

prioritises texture and feel above indulgent noodling, do the band become remotely appealing.

Dave Ling

Borean Dusk

Borean Dusk WWW.BOREANDUSK.COM



On the evidence of its opening track, things don't auger too well for this self-

financed debut from a progressive-metal band hailing from St Louis, Missouri.

Said introduction, *Wolf-Totem*, is nothing more than a run-of-the-mill metal instrumental romp, which at seven seconds short of nine minutes long rather outstays its welcome. Borean Dusk do 'fess up to their Iron Maiden influences, which is fair enough, but this is the sort of leaden tripe that a perfectionist like Steve Harris would surely have strangled at birth before allowing loose from the rehearsal room.

Thankfully, Borean Dusk have plenty more in their locker. Indeed, while the album remains

defiantly vocal-free throughout, the three multi-part epics that complete its three-quarters-of-an-hour running time – 14, 19 and 12 minutes long, respectively – reveal new levels of artistry.

Besides playing the bass, Jeff Burnett adds Irish bouzouki and octave mandolin to the melting pot, sending the band's fluency through the roof as delicate percussion, electric and acoustic guitars and basses are melded to explore a variety of differing moods. During the album's longest and most appealing song, *Scarab Wings And Scorpion Eyes*, they sound like traditional European folkies one minute, and Black Sabbath-worshipping rivet-heads the next.

Dave Ling

Ethers Edge

Return To Type

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Ethers Edge might currently be a small fish in the small pond of rock

music, but on the evidence of this impressive debut album they harbour bigger visions than a great many of their fellow minnows.

In order to complement their own formidable skills as performers and writers the five-piece from Lincolnshire have assembled a hugely enviable backroom cast. The immaculate listenability of *Return To Type* is due in no small part to a sound-mix from Angus Wallace (Wishbone Ash), with mastering courtesy of Jon Astley (Zeppelin/The Who/BJH/Porcupine Tree).

Including a challenging segment that doffs a tifter at *Apocalypse In 9/8 (Co-Starring The Delicious Talents Of Gabbie Ratchet)* from *Supper's Ready*, the album's nine-minute title track is among its isolated moments of bombast.

With Ethers Edge pursuing a strand of prog that can only be described as low-key, the focus on sound quality and great artwork pays rich

dividends. Like the other acts that inspired them (Tool, Opeth, P-Tree), this band are storytellers, and their album's loose concept of a person that has a "drunken encounter" and becomes "besotted by a new flame, but their former life returns and consumes them one more" deserves all the clarity it can provide.

Dave Ling

Jebo

Settle Up Or Settle

Down JEBOMUSIC



On first listen you tend to think that this Bristol five-piece are

peddling good yet predictable classic rock. Touches of The Who and Pink Floyd, with the occasional nod towards the Beatles. Not at all bad, but...

hang on, what's that Yes moment creeping in? And where did we miss that Jethro Tull nod the first time around?

This is not album that reveals its soul in one take. An initial listen is certainly enough to make you want to go back for more, but it's not the end of this journey. In fact, after a few spins this soon becomes addictive.

Jebo are good enough as musicians and songwriters to span an entire spectrum of influences without sounding too diffuse. And the clever production from John Burns (Genesis and Jethro Tull) brings all the strands quite neatly together.

The songs to highlight the talent here are the poppy *As Long As Love Remains* (early Genesis with an ear for easy melody), the clever *40 Miles* (XTC quirkiness with a King Crimson glint) and *Given The Chance* (a real prog epic) – surely convincing enough for you to return and find out what else is here.

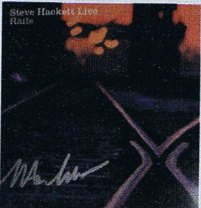
A British band with real international potential.

Malcolm Dome

Locomotive Breadth

Steve Hackett Live

Rails WOLF WORK



I was near the foot of the stage for Steve Hackett's electrifying, all-too-brief performance at last year's High Voltage festival. Several tunes in (during *Ace Of Wands*, I

think) the left bank of PA speakers gave out. Then just a few bars later the right set blew too. While some other punters looked perplexed, to my ears this was something of a revelation. Stripped of the enormous volume those bins emitted you could hear just the sound emanating from the band themselves – just the backline and Gary O'Toole pounding away at the drums. Bringing Steve Hackett down to pub volume was humanising; it became all the more apparent just what an accomplished powerhouse he had assembled. Moments later the PA was fixed, the music re-amplified to festival levels. Yet that glimpse into the inner sanctum stuck with me.

Recorded during Hackett's *Train On The Road* tour in 2009-2010, this two-CD set serves a similar purpose. Exquisitely mixed by Hackett's keyboardist and musical counterpart Roger King, *Rails* is culled from performances by that band in clubs in Paris, London and New York.

The set celebrating the guitarist's eclectic career,

drawing on his so back catalogue his acclaimed current release *Out Of The Tunnel's Mouth* and his Genesis legacy.

The sound is beautifully, digitally clear as the band pulls out with *Spectral Mornings* opener *Every Day*. The vocal harmonies of Hackett, rhythm guitarist Amanda Lehmann, bassist Nick Beggs and percussionist/woodwind player Rob Townsend cut through with ease. Indeed, Townsend's talent runs rock-like throughout: his playing tints *Ghost In The Glass* with a 1970s sepia grain, and adorns *Serpentine Song* with earthy penny whistle and lashing of luxurious sax.

In its shifting time signatures, changing moods and virtuoso passages, *Ace Of Wands* is an impeccable piece of prog. *Spectral Mornings* remains an extraordinary piece too, performed with sensitivity here – Hackett's sustained guitar lines as haunting and mellifluous as ever. The new material excels live. *Fire On The Moon's* music-box pizzicato verse and primal-scream chorus contrast thrillingly, and though Anthony Phillips' 12-string is missed on *Emerald And Ash*, Hackett's lyrical flourishes are almost clearer



Mr H: Platform independent.

here than on record. 'Fingers turn to talons in my hair' in this frank and honest tale of love turned sour.

Predictably, the biggest cheers are elicited by Genesis material. The opening piano lines to *Firth Of Fifth* (O'Toole takes multitasking to admirable heights, carrying the beat and providing a passable vocal) and *The Lamb... 's Fly On A Windshield/Broadway Melody Of 1974* both hit that nostalgic nerve. Hackett reclaims *Wind And Wuthering's Blood On The Rooftops* and *A Trick Of The Tail's Los Endos* for himself.

At whatever volume you play it, *Rails* is a classy set, rooted in prog and embellished by the music of the Middle East, Andalusia and the soundworld of Bach. Steve Hackett never went away, but now he's got the right people around him there's a sense of refreshed confidence here. His horizons have rarely been wider.

Rails is available from Hackett's webstore, via www.hackettsongs.com.

Grant Moon