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ROCK&METAL

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THEN COMES SILENCE
'BLOOD'
(Nuclear Blast)
MODERN/ALTERNATIVE

Apparently, Then Comes Silence are "captains of thundering Post Punk", whereas in truth, they're really impressionists of whimpering Goth boredom

The four audio discs are split into eras of the label's history, thus forming a chronological narrative through their ongoing rise, throwing your eager ears right into the middle of their "nuclear blast", with Death Metal stalwarts Gorefest's 1992 staple 'State Of Mind' (admittedly not a place I suspect any of our readers will start) which was the beginning of the label's now-historic departure from a strict supportive diet of Hardcore bands into one that respected the roots and protected the future of extreme music. Without even looking at the specific tracks, a quick glance at the bands listed on each disc is enough to show you the prestige Nuclear Blast has collected in the three decades of its existed – Slayer, Helloween and Paradise Lost. Those three names are all pioneers of their genres, leaders of the pack in revolutionising areas of Metal no one had yet heard and they have all spent time in the company of Nuclear Blast.

Whilst all four audio discs and the accompanying DVD are heavy hitters, it is perhaps the fourth CD that shines the most in terms of content. Its era is Nuclear Blast's most recent – 2012-2017. Its sixteen tracks are all killer and no filler, from its opening klaxon of Slayer's comeback-defining post-Jeff Hanneman jam 'Repentless' to its doomy Death-riddled end in the form of Paradise Lost's recent epic 'From The Gallows'. The fact that in the last five years Nuclear Blast have been responsible for the all-conquering super-group Killer Be Killed and Blues Pills' genre-bending era-traversing breakthrough is one hell of a testament to the legacy they've constructed.

What strikes me the most about this collection is perhaps the way in which it not only tells a tale of Nuclear Blast's history, but of a personal history to the listener, and in many ways, there are moments you, our dear 'Fireworks' reader, will look back fondly at, particularly during the second and third CD eras – 2004-2007 and 2008-2012 respectively – which fly heavily through the lands of Power, Symphonic and Progressive Metal with the highlights coming from Nightwish's 'Wish I Had An Angel', Eluveitie's 'Inis Mona' and Sonata Arctica's 'Wildfire'. Journeying through the various discs was like journeying through musical and magazine past in one.

Above all, this collection is the answer to the age-old friendship ruining question of what the ultimate Heavy Metal starter pack is, and quite honestly, once you've graduated from the seventies and eighties mainstream Metal bachelors, '30 Years of Nuclear Blast' is your master's education.

Jack Press

VENICE
'INTO THE MORNING BLUE'
(Lennon)
MELODIC ROCK

Smacked wrists for me because this album's been out for some while, and despite having it from the moment of its release, I've overlooked the review which is a travesty as once more Venice have produced a West Coast delight.

I still thank the day my friend Paul Jerome Smith recommended this band to me and the fact that I subsequently witnessed a very rare London gig by them. At that gig I was wondering if they were miming, so clear and accurate were the vocals, but from the front of the stage those doubts were quickly banished. From that moment I was hooked on their exquisite vocal harmonies, arrangements and wonderful songs.

From the opening A Cappella notes of 'Sunrise (August of '69)', you know this is another winner from the Californian four-piece (two sets of brothers who are also cousins) with their usual vocal prowess, great hook and instantaneously memorable chorus. This is music to put a smile on your face, as is the following 'Doesn't Get Any Better Than This' which is a touch rockier but

atmospheric like Harlot, Jack Star's Burning Starr, Reverence and Riot V, but for his debut solo album, 'Letters From India', he's adopted a rather different sound that at different times puts me in mind of Richard Marx with hints of Jude Cole, Jimmy Davis & Junction, Terry Brock and Venice.

The album title alludes to the fact that Hall found his wife and the love of his life as a result of them being pen friends with many of the songs being based around their

This is just great, but Tommy Zampet, please don't say goodbye to New York because you can hear it in your music and it's where you belong.

Ms. D

TRAGIK
'TAINTED'
(Rock Company)
MELODIC ROCK

THE RADIO SUN - 'UNSTOPPABLE' (Pride & Joy) MELODIC ROCK



The fourth release from Antipodean Melodic Rockers The Radio Sun serves up another helping of eleven tracks that are full of catchy hooks, harmony vocals and multi-layered guitar work with plenty of fine solo work thrown in for good measure. 'Unstoppable' has been mixed by Paul Laine (Danger Danger, The Defiants) who has once again done a sterling job with the vocals and instruments being well defined and separated in the mix without being too forward.

The album opens with 'Heaven On Earth', a quick drum lead-in and straight into the melody of the verse. 'Only You' is a mid-paced Pop Rocker as previously served up by the likes of Loverboy or Y&T, whereas 'You've Got The Touch' slows things down a bit. 'Tonight's The Night' is a classy mid-paced rocker with a simple infectious guitar riff (which is annoyingly familiar) and 'Surrender Your Heart' introduces a keyboard intro before giving way to the main guitar riff.

'Dreams Should Last Forever' introduces the keyboard talents of Andy Shanahan (from nineties Aussie rockers Roxus) which, along with the soaring guitar work, help elevate this song into "classic" status – surely this will become a favourite live. 'Set The Night On Fire', 'Why Must I' and 'Whenever You Want' are catchy mid-paced numbers full of the trademark harmonies and melodies we have come to expect from this band. The title track 'Unstoppable' is the rockiest offering on the album, opening with a simple basic riff full of reverb that develops into a pacey background crunch to accompany the verse, before an eminently sing-along chorus and fine, if short, guitar solo. The final song, 'You're Everything To Me', is the only ballad on the album, there's a vocal full of emotion with a piano accompaniment which slowly builds to the finale.

This is a release that should be high on the list for fans of Loverboy, Tyketto and Rick Springfield. The highlights of this album would be the opening '...Last Forever', 'Tonight's The...' and 'Unstoppable' with its simple Progressive riff building to the first verse that leads into a catchy chorus with harmony vocals and some serious guitar soloing – guaranteed to be a live favourite. The Radio Sun will be playing HRH AOR festival in the spring and also headlining some shows around the same time – catch them if you can.

Chris Mee

nonetheless melodic; both its music and lyrics are uplifting.

The title track is acoustic and has a poignant edge that recalls childhood; the bass work is delicious and the synth string arrangement is delightful. 'A Wealthy Man', like those tracks before it, has another catchy refrain and yet more incisive lyrics – wealth doesn't always have to be monetary.

'In A Heartbeat' is another heart-rending number, which is something these guys do so well, and 'If You Hear This Song' is a love song, but not with straightforward lyrical content; they have a knack of coming up with these different angles on the subject. 'A Dance By The River' is a joyous song recounting a story from when three members of the band were backing singers on Roger Waters' 'The Wall Live' tour. I defy anyone not to move when this song is playing.

The closing number is 'Suddenly You Walked In' which has more than a touch of Paul Simon about it, albeit with piano rather than acoustic guitar underpinning the vocals.

If I have one criticism, it would be that with only eight tracks, the album is on the short side in this era. That aside, this is a truly wonderful collection and an album I'll be putting on when I'm in the mood for something mellow and classy.

Gary Marshall

VICE
'VENI VIDI VICE'
(Pride & Joy)
HARD ROCK

Vice are a band from Germany who first appeared on the scene at the tail end of the eighties and released a couple of albums on BMG. They also toured all over Europe and with plenty of television exposure sold over a hundred thousand units. Personally, I've never heard any of their early work and only picked up on them recently when news of a new album broke.

The new album 'Veni Vidi Vice' was produced, recorded and mixed by Chris Limburg at Lictoc Studios in Munich and it is their first release in twenty-seven years. It's been a long time since they left the scene so have they got anything worthwhile to offer today? If you like big sounding Melodic Hard Rock with massive riffs, catchy choruses and

nifty solos you might find a lot to like here.

Vice in 2017 only retains Chris "Yps" Limburg (guitars) from the previous line-up and he is ably assisted by Mario "Mitch" Michel (vocals), Martin "El Bajo" Dreher (bass) and Pete "Pepsi" Lautenschlager (drums) who together have crafted an album that will most likely appeal to fans of Bonfire, Roko and Victory et al.

There are a few issues for me, the main one being the accented vocals of Michel reminding me of Udo Dirkschneider with a deeper and more melodic tone. He's not my favourite type of singer and the lyrics are nothing challenging, but the enjoyable nature of the songs and performance of the band make for an entertaining listen.

Carl Noonan

VICTIM OF ILLUSION
'INVISIBLE LIGHT'
(Independent)
PROGRESSIVE

Torino in Northern Italy is home to the Shroud Of Turin, Juventus FC, Fiat, Lancia and Alfa Romeo. It's sometimes called the cradle of Italian liberty and the place where Michael Caine drove around the streets in a Mini Cooper.

Torino is also where Victim Of Illusion were formed back in 2010 by Piero Giaccone (aka Peter Hamer – guitars/synths) and Paolo Gurlino (vocals), quickly followed by bassist Luca Imerito. Amongst their influences, they cite Porcupine Tree, Tool, Radiohead and Massive Attack. I would also add Riverside and possibly Steve Hogarth-era Marillion to that list.

After their 2011 EP 'What Senses Blow Away' and 2014 album 'Oxideyes', we now have a fresh selection of songs in the form of new release 'Invisible Light' which is described as the boundary between a real dream and an illusion. Whether you describe it as Prog Metal or Heavy Prog, there is more to it than meets the ear. There are some heavy riffs going on in parts, but there are also lighter touches which can be both melodic and atmospheric in equal measure.

Opening track 'A New Beginning' has all the classic Prog elements across the board, time signature changes aplenty, huge synth

atmospheric like Harlot, Jack Star's Burning Starr, Reverence and Riot V, but for his debut solo album, 'Letters From India', he's adopted a rather different sound that at different times puts me in mind of Richard Marx with hints of Jude Cole, Jimmy Davis & Junction, Terry Brock and Venice.

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Cat O'Brien

VIRGIL & STEVE HOWE
'NEXUS'
(InsideOut)
PROGRESSIVE

I was shocked upon reading that Steve Howe's son Virgil had suddenly passed away in September at the age of forty-one. When I was asked to review 'Nexus', I felt I couldn't say no (being a huge Yes fan and also out of respect).

'Nexus' is an instrumental release which was completed in the summer. According to Howe senior, Virgil Howe had written the majority of the compositions last year on the piano and then sent them over to his father who then added "suitable" guitar. Virgil Howe also played drums and bass on the album and added more synths to embellish the overall sound on the tracks to make them, as he said himself a few weeks before his untimely passing, "trippy, Psychedelic, Spacey, it's a space theme kind of thing".

The title track opens the album and features some simple keyboards, to which Steve Howe adds some lovely steel guitar. 'Hidden Planet' has Virgil Howe laying down some jazzy beats on drums and via keyboard, and Steve Howe playing some more fine steel guitar. 'Leaving Aurora' is a wonderful piece, Virgil Howe plays a lilting piano tune and his father complements the melody on acoustic guitar. As I write, it has just been released as a video featuring clips of Virgil Howe over the years – it brings a tear to the eye and is a lovely piece of music.

As if the mood could not get any sadder, next track 'Nick's Star' is a tribute to Nick Hirsch, who was Virgil Howe's best friend (they were both members of the band The Dirty Feel five years ago when Hirsch passed away). Virgil Howe shows off his ivory tinkling on what is another jazzy Rock number, especially when Steve Howe adds some really neat guitar. 'Passing Titan' and 'Dawn Mission' lend a nod to classic Camel and Virgil Howe shows what a sad loss his passing is with some superb piano work, and his dad adds some deft guitar which is reminiscent of his classic work with Yes during the seventies.

'Astral Plane' is another beautiful composition where Virgil Howe underpins the song with some fine ivory tinkling and Steve Howe once again complements the song with jazzy guitar.

'Nexus' is a fitting tribute to Virgil Howe's memory and is best listened to late at night so that when you look up to the sky you can see his star twinkling.

Az Chaudhry