

# FIREWORKS

THE MELODIC ROCK MAGAZINE

2  
FREE CDs...  
TWO AND A HALF  
HOURS OF MUSIC!

Issue 35 £4.50  
Mar/Apr 2009



LIVE TO ROCK!

SAXON & 'SYRIM' WARPATH



TWO SIDE MOON/SLW PROMOTIONS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Cornerstone - Ready to Go              | 11. Syrym - Warpath                        |
| 2. Oz Knott - You Can't Win               | 12. Sabina's Rex - The Curse               |
| 3. Tracy Gang Pussy - Miss Negativity     | 13. Stairway - No Mercy                    |
| 4. Gentlemen's Blues Club - Slippin' Away | 14. Badmouth - El Diablo                   |
| 5. Silverdollar - Unleash Hell            | 15. Equal Loudness Curve - You & the Devil |
| 6. Callie Cox - Back Thru the Universe    | 16. Denial Waits - Rock 'n' Roll           |
| 7. Phil Vincent - All Because of You      | 17. H.A.R.D. - Stay                        |
| 8. Three Quarter Stone - Squidgy          | 18. Sixty 8 - Any Race of Man              |
| 9. Marc Ferreira - I'm Waiting            | 19. Confused5 - Don't Hide Your Blues      |
| 10. Silver Dirt - Go! She Said            | 20. Knight - A Million Times               |

BRINGING LIGHT TO DARK PLACES...

WWW.MYSPACE.COM/NICKYADR WWW.SLWPROMOTIONS.COM

Free with issue 35 of FIREWORKS

All rights of the producer and of the owner of the work reproduced reserved.  
Unauthorised copying, hiring, renting, public performances and  
broadcasting of this record prohibited. Made in EU.



**BOW RISING**  
The Rainbow take the  
lead to the stage again



**METAL QUEEN**  
Doro celebrates 25  
years of rocking



goes to the haunting closer 'Sirens Of The Seven Seas', sung pretty much wholly by Jan Kenneth Barkved and augmented by a haunting violin solo courtesy of Stephanie Valentin, and 'The Mind Maelstrom' which veers quite heavily into Within Temptation territory (although is a heavy little beast when it gets going).

At the end of the day, there's nothing wrong with 'The 13th Floor'. It pushes all the right buttons, has some extremely clever songs with some great hooks and is certainly well played and well produced throughout; as such, it's a worthy addition to any collection. It's just that it offers little new and, as I mentioned above, it feels like the band want a second crack at repositioning themselves as a more accessible band in the genre: as such, they now find themselves at a crossroads, exactly where they were two years ago - hopefully this time round they won't screw it up...

John Tucker

### DESTRUCTION - 'D.E.V.O.L.U.T.I.O.N.' (AFM)

It's been 25 years since Destruction was formed in Lorrach in Germany. Alongside Kreator and Sodom, Destruction are titans of the German thrash metal circuit. After years spent in the wilderness during the nineties, founding bassist/singer Marcel Schirmer returned to the band in 1999 and since then things have been on the up for Destruction: they signed to Nuclear Blast in 2000 before moving on to AFM in 2005 for the 'Inventor Of Evil' album. The remarkable discipline and persistence of founding guitarist Mike Sifringer kept the band going through those rough years when most bands probably would have given up. They lost their record deal during the grunge period and had to self-release and promote their own albums during most of the nineties. But that's all in the past now and their latest album shows a band looking ahead to the future. It's a technically excellent album with lots of frenetic guitars and pounding drums. Interestingly, the first letter of each song spells the album's title 'D.e.v.o.l.u.t.i.o.n.'. There's even some special contributions from Annihilator main man Jeff Waters, Gary Holt of Exodus and guitarist Vinnie Moore. Standout tracks include the impulsive 'Offenders Of The Throne' and the terrific 'Odyssey Of Frustration' which recalls their best earlier work. 'Last Desperate Scream' is one of the albums more melodic tracks.

'D.e.v.o.l.u.t.i.o.n.' shows a band that's still worth listening to and are more than capable of producing top quality work that suits a modern metal audience whilst pleasing fans of classic eighties thrash.

Neil Daniels

### CORONATUS - 'PORTA OBSCURA' (Massacre Records)

You have to wonder if Nightwish had any idea of how big a can of worms they opened by becoming a successful crossover of rock and opera. They have given rise to many copycat artists, some staggeringly good, some embarrassingly awful, and some blander than a British Prime Minister. Germany's Coronatus are happy to throw their hats into the ring with their second album, and if nothing else have brought their own identity to the goth themed party (please leave your cloaks at the door).

The old chestnut of dual vocalists is dragged out on 'Porta Obscura', but in an interesting and effective twist Coronatus have gone for two female vocalists, one operatic (Carmen Schafer) and one more traditional (Ada Flechtnr). Flechtnr has a bit of an average voice, if I'm honest, but it doesn't affect the enjoyment of the album, especially as Schafer has a top notch operatic range. The songs wander between English, German and Latin, so you won't have much of a clue what's being sung about (I like to think it's an opera about toilets, but then I'm strange), but it doesn't matter much, as like a grown up opera it's all about the music.

Emphasis is placed firmly on the operatic side of the songs, and as a result 'Porta Obscura' (lit: 'Where's My Toilet?') will repel as much as it attracts. To the uninitiated it will seem like it's stuffed firmly up its own arse, but those who appreciate Nightwish's 'Poet & The Pendulum' will get a real kick out of this whole album, as taken as a whole it's not far away from a feature length version of that song with added Latin and opera.

Reviews for the album have certainly been mixed, and I was quite prepared for another disappointing Nightwish copy, but 'Porta Obscura' is a wonderful, epic album, and listening to it at full volume will really blow you away. It's metal, it's opera, it's great.

Alan Holloway

### ALSO EDEN - 'IT'S KIND OF YOU TO ASK' (Independent)



It was back in issue #27 that I reviewed the band's first album and said that it was one of the best debuts I had encountered in a long time, and I stand by that opinion. I am delighted that they haven't changed the formula on this, their sophomore release, so if you have a liking for bands such as Pallas, Jadis, Arena, IQ and early Marillion/Genesis then Also Eden should be on your shopping list. Clearly, a lot of love and attention has gone into this independent release as the booklet and cover art is very strong as is the production, and as for the songs, every one is a delight. The Prog tendencies show through with the three long tracks, which are interspersed with shorter offerings that provide a good balance.

The album opens with 'Star', in which they indulge in a lengthy but delightful instrumental intro that develops from keyboard drone into a jaunty piece as the other instruments join in. Both guitar and keyboards get a solo, the latter will have those who love the retro keyboard style purring with pleasure. Then the sonorous tones of Huw Lloyd-Jones make their first appearance and what a joy they are. The guy really reminds me of Alison Moyet in timbre crossed with Fish in terms of delivery, although he is far superior to the aforementioned Scot in terms of singing ability. The track rattles along until a nice piano section changes the mood and I am reminded of Alan Read (Pallas). This following up tempo section again brings Pallas to mind and the Mellotron outro is a wonderful way to close matters. Si Rogers' guitar work and Ian Hodson's keyboards throughout the track are very impressive and adaptable with the former getting to play in various styles from gritty through to delicate.

'Artificial Light' is a Jadis/Steve Thorne style number tinged with a smattering of early Genesis with the jangly acoustic guitars and the Organ when it appears. The refrain on the bridge is beautifully constructed and delivered.

'Skimming Stones' has early Hogarth era Marillion sensibilities whilst the chorus brings to mind Pink Floyd and Jadis. The acoustic opening is plaintive and the song builds to a big climax. The guitar work that Rogers plays low down in the mix is absolutely fabulous.

'Outside In' starts with a slow piano and vocal passage, before it moves into a Prog Metal-lite section that has Arena overtones. My one criticism is that this track feels a tad long and could have benefited from a bit of editing. 'Together Alone' will resonate with any of you who are married with kids. In comparison to the rest of the album this track is positively brief. The vocal arrangement is simple but very effective.

The album's piece de resistance is 'A Widow's Eyes', which in true Prog style moves through different sections. As I listen to it I can't help but think of parallels with Marillion's 'Forgotten Sons' with its theme of soldiers, war and loss. This is a splendid track and the use of different tempos to highlight the perspectives of the protagonists is very well executed. The use of sound bytes during this and the following number are both skilfully done.

The album closes with 'Photographs', which is well placed after the 'heavy' message of the previous number, and finishes things off on a lighter note and bounces long very nicely. The guitar and keyboard interplay towards the end is fantastic and will have those, like me, with a penchant for a bit of air instrument playing in a state of nirvana.

Many bands suffer with 'difficult second album syndrome', but not Also Eden who have delivered an extremely impressive set of songs, indeed, if there is any justice they will be a huge success and I urge you to support them by obtaining a copy of the album via their website, alsoeden.com, you won't be sorry.

Gary Marshall

### ANDROMEDA - 'THE IMMUNITY ZONE' (Nightmare)

Polish progressive metal band Andromeda are one of those acts whose music is something I like to describe as not an easy listen. Intricate songs interlaced with odd time changes and clever lyrics, makes their work something you have to indulge in, music that you have to take the time to really listen to before you get into it, before making your mind up about what they have done. New album 'The Immunity Zone' is just such an album, one that I didn't really understand on the first few plays though as I wasn't giving it my full attention at all times and missed out on quite a lot of what was going on.

So putting aside a few hours so as to give this album the time it deserved, I turned up the stereo and sat back. What came at me then was a classy slice of melodic progressive metal, that had many subtle elements interwoven within the music. Yet even after giving it my full attention 'The Immunity Zone' still wasn't an easy listen. At first the melodies are buried within the complex arrangements and they are slow to raise their heads above the firing line. It makes this album a hard one to enjoy but after continual plays I have grown to like it's many multiple, puzzling, complexities and when the melodies do show their heads then the song's take on a whole new life, which helps you enjoy the album the more you play the cd. Though this still won't be an album for everyone, even die hard prog heads may find this a hard one to get into, and give up on it, which would be a shame.

As songs like 'Censoring Truth', 'Another Step', 'Shadow Of Lucent Moon' and the epic 'Veil Of Illumination' are all prime examples of superb complex prog metal that is well played, produced and put together, songs that probe your senses looking for those dark recesses of the mind so they can claw and finger their way inside, but as I said earlier it just won't be everyone's cup of tea. So to sum up, another strong album from Andromeda that needs time and patience before you can unlock it's many secrets, but when you do it can be a rewarding experience.

Ian Johnson

### CREAM PIE - 'DIRTY JOB' (Independent)

Cream Pie are an Italian based sleaze rock band formed in 2006. Their sound is reminiscent of early Motley Crue and L.A. Guns, with a touch of Backyard Babies thrown in, more early 80's punk glam than the later prety-boy sound of Poison and Warrant. Self-produced debut CD 'Dirty Job' is a collection of eleven no-frills gritty rock anthems. Joey Florenz's vocals are pitched between Faster Pussycat's Taimé Downie and Vince Neil. The production is very basic and bottom-end heavy, (but what were you expecting, lush string arrangements and Mutt Lange style vocal harmonies?!). But occasionally the guitar solos of Florenz and Nikki Dick slice through the murk, and gives the sound a much needed boost. While some of the album gets bogged down with repetitive riffs and choruses, there's enough life in tracks like 'Long Leader', 'Tokyo Nights' and 'Love Is Blind' to please any fan of the genre, and shows Cream Pie could be one to watch out for.

Since recording the album, Joey Florenz has left the band, to be replaced by vocalist Rachel O'Neill and guitarist Phantom, and have been touring extensively through the USA. Purchase the CD from [www.creampirocks.com](http://www.creampirocks.com)

Ant Heeks

### DEEXPUS PROJECT - 'HALF WAY HOME' (Independent)

It never ceases to amaze me how many bands are out there producing decent quality and well produced music with little or no label backing; and you can add DeeExpus Project from the North East of England to that list. Essentially a duo made up of multi-instrumentalist and songwriter Andy Ditchfield and vocalist Tony Wright, they supplemented the team by bringing in support in the shape of guitarists Phil Sloane and Steve Wright, Mike Henderson (keyboards) and Ian Raine (bass) for the recording, although I think Ditchfield handled the vast majority of the instrumentation. It should be mentioned that subsequent to the release of the album they've actually recruited a full band and intend to tour.

Now, I do have one small criticism of an otherwise very pleasing album, and that's Tony Wright's vocals, which at times come across as a little thin and lacking in dynamics. There were times when I longed to hear certain sections sung by Gary Chandler (Jadis) or Steve Thorne, both of whom I think would really nail this material.

If I were categorising this album I'd have to tend towards the neo-Prog of IQ, Jadis and the likes albeit with heavier passages than those bands are known for. It's not pure Prog because there is a greater diversity to it than that, with some Pop influences shining through at various times during the course of the seven tracks. Musically I am really impressed and when the vocals are multi-layered it is a treat and it's a shame that those solo vocal passages don't quite carry the same impetus.

The album opens with 'Greed' that has a nice, chunky guitar riff and processed vocals. The opening sequence brings Porcupine Tree to mind although the chorus changes tack, whilst Sloane's guitar solo is a delight.

Recanting slightly on my earlier comment about Wright's vocals, on 'Pointless Child' his style fits the song to a tee. It starts slowly and builds pleasingly. It also has a decent chorus and pleasant refrain. I even like the processed drums that appear occasionally. I am to an extent reminded of Touchstone, albeit when I saw them perform without their female singer.

'Ptree' is apparently meant as homage to Porcupine Tree, which I can see in part. It opens with some Jon Petrucci-esque bursts of guitar that becomes increasingly prominent until it takes over. The change into a piano lead chorus is exquisite. 'One Eight' is a fine song, it builds delightfully from acoustic beginnings into a monster ending where Phil Sloane's guitar is very much to the fore. 'One Day' is a short piano and acoustic guitar piece that you wish went on a bit longer, but to all intents and purposes it acts as an intro to 'Seven Nights' with its strong beat and understated Organ sound underpinning beautifully. I am reminded of Paul Carrack on the verses and the simple chorus is effective. The song then takes on more neo-Prog sensibilities.

The title track closes the album and is the longest song on the disc at a fraction over 17 minutes and it does feel a little over-extended. It starts strongly with a delicious heavy guitar, and there are further splendid heavy sections elsewhere in the track, but this would be the one track I really don't think the vocals are equal to the music. The middle section is a bit drawn out, although the piano is beautiful. In summary they could have edited this down and had a really spanking song instead of one that's merely good.

As debuts go this is a fine album, watch out for DeeExpus, there's real promise here.

Gary Marshall

### CORNERSTONE - 'HEAD OVER HEELS' (ATOM Records)

"An emerging, ambitious Austrian band, marking the calming influence in between the prevailing Pop-Mainstream and the rebellious riot produced by the revived Britpop movement" claims Cornerstone's biography. I don't know what images that conjures up to you, but in truth the material on 'Head Over Heels' is a collection of very pleasant, well played, nicely produced radio friendly rock; trippy, laid-back music for a long drive on a summer's day. For those of a certain age, the closest comparison I can come up with would be Suede's DeMarchi's Baby Animals of the early Nineties.

There's nothing wrong with 'Head Over Heels', but there's not a great deal to get excited about either. Anja Schirmer (vocals), Stefan Wachelhofer (guitar), Michael Wachelhofer (bass) and Hannah Wachtler (drums) are undoubtedly a talented bunch, and it would be nice to hear them put the pedal to the metal to see what they can do. To be fair, as the CD progresses 'Changed' and to a lesser extent 'Something In The Way' do get the party started, but the rest of the eleven cuts on offer could quite happily be on heavy rotation on American radio: in the good old days, MTV would have loved this band.

Bizarrely for something so radio orientated, the CD boasts two bonus cuts over the eleven, US, radio versions of 'Regret' and 'Fade Away' which up the running order without really adding anything to the album itself.

John Tucker

### PLACE VENDOME - 'STREETS OF FIRE' (Frontiers)

I was fully expecting Balance to be far and away the best release from the ever more impressive Frontiers stable this month; yet much as the songs are growing on me more and more with each new listen (which I have to confess, is quite a lot), because of the rather dull production, Place Vendome's sophomore effort 'Streets Of Fire' has just nipped in and pipped them at the post!

Conceived as a way of tempting former Helloween vocalist Michael Kiske back into the fold after years spent in the rock 'n' roll wilderness, the Dennis Ward produced 'Place Vendome' was a bit of a revelation; it's broodingly sophisticated take on the old tried and tested classic hard rock formula marking it out as one of the best such releases of its type in 2005. Written and recorded with the assistance of various members of Pink Cream 69, and keyboard maestro Gunter Werner from Vanden Plas, 'Place Vendome' came as a genuinely pleasant surprise, and there's been an increasing clarion call for those involved to venture into the studio once more ever since. Those calls have finally been answered with 'Streets Of Fire'.

This time around, whilst the backing musicians have remained the same as last time, the songwriting team has changed completely with Torsti Spool (Leverage), Robert Sall (Work of Art), and Ronny Milianowicz (Saint Deamon) lending