was short lived and Psychas eventually landed at Willow Studios in the spring of 2006.

### **Bringing it to the People:**

After a couple months of sessions at Willow Studios, the band was unconsciously hesitant to play their first live show; a phenomenon apparently masked by their collective need for everything to be “perfect”. Simultaneous with the band’s realization of this problem, was Jason Hoyt’s suggestion to enter a live, unsigned music competition in the city of Chicago. Organized by the Emergenza Corporation, the competition promised exposure to sizeable crowds, prestigious venues and even a chance to sign a major label record deal. Regardless of the proverbial “carrot” dangling before them, the three men embraced the opportunity for what they knew it could absolutely provide; the live debut of their band and the test of scrutiny regarding their beloved product.

Following nearly three years of seemingly unending challenges and set-backs, Psychas made their live debut on December 9, 2006 at the Note in Chicago in the qualifying round of the Emergenza Music Festival. The initial taste of the stage was sweet that night, as Psychas took home first place honors against nine other bands on the bill. The victory advanced Psychas to the quarterfinal round of the competition at the same venue on March 10, 2007. The debut performance brought a larger Psychas contingent to the second show, which generated enough votes to propel the band onward to the regional semi finals at The Double Door.

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Psychas performed at the legendary Double Door on May 18, 2007 in front of approximately 350 people; 82 of which were "The Psychas Faithful", proudly dressed in red "Psychas Chicago" t-shirts. As a band merely in its infancy as a live performing act, Psychas fought through the Emergenza Competition with passion, advancing to some of the most prestigious local music venues in the city of Chicago, culminating in the national finals at The Metro on July 5, 2007. Psychas was rapidly building a large fan base, released a live DVD / CD combo of their semifinal performance at the legendary Double Door and was primed for continued success.

### **Trouble in Paradise; The End of an Era:**

With all of the momentum they could possibly ask for in the wake of the Emergenza competition, it would soon come to a screeching halt. Citing personal reasons, Jason Hoyt removed himself from the band in the summer of 2007. Being his second absence from the band, Eric and Marty held little faith in the possibility of Jason's return and began the process of finding a new bass player for Psychas. Five months of searching produced only one audition, which was heavily discouraging to the band's two remaining members. In late winter of 2008, Jason Hoyt talked with Eric Babcock and Marty Blake about a possible return to Psychas. Although the proposition was attractive from the standpoint of being a complete band again, Eric and Marty had their reservations about the longevity of the move.

Despite their better judgment, Psychas was agreeable to the reunion, but the decision would eventually prove to be ill advised for all parties. The band unnaturally battled through rehearsal sessions plagued with creative differences in preparation for an upcoming show that ended up producing clear evidence of it. The band performed live on the main stage at Penny Road Pub on August 2, 2008, struggling to get through long rehearsed Psychas standards that were performed flawlessly a year prior. It would be the last show featuring this lineup.

In the aftermath of a performance viewed as entirely inadequate by Psychas standards, tensions between Jason and the band were mounting. Jason was growing more and more distant from the band as more and more new material was introduced. Jason felt that the material was too aggressive and it was becoming clear that his musical tastes were growing increasingly incompatible with the direction of Psychas. Nevertheless, the band pressed on, motivated either by its determination to make it work or blinded by complete denial of its failure.

Two months of scheduling conflicts and the inability to mutually agree on rehearsal times ultimately brought the situation to a head in December of 2008 when Eric issued an ultimatum to the band attempting to rectify the issue. Eric created a policy document representing a mutual agreement between the members of the band regarding pre-determined rehearsal days and times. Possibly out of desperation to get Psychas back on track or possibly just out of sheer frustration, Eric clearly stated in the document language that failure to adhere to the rehearsal times would result in dismissal from the band. Eric felt that the need to collaborate consistently was the most basic need of any group of people who expect to be successful at... anything. Marty agreed with that assessment, but Jason did not. Jason Hoyt rejected the proposed document, was not agreeable to its suggested rehearsal schedule and was therefore released from the band.

### **Duck Butter Rodeo; The Confusion:**

Although Psychas had recently suffered a great loss, the band felt liberated by the absence of conflict and began writing fresh, new material for a sophomore collection of original songs before actively searching for a new bass player. Eric and Marty felt that a new found attitude and musical direction warranted a new identity and discussed a name change for the band. For the entire preceding year, Eric had taken a specific liking to a band name Marty Blake stated he would use if he ever formed a funk band; "Duck Butter Rodeo". Eric had long insisted that Duck Butter Rodeo be the name of the follow up album to House of Straw and with the band name discussion on the table, he

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took the opportunity to suggest it as the official name of the band. Although Marty had authored the name, he was skeptical about using it as the face of their music; feeling that it was a bit too silly to represent a serious musical endeavor. It was for that very reason that Eric was attracted to the name and the associated persona; believing that the light-hearted, comedic nature of a name such as Duck Butter Rodeo would take some of the edge off of their image and some of the struggles they had been through. The two men moved forward with the idea, but Marty's initial skepticism proved to be a revelation of the events in months to come.

By the end of January, 2009, Psychas was no more, and the entire face of the band was altered to properly fit the new name. Psychas.Com was changed to Duck Butter Rodeo.Com, new logos were created, all web affiliate sites were changed and even the album artwork for past works was changed to compliment the new image. If nothing else, all of the drastic changes brought some minimal promotional value back to the band through general inquiry and basic curiosity that had long been forgotten. None of it would matter without a fully functioning band to support it, so Duck Butter Rodeo started out on its journey for a new bass player.

The band exhausted all know resources to aid the search including ads in the Illinois Entertainer publication, Illinois Entertainer website and several additional web-based musician classified sites. Despite these efforts, the general response was even less significant than it had been in the past and the band was getting frustrated. Following a couple dry months in late winter of 2009, Duck Butter Rodeo conducted a series of auditions, one of which involved bass player Corey Volling. The band was impressed with Corey's grasp of the material and wanted to see more. Corey was asked to participate in a second audition the following week and was well prepared for it. As a result of his performance during that audition, Eric and Marty had seen enough and invited Corey to join Duck Butter Rodeo on March 12, 2009. Duck Butter Rodeo held its first rehearsal as a complete band the following week; a session that began a spiral of indecision, confusion and skepticism in the hearts and minds of Eric Babcock and Marty Blake regarding their investment in Corey.

Immediately following two very impressive auditions, Corey's bass parts were suddenly unrecognizable; as if he had never heard or played the songs before. Amazed and confused by what they were experiencing, Eric and Marty blew off the experience as a "bad day" for Corey and didn't ponder it any further. The next rehearsal deceptively confirmed their initial assessment of the problem, as Corey tore through the entire catalog with confidence and precision. For a moment, Eric and Marty shared in a collective sigh of relief. The next three months however, would consist of the same back and forth inconsistency pertaining to Corey's playing, leaving absolutely no manner in which to determine the band's readiness or progress for a return to the live music scene. Eric and Marty wrestled tirelessly with the issue of how to deal with the problem for nearly the entire preceding two months. Wishing to avoid a knee-jerk reaction or regrettable decision, the two men had lengthy discussions on the topic, which customarily concluded in a stance of patience.

In mid May, Eric and Marty decided to express their concerns directly to Corey hoping to adequately convey the level of importance they place upon the music and their dissatisfaction with his effort and associated progress to that point. Eric and Marty felt this was the best way to give Corey a chance and honor his body of work, while still holding onto some hope for the band. Another month came and went without measureable progress from Corey, totaling three months of investment without a return. Upon realization of that situation, Eric and Marty re-evaluated and knew it was time for a change. Eric explained to Marty that if he could not experience Psychas at its maximum potential, that he would rather not participate in Psychas at all. Marty agreed and both men knew that their music was worth holding out for the right bass player. On June 16, 2009, Duck Butter Rodeo parted ways with Corey Volling and found themselves yet again on a search for their third member.

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### The Return of Psychas:

Following the disappointment surrounding the Corey Volling situation, the band was at an all time low. The lack of stability and cohesiveness with Jason Hoyt, an extensive search and three months of lost investment in Corey Volling had kept the band out of the action for over a year and a half. Concerned about diminishing relevance, Eric and Marty took out another ad in the Illinois Entertainer, hung flyers at local music shops and distributed ads in several online classifieds once more. This time around, the band was excited about the potential of BandMix.Com; a website specifically dedicated to helping musicians find other musicians. Eric Babcock, who had served as the band's webmaster and general multimedia tech since day one, decorated the Duck Butter Rodeo BandMix profile with countless media; from live tunes and demos, to custom graphics and live videos.

By August of 2009, not a single promising lead presented itself through any of the promotional avenues established to locate a bass player. Additionally, the band was growing less and less fond of its name. Once the chief advocate of the name Duck Butter Rodeo, Eric Babcock now felt that it was actually a detriment to the pursuit of attracting the right bass player for the band. Having never fully been convinced it was the right name for the band, Marty agreed, and the two frustrated musicians began compiling a list of potential band names. In short order, they had created a list of more than 50 band names, one of which was... Psychas. At the end of the day, Eric and Marty really liked the idea of returning to the place where it all began and reclaiming a name rich with history. On September 7, 2009, Duck Butter Rodeo's brief and generally plague-ridden existence came to a close and Psychas was back.

With the image of Psychas firmly re-established across the band's online web affiliates, the excitement of old fans was mirrored by a breath of new life from Eric and Marty. Feeling rejuvenated and confident regarding the band's future, Psychas pushed forward in the search for their third member, meanwhile conducting energetic and productive rehearsal sessions that lead to the composition of fresh new original music. Faith in the original name and renewed vigor paid immediate dividends to Psychas in mid September as a surge of interested bass players began contacting the band through their BandMix profile. Auditioning bass players was their business, and business was good... finally.

One of those interested parties was a timid, but endearing and well spoken bass player from Tinley Park by the name of Mike Craig. Mike's outspoken trepidation about an audition and unconventional approach to learning the songs did not make him a promising candidate for Psychas in the days leading up to his first audition. The band had just conducted an audition with a bass player that reported a similar and entirely unsuccessful approach. However, the band's skepticism was overshadowed by Mike's honest correspondence and genuine excitement. Based on that and a basic "gut" feeling, Psychas scheduled an audition with Mike Craig on October 2, 2009.

### Mike Craig, The Savior of Psychas:

As the clock struck 8:45 PM on the evening of October 2, 2009, Eric and Marty had absolutely no concept of the redemption that would walk through the door of their Cool Metro Studio rehearsal room in a few short minutes. Mike Craig was prompt for his appointment with destiny, as he walked through the door with wide eyes and a gig bag in hand. The three men exchanged some small-talk dialog and it was soon time to see what Mike was made of. Eric Babcock, Marty Blake and Mike Craig started the evening's festivities with the flagship powerhouse "Isolation"; a long time tradition for every audition and rehearsal session in the history of Psychas. Before the trio reached the chorus of the band's most beloved song, somehow all the pain, frustration and disappointment of the past were suddenly justified. Every heartbreak, failed expectation and indecision was wiped away as Isolation reached its conclusion that night. Mike Craig compounded his four-string prowess through the masterful execution and soulful delivery of two

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additional Psychas songs before leaving Eric and Marty to deliberate over what would be the easiest decision they would ever have to make.

In reality, Eric and Marty didn't require anything further from Mike in terms of the audition process; he flat out nailed the songs and they were well aware of it. However, because of the unexplainable and violent inconsistencies they experienced with Corey Volling, they felt compelled to ask Mike for a follow up audition in two weeks. Mike obliged them and jammed with Psychas once more. Eric and Marty were fully prepared to invite Mike into the band, provided that his second audition resembled the energy, excitement and execution of the first. That wasn't going to be a problem; not only did Mike Craig return with the impressive performance of his first jam with Psychas, he was even better than before. Mike continued to solidify his position in Psychas that night by stacking the deck in his favor with four additional songs he didn't play the first time. Before the second audition concluded, Mike Craig was already proficient with seven original Psychas songs, representing over half of the entire catalog.

There was nothing to discuss and no cause for procrastination regarding Mike Craig and the spot he had earned in Psychas. Simply out of respect for one another, Eric and Marty adjourned briefly for a walk over to a local 7 Eleven to ensure their individual impressions were in concert. The discussion amounted to a mutual nod of their heads and it was done. Eric and Marty returned to the studio within a few minutes and invited Mike Craig to join them. On the evening of October 16, 2009, Mike Craig was invited to become the third and final member of the Chicago-based original hard rock trio, Psychas, and graciously accepted.

### Full Throttle; The Resurgence:

Lasting patience, sound judgment and hardship-stained wisdom had paid off in spades. The new era of Psychas, now complete with the member it always needed, was operating at full throttle and never looked back. The band was eager to get back on the stage and didn't waste any time in pursuit of it. Fast-tracked and tested from day one, Mike rose to each challenge and kept pace with a relentless rehearsal schedule to make it possible. The band's hard work and preparation proved to be a sound investment as the first live gig would present itself shortly. The opportunity came through a connection Eric had with long time colleague and Spiral Trance frontman, Pauly Karcz. Having shared the stage countless times in the days of Condition 1, Eric Babcock caught a live set from Spiral Trance for the first time in nearly a decade. After their set, Pauly asked Eric if Psychas could be ready to join them on stage at a venue called "Metal Shaker" in Chicago. The logistics of the show were irrelevant and it didn't matter when or where it was; Psychas would respond with an emphatic yes. With only a month to prepare, Psychas went to work with unyielding passion. The trio was determined to not only be ready for the show, but to make their return memorable; and memorable it was.

On the evening of December 12, 2009, Psychas made a triumphant return to the live music scene with a passion-filled set of original music at Metal Shaker in Chicago. The psychological state of the band was an obvious contributing factor to the success of the evening; Psychas was having fun doing what they love to do, and it shined through the music clearly for everyone to see. It wasn't the biggest show they had ever played. It didn't have the most fan fair or promotional hype behind it, nor was it the biggest crowd they ever drew. Psychas stood upon the undersized stage of a venue that would be hard pressed to accommodate 50 people, having great difficulty even hearing each other properly and had the time of their lives. Eric Babcock, Marty Blake and Mike Craig walked off the stage that evening with their greatest expectations validated; fielding commentary about how it was the best show they had ever played from their closest friends and long time supporters. Mike Craig's first show with Psychas was the dawning of a new and prosperous era. Priceless confidence and positive energy gained through the experience would propel Psychas to bigger and better things in the weeks and months to come.

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One gig turned into another, as Eric's close friend and band manager Ryan McDillon kicked bookings into high gear in the early part of 2010. The band played their second show of the new era in "The Rock Room" at Penny Road Pub in Barrington, IL on January 30, 2010. The aftermath of that show produced an invite to come back and play another set in the Rock Room only six days later on February 5, 2010. It was the band's goal to impress Penny Road Pub enough to get a chance to redeem themselves on the main stage, and Psychas delivered a performance with every intention of achieving it. In a very victorious seven day period following that performance, Psychas would receive confirmation of their chance to play the main stage at Penny Road Pub. Even more great news came days later with confirmation of a show at The Rave in Milwaukee in support of national acts Cold and Nonpoint.

As Psychas converged upon The Rave on March 6, 2010, their new experiences had been storybook perfect. All of that would change as one challenge after another tested the vigilance of the band on stage that night. Eric Babcock had fallen ill after rehearsal the previous night, and his condition would deteriorate as the day progressed. The staging area for the band and their equipment was excessively cold, which proved to be murderous on the instruments and not advantageous for the band. When the time came for Psychas to go on stage in the "Vibe Room", the setup process was agonizing for an already discombobulated frontman. Eric's connection from his amp to his foot controller failed, necessitating a trip out to his vehicle for a spare. Once that situation was rectified, Eric's wireless system failed. Already behind the eight ball in terms of starting the set, Eric grabbed his backup instrument cable, only to discover that it was not long enough to reach his place on the stage. Despite the issues, Psychas started into their set and quickly realized the sound conditions on stage were horrendous. Eric could not hear his vocals, Mike could not hear the guitar and Marty couldn't hear anything but his thunderous drums. There was nobody running the sound board to resolve it and due to the late start, the band was now competing with the national acts in the Eagle's Ballroom. Psychas relied upon their extensive preparation, toughed it out through eight songs and delivered a great show to a crowd who wasn't particularly aware that there were any problems. Ironically, the experience only added to the band's confidence. The show really could have and probably should have been a complete bust, but it wasn't. Psychas delivered in the face of adversity, and it was valuable for them to know that.

### **Back on top; The Stuff of Legend:**

Even in the weeks leading up to The Rave gig, the preparatory and promotional focus was fixated entirely upon the forthcoming main stage show at Penny Road Pub. Establishing a solid reputation at a venue that routinely attracts national bands was the primary mission of Psychas. The band worked to debut two new cover songs and a brand new original song for the performance while Ryan McDillon exhausted promotional avenues and produced a new batch of Psychas t-shirts. In an effort to abandon the laurels of the past and fully embrace Mike Craig, Eric arranged to have the show recorded with two high end video cameras, provided once again by Kevin Koesterer. It was the "Double Door" of the modern era, and Psychas spared no resource in making it transpire that way. The band plastered "Psychas at Penny Road Pub" propaganda across every available outlet, produced over 100 copies of their recent February 5<sup>th</sup> show in the Rock Room for distribution and produced seven different styles of stickers. There were a thousand moving parts, but everything was masterfully prepared and soon it was time for Psychas to deliver the performance of their lives.

The wait was over; Psychas took the stage at approximately 11:15 PM on Friday April 2, 2010 in front of a sizeable and excited collection of Psychas fans. Everyone believed in it, and it was a self-fulfilling prophecy as a result of that faith and energy. Despite the hype and pressure of "the perfect Psychas show", the customary nervousness was absent; replaced with unrivaled enjoyment and satisfaction. Psychas headlined the main stage while being afforded the opportunity play their entire original catalog and two covers; nearly an hour and a half of live music. As if that wasn't

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enough, the entire thing was being captured in stunning high definition for release of a brand new DVD and CD. The main stage gig at Penny Road Pub was everything Psychas and their fans hoped it would be, and substantially more. In merely four months time, Psychas had already played as many shows as they had participated in the previous four years.

### Embracing the Future:

Through thick and thin, Psychas persevered and emerged stronger than ever. As they stood on the main stage of the Penny Road Pub on April 2, 2010, the trio had traveled full circle. They regained the essence behind their motivation to assemble in the first place; the pursuit of fun, fellowship and music.

Being blessed with the right attitude, the proper perspective, the perfect lineup and an incredible support base, Psychas can't help but be excited about the future. Although it's impossible to know what that future has in store for them, Eric Babcock, Marty Blake and Mike Craig travel into it together with the highest of hopes, relishing every last note.

