

POWER PLAY

ROCK & METAL MAGAZINE

Boneshaking new album from the Oz rockers

AIRBOURNA

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Life after Lemmy

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ANGEL WITCH **THE FLOWER KINGS**
WAYWARD SONS **LEPROUS** **EDENBRIDGE** **FLYING COLORS**
CORELEONI **SOREN ANDERSEN** **IMPERIAL JADE** **WOLF JAW** **JD MILLER** **SIGNUM REGIS** **DERANGE**
BLIND GUARDIAN **TWILIGHT ORCHESTRA**: FINALLY ARRIVES AFTER TWO DECADES

at boredom, however, on the contrary each song inserts various hooks that enable the songs to offer individuality and the lead breaks are high-velocity, fret-scorching outbursts coupled to some fine riffs that possess melody and an inherent catchiness, such as on 'Jungle' and 'Dark Days'. As a debut, this album fires warning shots that this Portuguese act has the ammunition to forge forward with subsequent releases.

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

MARTIN HARRIS

LORD HELMET

'Forget The End Of The World'
Post-Progressive Rock
Independent Release



Californian duo Lord Helmet are releasing debut 'Forget The End Of The World' and it's an intriguing offering that should appeal to those with progressive leanings toward the likes of Tool, Muse and Radiohead. Given its apocalyptic title, it comes as little wonder that there's a celestial dimension to this collection of nine weighty tracks. Without outstaying their welcome there's an intensity that demands the listener's submergence and rewards are reaped with such investment.

Formed in 2018, the band haven't wasted much time in putting together their vision of the future and in opener 'Hidden Things' a benchmark is set with its Pixies meets Tool riffing intensity underpinning multi-instrumentalist and frontman David Tomkins intentionally anodyne and alternative vocals. 'The Judas Tree' continues Lord Helmet's uniquely edgy brand of post prog punk. At times the band come across as if indulging in a freeform exercise in organic experimentation but, on the whole, it works. Not the easiest or most accessible of listens, there's an absorbing intensity that holds our attention, nowhere more so than the beguiling Bowie-inspired pairing of 'Building Castles' and 'Remade' that offer the same nonchalantly hypnotic delivery made famous by the Starman himself. Much needed light and shade is offered by the crescendoing and melodically expansive highpoint 'Seeing Dreams', before hefty title track 'Forget The End Of The World' offers a heavy and mesmerising riff that wouldn't stand out of place on Tool's magnificent 'Fear Inoculum'. Perhaps the most challenging piece on the album, at nine minutes it's a wieldy yet ultimately rewarding piece of full-on prog. Closer 'Rings Of Saturn' is, as its title suggests, the band's own piece of space oddity. Building from a relentlessly distorted riff motif, its energy barely lets up, giving ex-Slot drummer Adam Fugura an intense closing workout.

Albums this full of explorative ideas that twist and turn at every corner are as rare as new Tool records so, in the words of the band's biggest influence, "take your protein pills and put your helmet on!"

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8**

GEOFF WOOTTON

STEW

'Stew'
Rock
Independent Release



Swedish power-trio Stew formed in 2017 and have been attracting a lot of attention. Their first EP, 'Hot' was recorded live in 2018 and its opening track 'Might Be Keeping You' got itself included in Classic Rock magazine's Best of the year 2018 cover CD.

They tell us that, just like the first EP, this album was recorded live (except from vocals and solos) and took only nine days – blimey! This might sound like fast food but let me tell you, this is much more than the microwaved Ikea gravy and meatballs you may associate with Swedish cuisine. No, this is a perfect mix of the finely sifted southern 70s sounds of 'Right On Time', blended nicely with the grits and gravy of 'People'. Add a dollop of

Cream stirred into the rough, bluesy guitars of 'Newborn' and a splash of 60s woozy wine in 'Fruits'. Let it bubble through the shaking riff and tumbling drums of 'Play The Fool' and finally serve with the shot of bourbon that is good 'ol 'Sweet And True'. This Stew is superb, tasty and good for you. Grab your spoon and enjoy.

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9**

Ms D

PRIME CREATION

'Tears Of Rage'
Power/Progressive Metal
Rock 'n' Growl



These guys kind of remind me of Nocturnal Rites, Evergrey and Masterplan. They incorporate those staccato riffs/drumming, detuned guitars, and dramatic song structures. In fact, the first three tracks, 'Fingers Crossed', 'Lost In The Shades' and 'Before The Rain', are in this vein and, thus, very similar in their approach. 'Tears Of Rage' falls in line with the band's debut, but with a better production. The almost gothic-like but unobtrusive keyboards add to the music's overall feel. Esa Englund's vocals are average, but complement the music nicely. The barrage of drumming and the palm-muted riffing is evident throughout the album and, at times, gives the songs an almost melancholy sense. While this isn't my kind of metal, it is nonetheless enjoyable.

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

TONY PIJAR

HELHESTEN

'Vanquisher Of Darkness'
Power Metal
Independent Release



Spanish band Helhesten's debut five track EP, 'Vanquisher Of Darkness' is very much in the Iced Earth school of power metal, with vocalist Sergio Beltran sounding a lot like Earth's latest frontman, Stu Block – and that includes range and quality of delivery, so a serious thumbs-up to start with, and the thumb stays up, as his band mates don't let him down at any point throughout the record. Regrettably, what cancels out most of these positives is the overall standard of the song writing. It's not that there is anything poor here, it's just that there's nothing on show that jumps out and says that this is something new and unique. The EP is a good listen because of how musically impressive this band are, but it's all easily forgettable.

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5**

KEITH BRYANT

HARDLAND

'In Control'
Variety Rock
LO41



Like a ruling political party taking the best ideas from their opponent's manifesto and reshaping them as their own, Dutch differences Hardland touch a lot of music and never stay anywhere long. It may be labelled melodic hard rock by the label, but starting with the pinched harmonic squeals and half rap of 'The Nation's Greatest Enemies' and then following with a rather nonsensical cover of Numan and Tubeway Army's 'Are 'Friends' Electric?' shows how little they care about that. The Parisien accordion feel to Beatles wannabe waltz 'Love Love Love' confirms it and 'Rise And Shine', a stentorian synth pop thing, enlivens with

sudden bass runs.

Not that there isn't soaring melodic rock here; the thrusting groove of 'Pleasure And Pain' is wonderful, whilst 'The Powers Within' pump themselves up to a gargantuan size, so we don't look too closely at the rather indie pleasing insides, but they get this almost Night Flight Orchestra sound right on 'Last Goodbye'.

Loads to like here and only a couple of anodyne missteps, Hardland are In Control of their sound. It seems a little all over the place, but this is exactly what they want.

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8**

STEVE SWIFT

SAINT ASONIA

'Flawed Design'
Alt Metal
Spinefarm



This Canadian supergroup with singer/guitarist Adam Gontier (Three Days Grace), guitarist Mike Mushok (Staind), Adam's brother Cale (Art Of Dying) on bass and drummer Sa Giancarelli (Staind) supply a consistently strong set

of songs on their second album. Mushok's riffs underpin the music and he has plenty of thick alt metal tricks in his armoury that are a good fit for the tales of angst. Gontier is the star of the show here though, as it is his impassioned delivery and confessional lyrics that connect most. His usually dark lyrics this time round are all about overcoming difficulties and in that sense they're uplifting and empowering. Gontier has had an eventful few years and the inspiration for this album comes from him being checked into the emergency room at Betty Ford's clinic as his son was being born. The song 'This August' is about that moment. If that's not enough of an incentive to make lifestyle changes, then nothing will be! The album is often about him finding his way, despite himself. Lead off and catchy as hell 'Blind' has Gontier singing, "The fire inside me hasn't died" with such complete conviction that you're sold. Good choral hooks are plentiful and there's enough diversity between tracks to stop it sounding samey (although alt metal these days is becoming so generic there's not very much alt about it). Within Temptation's Sharon den Adel adds her otherworldly voice to 'Sirens', a song surely destined to be a single. 'Ghost' builds cinematically to epic proportions, whereas 'Fallen' has a melancholic chorus that puts you in mind of recent Katatonia songs, but it adds a big radio friendly "That's the way life goes" pre-chorus on a song about those who have passed away in our lives. The title track ruminates on our flaws and how "Things we love lose their shine" but ultimately on this record you sense that Gontier's desire to get his life in order. This is evidenced on the strident 'Beast' when he avows "I won't break this time, I promise you" and his desire drives this album.

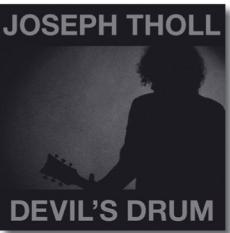
Superior, transatlantic sounding alt metal destined for high rotation on radio and social media.

POWERPOINTS: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8**

DUNCAN JAMIESON

JOSEPH THOLL

'Devil's Drum'
Heavy Rock
High Roller



'Devil's Drum' is the debut album of former Enforcer guitarist Joseph Tholl. Along the way his musical journey has seen him playing in Void and touring in the line-up of Robert Pehrsson's Humbucker. But perhaps this solo project might be yet his most adventurous. Joseph has assembled an array of phenomenal talent. From Robert Eriksson (Hellacopters) and Jakob Ljungberg (Second Sun) to Stipen Karlsson (Merciless), Tobias Lindkvist (Enforcer), Pontus Tahir (Dia Psalma)... the list goes on. And the resulting album is feast for the ear, with diversity and

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