

JEBO - Settle Up or Settle Down

By Carly Drew



JEBO have gone through some line-up changes since their first album 'Sinking Without You', but the band are tighter than ever on their follow up album 'Settle Up or Settle Down'.

Listing influences as diverse as Rammstein, Del Amitri, Neil Young and cheap red wine (preferably with a screw top), you could be forgiven for thinking that 'Settle Up or Settle Down' is going to be a schizophrenic affair with an unusual artistic direction. In fact, the album is quite the opposite, with a solid prog-rock theme throughout and plenty of blues, folk and classical undertones too.

Starting on a riff-tastic high note with 'And You Will Rise', you know that this album is going to stay on heavy rotation for some time after the initial listen. This strong, guitar-driven, first song has a perfect mixture of haunting melodies, rich almost-orchestral chord progressions and so many tonal intricacies that you may just miss them the first time.

New lead singer, Kevin J Messenger acts as the ringmaster in this musical circus, adeptly leading the way through each of the 12 tracks. His vocal range may not be to every prog purist's taste, but there's no denying that this guy has a cracking set of lungs, as displayed on the album's fourth track 'Given The Chance'.

'The Greatest Day' is a personal favourite from the album, beginning with lush strings and an acoustic guitar line that will be ripped off by every open mic performer lucky enough to hear JEBO. This soft and beautiful song displays the band's musical talents perfectly, while staying true to the adage that you should always keep it short and sweet.

'Settle Up or Settle Down' is a very emotional album, making it easy to get swept away by the clever lyrics and blues-tinged melodies. Luckily, guitarist Rob Allen is on hand to pick you up and keep the pace with the occasional solo that has heads bobbing and fists in the air, like that on 'Bring You Down'. The man's talent is clear throughout the album, but these short breaks to focus on his abilities are a welcome addition on any and every track that he is allowed to run wild with.

Produced by John Burns of Genesis and Jethro Tull fame, this album is stellar in both its clarity and direction. I would even go as far to say that JEBO and John Burns are a match made in heaven, with final track 'Something's Got To Give' blowing everything else out of the water. From the occasional burst of brass to the raw honesty in the vocals, this is one song that is a definite crowd pleaser.

Even if you don't consider yourself a fan of contemporary prog-rock, it is worth picking up this album purely for its ability to convince you otherwise.