



Jon Anderson: full of vim and vigour.

New World Order

Jon Anderson

Survival And Other Stories
GONZO

The older we get, it seems, the more we look back. This isn't necessarily an exercise in maudlin nostalgia, but can instead be a positive process of evaluation and reflection, taking stock as a way of coming to terms with the person we once were and who we've become. In such moments, we see that not everything we've done makes sense, and of course there's plenty of scope for regrets.

With a title that perhaps invokes to his near-death experience following an asthma attack, and subsequent acrimonious split with Yes (both in 2008), as well as a nod to the Anderson-penned tune that closed Yes's 1969 debut, it also neatly expresses his irrepressible optimism that things will generally work out for the best.

That openness to whatever might come along was also evidenced when Anderson put an advert on his website saying 'Musicians Wanted'. Four years of internet file-swapping later, the results are in – and they're surprisingly strong.

That he should have chosen to work in this way is no great surprise. Voice aside, the most potent gift of his career has been that of musical agent provocateur, a catalysing force urging his collaborators onwards to produce something that they otherwise might not have found in themselves. Of course, this is a two-way street, and the composers he's found himself with have given Anderson much to work with, and perhaps most importantly of all, a powerful sense of purpose.

New New World (co-written with Jamie Dunlap) has that mid-period Yes majesty, while the bounding *Love Of The Life* (with

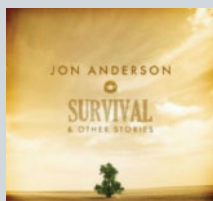
Dan Spollen) might almost have been an outtake from ABWH. With excellent production values throughout, this is no half-baked home studio effort, but rather grandly turned-out tunes that match and elevate the lofty principles espoused in many of Anderson's lyrics.

While religious belief has always been part of Anderson's subject matter, there's a more overtly evangelical tone on some tracks. *Big Buddha Song* (written with Kevin Shima), contains a long thank-you list to various deities and prophets, as well as a crafty quote from Yes's *We Have Heaven*. But given that this is the sound of a man with every reason to believe that each continuing day on the planet is a gift that he came perilously close to losing, it's easy to understand and forgive him such proselytising.

Perhaps best of all is the sumptuous *Incoming* (with Spollen), centred around an insistent piano pulse that anchors an unsettled, questing mood against the clipped chanting of Anderson's vocals. Gradually introduced strings, pounding tribal-style drumming and warm brass figures gather into an exhilarating momentum, forming a swirling high point that's impressive and emotional.

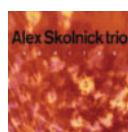
If an artist's value can be assessed by the degree to which their work has touched people's hearts, Anderson could have easily sat back to rest upon his laurels. That he avoids doing so, displaying the kind of strength, vigour and confidence that *Survival And Other Stories* embodies is probably a better measure of his true worth.

Sid Smith



Alex Skolnick Trio

Veritas PALMETTO



As guitarist for 80s mega-metal band Testament, Alex Skolnick had the rawk chops, but was always a cut above the chug-and-widdle brigade. A bright, eclectic mind and a taste for the surprising kept him and the band interesting.

Skolnick's been into jazz since he stumbled upon a Miles Davis concert on TV as a 19-year-old. In the intervening 23 years, while not playing with Testament or classical rock phenomenon Trans-Siberian Orchestra, he's become an acclaimed jazz musician. *Veritas* is the fourth album from the trio he formed in New York with drummer Matt Zebroski and bassist Nathan Peck. This highly recommended recording sees this accomplished and confident three-piece draw on traditional jazz, fusion and funk.

Skolnick's debt to Joe Satriani is clear in the Eastern-flavoured *Bollywood Jam* and the title track. *Song Of The Open Road* is a pacey, catchy piece of proto-Metheny fusion with swinging drum'n'bass sections, and the warm and fuzzy *Flection* is a nostalgic throwback to the heyday of Joe Pass and Barney Kessel. The acoustic *Alone In Brooklyn* is a lovely slice of melancholy, but with Skolnick's rock pedigree it's apposite that the stand-out track is their brilliant, Greenwich Village-cool rendering of Metallica's *Fade To Black*.

Grant Moon

Ant-Bee

Electronic Church Muzik

DAXAR



Billy James's reputation was founded on a love of all things weird and wonderful in 60s and 70s rock, chiefly that of Frank Zappa's Straight Records label. As his alter-ego Ant-Bee, he began creating his own experimental music in 1987. It's something he's continued to develop ever since, alongside a career as biographer of Todd Rundgren and Zappa And The Mothers Of Invention. This largely unclassifiable fourth album finds him joined by

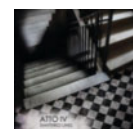
a phalanx of ex-Mothers (Bunk Gardner, Don Preston and the late Jimmy Carl Black among them), as well as Gong's Daavid Allen, Focus vet Jan Akkerman and Beefheart legends Zoot Horn Rollo and Rockette Morton. The whole thing, perhaps unsurprisingly, sounds like a vast radio station of the mind with an eternally itchy dial. There are precious few musical forms left untouched here, from churchy freakouts and spidery jazz-rock through to alien noisescapes and samples of Groucho Marx.

A good deal of it sounds like weirdness for weirdness's sake, but some sublime moments do poke through. *Mannah*, for instance, is a dazzling showcase for Akkerman's extraordinary guitar sorcery, while the country-blues odyssey of *Mallard Flies Towards Heaven* proves that Rockette and Zoot Horn can still deliver in psychedelic spades.

Rob Hughes

Atto IV

Shattered Lines GALILEO



No one sensible would ever dispute that Italy has punched above its weight in progressive rock terms over the past 40 years or so. Clearly there is something deeply entrenched in the country's abiding artistic culture and understanding of how music can be sculpted into new forms that lends itself to nurturing bands such as Atto IV – in turn leading to albums like this consistently enthralling stream of sonic consciousness.

On the surface at least, this four-piece are a fairly orthodox prog metal outfit, with a plain and brusquely-executed debt to Dream Theater and Symphony X that, on its own, wouldn't mark them out as anything particularly extraordinary. But within the subtle mutations and taut intricacies of songs such as the thunderous, eight-minute *Bad Dreams*, there is much evidence of a far broader palate of influences being employed, with shades of everyone from Opeth to Pink Floyd drifting across the aural panorama. And as much as Atto IV like to veer off on wild, technical tangents, these are carefully-crafted songs at heart, with bold melodic brushstrokes adding vivid colour and

atmosphere to a precise and sturdy rhythmic framework – most notably on the stirring *A Second*. Another audacious and absorbing triumph for our continental comrades, then.

Dom Lawson

Julianna Barwick

The Magic Place ASTHMATIC KITTY



At a time when any spotty twonk with a guitar and a record deal

insists on calling themselves an artist, it's refreshing to come across someone like Julianna Barwick, who is genuinely making music for the love of the creative process and of invoking emotions without the use of words. Coming from the abstract Laurie Anderson school of thought, *The Magic Place* is constructed entirely around her own layered vocals, with only the barest piano motifs or the occasional scattering of percussion to keep her company. The result is beautiful, ethereal and

otherworldly, like the ghosts of Sigur Rós haunting the woods.

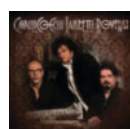
Barwick slips into your consciousness with the sunny, droning *Envelop*; a trance-like introduction that paves the way for *Keep Up The Good Work*, which sounds like nothing less than evolved whale song. Elsewhere, in the hopeful *White Flag*, she brings in some indecipherable chants that almost sound like African spiritual music.

It is, of course, all quite spectacularly hippie-like – if the very sight of a dream catcher brings you out in hives, this probably isn't the album for you. But as a collection of lullabies for grown-ups, this has a sleepy, echoing beauty that can't be denied.

Emma Johnston

CCLR

CCLR ESOTERIC



A new Italian trio featuring one-time PFM vocalist Bernardo

Lanzetti, this band ride a style that nestles somewhere between the aforementioned PFM, jazz rock and mid-70s Genesis, with just a hint of ambient below the surface.

The compositions here are sedate and majestic, yet also cinematic in style. The beauty of some of the piano playing by Cristiano Roversi is complemented by Lanzetti's vocal approach, which is eerily surreal. At times it brings to mind David Surkamp of Pavlov's Dog – not in the way that he reaches incredibly high notes, but in the general presentation. This works best on the lengthy *Great Love Does Burn Fast*, which is a masterpiece of both timing and building.

But every track here just grows from soft beginnings into a controlled crescendo, before settling back down. In this respect, these are more like mini-symphonies than songs, and part of the appeal is that at times you really do get the feeling that they're jamming. Their interpretation of Brian

Eno's *By This River* also brings a fresh dimension to the formidable music.

If this is what the trio can do on their debut, then the mind boggles at what could be achieved further down the line.

Malcolm Dome

Daedalus

Motherland

GALILEO



Daedalus's second album might have been a long time in the coming – they begun writing some of the material way back in the mists of 2004, would you believe – but they've put those inbetween years to good use by polishing up their sound and creating a more intricate collection of songs. Now operating with a slightly revised line-up, Daedalus have moved on, *Motherland* has matured enough for public consumption and the results of their hard labour can finally be heard in the wild.

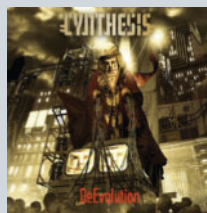
Mixed by Masterplan/Helloween's Roland Grapow (he also contributes a guitar solo to the highly technical *Underground*), this 11-track collection oozes atmosphere with a satisfying heaviness. The attention-grabbing instrumental opener *What A Challenging World* twists and turns around this Italian band's collective influences with a theatrical undercurrent as it flows seamlessly into *Your Lies*; a song that really pays attention to the fine detail and nods in the general direction of both Led Zeppelin and Metallica. More eclectic offerings neatly make the most of those shifting time signatures, jazz fusion and electronica without losing any edge. Harmonious with some spine-tingling riffs and piano, particularly on the melodic *Weather The Storm*, *Motherland* is a bold and exciting move forward for a talented band that just needed a little nudge in the right direction.

Natasha Scharf

Natural Selection

Cynthesis

DeEvolution SENSORY



The last time Jasun Tipton recorded an album it was with Zero Hour, the complex and guitar-laden prog metal outfit from California.

The key components of this band were three-fold: Jasun's dazzling guitar talents, his twin brother Troy's nimble skill on bass and Erik Rosvold's strong and soaring voice, however a number of factors culminated in Erik's departure and the eventual hiatus of the outfit. But you can't keep a good band down and with renewed vigour and a chance reunion between Jasun and Erik the unit are back in a new guise. Less metallic in flavour than Zero Hour but still inherently heavy, *DeEvolution* has been four years in the making, proving to be a remarkable return to form from the Tipton twins. In fact it wouldn't be preposterous to suggest that this is the album that Queensrÿche should be making – dark, moody and melodic with a singer who rivals Geoff Tate.

This is interesting stuff. In the years that Jasun contemplated *Cynthesis*, his aim was to

create a record that sounds cinematic. As a starting point the album is conceptual, denoting a metaphor for western globalisation via a story about a brainwashed shaman. Of course, *DeEvolution* can be enjoyed without focussing on the storyline. However a brief dip into the lyrics is recommended to appreciate Rosvold's emotive narrative. But even without the sleeve notes as a listener's guide, the mood of the album is carried by its brooding riffs and atmospherics. This might surprise those who are accustomed to concept albums that rely on bombastic segments to signify points of drama, but Jasun avoids blistering guitar solos in favour of soft, intricate noodling. Furthermore his brother Troy is often at the forefront of guitar duties (quite rightfully) demonstrating his exceptional technical ability on the bass. Hence, the bouncing bass line and mechanical guitar riffs of *Incision* cause the song to sound like bass-driven funk metallers Rage Against The Machine in places.

Perhaps it's the symbiosis of twinship or simply that they crave for balance, but this album manages consistently to evoke a sense of respect for the individuals involved. Press notes



Prog: "How's things?"
Cynthesis: "Looking up."

reveal Jasun's adoration of Rosvold, touting him as the only vocalist who can 'really connect to the material' and he most certainly doesn't disappoint. Serenaded simply by a lingering piano and spaced atmospherics, he gives one of his finest performances during *Shallow World*, expressing the lyrics with clarity and poignancy. Elsewhere, the more metallic moments such as *The Edifice Grin*, are also a perfect stage for the aggressive edge of Rosvold's vocal personality.

The sensitivity and depth of this record does cause it, in one or two places, to sound a tad like 80s cheese, but with the tempo shifts and a concept that demands an emotive storyteller these fears are short-lived and forgiven respectively. Fans of Zero Hour's heavier edge might also find fault with this aspect of *DeEvolution*, but it's not without Jasun's moments of guitar wizardry. With their follow-up album *ReEvolution* already in the pipeline, here's hoping that *Cynthesis* can match the majesty of this excellent debut.

Holly Wright