



## **BURLAP TO CASHMERE RELEASES SELF TITLED ALBUM JULY 19**

### **BURLAP TO CASHMERE**

By CAITLIN R. KING, AP - Associated Press, June 30, 2011

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Guitarist John Philippidis woke up groggy from a month long coma in a hospital room full of people.

He disregarded doctors urging him to stay in bed and slowly shuffled to the bathroom. As he went to wash his hands, he reflexively looked up in the mirror and saw a closed eye, a head the size of a basketball and his face disfigured beyond what he thought could ever be repaired.

"I started laughing," Philippidis said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

At the time, he couldn't remember that two ex-Marines and a female accomplice had beaten him to within an inch of his life and left him for dead during a random, road rage incident just miles from his home in the New York borough of Brooklyn.

Doctors took his reaction as a good sign — and it was.

"I just remember that feeling of being reminded right there in that moment that you're alive. Whatever happened to you, you're alive," said Philippidis.

That was 2005.

Today, 33-year-old Philippidis is feeling more alive than ever. His recovery sparked a reunion with award-winning, folk-rock band Burlap to Cashmere, and after a 12-year hiatus, the band is preparing to release its second, self-titled album, due out July 19 on Jive/Essential Records.

Recovery was a slow process, aided in large part by his cousin, Burlap lead singer Steven Delopoulos. Doctors didn't know whether Philippidis would play guitar the same way because of the damage he suffered, and he was nervous to even pick one up.

"Initially I was slow, and I put it down, and didn't look at it again, and said, 'Nuh uh. Not gonna do this.' That was depressing me. It was like, 'Oh my god, oh my god,'" he said.

Philippidis panicked, but his doctor reassured him that it would take time for his brain and nerves to reconnect.

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Delopoulos would drive from New Jersey to visit his cousin nearly every weekend. Instead of pushing him back into music before he was ready, they would play the Xbox video game "Halo" and trash talk each other.

"The thing about Johnny is he's really good at guitar, but whenever we play 'Halo'."

"Oh, he's trash talking right now," interrupted Philippidis, as the two joke around.

Eventually, Delopoulos began testing out a few song ideas in front of Philippidis, and the album track "Orchestrated Love Song" took shape.

"Picked up a guitar, and I think we wrote the opening lick to that song, which was like not complex, but it made me feel like, 'OK, wait, I can still do this. My hands are still moving,'" said Philippidis.

Little by little, Burlap to Cashmere began to reemerge. The band had broken onto the scene in 1998 with its major-label debut, "Anybody Out There?" Met with critical acclaim and multiple Dove Awards, they generated a dedicated following and quickly established themselves as an exceptional live act. However, relentless touring took its toll, and they went on hiatus in 2001.

"Steven and I will always play music together," said Philippidis. "We've been doing it since we were like 8. We're cousins. But this strengthened the fact that we needed to do it soon, because we realized at that point, well, life is fleeting."

Drummer Theodore Pagano heard some of the new songs and got onboard. He was at a crossroad in his own life, going through a divorce and having decided to leave his job in London, designing a 20,000-square-foot concept store for National Geographic that wasn't working out. After Burlap's initial breakup, Pagano quickly established himself as a top name in the interior design world. He designed all the top-floor room sets for Ikea and then did the same thing for Apple stores.

Pagano became an organizational and driving force behind Burlap to Cashmere that eventually scored them another major-label record deal.

"I always thought, if we were to do this again, if we were to make a record now, how would it be modernized?" said Pagano

He popped into a studio session during a visit home from London and heard his band mates working on the album track "Live in a Van."

"It was very subtle, which we didn't do very well back in the day, and really, really well-executed," Pagano said. "All the sounds were right, and all that I didn't like seemed to have gone away."

The inspired, 11-track effort marks a departure from the band's first album.

The grandiose textures that emphasized style over substance have been replaced with a more stripped-down sound and focused lyrics, reminiscent of Simon & Garfunkel and Cat Stevens. Their blend of Mediterranean rhythms and tightknit harmonies helps them stand out among popular folk-rock acts including Mumford & Sons, Avett Brothers and Fleet Foxes.

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"It's a very shadowy record," said Delopoulos, who wrote all 11 tracks.

"There's definitely a lot of energy and a lot of uplifting moments, like 'The Other Country,'" which Delopoulos wrote about his family member's last words before he passed away.

"There's sort of a redemption at the end," he continued. "But (the album) talks about, I would say, the different layers of life, the good times and the bad times all at once in one package with a bow on it."

These days Philippidis looks like a chiseled rock star, shredding guitar onstage in his skinny jeans, fitted shirt and dark sunglasses. The glasses hide a slightly closed eye, which can be fixed with one last surgery, and there is a C-shaped scar on his buzzed head from a tube doctors inserted to alleviate pressure on the brain. Philippidis has 13 titanium implants in his face. Doctors replaced his facial orbits, his forehead and jaw line. They also had to reconstruct his nose and sinuses.

His two male attackers are in prison, and the female who was with them fled the country. Despite the unprovoked brutality of the situation that nearly cost Philippidis his life, he and the rest of the band refer to it as the "accident."

"I view it as an accident, personally. I think we all do, because you can't really hold on to anything. I'm not really angry. I get to sit here with my cousin and somebody that I grew up with since I'm 11 years old and play music," said Philippidis, flashing that charming grin. "That anybody claps for our music is the biggest reward you can receive. We're just happy to be here."

Online: <http://www.burlaptocashmere.com>

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LINKS TO STORY, BELOW:

**Link to the online video:**

<http://news.yahoo.com/video/entertainment-15749636/band-burlap-to-cashmere-reemerges-after-tragedy-25794545.html>

-Video via AP youtube page: <http://youtu.be/WlgCEnhWXAE>

-ABC News - <http://abcn.ws/mFtOGy>

-Boston Globe - <http://bo.st/ipPum3>

-Huffington Post - <http://huff.to/ig6MZy>

-MSN Entertainment - <http://on-msn.com/lyoCQK>

-Pollstar - <http://bit.ly/lCV4Q3>

-Today (MSNBC) - <http://on.today.com/j5t6Lx>

-Yahoo! News - <http://yhoo.it/lIRFp3>