

THE MUSIC IS OUT THERE

By Nicky Baldrian



UK melodic rockers **SHAFT OF STEEL** have been gaining positive press for their recent EP called 'Art Of Steel'. The band are Robert Fenning - Lead vocals, Alex Markham - Guitar, Andy Cooper - Bass and backing vocals, Adam Carruthers - Guitar, Chris Smurthwaite - Keyboards and Garth Vickers - Drums. If you fire Fireworks then you will love these guys. I caught up with Alex Markham.

All the guys have known one another for many years. "They're my best friends from university and my hometown of Kendal," says Alex. "When I was 16, I was in a melodic death metal band with our other guitarist Adam and I played in a prog rock covers band with our keyboard player Chris around the same time. I met the other three guys at university in Scarborough ten years ago, when we were all studying on the same music technology degree. That's when the band you see today as Shaft of Steel originally formed. We had a break between 2007 and 2011 and I spent a lot of that time working in recording studios producing other bands, so when we reformed a few years ago, I felt like I was finally ready to make an EP that did the music justice."

When the lads started out, they were more or less a straight-ahead power metal band influenced by groups like Gamma Ray, Manowar and Blind Guardian. Myself and Rob, their vocalist, has always handled all of the song writing duties and back then they discovered pretty quickly that they had a shared love of 1980s AOR and progressive rock. "So our sound naturally shifted more towards those areas. Our bassist Andy arranges most of the backing vocals. Being from Sheffield, he was raised on Def Leppard and you can really tell that when you listen to the massive choirs we've got going on in the choruses! Also, Peter Gabriel is a huge influence on the keyboard sounds we use. I've been in love with that Yamaha CP80 piano sound since I first heard 'Red Rain'. We try and throw that into any song we can," says Alex.

What makes Shaft Of Steel different is the fact that they combine metal influences with out-and-out AOR. "You get a lot of metal bands that blur the lines between hard rock and metal, but not many that go all out with the glossy AOR melodies of the 80s. We've been compared to Serpentine and I can certainly see why, and I find that really flattering as they're a great band, but we're definitely more at the metal end of the hard rock spectrum. We want to delve even further into AOR territory on the next record. For me, the 1980s was the absolute pinnacle of rock music and Shaft of Steel are paying tribute to that, while doing our own thing at the same time," he says.

Alex is naturally really proud of the EP and what the band have achieved with this record. "It's only four songs long, but they're quite lengthy tracks so you get close to thirty minutes of music for your money. It's a mixture of big AOR choruses with huge backing choirs, Dream Theater-esque guitar and keyboard solo trade-offs, a rhythm section that smacks you in the face and a whole bunch of riffs straight from the Iron Maiden school of guitar playing. Adrian Smith fans are in for a treat because he's my guitar hero and you'll hear his influence in all of the solos," he smiles.

The EP was mainly recorded in Alex's home studio

in London, but the vocals were recorded all over the place, as Rob lived in Germany for a while and Andy lives in Sheffield. "So all of his backing vocals were recorded up there. Of course the legend that is Dennis Ward from Pink Cream 69 also sings backing vocals on the record, so he sent us his choirs over from Germany. It took about three years to record, which sounds like an awfully long time, but a few of us have moved house, changed jobs or got married, which certainly didn't speed up the process! I handled production duties myself and because I'm a huge perfectionist, there were a few rewrites and we ended up scrapping a song at last minute in favour of 'Drive', which has ended up being the opening track. We wanted to make the best record we possibly could and I think we've achieved that. Dennis Ward also mastered the CD and I'm so pleased with the outcome."

The band are hoping to get a few gigs booked in for later this year. "We supported Vega on the London date of their UK tour last November and that was really amazing. HRH AOR 3 was also a blast, so now we've really got the itch to play live again! We've put this EP out ourselves and there's been a lot of interest recently, so we're not going to be resting on our laurels. Right now we're working on a full-length album and we're looking to do some collaborations with other artists, if we can. It's really difficult to get a head start as a recording artist in the current climate but we love making music. It's our passion and we want to be able to keep doing it for many years to come. If other people get as much enjoyment out of listening to it as we have making it then we'll have accomplished our mission, Alex concludes. More info at:

www.shaftofsteel.com
www.facebook.com/shaftofsteel

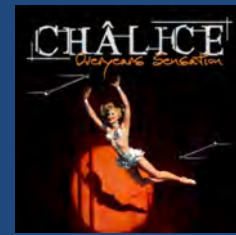


The excellent **CHÂLICE** are back with a superb new CD called 'Overyears Sensation' which is out now via Keiler Records. Chalice are Gino Naschke (voc), Oliver Scheer (g), Axel Hoffmann (keys), and Michael Mehl (dr). I caught up with Gino Naschke to find out more. Gino and the guys were just starting as a band at school. It was Oliver and Gino founding the band. After some time they found some good fellows who just had the same idea behind the music. "Very simple - stopping with everything doing apart from playing music on our way to become the biggest rockstars ever," Gino tells me.

Life itself is always the biggest inspiration for Gino. "We just live our lives to get new stories to put them into words for our music. We are five people with various musical backgrounds - all from rock and pop but different styles. From Kiss and Journey to Beatles and Deep Purple. What we all love is: great melodies and heavy guitars riffing around! It was definitely about time to release another record and to enter the stages again," he explains.

Chalice is together as a band for over 20 years now. The guys love each other and they hate each other. "Nothing better than a marriage. We put all our energy in our music. Normally when somebody comes up with an idea for a new song the others are just ready to destroy everything from this very first idea to change everything to make it a complete new 'Chalice-Song'. We change every little tone or phrase until everybody is happy with the result. And everybody means everybody! No compromises! This process sometimes takes more than two or three years until everybody feels confident. We learned that a song needs to grow, needs to mature as a good

wine. We are able to accept the egos of all band members without losing our own. In the end you get very special melodic rock stuff you can't compete in total with anybody. Every song is an experiment - no chance for stereotype thinking," Gino laughs.



The band are very happy with the new record. "Yes, it took some years to write the new material and to work on it until it was definitely ready to be recorded. But in the end it is a big reflection, a picture of our lives. We put in all our creativity and energy

to make it happen. The difficult tide of events of all our lives, like birth, marriage, children, divorce, ups and downs of all colours forced us to take time for the whole process. But as the music was always part of our lives it was also our personal catalyser of it all. And over the years we had the chance to learn on tour how a song needs to sound like to make the people move and to feel the music. And with this background we started writing our stories in melodies. And now we have real rockers like 'You Better Get Used To It', 'Rock'n'Roll Machine' with a real funky beginning and 'Shake The Earth' that tells the story of the band how it goes. With the title track 'Overyears Sensation' we have a 80s melodic track reflecting the band's status with a little wink. There are epic tracks like 'Chasing the wind' and 'Turn Into', a song that questions the virtual realities of the kid generation that eliminates 'authentic' face-to-face adventures at all. The short riff 'Glorious Again' is telling the story of a little boy who tried to commit suicide before he was 15 - a sad true story. The sing-along video track 'All About Your Love' is the story of a father who only realises that the daughter leaves for one year when it is almost too late. The mid tempo ballad 'Sign Of The Times' gives a little chance to sit down and relax before the album goes to the end with powerful songs 'Taste It' and 'Don't Tell Me Lies', a song about politicians who know exactly how to play the games. The short instrumental 'Last Wish' is the outro of the record.

I think the whole album sounds very powerful and it comes up with all trademarks of Chalice: Several voices on a hard foundation. Classic hard rock in the tradition of Deep Purple and Uriah Heep meets heavy rock a la Mötley Crue & Van Halen," he explains about the album and songs.

With this album the band went further on our road to create the music that they love for the ears of their fans ready to conquer the whole world with it. "We love catchy melodies but we also love interesting grooves sometimes peppered with complicated breaks - hidden for them who only want to rock but recognizable for musicians. The powerful sound (thanks to Andy Horn) is also an advancement referring to the earlier records."

The album was recorded in various studios under direction of Oliver (Scheer - guitar). "Oli was recording the keyboards, the guitars and the bass himself in his own studio. The drums were recorded by our friend Atti and the vocals were recorded and produced by Henning Basse in his own studio. The whole record was mastered by Andy Horn (Rob Halford, Rob Rock, Edenbridge and many more). In total it took about 10 weeks to record the album," Gino explains.

For the future the band will definitely go ahead writing songs and recording them for posterity, as they need to do it. "We can't live without it, anyway. But first of all we are going out again to hit all stages to rock the crowds like we love to do. At the moment we are planning some headliner shows and festivals in our near territories in summer before we go on European tour as supporting act again in autumn... but no names to whistle-blow at this stage." More info at

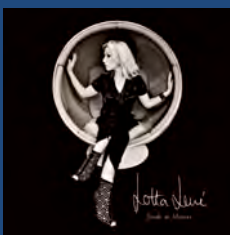
www.chalice.de
www.facebook.com/chalicegermany
www.reverbNation.com/chalicegermany

Currently causing a bit of wow and flutter with the Fireworks team is the extremely talented Finnish songstress **LOTTA LENE**. She has a new album out that is totally awesome called 'Smoke & Mirrors'. The musicians playing on the album are Lotta Lene (voc), Jake Mäkelä (gtr), Jukka Oja (bass), Timo Pudas (keys Timo was with Urban Tale).

Lotta realized that she wanted to be a singer around the age of 6. Her older siblings were listening to bands like Bon Jovi, Skid Row, Alice Cooper and Whitesnake



and Lotta was idolizing those bands and artists and saw herself giving interviews and performing on big stages and TV as well. "I just loved the energy these bands had, great melodies, guitar sounds and rhythm, all so carefree," she expresses. Music was a big part of Lotta's childhood in many ways; she went to music class and Lotta started cello lessons at the age of 9. Her days were filled with rehearsals and concerts and dreams of becoming a professional musician one day. "I just loved those years," she beams. Around her teens Lotta realized singing was her thing and really got into it. She had some singing lessons but mostly kept training by herself and with a band. After Lotta got out of school she started to put a new band together and great things started to happen! In 2005 Lotta got introduced to a guitarist named Jake Mäkelä. "He got me into writing my own melodies and lyrics to his songs and we realized we had something to work with. With Jake we found some dreams about making it in the music business, making records and touring around the world. And that's what we decided to do! It just took some time because first we wanted to make a living playing cover gigs and that's when our own music got left aside for a while," she tells me.



When Lotta and Jake started to write their own material they both had a vision of making great rock music with beautiful, catchy melodies, strong guitar sounds, powerful lead vocals and lots of backing vocals. Big, American sound! "Our influences were in

AOR and classic rock bands like Journey, Toto and Heart and bands more hard rock such as Van Halen, Whitesnake, Rainbow, Deep Purple and Bon Jovi. Next to these we also liked the sound of southern rock bands like Lynyrd Skynyrd and Zakk Wylde's Pride and Glory. I, especially loved country music with steel guitars and great vocal harmonies as well. Though all these were an inspiration to us, we wanted to create our own sound and to be recognizable. Over the years we wrote songs that were some more hard rock and some more southern rock to country but for the album, we decided to choose ones that would present almost the whole variety of our material," she explains.

Lotta feels proud to say, that they have created a sound that's fresh and new with still strong vibes from the 80s. "We have combined modern hard rock sound with female vocals that are more pure and clean than that raspy, scratchier sound that people have maybe been used to in rock music but still not going to the classical, trained way of singing." Jake and Lotta have always been a unit in their music and so far they've done everything by themselves. "But now that it's been time to put a whole band together for playing live, we've been very fortunate to have a line-up of great musicians to join us. We're very excited to get on stage with these guys," she enthuses.

Lotta found already at an early age, that singing was the best and most natural way for her to express herself musically. "I loved combining my voice with other singers and making harmonies, belt out as loud as I could or sing softly as I was almost speaking out the lyrics. Nothing moves me more than a big choir joined by a great vocalist and a wonderful band giving all they can together. Maybe I'm that kind of person too, suitable to take the lead. I do get nervous and sometimes feel pressured to be in front but that's something a lot of lead singers go through at some point, I think. I just try to relax, feel the music and bring all the emotion to the lyrics."

The album is a melodic AOR rock album with a touch of southern rock and country. "It's my first full studio album with songs that we've written with Jake over the years," she says. "We chose songs that we

felt would present our music best. The beginning of the album is more AOR and hard rock with songs like 'What I Want', 'Seven Days' and 'Promises' but it changes to more southern rock/country sound towards the end in songs like 'I Don't Mind', 'Riding Shotgun' and 'Here and Now'. We wanted the album to have a lot of feeling. There are two songs 'Stay' and 'Skin' which I believe are emotionally the most powerful tracks on the album. After I heard Jake play me the first ideas he had for the songs, I got very emotional and the lyrics just came out of me straight (and this is rare for me). The album lyrics in general talk about relationships, joy and pain of loving and losing somebody, life and people. Jake played all the instruments and did the drum programming on the album and also sang some of the backing vocals with me. I sang the leads and wrote the lyrics."

Lotta and Jake wanted to produce the album themselves and capture the vision they had for their songs and the sound that they were after. "We didn't have a record label or anyone to finance the making of the album but we were determined to have it done and went for it ourselves. We took time off from everything else and stayed in our small studio room in Helsinki writing a few new songs and then recording. Long days, a lot of coffee, same food almost every day from the corner cafeteria, mood swings from disbelief to the greatest joy and happiness... It's quite a process, I tell ya! But it was great! Jake did a huge job bringing our songs to life and making it all work. He also mixed the whole album. Mastering was done in Nashville, Sage Audio by Steve Corrao. It took us a year to complete the album. Lots of things came up during the making that were new to us and also delayed our schedule a bit, but through frustration, learning new things, believing in each other and in our music, we finally had the album done and we're extremely happy," she beams with pride.

After working just as a pair for a while, both Lotta and Jake are looking forward to the live shows with their band. "We'll start doing gigs in Finland this summer and then we're hoping to get a chance to tour around Europe and UK. Album promotion has already started in UK and we're very excited about all the feedback and contacts we've had so far. New songs are coming too and we'll be releasing something in the near future before a whole new album." Make sure you check this one out folks, more info at:

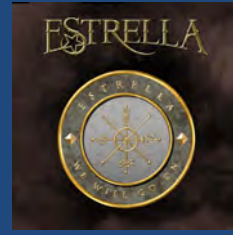
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Abdeen's **ESTRELLA** are back with a new single called 'Here I Am' and by the time you read this they will have joined the awesome Enuff 'Z'Nuff on their European tour. The band are: Paul (Vocals), Luke (Lead Guitars) and Nathan Gunn (Bass) along with Leo McPherson (Drums). I caught up with Luke Gunn.

Growing up in their hometown of Thurso (not far from John O Groats), the Gunn Brothers were all keen musicians and decided to form a band! Paul was the only one working at the time, he bought all the kit and the guys converted their mum's very small attic into an area where they could rehearse. Along with another local lad on drums the guys started doing gigs in Thurso then venturing further afield within the Highlands of Scotland and then to Aberdeen. It was playing in a Battle of the Bands (which they went on to win) that their now manager spotted the band. "We relocated to Aberdeen to make the logistics of touring easier, released an EP, then whilst working on our debut album Come Out To Play our drummer left but after six months Leo joined the band. Leo played with various bands in the past, his band and ours had the same gig one night and at that time we were so impressed with him so when our drummer left Leo was our obvious choice. The whole thing probably set us back a year but it was good to find someone who had

the same drive and passion for his music, then finally in May 2012 we released our debut, since then we've been touring and now are about to release our second album," explains Luke.



The band's music is definitely inspired by the likes of Aerosmith, Def Leppard, Van Halen, stadium rock bands with big riffs and anthemic choruses. "We've taken that sound we love and just given it a more modern edge. But it's their larger than life

show too, we try to ensure that same sense of energy is present in our own gigs, we enjoy what we do and think that comes across to audiences," he says. With the help of their first producer (and mentor), John T Sinclair (Uriah Heep, The Cult, Ozzy Osbourne) the band honed in on their sound on their debut album. "The inspiration behind this one was to make it a defined progression, still the retro nod but making that sound more current with British music today. I think the songs from the album like 'We Will Go On', 'Here I Am' and 'This Heaven' do this particularly well," he explains.

On stage the guys have this "sibling rivalry" between the brothers where their music is concerned, off stage though it's completely different. "We are a tight unit, cliché I know, but Leo really is like a brother, he's got the same drive and passion for his music, with the same ultimate goal to try, if we can, to make a decent living from our music. What might make us slightly different from other artists is the way we tour, no B&Bs or hotels for us, we've kitted out a white transportation van (!) with beds, shower in service stations, eat in Wetherspoons (we know the menu back-to-front) and it good too as we make use of the free wi-fi to do our social media. A bit "old school" and wouldn't work if we didn't want the same ultimate goal."

The CD is a mix of bombastic hard rock, upbeat melodic, anthemic tracks, and, real good lead guitar riffs, along with the essential rock ballad. "All done in Paul's words not mine 'My Own Way', you might need an album to figure this one out! As mentioned before, all the tracks have a retro influence but more current for today's music," he says.

We Will Go On was recorded at the infamous Rockfield Studios in Wales and it's a place steeped in rock music history. "Opening in 1965 it was the first residential recording studio in the world and has played host to many of the world's biggest bands including Black Sabbath, Motorhead, The Darkness and it is here that Queen recorded their greatest record of all time 'Bohemian Rhapsody'. We hoped the whole atmosphere and history would reflect in our own music! And we are sure we heard the ghost. Nick Brine who has worked with the likes of The Darkness, Bruce Springsteen, Oasis and recently Thunder's 'Wonder Days' (which reached the Top 10 in the UK's official tracks) produced our album. Nick was great to work with, he has an amazing work ethic when he starts working on a project, so the whole pre-production and recording process involved a lot of late nights. Since our debut album was released in 2012, each band member had been individually writing between tours, then in July last year we got together as a band to start the pre-production stage for the new album, at this stage we involved Nick. Also, in the pre-production stages we had the help of Pete Shoulder (The Union) and Luke Morley (Thunder, The Union); they also helped us pick the final tracks for the album. We then went to Rockfield in November and December last year to record all the tracks, it took us a couple of months to get the songs just right and in March this year Pete Maher (Rolling Stones, U2, Killers, Jack White, Katy Perry, The Killers) mastered the final album. So probably in all it took us about 8 months from start of pre-production to final mastering," he explains.

For the future the band wants to build on what we have achieved so far. "Our debut album 'Come Out To Play' was well received and fingers crossed our second album We Will Go On (to be released on 22 June) will be just as successful. Over the past three years, we've had the opportunity to support some great bands and just finished a tour with cult USA band Enuff 'Z'Nuff before that we toured with Robin Beck and House of Lords, now we would really like to land a major support tour within Europe. . . . a tour of

the States would be good too! To top it all off we have just landed our first major UK festival, we are set to play Download 2015 and can't wait. Maybe there will be more festival opportunities like this on the horizon! We just want to be lucky enough to continue making music, touring and if we can a decent living at this." More info at

www.estrellarocks.com
www.facebook.com/estrellarocks
www.youtube.com/officialaestrella
www.instagram.com/estrellarocks
www.soundcloud.com/estrellarocks

SEXPLOSION

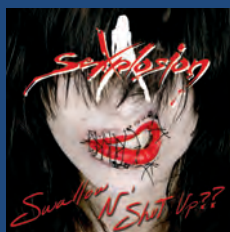


'Swallow 'N' Shut Up??' is the fabulous new CD from horny Spanish rockers **SEXPLOSION**. The lads are: G.Starless: vocals and guitar, Alex H.M: guitar, Fernando Ajejas: bass and Juan Capilla: drums

The lads were always involved in music right from childhood. 'I think we were always involved from childhood. We grew up listening a lot of music. Some day you see a show, a friend playing an instrument or something like that and you feel a big need to do it too. When you look ten years back you have been had many bands and almost sold your soul for it. Actually I don't understand another way of living,' G.Starless tells me. The band have a lot influences. 'We don't like to say all that names because there are many musicians, bands, in many genres not only on Rock N' Roll who influences us. We never try to sound like somebody, we just make music in the way we feel it and of course all people who listen our music could say "hey this part sounds like..." you know,' he explains.

The band has been working on new material for several months and with this album they had many things happen from people, experiences and other stuff. 'Since we are together in this band, there are many things that inspire us. I think who listen our music could have an idea about the inspiration on each song,' he adds.

Sexplosion are a Rock N' Roll band, they know they are not creating a new music genre, and they just do what they do. 'We always try to put our own personality in our music.' 'Swallow 'N' Shut Up??' is a very important for the band. 'We think is the more rough guide to how we sound live, at least at this moment. We have put here all our best compositions to say to the world who we are, all songs talks about personal things, experiences, the way we see something or how some things affects us. We think is an album very complete, it has many aggressive rock songs, ballads of power ballads, an acoustic song, and it has many sounds, many faces and we played with many harmonic resources we didn't used before,' he tells me.



The artistic production was made by the band and they had some help by Danny Martin from Calle 58 studios. 'We recorded all drums and bass live with Jesus Aparicio and Danny Martin at Calle 58 Studio in Madrid, and also voices after guitar

which was recorded by me at my studio "The Cube" in Madrid too. The mix was made by Alex Gilson and Nate Zensen at Gold Cassette studios and mastered by Steve Corrao at Sage Audio studios, both studios in Nashville – Tennessee. All process took some months because first we wanted to release a four songs EP but our label preferred to release a complete album and that made us return to studio several months after record the first four songs,' he explains.

The band are busy working on the promotion of the album and organizing the tour. 'We would like to be in every place where they want us and we are focusing more work on play out of Spain. We are going to be

playing first in our country on February, Germany on April, Italy for May and of course we will getting closed more shows on Europe soon.' Check them out at:

www.facebook.com/Sexplosionband
<https://twitter.com/SexplosionRock>
www.sexplosion.com.es

WHISKEY HELL

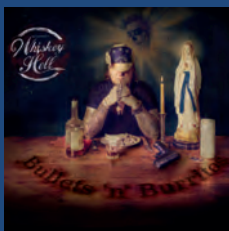


Germany's **WHISKEY HELL** have a new CD out called 'Bullets 'n' Burritos' which is out now via Keiler Records. The band are Olly Wallenberg (guitars), Carsten Sharky Meyer (bass), Lars Lindner (drums). Olly grew up with the music of his dad. Johnny Cash, Elvis and Chuck Berry. His first self-bought piece of vinyl was: 'Let There Be Rock'. "That's my favourite album ever. Rory Gallagher live in Europe and Kiss Rock 'n' Roll over! In the age of seventeen I got my first own band. I was inspired by the Ramones and the Pistols. And so I started in this monkey business," he says.

Olly love's Mexico very much. "At the TV I saw the news: the brutal cruelty drug-war in which innocent people dies and corruption and crime, greed hand hate rules all days and all nights. I was shocked by a bunch of scenes on TV. I wanted to tell the people: don't shoot no bullets, eat burritos. Sure, there are many negative facts of Mexico but for me it is the country of the rock 'n' roll with the associated lifestyle. And in the lyrics I tried to describe how beautiful that land is and the awesome history," he explains.

Whiskey Hell are based around Olly and his songs. "My brothers in crime are Sharky Meyer at the bass and Mr. Lars Lindner on skins! There are no big differences between us and other bands. Except the blues-rock in our blood. We are true old school kickass boogie rock'n'roller. We are also an absolute live band and we currently give everything that we play more concerts than ever before. You have to experience us live and you will rock with us," he tells me.

The songs on this album are a little bit more different than on the first one. "Some songs are just the story of my life," he explains. "2013 - It is a very sad song. What is gonna happened in 2013? My best friend died, my wife and I quit our relationship and I had two sudden deafness. It was the most heaviest year for me, but life goes on. Time flies – this song shows how quickly time flies and that we should enjoy our life. Mr. Rock 'n' Roll – is a tribute to Lemmy (Motörhead), a real rock-king without a crown. Weed 'n' Whiskey - invite you to relax."



and published by 1887-Musik/Elbmusikverlag. All those who were involved in this album are a damn good team," he says.

"If you comparing the first to the second album, it is noticeable that the new one sounds more mature, compelling and earthier" Olly explains. I like it dry and rough. So the third album retains this character definitely. However, it may sound a little earthier. Stay tuned – as long as the hell is still waiting." More info at:

www.whiskeyhell.com
www.facebook.com/whiskeyhell?fref=ts
www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6Ffrej0-Ns

'It's hard It's Life' is the excellent new album from rockers **TUMBLE WEED** who are from Italy. The band are Luca Zanni - Vocals, Francesco Giacometti -

TUMBLE WEED

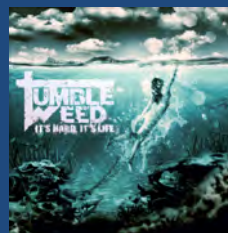


Guitar & Vocals, Michele Giovanardi - Guitar & Leads, Riccardo Grazia - Drums and Marco Luciani - Bass. The two guitar players and Luca met at school when they were 15. "We shared the passion for classic hard rock, so we decided to form a cover band, which also saw the involvement of our current drummer Riccardo and later, when we decided to start composing our own music, the bass player Marco. And that's how our path of madness started," Luca tells me.

The bands inspirations go from Gn'R, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin to Pantera, Alter Bridge and many more. "While composing I was in a moment of my life when I just wanted things to change, a feeling that caused me fear and pain but also great hope for the future, represented mainly by the dreams of this band. You can hear all those feelings seeping through in all the songs," says Luca.

What the band are trying to do is to live in the present. "We do not want to re-create an illusion of the 80s. Many people do not want to adapt the genre to the current context, preferring, instead, to relive old memories. We are trying to create a new form of hard rock, one able to make people feel the magic again. This doesn't mean we will repudiate the old style, not at all. In fact, we will always keep an eye on the past, but with our eyes fixed on the future," he explains.

This was the bands first serious experience in the recording studio, and they are very pleased with the result. "The EP contains six tracks, the first, '#weeders', is an intro enriched with electronic elements and an aggressive vocal line, where you can immediately feel the rage which fills the album. The second track, 'Save this soul', is a hybrid of classic hard rock and modern melancholy song. The third track, 'What's happening to me', is definitely more complicated than the previous one and we think it to be a very original song. The fourth track, 'Lovers come to leave you alone', is the ballad of the ep and it's a very emotional song that also features a string section. The fifth track is called 'Nothing new in rock and roll' and it's the single of the ep. This song represents our feelings about the clash we perceive between present-day music and the music of old times. The sixth and final track, 'Skeletons in the closet', is probably the closest we get to metal. About this last one, be careful: it will leave you with a remarkable amount of mad aggressiveness," he tells me.



The band recorded it in the studio of their label 'Moka Records, named Insomnia Creative Studios. "The production went on us and it took us 2 months to complete the album. All the songs were already written and ready by the time we started recording. For the very first time we understood how hard it actually is to produce and release a record; yet, writing and recording was a spectacular experience," wows Luca.

Tumble Weed have just released a music video of "Nothing new in rock 'n' roll". "By the end of 2015 we'll go out with our first LP. We are already hard at work writing new materials, and I honestly think that it will kick your ass. Our project has just begun and we look forward to start a European tour shortly. So book us and visit our website www.tumbleweedofficial.com!"

Fans of mythical power metal, progressive rock and storytelling music will enjoy the new self titled album from UK band **SACRED WIND** from Llangollen, Wales, which is also a novel. Sacred Wind are Olaf the Berserker – Lead Vocals/Lead Guitars/Sword, Grundi the Windy – Lead Guitars/Backing Vocals/Spiked Ball & Chain, Smid the Merciless – Bass Guitar/Backing Vocals/Axe and Agnar the Hammered – Drums and



Percussion/Hammer. Other musicians appearing on the record include The Oswestry Sheep Orchestra (who appear courtesy of Baa Lamb Management), Orchestration: Henry Fluffywool and Charles Corriedale and Keyboards: Henry Fluffywool. I had a chat with Olaf the Berserker.

Olaf put the band together a few years back, as he wanted to create the finest Welsh Viking Flatulence Rock band the Multiverse had ever seen. "Grundi and Agnar had been friends of mine ever since we fought in Cheese Wars of Aberystwyth, in 1984. That was a messy campaign, I can tell you, and a smelly one. Anyway, we all shared an affinity for rock music, curry, ale and farting, so we began rehearsing and composing our own songs. We were soon joined by Smid the Merciless (né Pig Herder), on bass. He'd become disillusioned with the politics and corruption involved in pig herding, so he let all his pigs go and bought a bass guitar... and a ruddy great axe. At our first gig, held at The Sheep's Stirrup pub in Llangollen, we were spotted by Oldfart Olafson (a band manager of some repute), who was impressed with our songs and the size of our weapons, and also with the amount of headbanging the sheep were doing at the gig. We soon signed a contract with him and our wind has been growing in potency ever since," explains Olaf.



As a band Sacred Wind have many musical inspirations, from their own reality. "For example, great rock bands of the seventies and eighties, such as Peter Dinklage, Very Dark Blue Sunday, Brass Barrage Balloon, Fat Lucy and Titanium Damsel, to name but a few. And, of course, we were very influenced by The Bertles - or Bert, Saul, Marge and Gringo, as they are affectionately known. They were the most successful musical band to come out of Scouseland. At one time they topped the charts simultaneously in twenty eight countries. In fact, the ruler of Latvargravia-Crustia, the Grand Emperor Igor Rocakovich, was such a fan that he passed a law forcing citizens to buy a copy of their most famous song, 'She Loves Me All Night Like A Walrus', every week to ensure its continuing position at the top of the Latvargravia-Crustia charts. He was eventually overthrown in a bloodless coup that actually involved quite a lot of blood. So, when it came to our album, we wanted to draw on our influences, harness the power and melody of rock and infuse this with our flatulent beliefs, creating the finest Welsh Viking Flatulence Rock album ever. And we feel we have accomplished this," he smiles.

I ask the band what makes them different. "To the best of our knowledge, we are the first Welsh Viking Flatulence Rock band from an alternative reality to release an album in your dimension. Although we consider ourselves to be Flatulence Rock, there are terms such as 'power metal' and 'symphonic metal' that have been attributed to our sound... by people in your reality. And that is fine. But, we feel that the size of our weapons, the balance of power, melody and wind in our music and, of course, our inspired lyrics differentiate us not only from bands in this reality, but also from any other Welsh Viking Flatulence Rock bands that may eventually release an album in this dimension. Plus, of course, our adventures have been chronicled in the Sacred Wind eBook trilogy, which is available on something called Amazon Kindle," he explains.

The bands self-titled debut album contains 11 tracks and 2 bonus tracks. "It begins with 'A Time of Magic', which is a narrative piece that tells of our adventures (as contained within the Sacred Wind book), and features sheep. Next is 'Sacred Wind', which is our anthem and warns of the power

of our wind. 'Metal and Curry' explains our love of metal and curry. 'Hurricane Ass' is possibly the only power ballad ever written about setting light to your own farts. 'Warriors of Asgard' is a saga of bravery, monsters, firm swords and buxom women. 'Sail With Me' is a most melodious song about a Viking finding love, and someone to shine his helmet and hold his oar forevermore. 'Rock, Rock, Rock, Rock Ragnarok' is based on ancient Norse mythology in our reality, when there were three cocks in the sky and all things went boom! 'Frigg' is the big ballad on the album, and I had to wear very tight pants to hit the high notes at the end. 'Fart For Odin' is our tribute to Lord Odin, king of the gods, who blesses are wind; whereas 'Dragon Ships and Women's Hips' is a very catchy tale of a Viking returning home to his loved one's hips. 'My Sword is my Sword' is an epic power-metal song based on a true story, relating the tale of our battle with the Bad Men from Bad Men's Castle. The two bonus tracks are a poignant instrumental called 'The Sheep's Lament' and another rip-roaring metal track called 'The Power of Cheese', which is about... the power of cheese," he laughs.

It was recorded and produced by the renowned music producer Mutt Allomrock, over a period of several months at his studio in Llanferres. "However, in order for it to be heard in your dimension it was decreed that we should seek one in your reality who would be a suitable channel. The criteria were very strict: a spiritually-attuned individual with fire in his veins, passion in his heart, sharpness of mind, and steel in his underpants. Unfortunately, we couldn't find anyone who qualified, so we had to settle for someone called Andy Coffey. And so it was he who acted as our vehicle for the music. His wind will be forever blessed. We also channelled a tremendous chap called Bernard DeSeck, from Memphis, US, to channel my vocals. The album was mixed by Dennis Cupp at Aztec Studios, Memphis, and subsequently mastered by Kevin Nix at L Nix Mastering, also in Memphis," explains Olaf.

After their appearance at the Cestrian Music Tournament in our reality (which is detailed in the book, in a most heroic way), we are just about to embark on a tour. Unfortunately, due to inter-dimensional travelling constraints, we cannot as yet perform live in this dimension. Our drummer has a very big one and we're not sure it would make it through the inter-dimensional portal, even if we sent it through in pieces. However, our music and book are now being promoted worldwide in your reality, plus an audio book is being recorded. There are plans for a film too. And we've already starting writing songs for the next album, which will include such classics as 'Fire In My Bowels For You' and 'We'll Fart Again'. Plus, there are plans for another book 'Sacred Wind - The Return of the Flatulantians'. So, there are very busy and windy times ahead." More info at

www.sacredwind.co.uk
<https://soundcloud.com/sacredwind>
www.facebook.com/pages/Sacred-Wind/136135083263791
<https://twitter.com/SacredWindBand>



Germany's **HIGH ROAD EASY** are back with a cracking new album called 'III'. The band are Jan Knopf, vocals, Sven Horlemann, guitars, bass, keyboards, production and Magnus Brandell, drums. Sven has always known Jan as they are both from the same music scene. "I've seen him live a thousand times with his own bands and I always admired his vocal abilities. What a range. What power. About 2005 we met on a melodic rock festival, started chatting, and kept in contact. Years later Jan asked me to help out as a bass player in his cover band (Juke Box Heroes) and I took that opportunity to become a much better bass player and do some live playing again," he tells me. As you can imagine Juke Box Heroes were

dedicated to classic rock: Toto, Foreigner (everything up to '4'), Rainbow (Joe Lynn Turner phase), Loverboy, Survivor, Whitesnake ('Don't Break My Heart Again') Journey, but also Deep Purple ('Burn', 'Smoke On The Water', 'Perfect Strangers') or Sweet ('Love Is Like Oxygen'). And that is only a fraction of what their inspirations are. "Because Jan is one of the few guys I know that buys as many CD's as I do. We are music crazy, complete nerds. Therefore current bands are always something we discuss: The Poodles are an amazing band, especially live. H.E.A.T. are incredible. We also went to see Winger, one of my all time favourite bands, as they are quite progressive within the melodic rock genre. Unbelievable musicians. As are Night Ranger. And King's X. And of course Toto. In every discussion we have about music at some point we talk about Toto. The new album is incredible good," he says.



Jan and Sven live and breathe melodic rock. They write all the songs. And even though they absorb everything they can get their fingers on, Sven is fairly certain that they do have their own, unique style. "I know that people say they instantly know my playing from others. Even as a bass player I was told to sound like myself. Thinking about it, this is something I really miss in most melodic rock releases - originality. Of course it's hard to judge yourself and in the end others have to decide whether they think we are original or not. But if you are looking for a lesser known band that plays European hard rock, why not listen to our latest record? And listen to all of the songs, as we tend to have diverse titles. From faster hard rockers to very melodic rock songs you find everything on our records. And I am very proud regarding our ballads, as they are avoiding every cliché that comes to mind. BTW, there is only one ballad on the album. This album rocks," he purrs.

Jan has an amazing voice and the guys deliberately worked more on vocal harmonies. "You know the small things you notice when you are listening to an album with your head phones on. When suddenly harmonies pop up you haven't noticed before. Also, Jan and I are big Queen fans. I wrote the vocal harmony part in 'Higher Ground' as a humble reference to what Freddie Mercury did with Queen. I admit, I was afraid I get thrashed for doing it. But everyone seems to think it's cool. I am kind of relieved, ha ha. So you have an album heavily influenced by the above mentioned bands. There are up tempo songs, 70's groover, modern rock songs, some slow mid-tempo rockers and a ballad. Sounds like a puzzle were the pieces don't fit. But we really worked on delivering a consistent, good classic rock album that does not bore you while having a go at it."

Sound wise the album is much closer to what Sven originally wanted for the band. With 'Drive' (2012 album) he tried too much to sound like some of the melodic rock releases that were released then. So the drums are 'lighter' than he would prefer them. As producer, this is Sven doing everything and he takes full responsibility. "The feedback we had so far for 'III' is that it sounds much better. Also I think the songs are more consistent in quality and in style. There is a good balance of songs, as I mentioned before. We made a conscious decision to take our time, not to rush things. The arrangements and therefore the overall quality of the songs did benefit tremendously. Regarding our playing / singing we are seasoned musicians with decades of experience. I am playing guitar and bass nearly every single day. I did not play as technical as I did in the past, and some noticed this. I have to admit that spectacular solos were not my priority. The older I get, the more I am interested in my tone and try to put meaning, more weight to my leads. And Jan has several projects like the theatre piece 'Herzbruchstelle' and helps out as a guest singer in different bands singing live a lot. So, as long as we keep on playing, High Road Easy remain a well-oiled machine," he explains.

The record was produced by Sven at his own shore-rocks studio. "I have the whole basement flat of our house for myself (thanks to my very tolerant wife Conny) and we can record everything but the drums here without bothering anyone. Drums are being played by Magnus Brandell, a phenomenal Swedish drummer, a nice guy, and worth every penny.

He records his files in Sweden and I finalize them in my studio. We book him, but if you ask me, he is the drummer of High Road Easy. This might be because we love Toto and therefore Jeff Porcaro. In Magnus we found someone who can add these funky feel and grooves to the rock tracks."

"Obviously gigging to promote the album is not an option anymore," Sven tells me. "The music business changed a lot in the last 20 years. We are digital now. Even a small band like us lost significant parts of paying customers, even though the promotion and support went up from the debut 'Hotter Than A Thousand Suns' to the 'Drive' album. Anyway, we are proud to have UK customers, Japanese fans still are buying and also the US shows some interest.

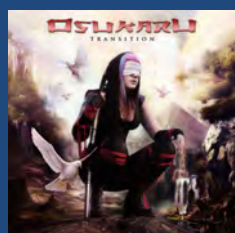
We will therefore focus on releasing a video to 'Higher Ground'. Doing a video takes a lot of time and I am still in the editing phase. The lyric video to 'Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea' is already out, and I might do another one for 'Darkness And Joy'. The whole promotion possibilities on youtube is something I still have to grasp fully. People upload audio files and show pictures so you can listen to all kinds of records from start to finish without paying. I understand this is tempting. Especially when sound quality is not your highest priority. Thinking about the changed behaviour I begin to realize the tremendous impact youtube has people. And one should never underestimate how many fans you can reach.

One of the fine things working with an independent distributor like CD Baby is that we always maintain complete control over everything we are doing. For a band like us, this is ideal to present our music worldwide. And this is what we will do. As soon as this is done I will finish my new solo album. Also we had inquiries to help out in some productions later this year and Jan and I might just do that. As long as it rocks we're in." More info at:

www.svenhorlemann.com
www.highroadeasy.com



'Transition' is the new release from Sweden based melodic rockers **OSUKURU**. The band are Oz Osukuru - guitars, keyboards, Fredrik Werner - lead vocals, guitars, Cecilia Camuii - lead vocals, Vidar Mårtensson - drums, Fredrik Svensson - bass and Jens Björk - saxophone. I had a chat with Oz Osukuru. At a very young age Oz went through his dad's record collection and he just got lost in the music, the artwork and yes, the hairdos as well. "I wanted to become one of those cool people and inspire someone the way I was inspired," he tells me. As a band, the guys are pretty much inspired by everything they see and hear. Since they all come from very different musical backgrounds. For example, their female singer Cecilia Camuii comes from a world of musicals while their other singer Fredrik Werner and Oz himself are heavily influenced by the classic and melodic rock from the 70's and the 80's. "I did however start out as a heavy metal guitarist so there sure are some elements of that in the mix as well. Our goal with the new album was to make it a solid gem within the wider world of melodic rock," he says.



Osukuru have gone through some changes over the years but with their last album 'Triumphant', they built the foundation of what they are today. "It was the first album to include both male and female vocals as well as more frequent use of a saxophone. With our new album 'Transition', we've been working even harder to become somewhat of an "all inclusive" AOR experience with all the elements that makes this kind of music so special. We are also

a very image heavy band, which actually is quite rare nowadays. The visual aspect of Osukuru makes us stand out a bit, both when it comes to the band itself as well as our album artwork, which kinda tells a story of its own throughout our releases," Oz explains.

All the bands album covers are featuring a blindfolded woman in company of a white dove portraying as her spiritual guide. "So for every new release we've seen her evolve and become more of a character. On 'Triumphant' she had an even bigger role throughout the booklet and when deciding on the concept for 'Transition', our singer Cecilia and I agreed on letting her take on the blindfold instead to not only move the story forward, but to make it more closely related to the band as well. On all our releases prior to 'Transition' I hired a model to do the job but when Cecilia joined the band during the recording sessions of 'Triumphant', it just felt more natural and interesting to have her becoming our mascot for the follow-up. So we came up with a story that would make a good transition from where we left off to where we are today and that is actually a part of the reason why we gave the album that title," he says.

'Transition' for Oz is a very special album. "Technically it's a full-length release but I'd rather call it a mini-album or a deluxe EP. You see, the idea behind 'Transition' was to make something that in the best way possible could showcase the strength of this line-up. It's our 5th release in total but only the 2nd one with both male and female vocals. So, we wrote and recorded five brand new songs and filled up the rest of the disc with new and improved re-recordings of older tunes, slightly re-arranged to fit both our singers," he tells me.

The production is also very slick. This is their best and biggest sounding release to date. "This time we also made the artwork, the concept and the band come together a bit more than before. But with our last album 'Triumphant' being a bit more experimental, this is our return to the big and melodic AOR atmosphere that people came to know us by," says Oz.

Oz produced the album and the majority of it was recorded in his own studio The OzCave here in Gothenburg. It was mixed by Attila Bokor at One Man Show and Mastered by Kevin McNoldy at Cphonic Studios in Raleigh, USA. It took the band about a year and a half from idea to finished product. For the future, Osukuru have a great bunch of live shows coming up and some other cool stuff that Oz cannot announce just yet. "But at this point the main focus is on our new album "Transition" and all the upcoming shows to support it." More info at

www.osukarumusic.com
www.facebook.com/osukarumusic



Out now is the superb new album 'Breakin' Chains' from Brazilian melodic/AOR rockers **PURPURA INK**. The band are: E.J. - Vocals, Márcio Glam - Guitar and Keys, Chris Wiesen - Guitar, Seth B. - Bass Guitar and Derick - Drums. I had a chat with Márcio. Márcio started his interest in music since the cradle, in fact his parents always liked a lot of music, and Márcio was gifted by listening to quality songs when he was younger, from W.A. Mozart to Led Zeppelin songs. Márcio was learning a lot and listening to every rock and heavy metal band he could. "I just started playing an instrument, in this case, guitar, when I was fifteen years old, and since that moment, I didn't stop to involve myself with music," he tells me.

Márcio is influenced by every rock n' roll subgenre (rock to metal), a little bit of jazz, blues, MPB (Brazilian Popular Music) and classical music. "When it comes to rock, what got my attention, was the 70's and 80's Hard Rock, the AOR, the classical Heavy Metal and some 90's stuff too," he tells me. "On 'Breakin' Chains', the influences from all the members can be heard in all songs, like mixing it all and you've got the album. We have a lot of musical references. In this record's

lyrics, the inspirations are personal stories we lived or we would like to live," he adds.

Purpura Ink are a true band. "We are, above all, musicians that never stopped from believing in our songs and all it represents to us. All over the world, mainly in our country, Brazil, it has been really hard to play Rock N' Roll and sound true, original and different. We're for sure not trying to be labelled, so, we always try to create well-written songs without losing that rock feeling. We can consider ourselves lucky and blessed for doing exactly what we would like to do for the rest of our lives," he says.



The band's new CD 'Breakin' Chains' features 10 tunes, each one with its own story to tell and different sources of inspirations when it comes to lyrics or arrangements. "Songs like 'Enemy' or 'Lifestyle' for example, got a more Heavy approach, while you got 'Flyin' Away', 'Rose With Thorns', 'Something to Believe' and 'Higher Ground' with a more AOR environment, mostly because of the keys they've got. 'Kate' and 'Bitter Wishes' have a more direct sound, with a peculiar groove. And 'Let Me Stay' it's a bluesy kind of song you know? With the characteristics of the 70's hard rock," explains Márcio.

The album was recorded on the Base 17 Studios, here in São Luiz - MA, Brazil. It was produced by Cid Campelo and Felipe Hyily. "We started to compose the songs in the middle 2012. When we come up with the idea of release an original album, it would be an EP, but we decided to release a Full Length album because we've got a good amount of written stuff. We recorded it with a lot of patience and caution. We also had the caution to don't write 'all-the-same-stuff' songs, and, when it comes to be 'the plan' of writing it, the real challenge was to explore the variety of our influences, and use everything we've got, in all members heads and still, keep our own I.D. So it became that, when was all said and done, we took 2 years to release it, but all we passed through worth it., and of course, all the process was very funny," he laughs.

The guys are currently in studio rehearsing to go out in tour and publish their first album. "Through the rehearsals, we are already writing new stuff and we want to enter the studio for the recording sessions of our new album, still this year. The CD is having a good repercussion and we're receiving a good feedback from the fans. Our goal is to play our songs in every place we can. We want to people to listen to our songs, listen to what we're doing here. We want to achieve the maximum number of people listening 'Breakin' Chains'. In the concerts, we'll play basically all the songs we already have, but there's nothing stopping us from playing the new compositions too," he explains. More information at: <http://on.fb.me/1A9q2mZ>

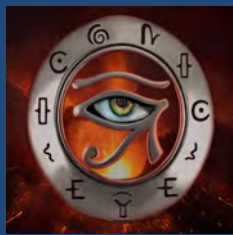


ICONIC EYE are a melodic rock band from England/ West Midlands. They have a new CD out called 'Hidden In Plain Sight', and it is very good. The band are Vocals - Tim Dawkes, Guitars / Keyboards - Greg Dean, Guitars - David Wasson, Bass - Gary Slater, Drums - Paul (Emo) Emery.

Iconic Eye have been playing in bands of one sort or another for years now. Each band member doing it for fun but all of them progressing to a stage where they were in cover bands with decent reputations. "We decided that now was a good time to push on with some original music for a change," says Greg Dean.

The inspirations of the band are really varied. Tim likes GnR and Thunder, Greg is into Journey, Alter Bridge and Hinder, David is into Thin Lizzy and the

Devin Townsend Project. Gary is into Kiss and Queens of the Stone Age and Emo finds his rock influence from the Foo Fighters but also has a thing for the Police so he brings in influences from Stewart Copeland. "That's a right old mixture in anyone's book! But the key ingredients are catchy choruses, silky vocals and emotional solos," says Greg.



The album came about because Greg had written a bunch of songs over the years and never done anything with them. "So I decided as a birthday present to myself to get them recorded. I was playing in a number of bands at the time so circulated the demos to those musicians and those that showed an interest I took further into the band. This left me still without a singer. My wife, Adele (and Gary) went to school with Lee Small (ex Shy) so Lee was drafted in to do the studio duties. As the recording progressed and interest rose it became evident that what was being produced was too good just to be a recording so we decided to create a true band from the guys involved. Lee is involved in so many projects and lived too far away from the guys to be a permanent member of the band so the search was on for a singer. The band took recordings from a number of singers and discovered Tim Dawkes who shone through above the others. Tim was offered the role and is now a permanent member, he explains.

Being into rock music the guys listen to lots of material and lots of new stuff. But what always brings them back to a classic song is the emotion you feel when you sing along to it. "We wanted to put that into each of our songs and make them all classics. The band has a diverse set of influences and it starts from an AOR point but then gets heavier as the guitars kick in and Gary adds the bass; he's all about the bass and wouldn't have any keyboards on the songs given his way. This combination brings about a heavy rock AOR feel with the vocals that we always wanted. If that sounds good to you go and buy the album," he enthuses.

The album is a 12 track affair. 11 original songs and 1 cover. 10 of the songs are written by Greg and 1 was written by David and Greg. The cover is Dave Bentley's, 'In a Broken Dream', which Tim wanted the band to do given his liking of the Thunder version of this song. "The first two songs 'Now that I've found love' (our first single) and 'You make it' give the listener exactly what Iconic Eye are about right from the off. Lots of Van Halen style keyboards and catchy choruses with the twin guitars firing alongside. 'All she needed' is Lizzyesque in its format as it tells a story but again with a stomping catchy chorus. 'Don't stop me from leaving' is our second single and shows off the bands twin harmony guitars together with those catchy choruses. These three songs have Lee on vocals. 'Let it rain down', which is the song on the cover CD is our third and current single and features Tim on vocals. Tim and Lee have similar but different voices and they sound excellent together. In fact Lee is on backing vocals on all the bands original songs. This song is a slow burner full of emotion and with a powerful steamy solo from Dave at the end. 'Every little thing' is back to Lee on vocals for the last time and is one of the fans favourites. 'Better Place' returns vocal duties back to Tim for the remainder of the album and is my attempt at a cheerful song about death! An upbeat rocker guaranteed to get your body moving. 'You knew' is the bands marmite song with many reviewers quoting it as their favourite song which is always followed by a debate. 'You're on your own' follows the Iconic formula to the letter and yet another ear worm which will torment your day. The album finishes with the epic 'Here I stand'. Packed full of emotional lyrics and moody playing and the nearest the band come to a ballad. We have had quotes that there isn't a filler on the album and that was exactly our intention."

The album was recorded at Madhat studios in Coven. The band produced it together with the studio engineer Sheena 'Shenious' Sear. "Madhat is the studio that Magnum uses for all their recording and Mark Stuart who owns Madhat and occasionally is the live engineer for Iconic Eye is their Manager. The album started to be recorded in July 2014 and was finalised in March 2015. Mark and Sheena are lovely people and we'd totally recommend this studio to

anyone who wants to record and produce an EP or an album. They just know how to bring the best out of you and your music," says Greg.

The band are looking to build on their Download appearance (on Stage 4, the Redbull Stage at 11am on Saturday) but playing some more festivals and building a fan base. "If the first album is a success then the band will start to record a new album in around 18 months time. I did most of the writing for the first album because initially it was my baby, but now it's different; now we are a band so we will write the next album as a band. We'll still keep the key features that we are known for i.e. catchy choruses, silky vocals and emotional solos but each member will no doubt add in their own influences and our sound will evolve." More info at

www.facebook.com/iconic.eye.music



UK based rockers **DAYLIGHT ROBBERY** have a new CD out called 'Falling Back To Earth'. The band are: Tony Nichol (Vocals), Mark Carleton (Guitars / B.vox), Colin Murdoch (Bass / B.vox), David Billingham (Keyboard / Piano) and Chris Miller (Drums / Percussion). "I guess part of it is in the genes," Mark Carleton tells me regarding his musical life. Mark's dad was a guitarist and amongst other things he used to play on the circuit in and around Birmingham and he used to play with the guys in Black Sabbath (when they were called Earth). When Mark was a kid he would constantly ask his dad if he could show him how to play guitar and Mark just wasn't interested. "He always told me 'You will, and you'll regret that you didn't learn when I offered.' Of course he was right, years later I got interested in music and started to teach myself how to play. To this day my dad still plays and his favourite band is Dream Theater, definitely the dye was cast and there was no escape," he says.

Mark admires so many musicians on a personal level. "I try to look at things differently so as not to let these inspirations be reflected in my own playing - I love John Petrucci from both a writing and technique perspective, even when he is shredding his playing is so emotional to me. I still love Edward Van Halen and I think his contribution to music is really undervalued. Jeez, there's so many.....Mark Knopfler from Dire Straits is so tasteful, Jason Becker remains an incredibly gifted musician - his condition is such a tragedy. Steve Vai remains ground-breaking, Steve Lukather is just a legend, Guthrie Govan is just ridiculous, Richie Kotzen, damn, hard question! I must emphasise though that it's so important for a favourite player or inspiration not to have too much impact on an individual's playing and just to take elements and ideas and take them in another direction. When we were recording the last album, I put a John Petrucci style run in one of the songs that we were demoing - and I had to change it as it just sounded like John Petrucci on an off day - you have to just be yourself and not lose your identity," he says.



For the inspiration of the album the band tend to inspire each other within the band. Mark writes the bones of a song and does a rough demo and they will take it to the studio and grow it organically. "We are lucky to have such good musicians with great ears for melody and in Tony Nichol - we have an amazing lyricist who also has the ability to create amazing hooks. Colin and I back that up with carefully constructed harmonies, Chris has an amazing groove to his playing and David adds that 'film-score' dynamic to the songs."

The band formed in late 2011. Tony, Chris and Mark have known each other for years and have worked on

other projects. "We always stayed in touch and knew at some point that we'd work together. We managed to get Colin on board which was a huge result as aside from being a great bass player - he can also has a great voice and he has helped shape the harmonies that we add to the songs. We released our first album 'Cross Your Heart' in 2011 and it received a lot of acclaim and got us on the map so to speak. Since the first album was released, we had to make a couple of personnel changes as we needed a different type of keyboard player and we needed a drummer with awesome technique as well as having amazing feel. As we had known about Chris for some time (I've known him since I was 6) and he was available it was a real no-brainer for him to be involved. Once we had David and Chris in the fold, writing the new album was pretty easy," explains Mark.

Although the first album did well - it was essentially made up of songs that the guys had written together some years before so they didn't feel it was reflective of where they actually are musically. "The new album was put together with the band having the right line-up and it reflected in the delivery of the songs. The whole album just feels alive. We were so strict with ourselves during the writing process to ensure that there are no 'filler' tracks. If a song wasn't good enough - it simply wasn't considered for the album. Fortunately when we do write together - dropping songs is a pretty rare occurrence. There was no pre-defined idea as to write a certain type of song, indeed I can demo an idea that is pretty heavy and by the time we've all added our parts and Tony has a vocal line - which heavy song turns into a beautifully powerful ballad and vice-versa. In a nutshell - the album is full of great songs, with no external songwriters being used and written by musicians who care passionately about their music. The album is basically a rocking collection of songs with big guitars, big keyboards, great vocals, lots of harmonies and choruses that won't leave your head for days," says Mark.

The album was recorded at Rich Bitch Studios in Birmingham. It was produced by the band and engineered by Sheena Sear. "The recording process was combined with the writing process so hard to say exactly.....maybe four months or so to get everything down. We were happy to produce our own albums as we are disciplined enough to drag the best performances we can out of each other and focused enough to understand the fine art of balancing musical fulfilment against what a rock fan genuinely wants to hear which in 99% of cases is just a great tune," he explains.

Mark explains that Dancing Flame have achieved so much in a relatively short time. "We've played with so many legendary acts, played numerous festivals and played at Sonisphere last year. For the coming months we are putting on our own shows up and down the country as well as playing bigger shows supporting major acts. We have just been confirmed as playing at the Genting/NEC Arena on the same night as the Whitesnake / Def Leppard show in December so it's all looking really good at the moment. I've started getting ideas together for album number three." More info at www.daylightrobberyrocks.co.uk

From Italy we find rockers **KLOGR** with a new album out called 'Make Your Stand'. The band have been featured in Fireworks a few times over the years so it is nice to see it when a band keeps pushing and never giving up, Klogr are here to stay folks. The band are: Rusty - vocals / guitars, PQ - guitars, Joba - bass guitar and Rob - Drums. I had a chat with Rusty. He started playing guitar at 14 after a Metallica show. "I was struck by their music. I decided that this would be my way. After several years, as a self-taught guitarist, I left my city and I moved to Bologna (north central Italy) to attend the Music Academy. After years of study I started working in several different studios as an assistant and then I began my career as a producer. At the same time I was playing guitar and singing in different bands. In 2011, after moving to Carpi (a small city in northern Italy) and the opening of my own studio and record label, I met Nicola (the first guitarist of the band) - the Klogr project was born," he tells me.

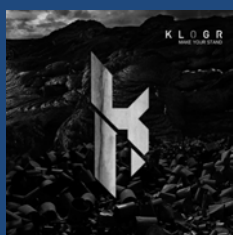
After several line up changes, Pq and Rob (the bands new guitarist and drummer) gave new energy to the project. "The inspirations are different, each of us listen to different music genres and have a well-defined musical identity, even if the direction of the project is alternative metal. The initial change of line up inspired this album. We needed to write new



songs. I believe that each of us have taken inspiration from the other," Rusty tells me.

Klogr is a project that started four years ago and in a short space of time they have done so many things. "The need to make music, communicate and share is the thing that drives us every day to do what we do. I don't think that the Klogr music is revolutionary, yet it is always evolving. We have yet not found a winning formula that sells millions of records which allows us to sit back and enjoy it. But if it did happen, I don't think that we could stop the search and discovery of new sounds and sensations," he says with pride.

'Make Your Stand' contains 3 new songs, 10 live tracks and a DVD with an entire live show and 5 documentaries of all the work done in the studio to date. "It's a little summary of what's happened these four years. For me (I edited the video material) it was a way to take stock of the situation, a way to see from the outside what we experienced as a band over this period. It's something that a band does after 10 years (or more) of their career, but we felt the need to do it now. Then, after the line-up change, we needed to present to our fans what was now the band. So, we decided to release a live show and three new songs. 'Make Your Stand' is a new starting point."



The main difference between this and the band other work is that Rusty didn't personally produce this album. "I left the production to Roberto Priori and Jody Grey and I focused solely on the music. There is definitely more participation from other musicians and that is why we have announced a change from a project to a band. The collaboration with Pq (the new guitarist) has triggered more complex song writing and I was able to devote more time to the melodies and lyrics," he tells me.

The new songs were recorded at Zeta Factory (Italy), which is the bands own studio and headquarters. Production was carried out by Roberto Priori (Rusty's old friend and teacher in the academy) and Jody Grey (an American producer who has worked with Priori for many years on other projects). "The new songs were written during a studio session; we recorded some ideas and then reworked them later. The live songs were recorded at Live Club in Trezzo (Milan) where we supported Guano Apes. Everything was mixed and mastered by Roberto Priori."

The band recently did a mini tour in Italy to promote 'Make Your Stand' and are now focused on writing new material. "We are selecting the producer for the next album but will continue to work with Priori and Jody Grey, who are now part of the team. We hope to publish a full album in 2016 and go on tour throughout Europe and get back to the UK as soon as possible. But things can change quickly; we could go back on tour before the release... who knows." More info at:

www.facebook.com/klogr
www.twitter.com/klogrmusic
www.youtube.com/klogrmusic



Peterborough based melodic rockers **PHOENIX CALLING** have a good new album out called 'Forget Your Ghosts'. The band are Steven Chapman, Dominic Greenwood, Martyn Hiliam, Matt Cope and Jason Howard. Dominic has been in love with music forever and was brought up on Eric Clapton, Queen and similar bands. He learnt to play guitar and sax from an early age and sang in the church choir so when the time came he joined a band and have never looked back. He also sites Queen/Dire Straits but also American bands like Whitesnake/GooGoo Dolls and more recently Deaf Havana, Mallory Knox and Young Guns as influences. "Feeder and the Manic Street Preachers have always been a big influence as their lyrics are very honest and evoke emotions. Inspiration behind the album is all about personal experiences and triumph over adversity and looking at the future, trying to forget the costs that can haunt your past," he tells me.

Phoenix Calling are a five piece band and they have all been involved in music for longer than they care to remember. "We came together when two other local bands finished and through a love of melody driven and hard to forget chorus's Phoenix Calling was created. We pride ourselves in creating an experience when we play live and the songs we write leave a lasting impression and people find themselves whistling the tune all day!! We are a band of brothers who love playing and creating together and getting close to the people who come and see us play," he says.

The album was inspired by different situations and personal experiences that lead to the birth of songs that reflected the way Dominic felt at the time. "Its about not looking back and trying to overcome negativity, living each day as if it were your last and making an impact on the world."

The album was recorded at regal House Studios Wisbech by Lee Batiuk; the whole process took approx a year. The band has 10 dates across the UK to play to the people at venues we have always wanted to play at namely the O2 Academy Birmingham & Islington, Waterfront Norwich. Festivals are upon us and we have a few to do. I have a bunch of new songs that we are going to record in the summer and get a second album ready. Ultimately we want to keep writing; playing and hearing people sing our songs." More info at www.phoenixcalling.com



Brazil's **DANCING FLAME** have a new CD out called 'Carnival Of Flames'. The band are Adriano Oliveira - Vocals, Emerson Mello - Guitars, Glaydson Moreira -Guitars, Rafael Muniz - Bass and Bruno Martini - Drums. Basically each band member had the passion and musical drive to play in a rock band. 'Adriano was involved with music since he seven years old. On his 14th birthday his aunt gave him an Iron Maiden album. This changed his life forever.

"All seventies and eighties classic bands! That's the sound we grew up listening to", he explains. "We cant tell everything that happens in the world can inspiring us: movies, tv news, newspapers news, a book. We got so many different feelings in the album: human feelings, reflections about the world, love, etc. 'Ronnie' is dedicated to Ronnie James Dio and 'Kalash' tells how damn crazy the wars can be," Adriano explains. Although most of the bands influence come from the seventies and eighties they try to bring something fresh to their music, without forgetting their own music personality. "Occasionally we can bring other elements outside of rock to our music. In 'Kalash' for example you can hear some influence by oriental scales."

'Carnival of Flames' is the bands second album and features 14 songs between hard rock and heavy metal – fast songs, mid tempo songs and two ballads. "We got special guests like Mark Boals on 'Follow the Sun' and DC Cooper on 'Dry My Tears' and the englishman Mark Wilkinson was responsible art cover. We're very proud for this! I'm a big fan from the Wilkinson's work! Mostly artwork from the Marillion albums. The mastering was made on Sterling Sound Studio in New York by UE Nastasi. Their work enriched all frequencies and melodies in our music," Adriano explains.



The band used three different studios in Brazil. "The guys from EME Studio (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) support us in album production, they have many experience with Brazilian artists, including in 2013 they did run for a place in Latin Grammy. The completed process almost six months between recording, mix and mastering."

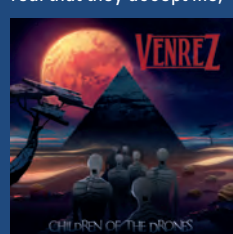
The band have just finished their participation in a 'Flight Without Back' a tribute to Brazilian eighties band called Harppia, to be released this year by the Portuguese label Metal Soldiers. "We're planning a new album too, to be released in next year. Right now we work on some demos and ideas." More info at

www.dancingflameband.com
www.facebook.com/dancingflameband
www.youtube.com/dancingflame09
[twitter.com/dancingflameBRA /](http://twitter.com/dancingflameBRA/)
<http://vk.com/dancingflame>



VENREZ are a rather good melodic hard rock band with an alternative edge from Los Angeles. They have a new album out called 'Children Of The Drones'. The band are Venrez - vocals, Jason Womack - guitars, Nico D'Arnese - bass and Ed Davis - drums.

Venrez started off managing bands and got two of them record deals. "They both were wonderful and had unlimited potential. But, personality issues between members in one band and drug abuse in the other caused the sinking of both projects. I always thought to myself, gee I wish I could give this person or that person my resolve and burning desire for success, but people are all different and that was simply not possible of course. Then I thought to myself, I might be better off fronting a band myself because if I got that rare opportunity, I knew I would deliver. So, I have relished this god given chance with Venrez and enjoy every second of it. Perhaps the fans sense that and my honest love and enjoyment of fronting the band is so real that they accept me," he explains.



Venrez writes about his life experiences in a manner of talking about them and teaching lessons about current political situations he feels strongly about. "I take a shot at corporate greed and oppressive government on a song or two every record. That will never change. The interesting thing about this new album is that I wrote more of it to music Jason Womack wrote instead of him writing music to my lyrics as opposed to the last two albums where most of the songs he wrote music to my lyrics. This created a situation where the lyrics flowed instantly from the feeling the music gave me, from political statements, broken and lost loves to eco friendly direction songs" says Venrez.

Venrez are and have been a self sufficient band,

keeping it real and writing their songs with no interference from a label, nor trying to pop it up and make it radio worthy. "The band has stuck with our message and efforts to create a new genre of rock music I call EAR which is short for Epic Alternative Rock. We have our own recording gear and record in the comfort and leisure of my house which allows us to do what we want, when we want and as we want with no pressure or insane noon to midnight exhaustion in lock outs of a paid studio where we may only have 21 days to get it done. I feel it has made a huge difference in the last two albums and particularly the new album," he tells me.

This was a very special album for the band to make. "We had just gotten home from the last big European and UK tour with Buckcherry and Hardcore Superstar in December 2013. Our budget was busted at that time and it was clear we needed a new album if we were gonna continue on. I was not sure if it was all over or not and neither was Jason because there was no money to keep the band together. So, band had the year off in 2014 and Jason and I spent most of the year writing songs and recording demos. Once we had the songs selected for the record, we put the keeper vocals on them and then had our drummer Ed Davis lay down the drum tracks. This album was a labour of love and right from the heart and soul of the songwriters me and Jason Womack, not knowing as we recorded them if the band would ever tour behind them."

For this new CD the band added more psychedelic sounds to the music and put a big fat stamp on the direction the band had been and is going. "I feel it's a big leap forward in the natural progression of the band. Jason really dialled in the Venrez sound and gave us a clear direction we are going in for this album and future recordings," says Venrez.

The band own their own recording gear and recorded this and the last record in the comfort of Venrez's house at their leisure. "Because we had given the band 2014 off, Jason and I wrote and recorded the album over an 8 month period. Jason produced all our past records and produced this new album.

The guys tested the waters, with their first headline tour anywhere in the world, of the UK in March of this year to break in their new bass player Nico D'Arnese. "It was a blast and went surprisingly well. We have recovered financially and plan to tour as much as possible all year and will without question record another record and continue on in 2016. We leave May 18th for 4 shows in Spain and another 8 in the UK with punk legend Richie Ramone. Look for us to be on the road all year long." More info at:

www.venreztheband.com
www.facebook.com/venrez
www.twitter.com/venrez21
www.youtube.com/VENREZTHEBAND



'Mars' is the new album from Melbourne based rockers **TORRENTIAL THRILL**. The band are: Chris Malcher - Lead Vocals/Rhythm Guitar, Steve Morrell - Lead, Guitar/Backing Vocals, Matt Morrell pounding the Drums and Steve Boyd on the Bass. I caught up with Steve Morrell.

Playing hard rock, both in bands and in the studio, has always been a past time that Steve has really enjoyed. "It's about the riff, the melody, and writing music and tracks that I want to listen to over and over again. We're not in to the glamour and debauchery of the classic, hard rock band, where everyone wants to catch their 15 minutes of fame - or 3 minutes if you happen to make it through on one of these "talent shows". We just want to be able to tune into something really loud, really potent and be able to be absorbed into that. If fame and fortune come our way, we'll gladly take that on board," he says. "I guess we became involved in music thanks, largely, to what all of us listened to in our teen and early adult years - the

bands and the genres have varied for all of us over a long period of time - that has certainly shaped the way in which we listen to and play our music now. Torrential Thrill was created through our collective love of music and our matching ideals: it's the music that we want to hear, that we want to play, produced the way we believe a traditional, hard rock album should be."

Metallica are a major influence on the guys. Chris sports the Metallica star tat on his left shoulder and Steve knows that from a personal point of view the band and, in particular, James Hetfield has always played a big part in his love and progression through music. "Personally, I was always a very big Guns'n'Roses fan and I'm sure Slash's influence rings through in some of my writing. Maybe it sounds a little clichéd mentioning the biggest metal or rock bands of all time as our influences or inspiration but that doesn't worry us the least - it's what we love listening to.

The whole idea behind this project was to find something that was hard edged, straight up, no frills and brutally honest in every aspect. Torrential Thrill and the album, 'Mars', is a blend of hard, fast driving tunes with a cutting vocal, telling you exactly what it thinks about the lay of the land," says Steve.

Torrential Thrill explores that dying breed of hard rock/metal where the songs are written, essentially, around a central riff or tune. "We want to really get into the guts of the melody and the drive with each track. Modern song writers and lyricists could argue that this is a dated, simplistic way of producing pieces of music but, honestly, we wouldn't have it any other way. Don't get me wrong, there is meaning and a lot of sentiment behind each track, but before we get down and dirty and add lyrics, we've always needed to be solid on the groove. We're not trying to be different. We're trying to bring the great sound of hard, fast-flowing heavy metal to your speakers in the best performance possible. It's not pretty, it's not pretentious. It's rough around the edges and in a lot of ways a little dangerous. What makes us different? Torrential Thrill aims to be the hard rock revival that no one thought they needed," he explains.



'Mars', as a track and album, is an exploration into Western society's obsession with excess, greed, ruthless competition and narcissism. The title is a metaphor for the way in which the views of humanity have become so skewed from "traditional priorities and values" that we may as well be living on Mars. "The cover artwork has caught this brilliantly - a child sits innocently in their own little world, laying in unassuming wait to be consumed by the corrupt and evil corporate of the world, that spew their content into our living rooms through all of our connected devices now. What hope does the parents, or in the wider sense, society, have for the child when there are so many arms reaching out for them?

'Mars' deals with all the dark clouds that we, as individuals and as a society, have to try to deal with on a daily basis: grief, loss, anger, depression, anxiety. Every now and then we get a little glowing reflection of golden moments which keep us going, hoping and fighting for better times.

Sounds dark, right? In truth, not quite - we're not that sort of band. Hard edged? Yeah - but we drive hard and we drive far away from those clouds of doubt - on to a better, brighter place. In our eyes, that place is 52 minutes of travelling to Mars," Steve explains.

Mars was recorded over about 4 months - from December 2014 to March 2015 - at Basin Studios in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. It was produced by Matt D'Arcy (D'Arc) and mastered by Basin Studios. "We put the first lot of tracks together in a 12 day stint just before Christmas and then worked it over through to mastering in March.

The process goes back much further than that, though - we had been writing and rehearsing the material for the album for around 18 months, each of us contributing to the content in one way or another. In fact, one of the tracks, Take Over Me, has been in the pipeline for more than 10 years, just waiting to be unleashed!

You know, it's funny how certainly things fall into place - a friend of mine in the industry put me onto D'Arc - we were looking for a studio option that was a little smaller than some of the bigger, powerhouse

studios. It was important to us to work with someone who was going to invest in what we were trying to achieve and not just churn through another record on the desk. We had a great connection with D'Arc. When we come round for our follow up album, I reckon we'd almost insist on looking D'Arc up for another party."

The band are hitting the road in Australia to launch and promote the album. "Hopefully we'll get some label interest so that we can get busy with a film clip or two! We don't want to go half-cocked with a film clip because we hear and see a lot of great music that gets let down by a budget production and it can feel like the music and the content of the song can get lost in that sometimes. Recording and releasing the album independently has been great and immensely satisfying for all of us and we're damn proud of what we've produced. We don't just want to get our heads on Channel [V], MTV or rage (Australia's longest running music television program) - we want to have an impact as big as the sound on the album.

Online distributors have made it really easy to get your art out there now and, with some local radio support, bands can take the initiative on the self-promotion highway, largely, thanks to social media. Chris and Knoxy have been great at managing these feeds in the lead up to and following the release of the album. We'll obviously be looking to write a follow up to Mars in the next 18 months or so - we've had a taste for it and, like a great piece of music, we're hooked."

More info at: www.torrentialthrill.com
www.facebook.com/torrentialthrill



Ohio's **FOUR STAR REVIVAL** have been getting good reviews lately for their new CD 'Knights Of The Revival' which is now out. The band are: Jack Emrick - vocals, Benny Bodine - guitar, Ed Girard - bass and Paul Strausburg - drums. I chatted with Benny Bodine. Benny started playing guitar as a young teenager and started his first band when he was 15. "It's funny because our bass player and I played in a band together back in those early days. We lost track of each other over the years, but reconnected a few years back. After I left the band I was in at that time, he and I then started Four Star Revival," he tells me.

Benny was inspired by late 70's/early 80's rock and metal. Bands like Black Sabbath, Rush, Blizzard of Ozz, Judas Priest, Kiss, Led Zeppelin, Cheap Trick, Queen. "All the bands from that era really shaped the way I play and write songs. When we were writing the songs for the album, we really wanted to have a mix of those influences combined with a more modern sound," he says.



Four Star Revival was formed about a year and a half ago in Dayton, Ohio in the United States. Some readers may remember Benny from having played in the band WarMinister. And some may remember their vocalist Jack Emrick from having played in the band Life After Death, which also featured a couple members of Armored Saint. "I think Jack is what really sets us apart from other bands. While other singers are doing more growling/screaming type vocals, Jack actually sings. And not only is his voice very strong, it is very unique as well," explains Benny.

The album is 12 tracks with a mixture of hard rock and metal songs. "One thing we try not to do is not write the same song over and over again. While all the songs sound like Four Star Revival, each one is different and stands on its own," he says. The album was recorded at Refraze Recording Studios in Kettering, Ohio in the United States. It was produced by the band along with Ron Pease. "Ron was really great to work with and helped us dial in the sound

and the feel we were trying to capture on each song. It was recorded and mixed over about a 2 month period," Benny explains.

Right now the band are playing shows in support of the album. "At this point we are only playing shows in the United States but hope to make it over to Europe in time for the summer festivals. So far the response to the album has been fantastic, especially in Europe. So we certainly don't want to disappoint anyone that wants to see us live," check them out at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Four-Star-Revival/308267629272924
www.reverbnation.com/fourstarrevival
www.youtube.com/channel/UCVTWcPZKtnLQV-yqljx69uQ
<https://twitter.com/fourstarrevival>



From Umeå, Sweden come hard rockers **STRONGHEART** and their excellent new CD called 'Scream Out Loud'. The band are Jess Heart (Jessica Nordström) – Lead Vocals, J West (Jesper Westermark) – Bass & backing vocals, The Animal (Emil Häglund) – Drums & backing vocals and Snake (Peter Nyman) – Guitar. The band have all played music their whole lives, more or less. "When we got together in 2011 we knew that this "crazy world of music" was something for us! It started out simple: We loved to play and that was that," says Jess.

There are hundreds of different artists, bands and records that inspire Strongheart and their music. "The great bands of the 70s and 80s are absolutely among the biggest inspirations. Mötley Crüe, Whitesnake, Scorpions, AC/DC, Ozzy and Dio for example" she explains.



StrongHeart is a band with four crazy members that lives and breathes rock 'n' roll music. "We can't imagine a life without that thrilling kick from a screaming crowd. We're aiming for the sky and beyond, ready to give it all for a chance to show the world what we've got. What makes us different? It doesn't matter if there's one person or one million people in the crowd, we'll always do a kick-ass show."

The band's debut album 'Scream Out Loud' was a blast to do. "Everything from the composing to the recording. It stands for both where we came from and where we're going. Musically it stretches from 70s Rock to 80s Heavy Metal and from the rough title track 'Scream Out Loud' to the soft ballad 'Withered White Rose'. This record got anything your heart desires. A mix that could only be described as StrongHeart," she explains.

The album was recorded at Studio Warehouse with Marcus Elisson. "An amazing studio engineer and musical genius who also contributed to the production of the album. The process took about a year in total, including everything from the first to the last tone."

The band will be hitting the roads of Europe this summer with the Scream Out Loud-tour! "We'll also release our second music video (Friday Night) along with a previously un-released track. Besides from that we'll be doing a few gigs at well-known Swedish rock clubs. Later this year we're heading back to the studio to start recording our next album," she adds. More info at: www.strongheart.se
www.facebook.com/strongheartsw

ACES & KINGS have a new EP out called 'Don't Stop'. The band are: Duncan Joe Henshall - Lead Vocals, Duncan Joe Henshall - Lead Vocals, Kev Hardy - Keyboards and Gary Wells- Additional Vocals. I had a chat with Duncan Joe Henshall. Like most young rock fans at the time, the guys were inspired by



the bands of the late 70s and 80s. "There's a venue in Stoke on Trent, where we are from, that regularly had every band you could wish to see, I remember seeing Van Halen opening for Black Sabbath for about a fiver a ticket!!!. I wanted to be Ozzy or Dave Lee Roth, I mean who wouldn't," says Duncan.

Duncan grew up listening to classic rock, Ian Gillan has to be right up there as his musical hero, and Andy was a massive admirer of Randy Rhodes. "I'm sure there are plenty of traces of his work in our tracks. By the time we started playing in bands there was a more melodic feel to the rock music around at the time and we tried to combine the classic rock and the AOR sound in a band called Direct Action I played in with Kev and Andy. All the tracks on our album were all written and performed by Direct Action so most songs are 25 to 30 years old. Only 'Don't Stop' ever got released on vinyl, so 30 years on we have given it a new lease of life. We enjoyed doing it so much we decided to resurrect an entire album worth," he tells me.



The band were originally going to resurrect the Direct Action name but for one or two reasons they stumbled for Aces & Kings. "There's no mystery where the name came from as it is the title of a greatest hits album by Go West. We thought it represented the mid 80s era when we were writing and performing these songs first time around. I guess we are a little bit different as this has been more a musical project than a band. We have no drummer or bass player, Andy does all the guitar work on the album and we programmed the drums. We have however ventured into playing live recently, throwing in some of our original material with some classic rock covers with both myself and Gary doing lead vocals so it's not every day you have a band with two vocalists on stage," says Duncan.

The album is entitled 'No Hard And Fast Rules' taken from a song title which sadly didn't make it in the ten tracks they are releasing. "It's set to be released on our own label late summer 2015. It will be available as a download and CD. We appreciate there's very little money to be made making music to what is now a small marketplace compared to when Rock music was in its heyday, so with this in mind we will price it very realistically and hope the public will give us a chance to be heard. As I said this album is a collection of songs that go back a couple of decades or more, some of the tracks have a real heavy feel to them while others such as 'Don't Stop' and 'Dancing With Your Heart' are pop/rock songs with a chorus line we hope will stick in people's minds as soon as they hear it. As you would imagine with the decade these songs were written there's a fair amount of influence of American rock bands in there resulting in what I would describe as our anthem track on the album, the song 'Heartbeat Of America'," he explains.

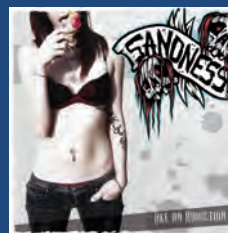
The CD was recorded at Kev's own studio. "We are still in the process of mixing and mastering at the moment which, as we are discovering, is not as easy as it sounds. We felt we wanted to mix it ourselves to give the tracks their original sound but with a few modern twists thrown in for good measure. It's been quite a lengthy process to record as we all have very different daily schedules and we were relative novices when we started recording 'Don't Stop'. Every track we have recorded since has felt better and better, so much so we're always looking to improve on what we've done and gone back and put some sparkle on what we have recorded. We are very happy with the results so far with a small budget and a very small window that we can get together," he explains.

For the future the band hope to make another album and have already written 3 or 4 brand new songs in a similar style to what they are currently recording and they sound new and fresh. "Like most bands in our position we would love for someone to give us a little bit more of a budget to record a new album with an experienced producer, so fingers crossed. We want to put a full band together and take a show on the road with all original material, maybe securing an appearance at some of the melodic rock festivals in and around Europe that's a place we could slot in nicely I believe. We enjoy making what we consider some good riffs and catchy tunes, we hope everyone agrees." More info at www.acesandkings.co.uk



Italian based rock band **SANDNESS** have a superb record out now via Sleazy Rider Records called 'Like An Addiction'. The band are Mark Denkley (Bass & Vocals), Robby Lucketts (Guitar & Vocals) and Metyou To Meatyou (Drums & Vocals). Since Mark was a kid he has always dreamt to have a job out of the ordinary and music was what inspired him the most. "I used to watch the videos of my idols and think that I wanted to be like them to be part of that world that fascinated me," he tells me.

Robby learnt to play the guitar on his own. "At first I tried to emulate my idols Dave Murray and Adrian Smith, but then I found a style for myself. The riffs that are in the album are born from personal feelings. With every guitar riff I tried to convey my feeling of real life to the ones who are listening. I want to show to the ones who always underrated me that even if I'm not a guitar genius I always do my best. That's a great motivation for me," he explains. Sandness are three friends. "We were at first schoolmates and then we became a band. We're very united and we spend a lot of time together. I think this is one of our strengths because we share our ideas and so our songs are characterized by elements from different genres since we all listen to different things," says Metyou.



Metyou is naturally very proud of the songs on the album because everyone brought their ideas and they tried hard not to be banal. "Every song is different from the others. In my opinion that's what makes 'Like An Addiction' various and listenable by a large circle of metal heads," he explains.

The band recorded the album at Mago Studio in Avio (Tn) Northern Italy. "Our producer was Maurizio Tachy' Fracchetti who also recorded it since it was our first real experience in studio and we didn't think about having a real producer. Fortunately he liked our songs a lot and he helped us improving them (thanks Tachy!). It took six months to record it because Metyou and I work in a factory Monday to Friday and Robby was still a student at that time. It was really tiring but of course an amazing experience," says Mark.

Sandness hopes to release the first official video by the end of 2013. "The official website should be ready as well then. At the beginning of 2014 we're going to record an Ep with four songs which will be in the next album. We hope to compose some valid material and we hope you'll appreciate the new album even more because we grew a lot and we want our music to grow with us. We also hope to tour Europe again to get known more and more by people abroad," conclude Robby. Check them out at www.facebook.com/Sandnessban
www.sandnessofficial.com

'Wax & Plastic' is the new album from USA rockers **THE BEN COTE BAND**. The guys are Ben Cote (Guitar, Lead Vocals), Sam Mogel (Drums, Vocals),



and Dave McNally (Bass, Vocals). Ben Cote started playing guitar when he was 14. Eddie Van Halen was pretty much the reason why the young Ben wanted to learn how to play. "I never really thought about being serious about music until I saw Def Leppard with Poison shortly after I started playing. There was so much energy, I just thought to myself, I want to do this," he says passionately.

Ben's inspirations are mostly classic rock and some pop punk. Bands like Van Halen and Led Zeppelin and Cream have always been his favourites. "I also love bands like Blink-182 and Good Charlotte. I try to combine Van Halen with Blink-182 when I write. Big guitar riffs and solos are what I look for in a song, so that's what I try to do when I write. Then I try to incorporate the catchy pop hooks, because I've always been a sucker for a good pop song. I just tried to make this album as fun and rockin' as possible," he explains.



The Ben Cote Band are a three-piece band at the moment, which is cool because it leaves a lot of room for each of member to fill. "We each have our own strengths and style that we bring to the table. Sam is the energy of the band. He's as crazy off stage as he is onstage; I've never really met anyone like him. He and I just clicked instantly when we met; we listen to all the same music and we can really read each other musically. Dave is one of the best singers I've ever met, and his harmonies really make us sound bigger than a trio. I think we are different than other bands today because we aren't trying to be artistic and deep like all those hipster bands and depressed singer/songwriters. We are just trying to have a good time and our music is a soundtrack for that," he adds.

"Wax & Plastic" is the debut album as the Ben Cote Band. "Sam and I were in a four piece band prior to this, but that band decided to go its separate ways. Sam and I tried to continue it, and I ended up having to step up as lead singer after not being able to find one, so Sam was the one who said we might as well just call it the Ben Cote Band. This album was us just trying to come out of the starting gate as hard and fast as possible. We tried to capture our live sound and keep it as raw as possible," explains Ben. The band recorded this album at Ben's parents' house with his computer and just 2 mics. "I produced it and mixed it myself. We're not trying to be this really polished, over produced band. Like I said, we try to keep it as raw as possible, like Cream or Van Halen," he explains.

The guys are already working on the next record. "We aren't stopping. Playing live is my favourite, but writing and recording are just as important. For better or for worse, playing music is what I'm going to be doing for the rest of my life." Check them out at:

www.bencoteband.com
www.facebook.com/bencoteband
www.bencote.bandcamp.com

Out now is the new CD 'The Tales of Cuatro Negro' from USA based rock band **BLACK4**. The band is: Bryan Tunis - Vocals, Jason Forrester - Bass and Brian Madurzak - Drums, I talked with Bryan about the new CD. When Brian was about 10, he had a friend whose Uncle played in the house band at the Playboy Club in Chicago. Brian used to go and watch them rehearse. "I was blown away! The intensity that the band used to play at was incredible. The way they shifted tempos, I was immediately hooked. I knew I wanted to be a musician right then and there. There was nothing like that feeling I had," he remembers.

Growing up and over the years Brian has been inspired by bands like Zeppelin, Sabbath, Clutch,



Monster Magnet, etc... "We were inspired to make an album that encompassed all of these influences, but also had touches of what makes each one of us unique to this band. We wanted something that came from a working man's perspective. Music for people who like to get their hands dirty. This is where we all came from. We also like to have a lot of fun. Work hard, play hard," he smiles.



It is hard to categorize Black4's music even though they refer to themselves as a rock band because that is what they are at the core, but they are a little more diverse than that. Black4 come from different backgrounds musically, but also appreciate one another's musical preferences. "Combining all of these influences is what makes the album so relatable to everyone. There is a little something for everyone. Rock, metal, punk it's all there for your enjoyment," says Brian. The album shows the band pulling all of their influences, in music and outside music, together. Creating an album that is relatable and speaks to the working class. "That's important to us because that's where we come from. These songs all came pretty naturally. That's why nothing sounds forced. The album is very easy to listen to. Music can get too complicated sometimes and make it frustrating to listen to," explains Brian.

The album was recorded at The Island Recording in Chicago. Paul Norman did the tracking and it was production by Elliot Bancel and Black4. "It was recorded and mixed over the span of a couple months. Again nothing was forced. Things kind of just flowed out naturally. This was made it a very enjoyable experience. Can't wait to get in and do it again," he explains with enthusiasm. For the future, the band hope everyone digs this album and that they get to tour the world sharing their music with as many people as possible. "We are looking to do videos for a couple of these songs. Possible shoot one of our live shows for a DVD release. We hope to get in and do another album. As of now we have enough songs left over to easily put out another quality album. We want to always keep a steady stream of music coming out for years to come," he concludes. Check the band out at:

www.black4band.com
www.facebook.com/black4band

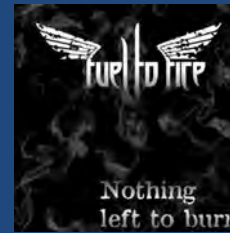


Out now is the new CD 'Nothing Left To Burn' from Germany's **FUEL TO FIRE**. The band are Thomas Hoette, bass, Christoph Puetz, drums, Christoph Schopp, guitar, Martina Tappe, vocals and Willi Wagner, guitar. I hooked up with Christoph Schopp. Back in the middle of the 90s Christoph started playing the guitar. Christoph liked the sound of distorted guitar and took a holiday job to buy my first guitar and amplifier. "That was back in 2000. After two years of practising I formed a band with a friend in the style of 'Lacuna Coil'. After this I joined a Hard Rock band. In 2008 I met Willi and Thomas at a guitar workshop of Victor

Smolski, the guitar player of the band 'Rage'. This was the starting point for Fuel To Fire," he explains.

The band's songs are mainly written by Willi and Christoph. "When the guitar players of a band do the song writing work it is quite obvious that this will result in a very riff-oriented style of music. I like the guitar-oriented style and Power/Thrash Metal style of the band 'Rage' which is also my main influence on writing music. Willi is a big fan of Motörhead and their style of playing Heavy Metal with Rock'n'Roll riffs and licks. This combination forms the style of our band. After showing the riffs to the others the arrangement and final songs were written by the whole band," he says.

The line-up of the band on the album consists of a classic set-up: drums, bass and two guitars. But having a female vocalist is still very special in this kind of music. "Willi is an excellent solo guitar player and was invited to a music workshop in Hamburg where some famous bands formed. Our bass player Thomas is also a drummer and has his own special style in playing his instruments which harmonizes greatly with our drums. On the drums Christoph Puetz does a very good job in playing tight and groovy rhythms."



"Nothing Left To Burn" has a history that dates back several years. "We initially planned the album release in 2012 but our former singer quit and we had to find a new vocalist. All lyrics were rewritten and the vocals lines were adapted to Martina's voice. The lyrics tell small stories and personal experiences. Our main goal is to give people a good time when listening to our music," Christoph tells me.

The recording process took quite some time since the band did all of it on their own. "It felt like this process would go on forever due to the first album release date two years earlier. Our rehearsal room was constantly rebuilt for the next instrument to be recorded. I actually had no experience in this field of work but with the help of books, tutorials and conversations with other sound engineers it worked out. Through countless mixing, mastering and rehearsal sessions the sound of the album was shaped," he explains.

Two of the members left the band due to professional reasons and the album was the last project of this line-up. "In the last few months we have been writing several new songs and hope to return with a completed line-up in the near future." More info at: <http://fueltofire.de>



If Southern country rock and pop is your flavour then do check out the brilliant new record '360' from Florida's **TIMOTHY CRAIG**. Also joining Timothy on the record are Donny Roberts/lead guitar, Wayne Killius/drums, Jim Hyatt/bass, Wanda Vick/violin and Michael Webb/keyboards.

Timothy was born in Wisconsin, USA and grew up in Ft. Myers, Florida. His passion for music undoubtedly stems from his father, who put himself through college writing songs and fronting a five piece rock and roll band in the early 60's. "Surrounded by vintage guitars, classic drum kits, and tube amplifiers, I formed my first band in the ct2express. The band played a lot of gigs, though never outside my living room," says Timothy.

Timothy's dad, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, John Mellencamp and Bruce Springsteen have all influences Timothy. "My inspiration behind the album was to record songs that I wrote that were true to my heart, both lyrically and musically" he explains. Timothy feels that his band/music comes across best live! "Yes, I'm proud of what we put down on the album but live is our forte'. I love going to see other



bands and feel their live show surpasses their recordings or at least is on the same level," he says.

The new album 360° is ten songs that Timothy wrote himself. "I have released other projects in the past that have had some co-writes. I called this project 360° because everything has seemed to come around full circle, from Nashville to Los Angeles and back. Some of the musicians that played on my very first release even played on this new album. I also recorded this new record where I recorded my first and these are just a few examples. I really felt the name on the album was appropriate even before we started recording! It's now available @ itunes, amazon.com and live performances."

The album was recorded @ treasure isle recording studio in Nashville, tn. "I produced it, which was an amazing experience to be able to roll with my feelings and vision," he says. "It was mixed by Peter Coleman and Richard Dodd, both from the UK. Peter is best known for producing and/or mixing five Pat Benatar records, Blondie's 'Heart of Glass' and the Knack 'My Sharona'. Richard has won several Grammys including one for Tom Petty's 'Wildflowers' album. It was exciting for me to have those guy's work on my project, growing up hearing and loving those bands/artist! We worked on the album, believe it or not for a few years, whenever we could, between shows and everyone's schedules. The great thing about that is that we could really live with things before putting them in stone."

For the future Timothy just wants to make the most of this albums and getting it out to the listeners, taking one day at a time. "Still writing of course, but spending time getting this project out there. Of course, I always plan and look forward to releasing the next new project, setting it free." More info at

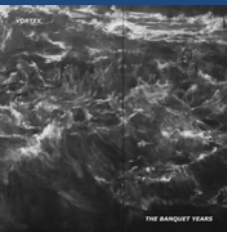
www.timothycraig.com



THE BANQUET YEARS

London based band **THE BANQUET YEARS** have an interesting and diverse album out called 'Vortex'. The band are Mark Watt and Arthur Schipper and they play an interesting blend of psychedelia and art rock, more art rock to be exact as the album paints many colours and textures.

Arthur started working in music in my teens playing in jazz groups and punk rock bands in NYC where he grew up. His dad had been a jazz and prog rock drummer and used to play in Europe and Asia mainly. Arthur started playing the drums, piano, and guitar early, and basically taught himself. "In the early 2000s, I was drummer for an NYC art rock n roll band called The Algiers that played noise punk and indie rock. Then I moved to London, which I'd always dreamt of doing. I decided to concentrate on my own songs when I got here and started The Banquet Years with Mark Watt, who was doing jazz and electronic music projects mainly. We started with the aim of turning my songs into ferocious punk pieces, but opted for more subtlety in the end," he tells me.



Mark and Arthur are inspired by anything that is honest, deep, and interesting. "We both really love Pixies, which is probably the most important band for us as a band. In terms of song writing on the album and in general, I'm most inspired by artists such as Cat Power who brings a real intensity and honesty into her song writing, and Lou Reed who really turned

rock n roll into art. Brian Eno, Bowie, Black Sabbath, and The Cure are also huge and direct influences. More generally, I'd say that our main inspiration for the album is the sea, each of the oceans, in all their grand turbulence and isolation - the sea is the womb of all life, but it also cradles many of our fears. Seascapes and sea-sounds are heavy in our blood," he progresses.

What sets the band apart as artists is their obsessions. "Mark is a perfectionist and is an utter gadget geek, an enthusiastic explorer of new sound technologies. And I am obsessed with language and stories, and dark topics such as trauma. I am also constantly awe-struck at the infinite possibilities of pop music - from just the simplest ingredients, one can create the most profound art, art that can deeply move, can nurture and heal, and that can also capture the intensity, the traumas of everyday life. What sets us apart from most of the other artists working today, I think, is that we are not afraid to explore and embrace the artistic power and potential of pop music. Even in hard times, life should be a banquet," Arthur explains.

The inspiration behind these songs specifically are conflicts and contradictions, life and loss. Many of the songs are directly about death, though they are couched in the language of love and longing. There are also songs about falling out of sync with nature and with people. "However, the songs aim for transcendence and connectivity. So, it's a positive record. We want listeners to find strength in these songs. But achieving strength requires some deep soul-searching and reflection. We've done the hard emotional and reflective work for the listener, and have, I think, succeeded in expressing this transcendental journey through these songs. From start to finish, the album aims to take its listeners on a journey of spiritual depth and healing," he explains.

The record was recorded in London at three different studios: Gun Factory (in Stokeley), Fortress Studios (Old st), and at Panther House in Mount Pleasant. Mark and Arthur produced and mixed all of the record at that third studio. "In fact, we were lucky enough to be part of a music collective Nomadic Tribe and build that studio from scratch. I think 'Azrael' took a bit longer than some of the other tunes, but most of the tracks were done quite quickly, e.g. 'Only Girl' was done in just one take and live at Fortress. 'Hearts Apart', the closing track is actually one of the first songs I ever wrote. I just didn't have a good drum part for it for years and was never satisfied by the attempts made by drummers I've worked with. It was a real moment of inspiration on the part of Mark to get the perfect drum and percussion parts finally," he smiles.

The guys have got about 20 tracks that they are really excited about which are left over from the awesome spurt of song writing during the period they were gigging and writing the material for 'Vortex'. "I used to write about 3-5 songs a week. I'm also constantly writing new material, working hard to use different techniques to bring more vivid images into the lyrics and to capture and explore different moods and themes. I'm really excited to get in the studio with Mark and produce those oldish and the new songs together. Hopefully, we'll be able to release another album by the end of the year. In the meantime, we plan to stand by these songs which we are both extremely proud of, and try to get our message across in different ways, e.g. by continuing to build up the live momentum." Check them out at:

<https://thebanquetyears.bandcamp.com>
www.facebook.com/TheBanquetYears
<https://twitter.com/thebanquetyears>
<https://soundcloud.com/banquet-years>

Salford's **DR. TID & THE TRIPLE EIGHTS** have a new album out called 'Nothing To Say' that fan of soulful, funky blues rock will enjoy. The guys are: Vox, Piano, Accordion - Dr. Tid, Guitar - Owen Shave, Bass - Gary Kinghorn, Kit - Ed Stuart, Special guest Guitar - The Reverend. Jim Adnitt, Backing Vox - Tosin Akindele & Rachael Jones. I had a chat with Dr. Tid.

Dr.Tid started composing and writing over 20 years ago working with a simple 4 track system, trying to figure out why he couldn't sound like Aerosmith, right out of the tape machine?! From these early times, his sound has been honed in and focused to a selection of Cajan blues piano with a hint of rock. "I became involved in the music industry for one simple reason. It's the only thing I want to do. To inspire people with my sound, shake things up a bit, to blow their minds... where at all possible," he tells me. Dr.Tid's inspirations for music are a mish mash of sources. Take the blues



influences that he calls on, Buddy Guy, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard. "Then you add in Dr. John, Randy Newman, Billy Joel, Stevie Wonder. Now throw in a sprinkle of Aerosmith, ZZ top, Led Zep... even a dollop of Level 42! It's all over the place really. For this album, and the band Dr.Tid as a whole, I wanted to craft an upbeat piano lead blues and funk sound reminiscent of second line for the brass, the Meters for the guitars and a Randy Newman/ Billy Joel fusion for the keys. I think we got there and even brought some rock elements with us," he adds.



Dr.Tid is based in Manchester. "We have a smorgasbord of bands and solo artists that are densely packed into the city. Most are typical Britpop incarnations, a selection of punk and grime, or EDM and dubstep. You get the more 'off beat' sounds

occasionally from small nights setup all over town, ranging from jazz fusions to solo beatbox artists. I wanted to focus on a truly alien sound to this environment. The festival, mardigras feeling from the south USA. Our live shows featured full band with brass and backing vocals, lots of players all strong behind this Cajun blues funk sound. It really hits the listener, especially in a town where this sound is limited. That's what I feel makes us different from other artists and why I wanted to carry this across to the recordings."

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For the future will see the reforming of a new selection of players to progress the sound further. "This session setup and core band has been an amazing process and great fun, I'm glad we 'caught' that moment of time on the album. I have a third album idea tucked away, sleeping, ready for the right point, and when I find the players and the time, more will follow." More info at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Dr-Tid-The-Triple-Eights/55418923694
<https://doctid.bandcamp.com/album/nothin-to-say>



From Poland we find classic rock/retro artist **SAMUEL BARON** and his new rather good debut CD called 'St. Parrot'. Which crossed the spectrum from

classic rock to psychedelic and blues. It a record more about art than about rock, and it is these types of records that have staying power.

Since Samuel was a kid he had a lot to do with all sorts of stage artists, mostly actors and musicians because his father was working in this business - he used to be a manager of the theatrical group of a sort called Epty-A and later Mumio. Dad was taking Samuel to jazz concerts and stage shows so Samuel had it all pretty early. 'But really it took a long time for me to think about it as about something I could do in life. I started to sing when I was 15 and play guitar when I was 18. That is pretty late isn't it? But after first few months I started to write songs of my own, that was really important to me,' he tells me.



Samuel explains that people talk about inspirations too much forgetting what they tried to say in their own music.

'But of course I've got some really important inspirations. Syd Barrett with his solo works and first Pink Floyd album, that's for sure. Lennon's first two solo albums 'Plastic Ono Band' and 'Imagine'. And the whole lot of David Bowie's. He really influenced me during the production process when most of the album was already done. Then Bowie turned me into a new direction on this material. I said 'Well, I can get it too dark on this track, I can get it too sweet on that one, that's bad trip and that's ballad let's do it properly.' He has beaten some of my main fears about what can I do and what would be too much. And of course there would be no Parrot without The Doors and The Beatles too,' he says.

What makes Samuel different from other artists is the fact that he taking music back to the core. A good song has to have good lyrics and good melody. 'There were days when pop music had two sides. One - give people what they want, give people what they like. Two - show them something, teach them something new. Let them have their fun but surprise them. I think the balance between pop and art, between catchy and weird is absolutely necessary if you're doing music for people. Like good fairytales - beautiful and scary at the same time, not just boring pudding of constant happiness for the pudding brains. And actually I don't think much people really cares about it these days,' he explains. Musically the record contains everything that Samuel always wanted his first album to contain. 'There are some psychedelic trips like 'Man With The Brick On His Head' or 'Bunnies Ball', there are some easy rock songs with wonderful electric organ like 'Chess' or 'Monkey Rock', there are one's with a dose of absurd like 'Let's Get Lost Together' and dominative one's that'll make you sit and listen, like 'Premonition'. I think it's different than some people would probably like it to be because it's not like a normal 'first solo album' with artists face on the cover art and showing off with singing skills. Let's set it up this way - this album is much more about 'St. Parrot' then it is about Samuel Baron,' he smiles.

Some songs (those with drum tracks) were recorded in Gliwice as a result of Samuel winning a band competition. 'I won three days in the studio that was placed literally in the middle of nowhere,' he says. 'We have recorded about 10 tracks but in the end we used just 5 tracks from this session on the album itself. That was October 2013 I believe. That's when the thing has started. It took couple of months before I took the tracks to the friend of mine who had his own little studio room in Sosnowiec. And basically that's where we were working most of the time in the Autumn and Winter 2013/2014. In the spring it turned out we have no more time and we have to finish the album but we haven't got enough material recorded. So that was it. I could make Parrot an EP. But I hated the idea; we were working too long on it. Then in one evening with Mateusz Wegrzyn we recorded 'She's The Only One', 'Bunnies Ball' and 'Let's Get Lost Together'. The final production and mastering was a weird process, I've been in UK at the time and Krzysztof (producer) in Norway. He was producing some of the tracks, I was doing the others and then he was closing the session. It was around 11 months from first session to the final version of the album.'

Samuel plans another album soon. 'I've got plenty of marvellous musicians to play with and great songs for the second record, just you wait! But first I need a bit of a luck with 'St. Parrot' (because it's still in digital

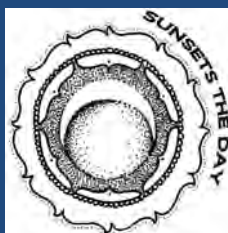
form only) and well, lots of work to do! But this 2015 looks pretty promising.' Check him out at:

www.samuelbaron.net
www.samuelbaron.bandcamp.com
www.facebook.com/psychedelicbaron



SUNSETS THE DAY have a new EP out now called 'Edge Of The World'. The band are Ryan Connell - Vocals, Simon Warlow - Guitar and Vocals, Jason Raynor - Guitar, Tamsin Clube - Bass and Vocals and Psy Collingborne - Drums. I had a chat with Tamsin Clube. Tamsin grew up listening to his father write, record and perform Classic Rock music. As a child Tamsin would fall asleep to the sounds of intricate electric guitar solos. This definitely informed his taste in music. As a teenager, he taught himself the Bass Guitar. Tamsin then mainly played in the band at church, but at the age of 27 he met a group of guys who would change his life. "The guys in the band have collaborated in various projects over the past eight years. Their first band, Point of Impact, toured throughout Hertfordshire and London. The band lineup changed over time, but Simon Warlow and Jason Raynor maintained the commitment to their musical partnership," he tells me.

The way the band's music sounds is as a result of each of member having different musical tastes and inspirations. "Personally I love Classic and Melodic Rock; I'm greatly inspired by Deep Purple, Blackmore's Night, and The Runaways. Our lead vocalist is a big Nickelback fan and listens to a lot of pop music. Whilst our drummer and guitarists prefer Prog or Metal. They are mostly inspired by bands such as, Avenged Sevenfold, Guns n Roses, Nightwish, and Pink Floyd," he says. The latest EP is a fusion of their differing styles, with a nod to the 80s Hard Rock sound. "Our songs 'Edge of the World' and 'You Don't Know' were written by our guitarist, Simon, whilst going through a phase of binge-listening to The Eagles. 'The Road' was very much inspired by Avenged Sevenfold, after seeing them perform their incredible dual solos live. 'Storm' started as a Prog track, and was written following a weather forecast that promised an enormous storm...but it never came."



Sunsets the Day are an unsigned and independent band. "We write and produce all of our own music. Every member of the band contributes to every song we write. We all love attending live music events. Hearing music performed live can never truly be replicated on a recording. Despite our differing tastes in music, one thing we all agree on is that we most enjoy bands who 'mix it up' - meaning that not every song sounds the same! Sunsets the Day have endeavoured to create a collection of songs, where each piece of music is truly unique, but still maintains our distinctive sounds," he explains.

Every song on the EP is completely original, and collaboratively written by the members of Sunsets the Day. 'Edge of the World' is a big step up from the bands last EP called 'Endeavour'. "You can clearly hear how our musicianship and song-writing have matured. Each of the four tracks demonstrates a different musical quality, giving a good flavour of our various approaches to song-writing: from catchy country riffs, to melodic vocals, to heavy duelling guitars," he tells me.

The EP was recorded at River City Studios in Hertford, by Sound Engineer James Marinos. The band spent five days in the studio recording their four tracks. "It's hard work, but we also have a good laugh. We all get very self-conscious when having to record vocals in the booth, so we dubbed it 'the booth

of shame'! After the initial recording and mixing, we listened to the tracks closely and repeatedly to pick up on what needed additional work. We then took the stems to Nick Clube, at a private studio, to do the final mixing and mastering," he explains.

The band will be back in the studio this summer to record their album, which they hope to release in the Autumn. The album is going to feature tracks from our previous EPs as well as some new tracks. The guys are really excited about getting some new tracks recorded and made available to listening ears all over the world. Two tracks, which they are especially eager to release, are 'Zombie Train' and 'Infatuated'. "Playing live is our greatest passion, so we will continue to perform as often as we can. Although our usual haunts are around Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, we are looking further afield as we promote the upcoming album - and we will keep saving our pennies so we can extend our tour outside of the UK." More info at www.facebook.com/sunsetstheyday www.instagram.com/sunsetstheyday



The new album 'Matter Of Time' from Greece rock band **JESSICA'S THEME BAND** has been getting some good press lately and is well worth your time. The band are John Goudoulas (vocals), Jim Karahontzitis (guitar, vocals), Nick Agathos (guitar, vocals), Denis Kaskouras (bass, vocals) and Tony Linaris (drums). As youngsters in the mid seventies the sound that caught the band's heart and soul was Rock. "Every sound that came out of the radio was a shock. Bands like Dire Straits, Police, Bad Company, Thin Lizzy, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Lynyrd Skynyrd and many many others. So the dream that I wanna be like them is well known to every musician. An urge to communicate and share those feelings was the beginning of everything. Once you know where you want to go, you start making your way. Playing the music we love and enjoying every aspect of it, we became involved by playing in bands and reaching to a point we said this is it. It's a crazy world but that's what is all about: the sound that changes everything, taking a verse from our tune Nothing Like Rock 'n Roll (ready to be on our second album)," explains Jim.

The band's inspirations are bands from early seventies like Lynyrd Skynyrd, Allman Bros, Molly Hatchet, Eagles. "British bands like Bad Company, UFO etc, Irish bands like Thin Lizzy, Rory Gallagher etc. All those great musicians and bands in Rock. The inspiration behind the album is that we wanted to express what we feel about love, life, relations and people. Our lyrics are based on our personal experiences through life, our fears, our dreams, our hopes. The songs from the album were written a long time ago and they were waiting for the right moment to be published. We try to catch every moment and make music out of it. Sometimes we write a song as a whole (lyrics/music), others we work on a riff and add the lyrics, other times it comes out of the blue while jamming," he tells me.



The band was formed in Athens by John, Jim and Nick in 1989 presenting their own material as well as covers such as Tush, I know A Little, Feel Like Making Love, Don't Believe A Word etc, with many live gigs, collaborating with local acknowledged musicians and winning the first prize as band of the year in 1991 on a Greek TV show. "When disbanded in 1994 after a journey through different musical paths we decided to re unite and with a new member Tony Linaris on drums, as Denis got in the band around 1995. In 2013 when Tony joined we sat down and started working on our 1st album. I know that we didn't invent

the wheel and you can understand the influences but the important thing in music and generally in life is to be honest and true. The point is to be original, based on the musical alphabet you know, your heart and your soul," enthuses Jim.

'Matter Of Time' is a solid, clean and true album, created with love and passion. "A few tracks based on hard rock i.e. Hard To Be A Hero, Matter Of Time others based on southern rock such as Black Cat, It Happened Again, Big Story, Hold On Tight. In general it's a mixture of all the genres of rock we love from country to blues to rock and hard rock. We are happy that the production we made together with our producer met our expectations. We gave big attention to our sound trying to establish it in our songs which is the identity in every band. A great team with understanding and open ears. We enjoyed every moment during recordings, having a great time. This energy is captured in every track of the album and delivers to the listener a fresh sound," he says with pride.

The album was recorded at SPR Studios (Athens, Greece) and their producer and main man is Sofoklis Pappas. "Mastering was made at Sterling Sound studios. Local musicians and friends participated on the album and the recording took us around one year. We took our time as we wanted to do it without pressure, focused on each song separately feeling the vibes and enjoying our music," he explains.

At the moment the band are playing live gigs around Athens and also writing new songs and working on their second album. "Our aim is to get attention worldwide and spread our music as far as it goes. We have the confidence and the tools to achieve our goals," he smiles. More info about the band at: www.facebook.com/jessicasthemeband
www.jessicasthemeband.com
www.cdbaby.com/AlbumDetails.aspx?AlbumID=jessicasthemeband
https://twitter.com/2014_jtb/



Out now 'Detroit' the debut CD from Italy's **KILLER BOOGIE**, a killer retro rock band that was formed in 2014. The band are Luigi Costanzo/Gabriele Fiori/Matteo Marini. Gabriele's friend Luigi (drummer of The Wisdoom) wanted to start another project. "It all began when we listened to the Ty segall new band 'Fuzz'. We really enjoyed it so we decided to make something similar...but at least we mixed that sound, with all other 60's/70's influences of bands as blue Cheer, MC5, The Stooges, Free and more recent Radio Moscow. The aim of the band is also to make a smart, fresh and funny fuzz riff rock. With the other bands we are use to make heavier tunes and style, with this new project we needed to have more Retro Rock style! We like to define what we play as: Retro Fuzz Riff Proto Punk Garage Acid Vintage Blues 70's Rock. We started the band also for another reason: a Fuzz Pedal, a small pedal for the guitar: the Ibanez Standard Fuzz that is a killer machine to write killer 70's riffs, the sound helped so much to start writing some kind of tunes as the one we make," he tells me.



The best thing about Killer Boogie is that Gabriele can play a genre of music he has loved since he was a kid. "So, MC5, Cream, Blue Cheer, The Jimi Hendrix Experience, The Stooges, Black Sabbath are of course the obvious influences. Actually, the project was born because Gabriele and I fell in love with "Fuzz" by Fuzz, Ty Segall's heavy psych project. So we just thought we had to make our own 70's fuzz rock record," he says.

"After the recordings Edoardo left Italy, headed

to Boston, MA to study music at the Berklee College of music. So we brought in the project the fantastic Matteo Marini, that added a rough-punk attitude that was fundamental to our live approach. What makes us different is that we are ourselves and we don't do anything to play or sound like someone else in particular. I think Gabriele is one of the few rock guitarist in the underground scene to have his 'own sound', and that's the main characteristic of the debut album and, in general, the key aspect of good rock 'n' roll records."

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The record was recorded in Gabriele's studio, which is also the place where a lot of HPS (Heavy Psych Sounds) band rehearse during the week. "We recorded all the tracks in a couple of days, and then Gabriele did the vocals and few overdubs with the guitar. Than Pino Santamaria mixed the record, and we're very happy about it because he completely understood the way we wanted the it to sound. The whole process took only few months."

The band has just toured Europe. "I think we're gonna play few shows in spring, but we want to wait for feedbacks, maybe the album will be a success and we will receive good offers, or maybe not. Probably we will play festivals in the summer. And we would plan also a week end with 2-3 shows in Berlin and around that area. We will continue to write new stuff...at least we already have 4-5 new awesome songs! I can anticipate a long term schedule news: the 11 volume of the 4-way split, cannot say which are the other bands but we're definitely in! And probably we will release a 7" very soon."

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/killerboogie>



Arkansas based solo artist **JUSTIN TEAL MORGAN** has a new CD out called '60 Miles To Memphis' that is worth checking out if you like classic rock with a southern blues guitar edge. Justin came from a musical family which he says has been a bit of a sickness really all of his life. "I have always been obsessed with music of all kinds," he tells me. Justin's mother sings, his brother sings and plays guitar, Justin sang first, then started on drums, then to bass, then guitar and writing songs. "I have a need to create music and share it. Through my early childhood and teen years...I tried on many musical hats. I was certain at one point that I would be a rock bassist. Then I began to sing, and was then convinced I would be a rock vocalist. After a while the prospect of being in a band got frustrating for one reason or another. So I learned guitar to be a better writer. Once I realized I could stand on my own, I committed to being a solo singer songwriter. I chose acoustic at first as a writing tool, but then t became my preference. Although I play some electric on this most recent album... acoustic is at the foundation of every song. My first two albums are all acoustic. Anyway - I got serious about releasing music 5 years ago, and have released 3 albums now," he tells me.

Justin is a true fan of all genres, rock, blues, folk, metal, old country, soul, everything. But it is Blues and Rock where he drew most of his true influences from. Blues artists like BB King and Stevie Ray Vaughan - but have influences all over the map including Elvis, The Beatles, and old Soul -even hard rock and metal like Alice In Chains and Metallica. "I guess I am

inspired by skill, by songs, by artists that play and sing with conviction -regardless of their genre. Blues and Bluesy or Roots stuff has always felt the most natural of any style that I have tried. I feel very connected to it. Having grown up in the Delta region of the South only a couple of hours from Memphis, and having spent a lot of time there. It permeated my creative identity. I guess this album is a nod and tribute to that. I struggled for years like many musicians, trying to pick which voice in my head to follow. I had tried everything. I had gotten well rounded as a musician and could have had at least some success at a few different things. I keep coming back to Blues and Roots Music/ Americana over and over again. And no matter how many basses or electric guitars I have lying around, or how much hard rockkaraoke I sing. I keep reaching for my acoustic, and writing the same stuff. I think the line gets blurred between who you listen to and who you are sometimes. I have had to truly learn to just stop thinking and just be me this album is me. All three since 2010 are," he explains.



Musically, Justin is not breaking any new ground here, but the music he writes is honest, completely naturally flowing. "I sit down with my acoustic guitar, and this is what happens, no plans, just creatively pure. I guess honesty is where I differ; there is a lot of trendiness out there. And although a white boy playing Blues is a cliché to some. I am honest with who I am as an artist. I tried to run from it, but it's just who I am. I think when you draw inspiration from a diverse pool of artists like I do, wherever your sound lands almost has to be honest. The only way to truly figure that out is to sit down and write. Whatever comes out, you just have to own it and put all your passion and energy into it. I think authenticity is missing from music now. I see bands or solo artists following trends and copying each other, and even more ridiculous is someone doing something outrageous or disgusting, or dressing up like whatever just to stand out. I realize that that has made a few bands a lot of money, and congrats on that, but it has nothing to do with music. I'm the same guy all the time, no costumes. No disrespect, just not interested in being anything but authentic and being the same guy on stage as I am at the bar or in your backyard barbeque," explains Justin.

Justin played all the tracks himself. "I wanted to capture the feel of a band even though there was no band, just me. I kept things really loose and relaxed, tried not to over produce or mix it, kind of a live feel -although tracking it all myself. That can sometimes give an album a sterile sound, when you overdub your own tracks, or accompany yourself, but I spaced the sessions out, and used a lot of different mic positions to create space and even air noise to make it sound like a band was in the room with me. I also chose not to do backing vocals on this album, which can also give it a robotic or sterile sound. I could have used other musicians, but with a real job, kids and all the musicians I know having real jobs and kids making all of that come together s next to impossible. I am pretty proud of this album, however basic the recording sounds. I think I was able to capture something pretty cool."

He recorded the album at my home, all over the house, even in bathrooms to get cool echoes on vocals and guitars. "The electric parts on 'Move Me' were recorded in my bathroom with the mic about 5 feet away from the amp, facing my shower. So you have reverb on top of an echo! It took about four month's total (when the kids weren't home). It got off to a slow start because I was learning to use the recording equipment while I was actually recording, but once things got flowing it got easier. I recorded most of the bass tracks direct with no amp except for '60 Miles To Memphis' and 'Slow Burnin Flame'. At one point I was going to bring in a piano player, or just take my little home studio to them, but that never materialized. Every song started with an acoustic guitar track except "Slow Burnin Flame"...I actually just laid down a walking Blues part and then recorded over that. I know I sound like a guy and a drum kit falling down the stairs rather than a drummer, but it worked ok," he says.

For the future Justin wants to write and record, play solo gigs when he can. "I will always be putting

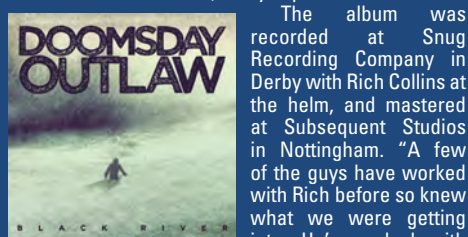
music out on iTunes and the like! I have to! I am writing now, so stay tuned! I really want to keep working on developing my songs, and being a better guitarist. I want to continue challenging myself as a writer and musician, and hopefully continue to have increased sales of my music. It's done well enough to support my operation, but I would love to see it flourish. I have had more downloads in Western Europe than anywhere, even more than my hometown. It was really cool to see downloads from Ireland and the UK, since all of my traceable ancestry is there. Funny how that works. I have to cross the ocean to sell my music, well digitally cross the ocean anyway. I guess I just want to keep making music." More info at:

www.reverbnation.com/justintealmorgan
www.soundcloud.com/justintealmorgan



DOOMSDAY OUTLAW are from the UK and have a new album out called 'Black River'. The band are Carl Batten – Vocals, Stephen Broughton - Guitar, Gavin Mills – Guitar, John 'Ironfoot' Willis – Drums and Indy – Bass. I had a chat with Indy. Doomsday Outlaw have all been round the block in various bands and were looking for a fresh start – a way of bringing together the best of what they had done before. "What got us fired up music-wise. We wanted to combine heavy riffs with a solid groove and kick-ass melodies. We want people to sing themselves hoarse and snap their necks at the same time," says Indy.

The band are inspired by anything heavy and organic sounding. "We want to crush heads but do it with soul. Everything gets chucked in the mix from Danzig and Clutch, to Pride & Glory and Johnny Cash. If it moves you, it's in," he tells me. The band love to get stuck into the groove. "The band doesn't rehearse in a studio. We're in shack on a farm, rain or shine, making as much noise as we can – frightening the livestock! Every jam is a deafening pressure cooker that's always spitting out something new for us. And when we're happy with the noise, we subject the Great British Public to it," Indy explains.



The album was recorded at Snug Recording Company in Derby with Rich Collins at the helm, and mastered at Subsequent Studios in Nottingham. "A few of the guys have worked with Rich before so knew what we were getting into. He's worked with the likes of Therapy? and LostAlone, so we knew had a good rock guy twiddling knobs, but we also knew he'd be able to capture a live feel – we wanted to get away from the soul-less click track perfection that you hear a lot nowadays. The most important part of that is having a guy who you trust to say "that take was sh*t – do it again" and not just quietly fix it all in pro-tools when you've gone home. And Rich ain't afraid of telling us when we had to do better." The album took most of the month of October 2014 to commit to tape, and then another couple of months of mixes and notes flying back and forth. Then it was ready for Subsequent to do their thing. "Joe has a load of experience in different genres, including grime and dance, so we were confident he'd get that bottom end roaring and not just a 'rock pre-set' veneer. All in all we've ended up with an hour of foot-stomping anthems taking in all points of heavy riffing and yelling goodness – and we think it's a solid calling card of what people can expect to be assaulted with when they come and see us live," Indy explains.

The immediate future involves going toe-to-toe with a load of the bands good friends in the East Midlands Metal 2 The Masses. "We're in the semi-finals in June and hope to get all the way to Bloodstock this year, after getting beat in the finals last year. Then

we're looking at taking show on the road and playing any toilet, shed, saloon or warehouse that'll let us plug in and deafen the locals," More info at

www.doomsdayoutlaw.com
www.facebook.com/doomsdayoutlaw



Italy's **BLACK RAINBOWS** are a power trio, influenced by the sounds of the 70's. They have a new super cool album out called 'Hawkdope' which is a fusion of heavy psychedelic and rock music which has been released by Heavy Psych Sounds Records a label based in Rome which started four years ago. The band are Gabriele Fiori/Dario Locca/Alberto Croce.

The label started releasing new albums from Black Rainbows, old repressing and splits and ep's. The band have as band many connections with some good bands around made some propositions to some mate bands around as Karma To Burn, White Hills, Naam, The Flying Eyes, Farifung, Fatso Jetson, Hot Lunch. So Gabriele had the chance to release and work with and for these wonderful bands! "Plus I choose and produce some new cool bands as APE SKULL,ita (vintage 70s rock) WEDGE,ger (retro 70s rock) WILD EYES,usa(acid rock/fuzz rock) KILLER BOOGIE ,ita(garage, riff fuzz rock) THE WISDOOM,ita (sludge doom) TONS,ita (sludge doom) DEVILLE,swe(stoner)," he says. So they started just before this vinyl trend to print coloured and limited editions of vinyls, and with a bit of success. "We want to still grow up and make much more cool bands as possible. We also take care of the booking of the bands, that is an important side that some label don't care," says Gabriele.

Black Rainbows was born in 2006, they released two albums with a French label called Longfellowdeeds records, CD and vinyls (when vinyls were not so trendy!) "Twilight in the Desert 2007) – (Carmina Diabolo 2009). Then they started touring all around Europe, especially in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands's haring the stage with bands like Airbourne, Nebula, Karma to Burn, Saviours, Jucifer, Farflung, Naam, Ancestors, Entrance Band, Fatso Jetson, Witchcraft, Dead Meadow, Black Mountain, Los Natas, White Hills, Micheal Davis from MC5. "We've played in 2008 at the "stoned from the underground festival" in Germany, then I started to run my own label called "Heavy Psych Sounds records" releasing many cool records for other well known bands. For Black Rainbows, I released a split with space kings Farflung, the 3rd full length and very well acclaimed "Supermothafuzzalicious!!" in 2011, that an Ep called "Holy Moon" in 2013 and last spring an awesome 4 way split with Naam,White Hills, The Flying Eyes," Gabriele explains.



Black Rainbows were invited at the Desert Fest Berlin and London last year, and now ready with probably the best album in the story of the band. Gabriele thinks' that the band are a good mixture of vintage, heavy ,fuzzy, psychedelic tunes of the 70's as Black Sabbath, Blue Cheer, Mc5, Hawkwind With 90's Stoner Rock As Kyuss, Fu Manchu, Nebula, Monster Magnet. "Personally I was 12 years old in '92 when Kyuss releasing "blues for the red sun" and I got it immediately, I saw them live when I was 14, "superjudge" of monster magnet was one of my favourite records , I bought it on vinyl and I think I've listened to it like 1 million times! Then I started discover all the late 60's – begin of 70's rock with bands as cactus, captain beyond, can, free, Steppenwolf and the other thousands of great rock bands of that age. For this record I think the main influences are Monster Magnet-Hawkwind-Fu Manchu and Nebula I think is a good mixture of the sound of these bands!

But I would also love to say we are fans of Cactus, Captain Beyond, Gong, King Crimson, Free, Faces," he tells me.

Gabriele is a fan of space rock with Hawkwind, but also the hard rock from Black Sabbath, and he thinks' with this last album they have reached their aim. "We have our personal sound, recognizable. We love big amps, we like jam during the rehearsal time, but also we like to make songs with certain structures, I don't think were so different from the other bands, we just say our thing, we offer the listener what we are with our luggage of personal listening. I think we change step by step, we don't have a formula as Ac-Dc so every record is a discover cause we like to change each time! One of our main inspirations is Motorpsycho a band who explored all kind of rock during this last 25 years," he explains.

Some time has passed since the releasing of their last full length album 'Supermothafuzzalicious', which came out in December 2011, three years passed, since that moment they made one long Ep 'Holy Moon' and one split with Naam, White Hills, The Flying Eyes, during these years. "We also wrote a lot of new material; I have hundreds of new songs, part of songs, ideas, riffs, recorded since that time. We use to rehearsal in the HeavyPsychSoundsRecords studio, so we also have the chance to record professionally all the sessions, so when we need to record a rough idea we can do. At least it takes 2-3 years to come out. We want to make a good 4th full length, and it took time to collect all the right material, in that time as I said we did prefer to release the ep and the split cause we wanted to make something special for the 4th chapter. The record is about 45 minutes total running, for 9 brand new tracks, one is acoustic, and another, the last a bit more psych-space. I think 'Hawkdope' is a perfect fusion of the sound of bands as Monster Magnet, Hawkwind and Fu Manchu, with Heavy Psych-Stoner passages, Lysergic moments, Hard Rock oriented with Psychedelic shades. I can honestly say that this album is very very good, is definitely the best album we ever did until we start playing," he smiles.

The album is produced by Gabriel. "I took care of all the features from recordings, to the selection of the instruments, to the arrangements and mixing and editing of the songs. In those past years we collected so many songs that it takes some time to choose the best for recordings.

At least we decided to record 18-19 brand new songs, so the work to arrange all these songs, write the lyrics and work on it was huge job. In the end last summer we decided to start record all these 19 songs. 2 hours and 45 minutes of recordings! From all this long recordings we choose again the best ones to have 42-43 minutes of chosen music!

While we played the songs many times the recording sessions were not so long. First day was for the sound making, to choose the best snare, tom and floor tom (consider we choose among 7 different floor toms and 4 snare), microphones positions, guitar effects, bass sound and so on.

Second day of recording we warm up, so we start recording slowly the first bunch of songs and be more confidential with the record process, doing long stops and rests so to not be too stressed!! Other two days and all was finished, fifth day was for listening carefully all the songs...in fact we found that a couple of tunes were played too fast, so we did it again! This was the first time we make a recording session all together in one room, usually in the past we used to record one by one, guitars after bass after drums after vocals...but this don't means a better result. We don't like super professional and clean recordings; we need the 'beat'. The 'paste', the 'mud' you generate when you play all together and everyone see the other in his face. Regarding the editing and the artistic production of the tunes

We wanted to give an easier cut to the songs, so to be easier to listen, and during the selection process we choose different beats, different tonalities, and different timings of the songs so to make the album various, and not bore the listener.

We're not a band with a formula, like Ac-Dc or Rage Against the Machine, we can have 12 minutes song more psychedelic or 3:30 minute stoner song as well. You see that there's a red line connecting all the songs cause I think that in this moment we reach a good point as a band. I think we have our own sound also if we play different sometime, you find the same sound if you listen a psychedelic tune with lysergic opening, but you understand this is the same band

also with straight songs with faster beats.”

“We want to see new record feedbacks, hope we can get a bigger booking and maybe label and bigger festivals! We still have many songs to release so I think in this next future we will be pretty active about releasing stuff,” he concludes. More info at

www.theblackrainbows.com
www.heavypsycheounds.com



Out now is the new CD ‘Decade Dance’ from Baltimore based psychedelic progressive rock band **TELESMA**. The band are Ian Hesford - didgeridoo, kuling (bamboo mouth harp), barrel drums, tank drum, Jason Sage - keyboards, vocals, hand drums, percussion, Chris Mandra - guitar, analog guitar synth, the manDrum, vocals, Bryan Jones - 6 string MIDI & upright basses, theremin, percussion, Joanne Juskus - lead vocals, karatalas, percussion and Mike Kirby - drums. All the members of the band had been performing musicians involved with other projects for some time before meeting to form Telesma. Ian Hesford and Jason Sage met in 2002 at an open mic and formed Telesma the next day. In 2004, the current line-up formed when Ian and Jason, joined by Chris Mandra and Joanne Juskus, combined forces with Bryan Jones and Mike Kirby, who were formerly in the band Naked Jungle. The “crazy world” of music is the only life in which Telesma’s members are interested in living! And Telesma is the “craziest” project that any of the band members have ever been in!

Telesma’s inspirations are as wide and varied as the members themselves. “Coming from disparate musical directions. There are definite tribal influences, as well as futuristic, and sounds rooted in spiritual and musical traditions thousands of years old,” explains Joanne Juskus. “One reviewer dubbed ‘Dead Can Dance... with teeth’. Some contemporary influences include Pink Floyd, Table Beat Science, Amon Tobin, King Crimson, Ravi Shankar, Krishna Das, Sheila Chandra, Afro-Celt Soundssystem, Bob Marley, Sun Ra Arkestra, Thievery Corporation, Tool, Mickey Hart’s Planet Drum and Peter Gabriel,” she adds.

The inspiration behind the band’s new album was mainly that they wanted to celebrate their first decade together with their friends and fans. “We explored themes of life and death and the Bhagavad-gita in our last album (Action in Inaction). This album is much less structured or themed. It is a labour of love for all the musicians, artists, dancers, performance artists and listeners who have been a part of the Telesma scene for all these years,” she says.

From its inception, Telesma has been more of a travelling collective experience. “We make music that is participatory and community-oriented. The band has never been interested in setting up our instruments and just playing on a stage in the traditional manner. We arrive at many shows with our wonderful menagerie of artists, dancers, performing artists, and our friends who may want to offer their art/clothing/jewellery wares. We hand out incense to all who attend, decorate the stage and surroundings and transform any venue into a wonderland,” Joanne explains.

The band recorded ‘Decade Dance’ in an astonishingly quick two days. “We had written all but one of the songs ahead of time, and went into the studio well-prepared. We always leave room for magical things to happen, and they did, but we also knew that we really wanted to release this album at our 10 year anniversary show on December 27, 2014. We had one track that we wanted to happen completely organically, and that is the last track, ‘Be Here’, our first song featuring Ian Hesford’s latest find

– in what seems like his endless attraction to unusual (and usually ancient) instruments – the tank drum (a multi-tonal drum fashioned from unused propane tanks). We recorded it at Hudson Street Sound with the man we have worked with on all of our projects, Frank Marchand. He’s an amazing producer/engineer and we trust him completely. He understands how Telesma actually sounds live and his goal is make that sound come across in the studio,” he explains to me.

The band was looking forward to creating some new music in 2015, plus the second and third instalment of their ‘Lotus Chain’ video trilogy will be released this year as well. “These are amazing videos that combine live action and the wonderful visionary art of Adam Scott Miller. The first part of the trilogy can be found at this link: Telesma “Chain” by Adam Scott Miller (Chapter One of LOTUS CHAIN, in Blu-Ray 1080p). We would also love to tour Europe and especially the UK, so we are hoping to find an interested promoter to help us book a tour.” More info at:

www.telesmaband.com
www.facebook.com/pages/Telesma
www.facebook.com/pages/Telesma
<https://soundcloud.com/telesma-1>
<https://myspace.com/telesma>



If you like instrumental progressive rock, then check out the rather good new album ‘I’ from **TOOMAS VANEM** who is from Estonia. Toomas grew up in the musical family. His father played clarinet and saxophone and mother accordion so there was always music around him in his youngster days. “Then one day when I was asked, “do you want to learn how to play some instrument son?” - I chose clarinet and went to local music school to study it. When the puberty hit me I got bored of the clarinet and found that guitar is the coolest thing in the universe and I started to learn it. Cause I had some knowledge of music theory and was familiar with the practicing routine, it was not so hard for me and I my skills on a guitar developed quite fast. But it was not enough for me and when I was about 16 I left the small village where I was born, went to our capital city Tallinn and started study guitar seriously. It opened lots of new doors for me and I was soon involved to Estonian music scene on a professional level. And since then I have not done much more than played the guitar and writing music and producing it. And I love this crazy world of music very much,” he tells me.



The main source of inspiration behind this album was the melody. Toomas tried to come up with the melodies and themes for each song that you really can sing. “What I mean by that is that I needed to find the strong and exciting melody first, and then built the whole composition around it. There is huge amount of guitar oriented instrumental music around us, which is constructed like series of guitar licks, and sounds mostly like a technical show-off. The only thing that touches you listening those albums is “wou, boy he/she is fast”...(laughs)... but where is the music? So I decided to go other direction and create guitar album of melodies that you can really hook up to. In that sense my music is inspired by any style of music be it classical, jazz or metal,” he explains.

Toomas also has a band. “It is called ‘Limited Edition’. We play instrumental progressive music and most of it is presented on my album. We have Andrus Lillepea on the drums who is tremendous musician. Now He is a busy man, plays with everybody and all styles of music, constantly develops himself, also a teacher of drums and one day he will be the best drummer of the universe, so guys watch out...! OK

then we have Henno Kelp who is amazing bass player. He is our metal guy, plays on a Estonian famous band Terminator, and is well known session player who is booked all the time, and I really have sometimes hard time to get the band together, cause you know... everybody is busy with the projects. On keyboards we have mister RunnoTamra who is absolutely a wizard on a keyboards. His technical knowledge and musical skills are absolutely outstanding. And then it is me on a guitar, and there is nothing special about me...(laughs)...What makes us special is that nobody of us can’t really sing...(laughs)... and that is probably the reason we are not that much famous. But seriously we choose to make music and create melodies on our instruments. And this is not just moving your fingers on your axe. I have a luxury that all the musicians of our band can sightread music, so we don’t spend hours sitting and in a band room and trying to memorize a riff or melody. Most of the material is pre-composed, I bring the scores to the rehearsal and everybody tries to concentrate on his part of the music and fine-tunes his part on a highest possible performance level. Maybe the thing that differs us from other bands is that our performance is close to the top of so called virtuosity level. But only our fans can judge.”

The album is instrumental. “As I mentioned before the melody is the A and O for everything. When I compose the songs I need every tune to have some kind of story to tell. It does not matter that there is no lyrics. You need to enter into this some kind of mental stage and have strong vision what you are doing and concentrate yourself and let the inspiration flow. This way you can come up with some good music that means something and touches people. Sometimes the magic happens, sometimes not but your heart will tell you when you have nailed something. From philosophical point of view this album is a collage of several stories about fragments of world and life, spoken in a language of music. You can call the music also progressive in a sense that we have odd time meter changes on most of the songs, multiple layers of rhythms is presented on compositions. Melodically and harmonically I have used some exotic scales ... on tune “Gravity of the Eiffel Tower” for example pulled the harmonies and melodies out from the melodic minor inversion... that is why this song sounds little bit weird and not from this earth. And yes Stuart Hamm plays bass on this particular tune as a quest star musician,” he tells me.

The album was recorded, mixed and produced by Toomas. “Most of the recording took place at my little home studio except for the live drums. With the help from my friends at local music industry I had a luxury to record drums at a big studio with Andrus and some of the bass was also recorded during those recording sessions. After that I transferred all the recorded material to my computer back to my home studio and finished all the guitar parts there. I also played all the keyboard stuff, except for the keyboard solo on “Summer Samba”. The whole process took more than I thought at the beginning, cause you know, when it is your first solo album man you want it to be perfect and you polish and polish it forever...laughs! At one point I had to stop and release it and I am quite happy with the result,” he says with pride. Toomas will soon release his second solo album. “I don’t want to tell you specifics of it but on the next album I will go crazy mixing some more styles and exotic scales again. I bought a nice piece of land outside the city and planning to build new studio over there. Little princess was born to our family and I am now father of 4. I am currently working on a project of Mr.Tshaikovsky’s music a concert program of electric guitar and big classical orchestra. Little things like that.” More info at: www.toomasvanem.com



FOREST FIELD is a progressive project based around Peter Cox from The Netherlands who some of

you may remember from the band Cinawhite. Joining the band is US singer Phil Vincent (no stranger to these pages) and Sue Straw who plays Native American Flutes. They have released a new CD worth checking out called 'Onwards and Upwards'.



Music was Peter's first love and it is likely to be his last. "Ever since I got a taste of releasing original tunes with Chinawhite (early nineties), I have been writing and slowly building a studio to this day and age, where I can record whenever I like and release an album when it's ready," he tells me. Peter is inspired by a whole range of musical styles. "It's hard to pinpoint just what," he tells me. "But what I can say there is no deliberate attempt to sounding like anyone at all. What you hear is what comes out of my hands when I am writing for Forest Field. This album was built around the concept that is best represented by some lines from the lyric of Stronger, the key track on the album: "it's not the falling down, it's the getting up again". Hence the title Onwards And Upwards."

Peter feels his music is not a competition so it is hard to judge how Forest Field differs from other bands. "I try to come up with interesting songs that have melody and feel. Phil adds his vocal magic and mighty harmonies and sometimes it is nice to invite someone to add something special, like Sue did with the flutes. Onwards And Upwards is our third release and I am pretty sure more are coming your way."

The album is a mix of various types of instrumental songs (the odd numbered ones), ranging from piano, to full on work outs. "The even numbered vocal tracks probably sit well in a prog environment but have crossover appeal as I have learned since it release. Everybody that takes a listen loves it and has a different personal favourite. Which is great to discover! The CD edition has an 8 page full colour booklet with the lyrics and photo's that add to the concept," Peter explains.

All instruments were recorded at the Down the Road studio in The Netherlands, Phil recorded his vocals at The Muzik Room in the USA and Sue recorded in her Oklahoma home. "The album was produced by me and mixed by Billy Sherwood of Yes, Worldtrade and Circa: fame. Something I am very proud of as I love his music. Mastering was done by Maor Appelbaum. Both Billy and Maor work from California in the USA. Some of the songs are 10 to 20 years old, and others were written in the past 2 years. All were recorded the past 2 years and finished early 2014 after which mixing and mastering took place."

At the moment the guys are enjoying the release of the album and the immense feedback they are getting from it. "The way things look now it might be possible the band family gets extended with a drummer from yet another country. And that also means we are looking into the songs for the next album that we plan on releasing somewhere in 2015. And since a lot of people are saying they enjoy my guitar playing so much, I will make sure we get even more of that." Check them out at: www.rockcompany.nl

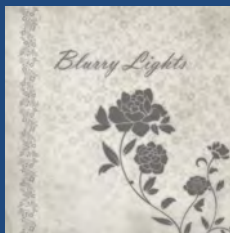
From Russia we find new project **BLURRY LIGHTS** who have a rather good self-titled album that is out now. Main man B.M handles everything on the album. When he was a kid, B.M was in love with music listening to his parents' CDs and tapes. With time B.M started to buy his own CDs and tapes. Then one day he had an idea of creating his own music. "My first attempt in music-making was back in April 2009. I didn't know anything about how to create music and never attended any musical colleges. What I have now is the result of progress I made by myself through these years," he tells me.

The main inspiration behind all of B.M's music is his own life and experiences. "When I'm doing music, I'm trying to convert my thoughts and feeling into sound. As any other musician, I have my own list of bands and projects, which made a heavy impact on my vision of music, such as Woods of Desolation, Alcest, Two Steps from Hell, Infinitas and many more. Surprisingly most of them are metal projects while I make neoclassical music. Sometimes I'm getting inspiration from movies and writing something after I watch it, while I'm still impressed. They usually are romantic and/or sad movies," he explains.

Blurry Lights was started on October 18, 2012

(that's also the day of B.M's birthday). B.M. was just practicing on piano and wrote his first release called 'Timeless', which consists of the few short improvised pieces. "Later my music got appearance of drums and a few guitar parts. Right now my music sounds like a cinematic soundtrack mixed with post-rock. Sometimes I'm using help of various vocalists, mostly female," he explains.

The name of the album is self-titled, 'Blurry Lights', because it has completed B.M.'s vision of this project. "I will, most likely, take a break from creating music. The album consists of 10 songs, it has guest vocal appearance in one of the songs, guitar appearance and I utilized a couple of movie speech samples as well. Every song is meant to be a different story. Some compositions are happy, because people are together, some are sad, because people going through their life alone or having a hard time in their relationship. Whatever is your mood right now, you can definitely find a suitable song for yourself from this album. As always, the sound of the album is very 'warm' and it's all about pure love and romantic feelings," he tells me.



B.M. always records everything at home. "I'm trying to make it sound like studio-quality. I'm doing all mixing and mastering by myself as well. For this album, it took me about 5 months to write it, and I'm completely happy with the result," he smiles. Blurry Lights will certainly have other albums in the future "This is my main project and I don't plan to close it. But I will take a break after this album 'Blurry Lights' 2015, I have plenty of stuff to do in my life right now. Time will tell when I start to write something new! I also have other projects, Skyforest (melancholic metal) and Hiki (post-rock) which had their debuts in 2014 and they are also suspended right now. But as soon as I sort my things out, I will be back again." More info at:

<http://blurrylights.com>
<http://facebook.com/BlurryLights.Official>

If you enjoy progressive rock then lend a year to the rather good album called 'Somewhere Else' from Scotland based band **GARDEN**. The line up for this record is Hannah Bradley - backing vocals, Sam Bradley - bass guitar, lead vocals, tuba, Dan Glover - piano, backing vocals, Chris Grieve - cello, Patrick Jamieson - guitars, backing vocals, Matilda Nordqvist - violin, Cameron Kuronen-Stewart - alto saxophone, Bb clarinet, Greg Thornton - backing vocals and Jack Webb - alto saxophone vocals. It should be noted Garden is really not a full on 10-piece group.

Sam came to music relatively late, taking up the euphonium at high school. "I soon began learning bass in order to play music I was more interested in, being initially inspired by the bass playing in bands like Red Hot Chili Peppers and Rage Against the Machine. Later I was introduced to metal and prog and the rest is history, really! I currently study composition alongside Philosophy at the University of Glasgow," he tells me.

Although Sam's listening preferences are more Randy Newman than Dream Theater, his most direct song writing influences have definitely come from prog rock and metal, like Yes, Jethro Tull, Kamelot, Blind Guardian etc. "The songs on 'Somewhere Else' were all written at different times though and display a breadth of influence from the thoroughly symphonic metal-oriented 'Overture for the Divided' to the various folksy passages throughout the record," he adds.



Garden is in the awkward position of aspiring to some sort of art rock maturity while indulging in pulpy power metal and prog excess... "At the very least our music features an uncommon line-up including piano, strings and woodwind alongside the standard rock line-up, which function as principal parts rather than as a shiny backdrop," explains Sam.

The album was made up of relatively old material, the songs having been mostly written years before rehearsals began in early 2013. "The songs were heavily rewritten and re-arranged, and the result is

a sort of incomplete concept album, whose themes neatly mirror the process of composition, mainly focussing on reflection and distance, to put it vaguely."

The album was completely self-recorded in Sam's old bedroom at his parents' house in Edinburgh, in between its new function as his dad's office. "In retrospect the process was pretty straight-forward. I wrote and rewrote from summer 2012 till the new year (before the self-titled debut EP was even released), the band rehearsed sporadically until Summer 2013 and then recorded almost everything in a few weeks in July. Various odds and ends were then recorded and I eventually decided to mix and master it myself (which turned out just about okay) and it was digitally released in September, making it less than a year since the release of the debut," he tells me.

Garden are currently writing new material for a third EP, which Sam says is going well. "The songs are more focused and the arrangements more economic. It should hopefully be recorded and released Autumn-ish, if that isn't too optimistic of me! Plans to form a performing group and start gigging broke down over the summer of 2014 so the likelihood is that Garden will remain a studio project for the foreseeable future, but anything's possible." More info at:

www.garden.bandcamp.com
www.facebook.com/gardenprog
www.twitter.com/gardenedin



'Vaudeville' is the new album from artsy progressive rock band **VINYL FLOOR** who are from Denmark and album that may need multiple spins to fully appreciate, you need to sit with it and live with it for a while and in turn a truly excellent album evolves. The band is: Thomas Charlie Pedersen, Rasmus Bruun, Daniel Pedersen.

Charlie has always had something to do with music. They all began playing instruments as kids and as soon as they learned the basics they turned everything into their own song ideas. "For instance, when I learned my first two chords at the age of, like, 13, I turned them into a song before I learned a third chord which made me able to play cover songs. Therefore, song writing has always been a part of our DNA. In 2007 we took the name 'Vinyl Floor' with the aim to release albums ourselves. It's always been very important for us to maintain a 100% artistic control. This also applies to artwork and how we manage our company (Karmanian Records). It's a lot of hard work sometimes but we feel there's a constantly growing number of listeners out there. And that's also what keeps us motivated," says Charlie.

Charlie has always been influenced by different genres and artists. "We listen to rock and we listen to singer/songwriters. We even listen to classical music. We wish to put all these musical styles into a giant melting pot and see what comes out of it. The motto of the band could easily be 'do what is not expected'. I think that is what keeps us interested. We always take it as far as we think we can. For the 'Vaudeville' album, we wanted to do something a bit more straightforward than its predecessor which was a concept album. 'Vaudeville' also features conceptual ideas but perhaps in a less complex way. We knew right away that the songs would be pretty dark this time, very personal and therapeutic. I think that, in an effort to kind of distance ourselves from the songs a little, we began talking about all these characters which the songs could represent. We imagined those characters being protagonists in this ancient Vaudeville show where there's a lot of singing, acting and playing in different musical styles. To sum it up, we put a lot of ourselves into these characters but they have sort of created a world of their own. Add to this, there's a somewhat dark and mystic spirit to this long-forgotten travelling show. We really liked that," he tells me.

Vinyl Floor are two brothers and a neighbour growing up together in the countryside north of

Copenhagen. 'This is our story. Daniel is my younger brother and we have known Rasmus since 1994. We are very good friends and I think that is what adds to our mutual understanding. Of course we can discuss, heck, even fight a little sometimes, but we do respect each other's opinions and we always get back on track. I think our alternative rock with symphonic elements and a sort of British tone if you like, and the fact that we are all songwriters in the band, makes us stand out. Add to this, our songs may be very complex and simple at the same time and I believe we have our own sound. I honestly don't think we sound like anybody else. We may not be the best players around but we have a natural approach to melody, song dynamics and structures. Also, I often find that we are not afraid to think 'big' in terms of song writing and I believe our sometimes pompous arrangements often take us in new directions. If the song works the arrangement will probably work too. I think it's really all about trusting your basic song idea and allowing the song to go wherever it wants to go. You can't control it too much once you've written it.'



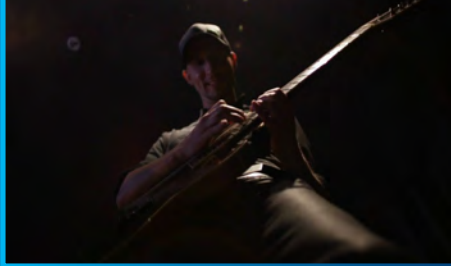
With 'Vaudeville' Charlie personally wanted to expand the palette as much as they could. 'I don't mean in terms of arrangement and instrumentation where there's still a lot of unknown territory to explore, but simply in terms of how many different songs you should include on the same album. I think it works but I'm also aware that some probably prefer a more homogeneous, stylish direction on an album. It's probably a lot to take in at once but I do think that it's also what is rewarding in the end. I believe that the more you want your music not to get labelled, the easier it is to get misunderstood by some. I am very happy with this album and the response we've had, but I also think we've been misunderstood by some people. I guess this is a risk you just have to take. We've been associated with bands we don't even listen to and some have even compared us to musicals and stuff. I don't mind musicals at all but I personally think we sound more like the 70's progressive rock than the Beauty and the Beast. I'm not criticizing anybody here, again, this is a risk we need to take. An example: there's a song called 'The Abyss' which is a sea shanty of sorts. We knew it would be an odd thing to do. We were just having fun and not taking ourselves too seriously. I'm sure it confused some people though,' he laughs.

The band produced the album themselves. 'We turned our rehearsal space into a recording studio. We recorded our second album in Sweden and wanted to do something different this time around. We didn't really rehearse the songs in advance we just brought in our songs, arranged them and recorded them one by one. We did this on and off for about 11 months. Yes, that is a long time, but we also did a lot of arranging and sonic experimentation in between. It was mostly fun not knowing when it would stop and what the outcome would be. Also a bit terrifying, it was. The songs came together in many different ways. Some were brought in complete with melody, lyrics and all. Some songs had additional parts written while recording. Some songs were pieced together by different ideas we had individually. 'Colorblind' is an example. That one was pieced together by something Rasmus had and something different I had. It just suddenly fit together. 'Fallen Leaves' is Daniel combining parts from two different songs he had. He took the verse from one song and added the chorus from another and then we had this song.'

The guys have already begun working on new songs. 'We have gotten together one or two times and have worked on at least 3 new songs. The next couple of weeks we are going to work on some more demo material. So I guess that our next effort, whatever it will be, will probably be a bit more rehearsed and arranged before we record anything. Not as loose as 'Vaudeville' I'm really excited about the stuff we have so far. I don't know when we will record again and we have a few shows to play this spring. We will probably play more shows later this year and when the time is right, we will start recording again,' concludes Charlie. Check them out: www.vinylfloor.dk

Worth checking out is the superb new album 'InstruMetals From Outerspace' from USA

PROTOSHREDANOID



progressive/instrumental band **PROTOSHREDANOID**. Jason Willey - guitars, synths, programming, sound design, composition and production and Matt Willey - acoustic drums. Jason believes that their interests and talents choose us. "If I had anything to do with it I'd have to say it was a combination of things that got me involved in music," he tells me. Seeing his Dad play guitar when Jason was growing up probably had the biggest impact on him. "He would play bluesy stuff and play riffs from 'Iron Man' and 'Smoke on the Water' and I just thought it was the coolest thing ever. It was amazing to me that he could just hear something and immediately play it back note for note. I was mesmerized. When I was 7 I gathered up the courage, picked up the guitar and tried to play the same riffs. Something about the guitar just felt so right to me. I remember the first riff I played was the intro from Ray Charles 'What'd I Say'. He also played a lot of records - Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, Nugent, Deep Purple, Hendrix as well as Funk and R&B. I remember one song 'D.O.A.' by Bloodrock used to scare me to death and give me nightmares, but I'd still beg my Dad to play that record because it was so powerfully addicting. That song intrigued me made me realize how powerful music can be," he tells me.

Other things that played an influential role when Jason was a kid would be the music from the video games he played. "My first telescope I received when I was 7 and a Casio keyboard where I could record and sample sounds. I went nuts with all of those things and they helped shape my future with music," he adds. When it comes to inspirations and influences, there are many. "I have always felt a weird connection to the physics of sound and music being vibrating energy. When I realized everything in existence is just vibrating energy at its most fundamental level, it made music and sound that much more powerful and ultimate to me.



At 14, Jason heard Joe Satriani for the first time. "His guitar playing blew my mind and changed me from playing a few hours a week to practicing for eight hours a day. I had a new respect for the instrument and became an absolute guitar fanatic. Around that same time, I got into my first band with someone who ended up becoming my best friend. He was a super smart and artistic dude who really got me into writing and recording. He also introduced me to the Shrapnel guys - Jason Becker, Friedman, MacAlpine, Vinnie Moore, Greg Howe - and that was like the Holy Grail for me. When I was at the Berklee College of Music I studied with a bunch of amazing teachers and expanded my musical palette by getting into jazz and classical music. Also, all of the amazingly talented people I have worked with in my time at Activision and Riot Games have influenced and inspired me in many ways," he says.

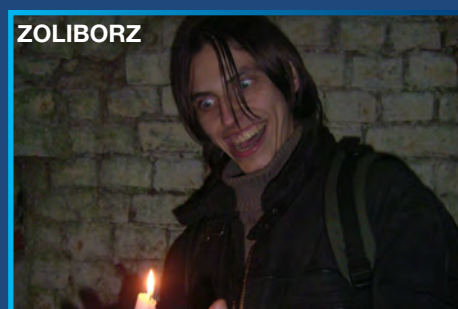
ProtoShredanoid is basically an alter ego pseudonym for Jason that came from his fascination of music, guitar and our universe. "My brother Matt plays the drums and I do everything else from writing the music to performing the guitars, programming synths, sound design, mixing, all that jazz etc.... I believe the feeling and the atmosphere of the music is what sets ProtoShredanoid apart from other artists. Sure there are plenty of crazy guitar techniques, technical bits, odd time signatures and weird harmonies that musicians and guitar players can nerd out on, but I feel there is a unique balance of technique with emotion and sonic atmosphere. It's tricky - too much technique can scare people away, and too much ambience can be boring. Hopefully, ProtoShredanoid is the perfect mix. There is also a

strong sense of imagery with each song. When a listener hears a track like 'Amethystine', I hope they envision being in a cave on a distant alien ice moon, surrounded by gelatinous purple sentient organic matter or picture themselves floating aimlessly into the sun when listening to 'Adrift'," he says.

'InstruMetals From Outer Space' is a reflection of Jason's thoughts and visions of our universe - past, present and future - expressed through the guitar. "If you like music, crazy guitar, outer space or any combination of those three you might dig the album. Musically, it ranges from progressive metal to atmospheric alien soundscapes, keeping all kinds of guitars and space synths as common elements throughout. I believe each track stands on its own, but when listened from start to finish a musical journey filled with riddles becomes more apparent. It's available in most digital music stores and streaming services with physical copies available through Amazon on demand," he explains. Jason hopes this album can be seen as an inspiration to any young musicians out there thinking that they need all of this crazy, expensive gear or a fancy studio to record the music they hear in their head. "While all of that is nice and extremely helpful, it is not completely necessary. Dedication and practice can go a long way."

Jason recorded and produced the album in his home studio which moved from New York (2011-2012) to Santa Monica California (2013-2014). The acoustic drums were actually recorded by his brother Matt in his parents' basement. "The entire process took place in nearly all of my free time over the last 4 years. There were a few setbacks and big life events that prolonged the release of the album, but then it wouldn't be what it is today without those experiences. I could do without the hard drive crashes and a few other things, but moving across the US and switching jobs from Audio Designer at Activision in New York to Composer at Riot Games in California has been amazing and has helped me grow as an artist," he adds.

There are many things on the horizon for Jason. He is currently writing material and recording demos for a new InstruMetals-type album while at the same time mixing an album of more atmospheric, spacey guitar stuff similar to the tracks 'Adrift' and 'Moonbeam' from the InstruMetals From Outer Space album. "I will continue to pursue my vision of mastery on my instrument and hone my mixing and sound design skills. I would like to get back in to teaching guitar lessons through Skype again and do more collaborative projects like the stuff I did with the band Pentakill. There are also a bunch of things in the early stages of development like new features on the website and a Metroid-Vania style side-scroller ProtoShredanoid video game," he says. More info at: www.protoshredanoid.com



'Poincare Conjecture' is the new superb album from Russian power metal/progressive band **ZOLIBORZ**. The band are Alexander Razhev - song writing, guitars, Vitaly Mimoladov - song writing, guitars. Guests: Gabriele Grilli - vocals, Jacco de Wijs - vocals, Andrew Ischenko - drums and Olga Egorova - mandolin. Irregular line-up: Nikolai Poliakov - song writing, Olexandr Ovchinnikov - song writing, guitars, piano, Vladimir Osadchij - song writing.

It was in the beginning of 00's when Vitaly noticed that music was inspiring him too much. "I remember the moment when I was listening to Iron Maiden's 'Seventh Son of a Seventh Son' song (its solos parts in the end of the song) and felt the creeps walking over my nape. I just thought that I definitely would have to explore the nature of metal from the inside and 2 months later bought the electric guitar. Then I started playing riffs and got acquainted with the other guys who interested in the same," he tells me.

Vitaly gets his inspirations from progressive death metal bands like Hieronymus Bosch, Carcariass,

Gorod. "The structure of their songs, musical ideas are just incredible. Also I like to listen to avant-garde metal (for example, Fury N Grace) and hope to develop my songwriter's thought in this direction. But if we say about inspirations behind the album it's a different story 'cause all the songs from the album had been composed in the old years (in period from 2001 to 2006) by me and other friends. On that time I mostly listened to Death. Alexander Razhev (who composed for this EP not less than me) mostly listened to At the Gates," he adds.

Vitaly has had an experience of playing of music with different friends and acquaintances and it was not a kind of band but was just a jamming. "Since these old times I had accumulated some material which up to this year was already forgotten by my friends but not by me. I decided to unite the best ideas of this very old groundwork and to start band's discography from this very simple but diverse material. Some of my mates were really surprised to hear this music 10 years on... But truth to be told some of them couldn't remember exact riffs... So I can say that currently Zoliborz is a one-man band yet but already with the history of collaboration with other musicians," he explains.

The songs were initially supposed to have screaming vocal but then 10 years after Vitaly decided to try a clean powerful voice despite the melodic-death base (if we take 'Roland Garros 2048'), and decided to apply lyrics which have nothing common with metal music, and the same thing about artworks. "To fulfil this aim I asked to help me with my ideas my favourite metal singer Gabriele Grilli (Doomsword, Fury N Grace) whose voice you may hear in the first song of the album and then asked Jacco De Wijs (Conorach) to help me with the second song. Other songs of the EP are a plain chaos of segmental ideas of different people. Only the end of EP returns listener to exact form where mostly sound ideas of Olexandr Ovchinnikov (my Ukrainian mate from Tessarat band)," he adds.

Vitaly felt that he was unable to do any music anymore without having all the old material released. "It was a real burden. And once I decided to start. It was in March 2014. I had only to record clean signal of guitars and to form a budget for the rest instruments. Besides the vocalists three other people were involved in process: session drummer Andrew Ischenko (Hieronymus Bosch, Arkona), mandolin-girl Olga Egorova with her gift-composition 'The Secret of Life' and the former mate Olexandr Ovchinnikov with his old composition (dated with 2001 year) 'The Call of the Polar Star' which definitely deserved to be fixed. Mixing and mastering took place at Diana Studio (Varese, Italy). Up to October 2014 it was all done. If you ask about production - as you understand conception is completely mine."

Fortunately Vitaly has a fund of material enough for the whole LP (music accumulated in period of last 8 years but not 14 years like it was before the recording of EP). "This newer material is much more developed and strong. Now it's the question of right realization of its potential and I have to make a lot of improvements relatively to EP (sound, technique of playing). Regarding line-up I'm sure I'll form the band for live gigs when LP is released. It should be the best base for the start of live activities." More info at

<https://zoliborz.bandcamp.com>
www.facebook.com/zoliborz.band
<http://zoliborzband.wix.com/zoliborz>



French band **SUNSHADOWS** have a new CD out called 'Red Herring'. The band are Regis Morin : Guitar

and Vocals, David Jay - Bass and Backing Vocals and Matthieu Budin - Drum and Samples. The starting point for everyone in Sunshadows is a true love of music. "That's the same old story first, you try to copy your personal heroes and then you start playing your own music. Then comes a time to find the partners that can allow you to get bigger and give you access to a level when art meets industry; and then you step into the music business. Yet, in Sunshadows, we don't forget why we became involved in such a crazy world to give and share emotion! For some it's painting or sculpture. For us, it's rock n'roll," says Regis.

Regis tells me that he thinks that the band's music is a melting pot of different trends. "For Sunshadows, inspiration comes from metal bands from the 90's but also New Wave stuff from the 80's or Trip Hop influences. So if you need names, let's say we enjoy music from Deftones, RATM or Limp Bizkit to Depeche Mode or Massive Attack. Yet, our inspiration is not limited to music. To make a good song, you need a trigger event! And we get inspired by our personal experiences. Once again, it's a matter of emotion, thrill and drive ; what everyone of us can feel deep inside sadness, joy, happiness, wrath, jealousy, love, pressure, loneliness...that's what our first album 'Red Herring' is made of," he says.

Sunshadows is a power trio. Regis is the singer and guitar player. Dej is the bass player and does some backing vocals too. Matthieu is the drummer and he also controls the samples and the electro parts of the band's music. "Now what makes us different? We love fish - the title of our album 'Red Herring' proves it! - And we are French that's a big difference isn't it? (lol). Is there a French touch of Rock Metal? I don't know! In fact, we don't belong to a specific style and that is the idea behind the cover of Red Herring. It's a red herring! We wanted to break the codes of rock and metal no skull, no bones or other explicit references to the genre. It's not that we don't like or respect the persons who are into it we love metal! But that's not what we are. And we don't want to lie about what we are."



The CD will surprise you by the variety of musical and emotional shades you will experience. "It's all about big guitar riffs, a pinch of electro sounds and a cool attitude with a massive and modern sound...A shot in the arm for rock lovers, man. OK, you buy it, now," he laughs. Sunshadows recorded 'Red Herring' in Grenoble, in the South East of France. "It's produced by Eddy Dorigny from Fromtape Records. I did the song writing with Dej and it took us maybe one year to write all the songs. Matthieu joined us for the recording. What was too long for us was the waiting between the end of the recording and mixing process and the release of Red Herring (the 18th of May, worldwide). But you know, business is business. We are just musicians and impatient people," Regis tells me.

For the future the band will continue to promote, plug and play the album live wherever they can. "So we hope to see you soon! Listen to Red Herring and come to see Sunshadows on stage." More info

<http://sunshadows.fr>
www.facebook.com/sunshadows.fr?fref=ts
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnQgMYrNzjg&list=PLWTTBXHABoxv2glA7rxTb2vp0034kh1f

French metal band **LAST AVENUE** have a new album out called 'Integration Protocol'. The band are Dej (vocals / guitar), Will (guitar), Elie (bass guitar), DDA (drums), Flo (samples, programmation). It all started when they were kids. DDA had known Dej for quite a while, as well as his brother Flo. "Dej was with me at school. But we actually became friends at the music school where we played in a jazz band. Dej met Will and Elie on his own, they had a band back then doing something in between pop and punk rock. I replaced their drummer and something good happened. We played together for a while. When we were teenagers music was the best option if you didn't want to be bored to death where we lived. And it kept growing on us. Unfortunately we had to split because of our daily jobs and personal projects. A few years later, Dej and Elie created Last Avenue. They wanted to do their best with this band. It really started in 2009 when Will came in. Flo joined them later that year,



adding electronic textures and atmospheres. He was involved in the project because he was often hanging out with his brother. The sound of the band was slowly morphing into what it is now. I replaced their drummer for one gig in 2010, and became a permanent member a few months later, happy to be back with friends I've known for a while and lost contact with," says DDA.

The band listen to a lot of artists, and they don't crave the same kind of music, it goes from Giorgio Moroder to Slipknot. "So my answer probably doesn't match those of my friends. Our backgrounds are very different. What we do is labelled industrial metal, and that's what we end up doing blending what we like, and we like what's got clean vocals, energy and power. I know Dej and Flo share a taste for the "French touch" era of electronic music, represented by Daft Punk, Martin Solveig... Dej also listened to a lot of afro-American music of the 70's and loves US Rock bands like Stone Sour, Foo Fighters and many more. I grew up in the 90's, and that means new-metal with bands like Korn or Linkin Park, industrial metal with bands like Rammstein or Oomph!... I personally crave progressive metal and what some call djent now, I guess it has something to do with me being a drummer. In the end, we work our tracks again and again until we all feel good about them, which means our demos can be altered a lot before we settle for something. Our goal for our music is to keep things as simple as possible, it's direct and compact. Even if a lot of different inspirations are involved, we want to keep things under control."



The band are focused on the contrast between organic and digital life. "That's the core of our music, our lyrics and also our visuals on stage. We add electronic sounds into a rock/metal band, and we keep our vocals clean with a few screams along the way contrasting with cold computer generated vocals. The man and the machine playing music together. The interesting thing is that rock and metal existed long before internet was even out there. Technology is changing everything, computers are great tools we use on a daily basis because it's efficient, and it's fast and easy. The way we feel about electronic music and digital music production in general is that it brings sounds we never heard before with amazing clarity in the low and top end, but at the same time lacks the energy you get from a band. Once Flo came in with samples and synths, technology enslaved us, like machines can enslave us all in a way, keeping the tempo and triggering effects. In the end, we use and like technology, even to a point that one could call addiction, but we enjoy even more meeting people for real at a show or a bar, and that's what we want our music to sound like," DDA explains.

'Integration Protocol' is the band second album, released on February 2015. "We wanted to do the blend between electronica and rock/metal as integrated as possible, and the title "Integration Protocol" partly means that. It's also a way to thank our friends Roman Rouzine and Devy Diadema, two guests we were very happy to have on this album. Both took time from their bands (The Tria and The Mars Chronicles) for us, and that's really cool. They play a guitar solo on 2 of the 12 tracks of the album; they really match the mood and groove of our music adding their skills and musicality to those tracks. Even in 2015, shred is not a crime! The album is made of rather short tracks, to the point, with a fat and rich tone, hard hitting drums and clean vocals for the most part. An integration of the melody is the other thing, and that's all you get," says DDA.

The first album was released exactly one year before "Integration Protocol", in February 2014, it

was produced at home and the final product was ready before the band got a deal with their label Tinplho Records. "Actually, we got the deal because the product was ready; the label liked what we had done. This year release is a great step forward for us, it's the first album we wrote and recorded with the help of a record label. That said, it didn't change the way we work, but we had access to world class equipment and engineers, and that's a difference you can hear! We gathered material on demo for about 6 months and started recording in summer 2014 at Marmelade Production, with cool people and gear. Then all the tracks were mixed by Christian Carvin at All Production on a classic analog console. I think it helped a lot for the electronic sounds to feel right next to a wall of guitars and heavy drums. He took care of the mastering too. It was great to meet someone who perfectly understood what we had in mind and got it right straight away, obviously we kept in touch. Then we had to do the artwork and press the physical copies and that was it, a year of hard work put into shape."

The band are currently preparing a French tour, starting this September. "Dates and places are to be announced rather soon. I can't be more specific right now, everything isn't ready yet for public announcement, but we'll be playing in places up north, close to England. We'd love to do gigs outside our country, but that's still work in progress. We also work hard on stuff to put online, that probably will be available when this interview is published, so be sure to check out our youtube page. And I hope all this leads us to meet more and more people who enjoy music as we do." More info at

www.lastavenue.fr
www.facebook.com/Lastavenueofficial
www.youtube.com/LastAvenueOfficiel

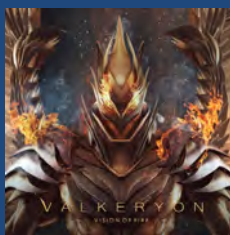


Power metal band **VALKERYON** from Panama have a new album worth checking out called 'Vision Of Fire'. The band are: Rubens - Vocals, Alpha Prime - Keyboards, Anthony Malcolm - Drums, José Chang - Guitars and Daniel De León - Bass. Music seems to be a birth talent for all the band members. "After that, it was just a matter of being perseverant in doing what our team-soul desired, and being at the right time and place with the right people," explains Rubens. As many of the greatest bands, they were all friends who liked to play together some cover songs from our favourite musicians at a home garage. "Little by little we got into composing our own songs, until we decided to take it seriously and complete an album. It is impossible to venture on an album recording without the right team. In our case, this is a team built from the beginning with a vision of constant improvement, with carefully selected members and carefully guided to what it is today," he tells me.

Valkeryon have many bands as examples to follow on their level of quality, composition and execution. "Musically, our inspiration starts from our tropical music influence, which is there since our youth. Decades such as the 80's and 90 have provided us with a range of excellent music, from video games and from classical 80's rock, to the more powerful 90's Power Metal. After this it was a matter of time to be able to get access to less popular, but excellent genres of, music such as progressive rock, classical orchestral music, opera and jazz. This mix of styles is what you'll find on our music which makes it a very entertaining one. In addition to this, we may say we inspire ourselves on our achievements; sometimes just baby steps which little by little make us go up this crazy musical ladder," he tells me.

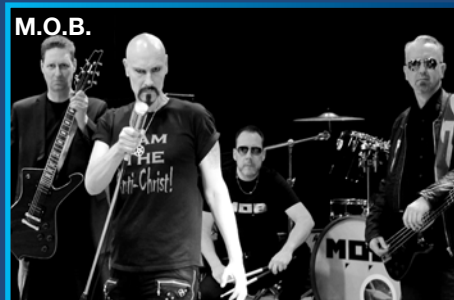
Normally, known power metal bands are born and made in heavily power metal influenced countries. "Since our country's main musical influence is far away from the rock genre, growing as power metal musicians here is always an uphill battle, like trying

to win the world cup and being part of a country in Oceania, a continent that only have 1 qualification slot to the world cup, if any. So it has been a challenge in every step of the way, pushing the boundaries around us, which makes every victory even more meaningful. It is crazy to go against the tide, but at the end, hard work always pays in some way," he smiles."



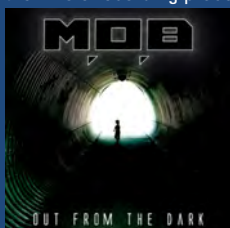
This is the band's first album. "Our first victory. 10 songs, 5 arrangers, 3 composers, 2 lyricists, 1 general idea: Let's make good music. That's all we care about. By good we mean music as it is understood by its meaning, and lyrics written to deliver uplifting messages or stories: topics ranging from regular people accounts to sci-fi themes. Vision of Fire is just about crystallizing our ideas, making real our fire within, putting our souls into music. We have already received good comments of the album being different, and not easily identified as similar to other bands. Hopefully enough people will enjoy it as much as we did while producing this album. We have frequently received requests for our album from Japan, UK and here in Panama. It has been wonderful, a great surprise, like winning the lottery," beams Rubens.

The album was recorded in Panama City, Panama, at their own studio, and mixed by Piso 3 Studio, and the master was also done by the band. "It was fully produced by the whole band. The whole process took about 3 years since most of us didn't know anything about composition, writing, recording, mixing or mastering. We had to study in depth all these processes, studies that resulted, for example, in our own designed vocal booth for recording," he concludes. More info at: www.valkeryon.com



Sweden's **M.O.B.** have a rather good album out now called 'Out From The Dark' that you should enjoy if you are a fan of hard rock and power metal. The band are Fredrik Notling (lead vocals), Richard Averdahl (drums), Peter Gustafsson (guitars/backing vocals) and Leif Eriksson (bass/backing vocals). Fredrik has been writing and performing music since he was a kid, and after playing in different outfits, all the band members got together in as M.O.B in the early 90s and they have been at it ever since. The guys have a lot of different sources of inspiration within the band but some common ground contains bands such as Black Sabbath, Kiss, Judas Priest, Ozzy solo, Cheap Trick, Dio and lots more. "The inspiration behind our latest album "Out From The Dark" is purely life itself in many ways, at least lyrically," he tells me. M.O.B has been around for a while and their music leans toward the classic hard rock/metal of the 70s and 80s, lots of melody and heart but not without edge and attitude. "I'm not sure what it is that separates us very much from other bands, we just do what we feel is our thing and put a lot of honesty and dedication into it, its rock n roll straight from the heart I guess," says Fredrik.

The band started to write songs for this album around the late fall of 2010 but in February of 2011 Fredrik was diagnosed with throat cancer. "Of course, the whole recording process then was halted. During



the following 2 years as I underwent and slowly got my strength back from surgeries, chemo and radiation treatments, a lot of the songs/lyrics were written and I guess the whole cancer adventure certainly put its mark on the album,

especially regarding the lyrics of course, writing is the best form of therapy. In the summer of 2013 we were finally able to go into the studio again and in April of 2014, "Out From The Dark" was finished," he says with pride.

M.O.B. recorded the album in their own recording studio and the actual recording/mixing/mastering process took about 9 months. "It was produced by myself and Peter Gustafsson and was mixed by Fredrik Folkare (from Unleashed)," he explains. Right now M.O.B are trying to perform live as much as possible and they have landed a couple of nice festival gigs this summer as we will perform at Sweden Rock Festival and Väsby Rock Festival in Sweden. "After the summer, it's time to start our next album adventure by writing new songs for 3 or 4 months and then hopefully we will start to record again in early 2016." Check them out at:

<http://mobrockz.com>
www.facebook.com/mobtheband
www.reverbnation.com/mobtheband
www.youtube.com/user/frednot/



CASVADELL have a new album out called 'Bull By The Horns' that is worth checking out. The band are: Casey Lowery - Vocals, Davin Burson - Lead Guitar, Ruark - Guitar, John Webb - Bass, & Josh Dumas - Drums and they come from the parts of El Dorado and Arkansas in the US. Davin's dad was always heavily involved in music. He owned a record store when Davin was growing up. Davin was exposed to just about every genre of music there is. His dad was also in a band. "When I was little I would take naps in their kick drum while they were practicing. They would play until the wee hours of the morning. I like to think that is where I get my sense of rhythm," he tells me.

Davin's father is his biggest influence. Living in the South, most people listen to Southern Rock such as Lynyrd Skynyrd, Molly Hatchet and etc. "Southern Rock naturally has a big influence on my playing. As I got into my teens, I started listening to Jimi Hendrix and Van Halen. As my musical tastes changed the doors to new styles and techniques became a part my playing. The inspiration behind the album is all over the map. Bull By the Horns draws inspiration from Southern rock to Southern California Nardcore along with all the guitar greats from bands like ZZ Top to modern rockers like the Foo Fighters," he explains.

Casvadell is a five piece band. Casey Lowery is the vocalist, Josh Dumas is on drums, John Webb is on bass, and Ruark and Davin plays guitar. "Casvadell is different because we will probably never fit solely in one genre. Between all five of us, there are many different styles and influences. We don't put limits on what we write. The music on "Bull By The Horns" has a variety of styles that shine through. We strive at making each song sound unique."

The CD is Casvadell's second release after 'Our Way'. Both albums are available to download for free. 'Bull By the Horn's' is shorter than 'Our Way'. "We wanted to focus more on quality rather than quantity this time around. One of our main parameters for Bull

By the Horns was to keep the music fresh, lively and happening. We had previously explored punk rock and focused on ballads a little heavily on 'Our Way'. We thought hard about how the new album would come across live. We wanted it to be balls to the wall—something that a light show, smoke machines and maybe even explosions or two would be fitting for. Ruark mentioned he thinks the lyrics and vibe of 'Bull By the Horns' is like the TV show Supernatural turned into rock songs,' Davin explains.

The CD was recorded in Davin's home studio with very minimal gear. "The music and some of the lyrics were written by myself and produced and engineered by Ruark. Casey wrote the bulk of the lyrics. The lion's share of the music was written and recorded throughout 2014. A couple of tracks were started here and there over the years prior, but for the most part the album took about eight months," he adds.

The future for Casvadell is to play shows and have a great time promoting the album. "We intend to play out regionally at first then tour further out during the summer." More info at:

<https://casvadell.bandcamp.com/track/baptism-by-fire>
<https://soundcloud.com/casvadell/03-baptism-by-fire>



French metal band **HARMORAGE** have a new CD out called 'Psychico Corrosif'. The band are: Vocals - Daniel Chalon, Guitar - Nicolas Chalon, Bass - Frédéric Fiaschi, Drums - Bertrand Minary. Since Daniel was a kid, he heard all the rock music that his parents were listening to. "But I think the first time heavy music has caught my attention is when I was a teenager. Like all young people I was asking myself a lot of questions and wanted to follow my own rules. When I heard the first album of 'Rage Against The Machine' and many times later the album 'Beat the Bastards' from The Exploited, I meant: 'Wow! Can we say that? Really?'. I discovered other points of view on actual world. I remember, I was beginning to think from myself and I felt free. After that, I began to write some things and I wanted to say it to the world. The room next to me my brother was playing guitar, and I was like hypnotized by his riffs. Harmorage was born," he tells me.

The band are inspired by things going from the complexity of Finnish death metal like Children of Bodom to American heavy stuffs like Black Label Society. "Of course, trash bands like Slayer or Kreator influenced us a lot as well as Motörhead or The Exploited's punk-rock music. Another source of inspiration is the local French hardcore scene with bands like Lofofora or Black Bomb A. Our goal in Harmorage is to get a well balanced mix of trash metal, punk, hardcore with raw French vocals on it. An efficient and powerful music with a part of technicality and complexity. On the 'Psychico Corrosif' album we wanted to be totally free. We tried to go deeper in our trash music and allowing us to add other things we love in music. That's why we can hear some inspirations from Van Halen's Hard Rock or Pink Floyd's ambient parts for example," he says.

Harmorage is a French metal band with a hoarse and raw French singing. The band's name is the mix of 'harmony' and 'rage', and it's the guideline of their music. "Our sound takes its root in trash and heavy, with some inspirations from punk hardcore, industrial metal or the power of rock'n'roll. For the lyrics we talk about human and the individual. We try to explore feelings going from the corrosive part of doubt and introspection to the wildness of anger. These themes are served by expressive and full of distortion riffs as well as ambiances and musical colors. Musicality is always between melody and dissonance. I think all these different things make our music different and maybe unique," explains Daniel.

Nowadays society is build around structures and mainly influenced by television, leading some people to fear of everything. On this album the band choose to explore two aspects. "The first one is the impact the society has on individuals, and the second one is people's reaction that these feelings can lead on. We make observations about that and give another

point of view on it, another way to live in this world without rejecting all, and without making the apology of chaos. Life is too short to spend time being afraid of it. About the music itself, we took a global approach. We wanted to have continuity all along the album in the songs and the lyrics, so that the album can be easily listened from the beginning to the end. Despite this global approach, we wanted each song to get its own personality and get its own ambiance. As a result, this album goes from speed riffs to powerful rhythms and from frozen ambiances to deeply dark musical colours," he explains.

For this album, the band decided to make it in a full 'do it yourself' way. "We wanted to control all the different steps from the conception to the realization. We also wanted time not to be a problem, so we built our own recording studio. It gives us the ability to try things during the recording process. Once all tracks recorded, Franck Graziano, a really good friend of us mixed it and the mastering has been done by 'Neemis Mastering' in Lyon. We wanted to work only with people who felt involved in the project. We are really proud of it. I think this kind of approach could be the future of music. One word: freedom, one philosophy: do it yourself! That's our understanding of the rock and roll spirit."

For the future the band will carry on promoting the album. "We are also booking gigs to share this album on stage. For us it's very important to play our music live. That's where the music takes place and, moreover, all that feelings on stage and the communion with the audience is one of the main reasons why we play metal music." More info at

<https://fr-fr.facebook.com/harmorage>
<http://www.harmorage.com/>



From Scotland come **VANTAGE POINT** who have a new album out called 'Demonic Dinner Dance' that fans of power metal will enjoy. The band are Bass & Vocals - Murray Graham, Lead Guitar - Liam Kane, Rhythm Guitar & Backing Vocals - James Mitchell and Drums - David Cumming. Like most musicians it was a love of music that turned into a passion and wanting to play it and create it. The band each came about it by different pivotal pieces of music and moved through playing in bands until Vantage Point came together, over ten years of gigging and recording later and they are still enjoying it.

The latest album, which is the bands third, is probably the one that is uniquely theirs Maiden/Priest influences were pretty evident on the debut album, Daredevil on the Shore. "While a bit more of the thrash stuff, musically at least, came out on the follow-up, Tomb of the Eagles. But we feel with the current CD, Demonic Dinner Dance we have achieved more of our own identity," says James.

The actual album came from a dinner party where each of the characters were given a song to depict them, with other passages of music uniting them altogether. "For which we think we did a pretty good job in coming up with songs that can be listened together in a coherent piece of music, or can be removed from the album and enjoyed as individual songs," he tells me.

The band never set out to be different or alike to other bands. "We are pretty much a traditional drums/bass/guitar/vocals hard rock / metal band whom try to write the best songs we possibly can. Then when performing them live try to be as entertaining as possible. In the end it all comes back to the songs and whether you want to listen to them time and again or skip to the next band, and we are hoping some people feel the former about our stuff," explains James.

The album in the main was recorded at Split Level Studios, Ingliston, Edinburgh. "We recorded 15 tracks there with the other two that complete the album having previously been done at Electric Studios, Penicuik. Those were High Maintenance Girlfriend



& Reverse the Charges, different mixes of which were released on an EP prior to the album going out. We remixed those songs at Split level for inclusion on the album," he says. This was their third album working with Neil McNaught at Split Level Studios; he produced it with James and Murray overseeing the mixing process with him. "Recording was started in March 2012 and the final mix was ready in March 2014 for the release in June. Though it was over a long period, the whole process probably took less than a month, but unfortunately not being fulltime musicians 9 to 5 living provided constraints, as did booking studio time."

Vantage Point are looking to put out their first vinyl release in 2015, it will be a 7" single featuring the track, Tutankhamun. "While we are also working on a new album, Work Work Work, which has 12 songs all written about the joys of the day job. As well as releasing our version of the album then plan is to give the backing tracks to guest singers to write and record their own lyrics, again with a working theme, to give us an alternative companion album. Which will sound the same, yet be slightly different, sort of like another day in the office." More info at:

www.facebook.com/vantagepointrocks

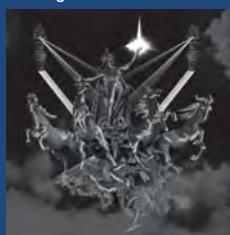


If you are a fan of the heavier side of metal than check out French metal band **PAVILLON ROUGE** who have an interesting new album out called 'Legio Axis Ka', which is the bands second album. The band are Kra Cillag - Vocals, Mu Cephei - Guitar/Vocals, E.Shulgin - Bass, Sorthei - Drums and Mervyn - Guitar/Programming.

When Mervyn was 10 he was already crazy about any kind of music, especially commercial bands of the 80s and early 90s. "But I didn't know anything about Heavy Metal," he tells me. In college Mervyn was with a group of badass guys, wearing leather jackets, ring in the ears and Slayer or Iron Maiden shirts. "I thought 'Iron Maiden' was a t-shirt brand, but a friend of mine told me it was a Heavy Metal band," he says. So Mervyn tried to get friendly with the group of bad boys, because he thought they were cool, and he really wanted to know more about Heavy Metal music. "They made me discover albums like Judas Priest 'Painkiller', Slayer 'Show no mercy', Megadeth 'Rust in Peace', and then Guns N Roses 'Appetite for destruction', which became my favourite album for many years. When I first heard this album, and watched the picture of the band, I was totally astonished, and it changed my life, I wanted to be like these guys, having the same life. I couldn't imagine doing something else actually," he says.

Even is fond of Heavy Metal. His main inspirations come from other kinds of music. "I'm a huge fan of every band from the 80s, in almost every style: synth pop like Depeche Mode, punk rock n roll like Social Distortion, death rock like Skelettal Family, gothic like Siouxsie and the Banshees, and of course glam rock like Guns n Roses or Hanoi Rocks. Besides I listen a lot to industrial metal (Ministry, old Nine Inch Nails), Aggrotech (Combi-christ, Alien Vampires) and of course Black Metal (especially Emperor and Enslaved)," he explains. "For this album, the inspiration mainly comes from a French black metal band called Crystalium, especially for the guitar riffs, but also from the first albums of Muse, for the cosmic atmosphere, and, finally, from Techno bands like Scooter! One could think it's a shitty commercial band, but I work as a fitness teacher, and when I play it in my classes, I feel an incredible energy coming from this powerful beats and catchy punchlines! I wanted to recreate this energy in our album," he adds.

Musically speaking, the band blend together Black Metal riffs and vocals with techno beats and ethereal 80s synths, almost heavy and progressive. "I don't think there are a lot of bands performing this kind of mix. And yet, our music is not a kind of experimental metal. We're not scientists, we are rockers, we want to play kickin ass songs with catchy riffs and great chorus, even if the atmosphere is very important to our eyes," explains Mervyn. "And we are one of the only Black Metal bands worshipping Light. We don't give a shit about all the evil stuff that comes of



Black Metal; we use an extreme kind of music to give a positive message. We're not angry, we're not hateful and we don't pretend to be, contrary to most of the bands in this style, we just enjoy life and all the ecstasies that come with it."

This album is the meeting between Black Metal and 80s music on a cosmic dance floor. "For sure, it's a brand new kind of black metal, in the same time atmospheric, powerful and very catchy. The guitar riffs are inspired by French black metal bands like Crystalium, and the drums part are all electronic. And yet, it's totally apart from Industrial Black Metal Band like Mysticum, Aborym or Black Lodge, mostly because of the cosmic atmosphere, the dance floor rythms and the catchy melodies... Pavillon Rouge doesn't try to perform « sick » or « dark » music, and this album is very far from usual black metal clichés. While most of the Black Metal albums deal with « evilness », « sickness » etc... « Legio Axis Ka »'s main themes are Light, Discipline, Brotherhood, Ecstasy... and one could feel it by listening to these tracks. The lyrics are in French, and use many symbols from Antic Mythology. Most of them deal with the search of light and any kind of ecstasy, which is a specificity of the band," Mervyn explains.

'Legio Axis Ka' was recorded by Arnaud Ménard at the Hiroshima Studio, near Annecy (a small town in the Alpes) "The recording was a great experience, especially for the voices. Arnaud is an old friend of us, he has recorded and mixed our first album 'Solmeth Pervitine' as well, and he often has great ideas. He really likes this kind of electro/extreme metal style, and perfectly knew what was good for the album. The mix was very long, almost 6 months, and after that we had to search for a new label, that's why the album was released so late."

The band are currently working on their next gigs: south of France, Switzerland, and the Paris with Hanzel und Gretyl. "We're also working on new tracks for the next album, which will be much more electronic, in the same time very violent and very danceable! I'm currently searching for a new kind of violence in music, and I hope this next album will be a first step towards this goal. Besides, a video clip for our track "Droge Macht Frei" should be released, we want to make it very original and very powerful. And a couple of remixes of old and new tracks should be released soon, I know that many bands release remixes, but in our case, the remixes will have a real interest." More info at <https://www.facebook.com/LuxDiscipline/>



Norwegian based solo artist **SASSY KRAIMPRI** has a new CD out called 'Cock Fight II'. Her parents and siblings planted the first seeds with The Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Pretenders, Black Sabbath, and then Sassy got the rest through MTV and radio. "We all picked up our instruments pretty early in adolescence and found that music was a great way to release the pressure, and it stuck," she says.

The band all have some similar artists and some really different artists. Dick is a Body Count raised

crust-punk who now loves Clutch and plays in a psychobilly band. Linda is all about Cher and Miley Cyrus but loves Kitty. Sass dug Abbey Road and Michael Jackson as a kid but had her punk revolution at Riot Grrrrs, after which she discovered Kyuss and never looked back. "When we were going in to record we talked a lot to Russ about where to go from The Pussy Magnet EP and The Bronx's live, in your face sound was mentioned a lot. The songs on Cock Fight were all written over a long, dark, Northern winter, when we need both high-energy punk rock, sludgy, down-tuned riffs and a few heart-wrenching melodies to sooth our tortured souls," she adds.

The band performs a strange mix of street punk, catchy melodies and thundering drums. Punk with an R and B twinge? Stoner punk? Black Sabbath on speed with a chick instead of Ozzy? "In Norway we're straddling what the industry considers punk, rock and metal, in England we're considered street punk, and in the US we're compared to John Spencer Blues Explosion and PJ Harvey. I think we definitely have our own thing, and take pride in the fact that people can't quite place us. We've got some amazing new songs for the next album too, hopefully people will keep their ears peeled," he says.



Cock Fight was originally released as a trilogy of EPs, printed on 7" vinyl in a minimum pressing for each. "The feedback has been massive so we're going to release the whole shebang as an album in May, right around when we come over to the UK

to play at Indie Week Europe in Manchester. We'll also be catching Babes in Toyland AND Mudhoney, who both play Manchester that same week! WHAT ARE THE ODDS," she smiles.

The EP was recorded at Parlour Sound Studios, Kettering, England. Two weeks recording and rough mixes, another month final mixes and mastering. Recorded with the fantastic Russ Russell. "We had the bare bones of the songs but weren't as prepared with ideas and some of them didn't even have lyrics until we were in the studio, so a lot of Russ' talents as a producer shine through in the final product here- he really gets us, helped us shape the songs, pack them into a massive sound-scape and highlight what we're best at," she explains.

The band are currently touring. "We're playing some awesome gigs here in Norway before we come to Manchester late May, then we'll play a few festivals over the summer before we head to Spain and Portugal in October. We're also waist-deep in writing the next album, having spent a month at an artist's residence in Berlin last year getting a LOT of great ideas to "tape". We've been jamming non-stop since the New Year and really getting into the groove of things. We've got studio time this summer and are hoping to do a more stripped-back version of our sound- more live- more garagey. We'll be working with a new producer for the first time in five years; will be strange to not be with Russ, but fun to try something new. Planning to release the record in late October- all things considered. So many things to do. So little time. Thank fuck for rock and roll." More info at www.sassykraimpri.com



Baltimore's **PUSH** have a new album out called 'Friction'. The band are Geo - lead vocals & lead guitar, Walter White - bass & vocals, Joe Holbrook - rhythm & lead guitar and George DeCampo - drums. I had a chat with Geo. Music was always played around Geo's house since he was young. Then it all really started for him when his sister's boyfriend handed Geo a copy of the Kiss Alive album. "From there, I moved on to T-Rex, Aerosmith & Queen. When I was 13 yrs

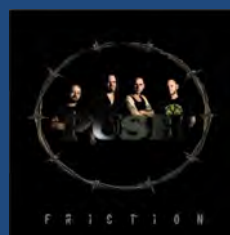
old, my mom got me a second hand guitar for \$100 (us) from a pawn shop and I learned every note on the Kiss Alive and Black Sabbath Paranoid album. I had my first band at fifteen and been in and out of bands ever since. I couldn't imagine a day or week going by without playing my guitar. Playing my guitar is like pure sex," he tells me.

Push are inspired by bands like Kiss, Aerosmith and Queen, these bands were among Geo's earliest inspirations along with the glam of T-Rex and Bowie and the shock of Alice Cooper. "The music on the Friction album has roots in all those artists along with the modern sounds of the Foo Fighters. This album is also a very personal album. It draws from a lot of life experiences I've had," he says.

In the grand scheme of things every band borrows from its influences. "What makes or breaks a band is how they expand on those borrowed ideas. I believe every song needs a hook, that one line that stays in your head, in order to survive. I also believe that the guitar solo is much more than a series of repeated notes--the guitar solo is a song within a song," explains Geo.

The band's new album 'Friction', while it has a heavy guitar driven modern sound also pulls from the days when every song had a hook in the melody line and got stuck in your head. "I think that quality is lacking in a lot of today's music. This is how PUSH writes and continues to write music. We don't follow the trend. We continuously strive to be true to the idea that we remain ourselves and let the chips fall where they may," Geo tells me.

'Friction' is also very personal album. "At least half the songs were written from personal life experiences I've had ranging from bad relationships to new ones. It was very hard sometimes to listen back to the recordings knowing what some of the songs were written about. My hope was that people would take the songs and apply them to their own lives. That to me is a good song."



'Friction' was recorded at Invisible Sound Studios in Baltimore, Maryland in the States. "It's a great studio hidden away in a nineteenth century factory building that looks like it might collapse in certain spots...but inside the studio is state of

the art equipment and has one of the best recording engineers I know. Dave Nachodsky and I produced the album along with hints from PUSH management on certain songs," he says. The recording process for 'Friction' took just under a year with a lot of hard work and sweat, some confusion mixed with moments of clarity. "The recording process was very fluid...we allowed new ideas and changes to be made in the music and lyrics as they stuck us. For instance, when we were recording The Place I kept hearing a bell sound... so we went out in search for one...found an antique huge old bell that we lugged all the way up into the studio... it weighed a ton...wound up hitting it with about a dozen different mallets till we found the right bell sound. In the end we used a different bell and donated that one to a church that needed one in its bell tower."

The 'Friction' album is so new that that the band really want to concentrate on propelling its success. "We just released three new music videos of Flying Girl, Do What You Want (band version) and a version of Do What You Want featuring guest artist Jade. We had so much fun filming that we'd like to do a few more videos from singles off the album. I've also started writing a few new songs so there will definitely be another album in the next year followed by a live album. We're also enjoying breaking into the European music scene. We've had calls and interest in the album from people in the UK, Italy and Spain. We love having our music heard all over. This is a great roller coaster ride--I don't see it ending anytime in the near future," he concludes. More info at www.Pushkicksass.com

Out now is the new CD 'Mechanism' from US alternative rock band **ME AND MY SHADOW**. The band are Andy Ussery (bass, synth, programming) and Randy Andy (guitar, vocals, programming). Andy and Randy have both been playing for a long time. Nirvana and Black Sabbath by way of Beavis and Butthead 'nah-nah-nahing' the guitar riff to Iron Man along with

seeing their favourite bands in concert growing up and wanting to be on that stage gave them both the inspiration to be musicians.

They both listen to a lot of the same stuff, from Type O Negative and Deadsy to Depeche Mode and New Order, to extreme metal from the 90s. "We grew up in the 90s right when rock music changed, and lived through the "alternative" nonsense and the subsequent nu metal craze. Now it's back to the tights and cute haircuts from the 80s. We're getting old. But for this project, we were both coming from rock backgrounds and finally are doing the kind of thing we've always wanted to do: a cool electronically driven project that still keeps the rock vibe," Randy tells me.



The band's first record draws on a lot of sci-fi themes as well as weird dreams and a real dystopian kind of vibe. "For our new stuff, it's less along a theme and we're just going for making cool stuff," he adds. "Everything's been done with rock music. It's all in the delivery and the heart behind what's being created, and that is something that will come across in the music. We grew up under the illusion that we "make music for ourselves," which is something we were all kind of spoon-fed as kids with the whole independent vibe of some of the 90s bands. Well, we've realized that we just want to know that someone out there is enjoying what we're doing, and if we really got what we wanted, they would want to see us live. We're too old (and in Randy's case, too ugly) for X-Factor, and short of a miracle, we won't be quitting our day jobs any time really soon. But if we can get the stuff out there and in games and film, and play some really awesome shows in a lot of different places, we are happy," smiles Randy.



The current album is called 'Mechanism'. "We put it out in 2013. Creepy songs about robots, sci-fi stuff, being chased by robots in nightmares, and bronies," he says. "The whole first record came from demos Andy made in Garage Band on his phone. Randy is well versed in music production, so when they were working on another record for a band they both played in (that ultimately fizzled out), they decided to someday make those demos into real songs. The rest is history. From start to finish, the record went from phone demos to full on produced in about 9 months."

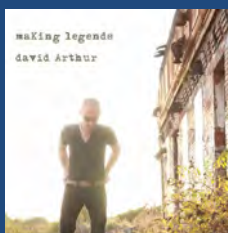
The guys have got about 30 demos that they are currently working from. "Andy still churns great ideas out on his phone using Caustic, which we blow up in Pro Tools and make into a record," says Randy. "We've got a handful of shows under our belt, which

have gone really well. We're working on branching out in the Midwest US, and oddly enough, you guys found us out of the blue and here we are. The reviews we've gotten from the UK Webzines have been great for us, and really cool to read. Would love to make it over for an English Breakfast." More info at:

www.meandmyshadow.rocks
www.twitter.com/OmegaHiFi
www.facebook.com/meandmyshadowband



Out now is the new CD 'Making Legends' from UK artist **DAVID ARTHUR** who comes from the Lake District area. David has always loved music and as far back as he can remember. "I've always been jumping, singing, pretending I'm a rock star around the house! When I was a kid I had to have music on, so I'd get my Mum to put stuff on for me - usually her soundtrack LP's and float off into another world. Then at 11yrs old my parents bought me a guitar for Christmas and all the feelings and emotions I'd had for music that I didn't understand as a kid suddenly made sense! Within 6months I was playing regular gigs with some friends of mine and my brother on bass and Dad on Drums! The absolute joy I feel from writing and performing is still as strong now - long may it continue," he tells me.



David's main inspiration is the late and great Gary Moore. "A friend played me 'Corridors of power' when I was about 13 and man, that changed everything for me! Up 'till then I'd been listening to and loving stuff like The Beatles, Beach Boys, Dion and the Belmonts, even Bert Weedon! Then Gary came along and gave me a good slap. Also, gotta mention Stevie Ray Vaughan cause the man was just phenomenal! But I've never, ever wanted to sound or play like these people. I always wanted my own identity, so I put together a studio and started writing. And some of the material I've written ended up being the album," he explains to me.

David ended up being a solo artist. "I didn't set it up like that; it's just the way it worked out because friends were too busy with their own projects to commit. But I'm fine with that as it gave me total control over the whole project and probably allowed me more time to work things out when it was required. I think the thing that makes me different is that I've never just played 'Rock'. Over the yrs in various bands I've played Pop, Dance, Metal, Disco, you name it I've probably played it. But the reason we played a varied set is simply because they were all great songs! I love songs, and I have worked really hard to make my album one great song after another. Hopefully people will agree," he smiles.

'Making Legends' is a powerful, emotive, very positive and uplifting record. "I think it does what an album is supposed to do, which is take you on a journey - on a roller coaster of emotions. This isn't a full throttle all the way to hell kind of album. It has its full throttle moments but it is also subtle at times which gives the heavier songs more impact. It's a very dynamic album which is exactly what I wanted to produce," he tells me.

The album was written and recorded in David's own studio over a condensed period of maybe 10/12months. He produced and mixed the album himself. "I've worked many times before hand with pro producers and engineers and achieved some great results, but they were never what I really wanted from the tracks. So, I thought this time around I'll do it myself and see what happens. After the 1st track was written and finished (ironically a track that didn't make the final cut) I knew I was more than capable of the job. So now I have 'Making legends' and I'm very proud of it."

For the future David is going to keep writing and producing and he hopes to put out another album soon. "I've got to give this album a lot of time and attention in regards of promotion as I think it really needs to be heard. Getting it out to the States is very important to me as I feel that's a big market for my style, but obviously that's going to take time and a bit of luck." More info at www.davidarthurmakinglegends.com

Nicky Baldrian Playlists:

1. **Halestorm** - Into the Wild Life
2. **FM** - Heroes & Villains
3. **Alabama Shakes** - Sound & Color
4. **Raven** - Extermination
5. **Radioactive** - F4ur
6. **Seasick Steve** - Sonic Soul Surfer
7. **Peterik & Scherer** - Risk Everything
8. **Magic Kingdom** - Savage Requiem
9. **Nelson** - Peace Out
10. **Mahalia Barnes & The Soul Mates** - Ooh Yea! The Betty Davis Songbook
11. **Parzivals Eye** - Defragments
12. **Richard Page** - Goin' South
13. **Civil War** - Gods & Generals
14. **Whitesnake** - The Purple Album
15. **Asa** - Bed of Stone
16. **House Of Lords** - Indestructible
17. **Ten** - Isla De Muerta
18. **Hinder** - When the Smoke Clears
19. **Red Sky Mary** - River Child
20. **Lotta Lene** - Smoke & Mirrors

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