

2010 : VOLUME 28

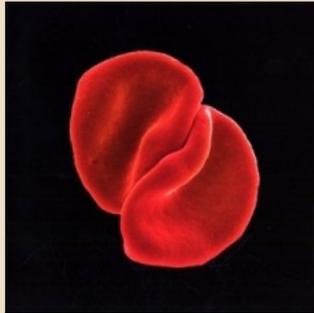
[Previous Volume](#)

[Next Volume](#)

REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE:

- [Peter Gabriel - Scratch My Back](#)
- [Aranis - Songs From Mirage](#)
- [DouBt - Never Pet A Burning Dog](#)
- [Barry Cleveland - Hologramatron](#)
- [Copernicus - Nothing Exists](#)
- [Mostly Autumn - Live 2009](#)
- [Hawkwind - Sonic Attack](#)
- [Soul Enema - Thin Ice Crawling](#)

Peter Gabriel - Scratch My Back



Country of Origin:	UK
Format:	CD
Record Label:	Virgin / Real World
Catalogue #:	N/A
Year of Release:	2010
Time:	53:05
Info:	Peter Gabriel
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *Heroes* (4:08), *The Boy In The Bubble* (4:27), *Mirrorball* (4:48), *Flume* (3:00), *Listening Wind* (4:22), *The Power Of The Heart* (5:50), *My Body Is A Cage* (6:12), *The Book Of Love* (3:52), *I Think It's Going To Rain Today* (2:34), *Après Moi* (5:13), *Philadelphia* (3:46), *Street Spirit [Fade Out]* (5:06)

Imagine answering the telephone one day and a voice at the other end says... "Hi, it's **Peter Gabriel** here and I'd like to cover one of your songs". You might be quite excited and even more so when he introduces the idea that you can cover one of his songs in return. "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours", as the saying goes. So essentially it's a 'covers' album where artists have exchanged songs. Does that fill you with horror or excitement? I was slightly sceptical as I wanted new material, like *UP*. I gave Mr Gabriel the benefit of the doubt, and true to form he doesn't disappoint with something different and fresh.

His voice still sounds great after all these years, as it really needs to be. There are no guitars, no electric bass and no drums for his vocals to hide behind on this album. The music is played with strings, woodwind, brass and piano. So what we have is a collection of other artists songs, stripped to their bare essentials with classical arrangements and Gabriels' own vocal interpretation. Many people I have spoken to about the concept immediately said it's something that instantly doesn't appeal to them. I do sympathise with them. It's easy to hastily dismiss this album if it's not your thing. It does require patience and in some ways could be seen as an album for die hard Gabriel fans who just love his voice. In fact, it's much more than that.

So what's the album like then? Overall, it's slightly melancholic in it's approach and sound, but I noticed that alot of the songs and lyrics revolve around human feelings, relationships and emotions. The lack of electric instruments really bring the lyrics to the forefront. As a result one can concentrate more on them than usual. A great example of this is the album opener, *Heroes* by David Bowie. With a totally fresh and sparkingly light arrangement it sounds wrong, but right. Gentle, slow violins create a smooth backdrop for Gabriel to sing those very familiar Bowie vocals without any of the 'pop and circumstance' that we know. The string arrangements by John Metcalfe give the piece structure, where in the middle sections the violins bow faster, accelerate the piece and then slow down to repeat the entering phrase.

The Boy In The Bubble, by Paul Simon exposes the lyrics and song structure to it's honest arrangement. It takes a bit of getting used to with this minimalist approach. Gone again is the pace and 'happy rhythm' that accompanies the original. It just typifies how differently we all listen to music, now I listened intently to the lyrics, rather than the drums and bass. Credit where it's due, it's deceptively magnificent. I never understood how powerful Gabriel's voice was until I saw him in concert and this album really shows his distinctive vocal range.

My personally highlight of the album is *The Power Of The Heart* by Lou Reed. It's such a personal song between two people. It's quite beautiful and made me stop what I was doing a few times. Like I said before, the human emotion theme fits in with some of those that already run through Gabriel's music. Tracks like *In Your Eyes* and *Secret World* spring to mind. It's impossible to listen to this song and not remember that we are all human and have at least one thing in common. I actually don't know the original song and this made me think. This is a covers album, but what if you don't already know these tracks? I didn't know all of them. If you have no preconceptions then I think one listens more open mindedly and form your own opinion. This album has made me aware of some other music that I should have in my collection. I have always thought that good music inspires listening to more music.

The huge classical nature of this music may cause many listeners to pass it by. Conversely, it may turn people onto some new classics. The arrangements are more **Philip Glass/Steve Reich**, than a full blown orchestra. Listen carefully and the rhythm, melody is all there, it's just not in the traditional bass/drums combo. I do wonder what people would think if this was piano, acoustic guitar and double bass. Would perhaps not so classical music enthusiasts receive it better?

The sound quality on CD and vinyl is absolutely excellent. On a quality hifi system, it has so much presence and depth, it really is like a personal Gabriel performance for you. After lunching with a die hard Genesis fan who admitted that "the live version was much better than the CD" and was left a little undecided about the CD, it again reaffirmed my feelings that quality audio systems let you get closer to the music, which is actually what this album is about.

The most interesting song must be Radiohead's *Street Spirit [Fade Out]*, it's so creepy the vocals sound dark, contorted, painful and nearly wrong. It reminds me again of Gabriel in Genesis assuming characters on stage, contorting his body in strange positions. It would have been great to see this vocal take in the studio. I wonder what kind of mood you have to be in to sing like this?

If you are a die hard Gabriel fan, you will have probably bought it already. I am not sure that it warrants a DPRP 'prog' recommendation because it's not 'progressive rock' and I assume that it may be difficult for some with it's classical nature. This album requires effort and a different frame of mind from a typical Gabriel album. It's not music for everyday, every person, every mood, every event. It's a unique idea and that's what makes it so special. On a musical satisfaction level, based on longevity I think earns it at least 8/10. On a pure 'prog' level it's unclassifiable, but could appeal to a limited set of proggers. It may not instantly become a favourite album, but I guarantee you that one day, one time, it will stop you doing whatever you are doing and make you listen. That is a mark of quality music. Overall, it's a reflective, emotional and deceptively beautiful album from a musical visionary of our times.

Conclusion: See review

IAN BUTLER

Aranis - Songs From Mirage



Country of Origin:	Belgium
Format:	CD
Record Label:	Home Records
Catalogue #:	HOME 446058
Year of Release:	2009
Time:	51:93
Info:	Aranis
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *Ouverture* (6:20), *Fresia* (2:03), *Chamber Rock* (2:19), *Reprise* (0:50), *Lullaby* (3:02), *Airesym* (4:22), *Aynu* (2:53), *Lever In Plakjes* (3:15), *Jelimena* (4:34), *Keria* (3:03), *Out Ama* (7:31), *Enjuminenna* (3:27), *Ilah* (4:35), *Finale* (10:09)

The discerning prog listener has been known to embrace music that may not initial appear to fall wholly within the boundaries of the genre. Therefore I would like to offer **Aranis' Songs From Mirage** as a contender for your attention.

This is the third release from the band following up *Aranis* (2005) and *Aranis II* (2007).

The core of the group of this Belgian group are Liesbeth Lambrecht (violin), Marjolein Cools (accordion), Stijn Denys (guitar), Jana Arns (transverse flute), Joris Vanvinckenroye (contrabass & composition). As Aranis undertake a number of different projects they then enlist the services of other musicians depending upon their requirements at that time. For *Songs From Mirage* these are: Els Van Laethem (vocals), Herlinde Ghekiere (vocals), Anne Marie Honggokoesoemo (vocals), Linde De Groof (violin), Axelle Kennes (piano)...

Along with my opening remarks, a glance at the band members and their respective instrumentation you will already have an indication that this is not going to be standard prog fayre. Aranis perform often complex instrumental pieces along with more accessible multi-part vocal arrangements. Sometimes as separate tracks and others within the same piece of music. But *Songs From Mirage* is not just about complexity. We also have delicate and haunting, strident and absorbing, relaxing and draining... Perhaps Aranis' summation of their music may help:

"The music is filled with contrasts and opposing themes. It's dark and light at the same time. It's beautiful and nasty, simple and complex. It has a personality of its own and nevertheless you can hear the influences from a multitude of different genres and styles. Never heard before and yet recognisable.

It is through the combination of these opposing themes and influences that emerges a contemporary and vibrant sort of music with a very unique character."

The opening *Ouverture* captures much of this character - starting with a menacing bass drone accompanied by angelic vocalisations. Gradually other instruments (initially violin) creep into the music, adding to the tension. The band maintain this grip for a little over two and half minutes. Enter the piano and the mood changes and the air is light and breezy with numerous instruments dancing playfully and held together by the sweet harmonising vocals. Five minutes in and the darker tone returns, although subtly different. Superb stuff. I'm convinced already. *Fresia* on the other hand is simply beautiful with a captivating vocal line and mainly piano accompaniment.

Chamber Rock perhaps speaks for itself - complex, busy and excellent ensemble playing. The brief *Reprise* and *Lullaby* also need little explanation. The latter however is one of the most engaging tunes on the album, with a simple bass line forming the backbone to yet another excellent vocal performance. The "marching" instrumental *Airesym* follows with light and shade throughout.

Elsewhere we have *Anyu* with its playful flute, whereas *Lever In Plakjes* moves us straight into the realms of performance theatre. *Jelimena* is another absolute gem with great melodies and an uplifting spirit. As with many of tracks from *Songs From Mirage* there's a distinct Eastern European flavour present and *Keria* is no exception. *Out Ama* is the bands tour de force encapsulating much of what makes Aranis tick. *Enjuminenna* is another uplifting track which segues into the equally delightful *Ilah*. The flavours of English folk music along with the aforementioned Eastern European influences brought the excellent *The Secret Language Of Birds* album to mind.

The grand *Finale* lives up to its title, but sadly I've run out of superlatives. As with many other tracks from the album, the main themes are recapped and reintroduced thus making it a fitting conclusion to the album.

The CD comes in a fitting gatefold package, that is simple and tasteful. The production is also top notch.

Brief excerpts from the whole album can be heard [HERE](#).

I've not singled out any individual performances from the album as all the musicians contributions are exemplary throughout. To be honest I couldn't find fault with this release from Aranis at all, just a shame I hadn't heard it last year as it certainly would have ranked in my top ten for 2009.

Now I have pondered long and hard as to my final conclusion and deliberated whether a recommendation tag for this release would be appropriate - purely based on the nature of the DPRP site. And it was only at the point that Ian Anderson's *The Secret Language Of Birds* popped into my mind that the decision became clear. *SLOB* may not be considered by all as a progressive rock album, but it certainly rocks my boat and is one of my all time favourite albums. Similarly *Songs From Mirage* presses many of the right buttons for me.

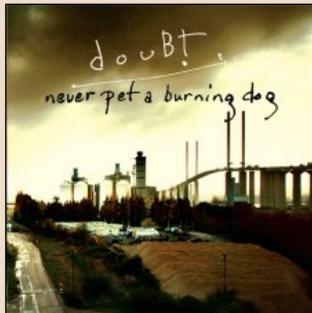
So on a personal note I'll say that this a truly fascinating album, a delight to listen to and certainly worthy of your attention.

Oh yes - and recommended to all...

Conclusion: 8.5 out of 10

BOB MULVEY

DouBt - Never Pet A Burning Dog



Country of Origin:	UK
Format:	CD
Record Label:	Moonjune Records
Catalogue #:	MJR032
Year of Release:	2009
Time:	52:57
Info:	Moonjune Info
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *Corale Di San Luca* (3:05), *Laughter* (6:25), *Over Birkerot* (8:53), *Sea* (7:57), *Passing Cloud* (4:08), *Cosmic Surgery* (6:45), *Aeon* (7:28), *Beppe's Shelter* (8:18)

DouBt is a trio made up of Alex Maguire (Fender Rhodes, piano, Hammond organ, mellotron and synth), Michael Delville (electric guitar, Roland GB-09) and Tony Bianco (drums). The album also features Richard Sinclair (vocals 1 and 5 and bass 1 and 2) and *Never Pet A Burning Dog* is their debut release.

Peeps have you seen the tools used here to record this album, Fender Rhodes - check, Mellotron - check, Hammond Organ - check do I need to carry on. This is enough to stop a charging bull in a china shop and raise the curiosity level to 12.

This is a very interesting piece and what makes it really impressive is that all eight tracks were recorded live in the studio over two days. This is not an easy listen / album to sit through in one go, you really need to break it down to even try and scratch the surface and take it in. It is experimental, improvisational, progressive, challenging and when the breakthrough comes rewarding.

It's going to be split decision time here. You are either going to love or hate this album, no question. Which ever decision you make the one thing that we can all be sure of is that you will be amazed at the level of musicianship, skill and dexterity that has gone into crafting this album. This album comes across as a bit of a muso's album that can often come across as being pretentious, something that this album does not achieve.

From the opening tolling bell on *Corale Di San Luca* with its somewhat mono tone pastoral vocals and very energetic cymbal and bass work courtesy of Sinclair. You get the feeling that everything is not as it seems. This does not prepare you for what is to come. The track segues straight into *Laughter*, (I would love to know how you decide an instrumental song title), which is launched by some furious dextrous fret work from Delville and tireless drumming from Bianco. Maguire's contribution to all of this is stunning, with each musical phrase taking its turn leading the way, building very complex sound structures with its polyrhythmic approach, which can

sound a tad fugazi initially. *Over Birkerot* originally recorded by Terje Rypdal, being the only non original track on the album, has DouBt turning the notch up on this version. It is a somewhat less stated track initially, but once the guys have warmed up we are hit by even more intense and complex music. Maguire's keyboard work is very prevalent throughout with the all the signature tones that you would expect whilst Delville continues his furious guitar assault complementing, heightening the aural experience that is being presented.

Sea has the intensity of Bianco drumming which give the impression that all he wants to do is play the most number of beats per second as possible. I'm sweating for this guy and I'm only listening to what he's playing. The keyboard passages played weave and undulated around Bianco work creating atmosphere to an improv sounding piece. You certainly get the impression that if you were to record the entire drum notes on paper you would have some to me on your hands. I need to lie down and relax after listening to this, god knows how Bianco felt.

Passing Cloud slows everything down with more of Sinclair's vocals and bass work. The Fender Rhodes sound is very prevalent in this piece with a psychedelic bossa nova feel. This allows the listener time to catch his breathe before the assault starts again. *Cosmic Surgery* starts off with a passage that sound vaguely like *Free Hand* by **Gentle Giant** but with a more modern take featuring some dense organ work, heavier guitar work and dynamic drumming through out the piece, but broody in approach during the mid section. *Aeon* has a strange but ethereal feel having Bianco's trade mark drumming and some very interesting sonic soundscapes. It is the improv approach that makes the piece feel very unstructured in approach, almost as if you removed one instrument the whole thing would collapse in on itself. *Beppe's Shelter* closes the album in both style and approach with the use of some very interesting tonal guitar work which vaguely reminded me of **Steve Vai** before Bianco and Maguire go into overdrive with some absolutely stunning improv passages and phrasings.

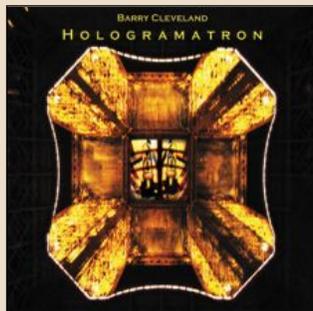
This is an album of intense magnitude and cooks up a real storm. There is no real respite throughout. We have three musicians here of high class set free in a studio, recording live over two days with outstanding results. When I scrutinized the tracks a bit further looking at writing credits the structure / approach of the instrumentation of the tracks made sense. This album hits all the spots you would expect in this genre of prog proficiently and perfect, having Richard Sinclair, (Caravan, Hatfield And The North, Camel), thrown in for good measure and having a very good production. As I said it's not going to be everyone's idea of listenable music, for me it is!

The promo notes quotes DouBt as, "the missing link between Sun Ra, John Zorn's Masada, vintage Terje Rypdal, Sonic Youth and Ennio Morricone". This a very good reference, that I probably couldn't define better. Now after being stopped in your tracks do you still want to listen? I did!

Conclusion: 8 out of 10

JOHN O'BOYLE

Barry Cleveland - Hologramatron



Country of Origin:	USA
Format:	CD
Record Label:	MoonJune Records
Catalogue #:	MJR 033
Year of Release:	2010
Time:	64:24
Info:	Barry Cleveland
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *Lake Of Fire* (4:22), *Money Speaks* (4:40), *You'll Just Have To See It to Believe* (5:22), *Stars Of Sayulita* (6:12), *Warning* (4:20), *What Have They Done To The Rain* (4:56), *Abandoned Mines* (5:45), *Suicide Train* (4:23), *Telstar* (3:55), *Dateless Oblivion & Divine Repose* (1:54). **Bonus Tracks:** *Abandoned Mines [Forrest Fang Remix]* (8:26), *You'll Just Have To See It to Believe [Alternate Mix]* (5:48), *Lake Of Fire [Evan Schiller Remix]* (4:21)

Let me start by digressing slightly: I've always found it strange how little recognition and/or success some very progressive musicians achieve, including in the so-called "progressive music" world. Often, these musicians are highly regarded within the music industry itself, but struggle to break through in terms of major music sales. They stay true to their art: sometimes it sells, occasionally becomes popular many years later and sometimes never. Often the music is marked by an eclecticism makes it difficult to "pigeon-hole" into a particular category and I feel that that characteristic is one that often weighs against major sales; conservative-taste fans preferring the predictability of less adventurous, less progressive artists.

Barry Cleveland would appear to be one such artist: in his latest offering *Hologramatron* he invites a large complement of guest musicians to join him in creating an eclectic mix of *progressive leaning rock* that - without being facile and calling it "art rock" - is impossible to pigeon-hole into any of the "normal" styles, but which is always enjoyable not only for its melodic and rhythmic sensibility but also for the sonic textures that are brought out in the music. It reminds me of similarly eclectic albums such as **Cushma, Cides & Alexander's Not Different But Not The Same** and of artists such as **Group Du Jour** and **Sky Cries Mary**, who can mix up styles admirably, leaving the musicality and the focus on the sound textures themselves as the unifying thread.

I don't know Barry Cleveland's previous work, but *Hologramatron* is, according to the promo material, apparently a departure from his usual "ambient and impressionistic" work on his other four albums. To me, some of the music on here would still sit in ambient space, virtue of its mantric/trance characteristics. However, maybe in the earlier works the effect is much more pronounced...

Before going on to the individual tracks, it may help if I list some of the artists helping Cleveland on *Hologramatron*, together with the some of the instruments on offer. The cast includes bass innovator Michael

Manning; drummer Celso Alberti; pedal steel iconoclast Robert Powell; vocalists Amy X Neuberg and Deborah Holland; cymbalom master Michael Masley. In addition to playing acoustic and electric 6 and 12 string guitars, Cleveland utilizes a prototype of the Moog guitar, as well as acoustic and electric GuitarViols and sampled mellotron. That gives you some idea about the importance, richness and complexity of the soundscape but, more importantly, what about the music itself? Let's move on...

As I said before, the music will appeal to those fans with eclectic tastes. The album is conceived as a "21st century protest record with songs featuring biting, sometimes brutal, commentary on the state of the Western world". The opener, *Lake Of Fire*, takes you straight into that protest via a sardonic look at the second coming of Jesus, the lyrics of which some fans with deeply held Christian views may find difficult. Musically, the rhythm dominates, Manning's gorgeous bass sound making the instrument sound almost like a Chapman stick. *Money Speaks* again revolves around the rhythm, the mantric style of this album opening, exacerbated by the bass, bordering towards trance. The mood changes for *You'll Just Have To See It To Believe It*, an instrumental that is whimsical and melodic. *Stars Of Sayulita*, the only track to feature a male sung vocal (Harry Manx), kicks off with a very pretty melody played on acoustic guitar and one of the unusual instruments, probably the Moog guitar, before developing a bluesy feel, then moving into the mantric: it's very effective indeed! *Warning* has some sonic wizardry overlaid by a spoken male voice: it's full of dissonances, sound-bites and tinsel sounds; one for the sonic connoisseur. *What Have They Done To The Rain* is the first cover on the album - the other being *Telstar* - and is given a light treatment - it sounds good. *Abandoned Mines* has strong Eastern/Arabian influences running through, and its mantric web leads you off into a dream-world of star-filled, clear night skies and belly-dancers. The trance continues on *Suicide Train*, but without the Eastern mysticism. The Tornados's *Telstar* is given plenty of oomph on the bass before the "normal" album is closed out with a brief, but attractive, soundscape created on GuitarViol - a very attractive texture I have to say!

We then have three "bonus" tracks - what's bonus about tracks included with every copy of the original album? - the first two add value in that they present quite different versions of the earlier "proper" album versions, but the remix of *Lake Of Fire* adds too little, other than closing the album off with a certain pleasant circularity.

Altogether, it's an enjoyable album, which falls short of a recommendation virtue of the fact that I do think that there are better, musically if not sonically speaking, in this general broad field of music.

Conclusion: 7 out of 10

ALEX TORRES

Copernicus - Nothing Exists



Country of Origin:	USA
Format:	CD
Record Label:	MoonJune Records
Catalogue #:	NCD2085
Year of Release:	1984/2009
Time:	37:41
Info:	Copernicus
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *I Won't Hurt You (4:13)*, *Blood (5:28)*, *I Know What I Think (3:03)*, *Quasimodo (4:22)*, *Let Me Rest (11:12)*, *Nagasaki (5:07)*, *Atomic Nevermore (4:21)*

Copernicus' *Nothing Exists* was originally recorded and released on LP in 1984 and is now presented here on CD for the first time courtesy of MoonJune Records. During his recording career Copernicus has recorded twelve albums, being an artist that has slipped under my radar. The band for this recording is made up of Copernicus (poetry, lead vocals and keyboards), Pierce Turner (musical director, keyboard and vocals), Larry Kirwan (electric guitar, keyboard and vocals), Thomas Hamlin (drums), Chris Katris (guitar), Jeffrey Lad (flute, keyboard and effects), Peter Collins (bass), Steve Menasche (marimba, percussion), Fred Parcells (affected trombone), Paddy Higgins (bodhran, floor toms), Andy Leahy (violin, vocals), Fionnghuala (flute, vocals), Jimmy Zhivago (guitar, piano) and Fred Chalenor (bass).

This is Arty / Avant / Experimental / Prog Rock, crossing and weaving through many emotions both musically and waxing lyrically creating an album of strange and testing textures and text, which will probably be an approach that some will find unique.

"To experience Copernicus is to witness a personal struggle. The struggle of an artist in search of the most effective means to communicate his vision: that the world around us which we perceive as reality, is in fact an illusion, and the truth is that nothing exists."

Progressive rock was fundamentally designed in its infancy to elevate rock music to new levels of artistic credibility being bombastic in approach. Through the years very little has really changed, although there has been some growth of new sub - genres. This has enabled some artists a target audience that they probably wouldn't have had, with their unique and differing approach, that only accepting people would offer time or an ear too, this is where Copernicus can be found.

What we basically have here throughout the whole album is some beautiful crafted and challenging music supporting the spoken word of Copernicus, which might I add works very well. There is no doubt that Copernicus and his band of like minded people believe in what they are doing which strangely you can't help but get dragged into.

There isn't much point in deconstructing this album track by track as this is the fun of the fair for the listener.

Every time I listened to this album I listen intently feeling the emotion and ambience of the soundscapes created, which are note perfect, allowing the listener an opportunity to build their own pictures to support it all.

The seven tracks that are on offer range in approach. *I Won't Hurt You* moves in a commercial circle with a really mellow keyboard passage and some suave vocal, bass and guitar work. *Blood* has a more experimental approach with hymnal layered vocals and discordant keyboard work and violin passages all of which under pin Copernicus' vocal presences.

"Let the musicians declare war!!" cries the opening line of *I Know What I Think* with its new wave approach and abrasive keyboard and guitar work. This is Copernicus with attitude picking up the pace with confidence and surety. *Quasimodo* opens like an unreleased **Alex Harvey** track, its musical passages are menacing and have intent with its repeating guitar passages helping to build an atmosphere. *Let Me Rest* is the longest piece on the album coming across as the bastard child of **Tom Waits** and **Diamanda Galas**. The emotional vocal passages are supported by differing musical tones that build a strong foundation to Copernicus' creation. The complete track has power and strength and is somewhat compelling even to the fading lines repeating the call of, "Let me rest".

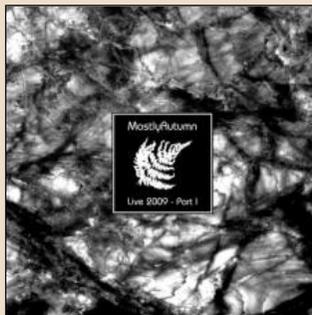
Nagasaki opens with some **Duane Eddy** guitar style passages, an off kilter **Hawkwind** melody, vocal work and synthesiser eruptions, which is the how the track is driven to its conclusion. The closing track *Atomic Nevermore* returns to performance poetry with its experimental and avant approach having the band build up a structure for Copernicus to work around, giving it body and being quite a fitting closing track.

This approach of Copernicus on this album has been somewhat sublime, having been approached in a very mature manner, which in turn has created a fantastic album. It's not going to appeal to lots of people, the caveat I feel needs adding here is that, this is not an album that will suit everyone's taste. This will appeal to the more adventurous or open minded proggies out there, so tread carefully if you wish to try it. If you like the testing work of the likes of **Faust** or **Throbbing Gristle** then you aren't going to struggle with this. You will find something in here that you will like: it's just about how long you are prepared to work. Out of all the albums I have reviewed so far, this is the one that has really caught my imagination. Because I feel this album will have only a limited appeal to our target audience I feel that I have to award it accordingly.

Conclusion: 7 out of 10

JOHN O'BOYLE

Mostly Autumn - Live 2009 [Disc 1]

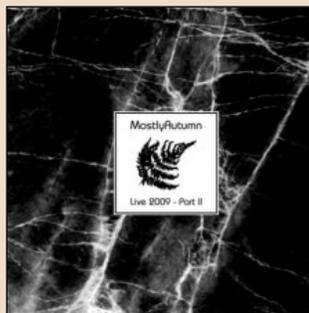


Country of Origin:	UK
Format:	CD
Record Label:	M A Records
Catalogue #:	AUT 0331
Year of Release:	2010
Time:	47:09
Info:	Mostly Autumn
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *Fading Colours* (6:41), *Caught In A Fold* (3:44), *Flowers For Guns* (5:07), *Unoriginal Sin* (5:02), *Simple Ways* (5:39), *Spirit Of Autumn Past Pt. 2* (6:37), *Half The Mountain* (5:52), *Evergreen* (8:22)

Mostly Autumn - Live 2009 [Disc 2]

Country of Origin:	UK
Format:	CD
Record Label:	M A Records
Catalogue #:	AUT 0332
Year of Release:	2010
Time:	60:20
Info:	Mostly Autumn
Samples:	Click here



Tracklist: *Winter Mountain* (5:45), *Dark Before The Dawn* (4:43), *Answer The Question* (4:43), *The Last Bright Light* (9:16), *Above The Blue* (5:58), *Nowhere To Hide* (4:26), *Broken Glass* (3:45), *Never The Rainbow* (6:59), *Pocket Watch* (5:23), *Tearing At The Faerytale* (7:40), *Carpe Diem* (8:56), *Heroes Never Die* (9:51)

Mostly Autumn, the name conjures images of an October sky, leaves on the ground, trees preparing to sleep through the coming season change, and shortened days. In the fall we enter a twilight realm in which a mystical unfolding is taking place. Similarly the band Mostly Autumn, evoke these qualities in song. They have been bringing this mysterious music to us for many years now, treading the boundaries of folk, prog, and Celtic

been bringing this mysterious music to us for many years now, breaking the boundaries of folk, prog, and Celtic music and conjuring the ghosts of a past that is still subtly hanging on to the present. We have walked in their meadows, slept by their rivers, and journeyed to Middle Earth. Now on the heels of their next studio release *Mostly Autumn* have released *Live 2009*. Don't worry what it lacks in title it makes up for in talent.

Although I have always felt a soft spot for Mostly Autumn I have never gotten to see them play live. Nevertheless if their concerts are anything like this recent live release then I have to say I have been missing out. Certainly their studio albums have revealed a band of growing talent and vocal prowess, but hearing their music live for the first time has opened up a vista of hidden treasure that I just did not recognize in the studio material. The music sparks as if something wild has been set free and indeed it has. From the opening strains of *Fading Colours* laced with an unworldly duet female vocal, we can tell that the band is in good form. Together they work through many old classics as well as songs from their recent *Glass Shadows* album.

Although this is sadly the last album that will feature original vocalist Heather Findlay she certainly belts her way into your heart. I am not sure what Heather has on her plate for the future but I wish her well and I will miss her voice. Despite this, the triumvirate of female vocalists Heather, Anne-Marie Helder, and Olivia Sparnenn combine to provide a siren song threesome. You will definitely need to be tied to the ship in order to pass through this territory. The sirens combine their voices throughout the concert. One of the standout tracks is *Flowers for Guns* which showcases each of them, but the point of no return comes in the song *Never The Rainbow* an old classic with a new shine as Olivia Sparnenn climbs to ungodly heights following after guitarist Bryan Josh in a performance that honours the great gig of **Clare Torey** and could possibly shatter your wine glass.

Josh, also brings his A game into the mix. In the past Josh has worn his allegiance to **Gilmour** in plain view for all to see and this mix certainly shows that he has continued that tradition. His lead however, is more than just homage to Gilmour; he puts his own signature flourishes throughout the songs. His recent work and certainly this live recording show him developing his musical voice beyond the shadow of the dark side of the moon. Check out his work on *The Spirit Of Autumn Past* and *The Dark Before The Dawn*. Iain Jennings, Liam Davidson, Andy Smith, and Gavin Griffiths, all lay down the canvas on which the ladies and Bryan paint the picture. Through beautiful ballads like *Above The Blue* as well as old favorites such as the Pink Floyd inspired *Half The Mountain*, the band constructs a comfortable space for the music to take flight within. For me this is most evident in tracks such as *Winter Mountain*, *Simple Ways* and *Heroes Never Die*.

I have been quite impressed with this album, coming back to it on many occasions to search for the hidden nuances. However, I would like to see all of the musicians stretch out more and show their true colours. Mostly Autumn do not craft epics, or long form songs with multiple changes. The band is closer to a folk rock band at times, instead of progressive folk, so if this is not to your taste then steer clear. Furthermore while the femme fatale trio makes an amazing splash, their male counterparts just cannot compete. What this means for me is that the songs sung by Bryan and Liam take me out of the whirlwind. This is not to say that under other circumstances I would not enjoy them; but against such vocal talent they put a damper on the passion of the music. Nevertheless the songs throughout the CD are well chosen and what they are missing soon becomes non-issue as Bryan takes off on yet another spread wing guitar solo. Overall the album brings new energy to the studio classics of Mostly Autumn and any Mostly Autumn fan will find appreciation for this live set. Newcomers may feel more comfortable checking out the back catalog, particularly *Heart Full Of Sky* and *The Last Bright Light* so that you can get a feel for the tenor and texture of the band, then come to the live release so that you can feel the difference. No matter how you choose to get here, this album will satisfy fans of Celtic rock, and proggy folk.

Conclusion: 7 out of 10

WOODY HARRIS

Hawkwind - Sonic Attack



Country of Origin:	UK
Format:	2CD
Record Label:	Atomhenge
Catalogue #:	ATOMCD 2019
Year of Release:	1981/2010
Time:	93:24
Info:	Hawkwind
Samples:	N/A

Tracklist:

CD 1 [42:01] *Sonic Attack* (4:49), *Rocky Paths* (3:53), *Psychosonia* (2:33), *Virgin Of The World* (4:09), *Angels Of Death* (5:59), *Living On A Knife Edge* (4:48), *Coded Languages* (4:51), *Disintegration* (1:06), *Streets Of Fear* (4:10), *Lost Chances* (5:39)

CD 2 [51:22] *Angels Of Death [single version]* (3:40), *Transdimensional Man [b-side]* (4:00), *Sonic Attack [first version]* (3:30), *Out Of The Void* (2:07), *Lost Chances [extended version]* (7:08), *Streets Of Fear [alternative version]* (5:49), *Devilish Dirge* (3:52), *The End Of Earth City [demo]* (6:29), *The Speed Of Light [Transdimensional Man demo]* (6:45), *Living On A Knife Edge [extended version]* (7:57)

By early 1981 the somewhat inappropriate occupier of the **Hawkwind** drum stool, ex-Cream drummer Ginger Baker, had left as had Keith Hale, whose tenure behind the rack of keyboards was somewhat brief. Also gone was the deal with Bronze Records and so, once more, the remaining band members - Dave Brock, Harvey Bainbridge and Huw Lloyd-Langton - found themselves without a recording deal. This situation was not to last and soon an arrangement was struck with Active, a new label set up by Kingsley Ward who owned Rockfield Recordings studios where Hawkwind had been regular clients since 1972. Active were distributed and marketed

by RCA who kept a degree of control over releases by financing recording projects. To complete the line-up, Hawklords drummer Martin Griffin was re-introduced into the fold, keyboards were left in the capable hands of Brock and Bainbridge, while another old friend, Michael Moorcock added lyrics and loaned his voice on one song. Released in October 1981, the album made the top 20 in the UK charts.

The album kicks off with the title track, an old lyrical piece that had first appeared on the seminal *Space Ritual* live album back in 1972. Although the musical backing is suitably cosmic, the rendering of the lyric is not a patch on original version having lost a lot of its original menace and ominous nature. I also miss the slightly creepy backing vocals! Lloyd-Langton's only writing contribution to the album came with the next track, *Rocky Paths*, co-written with his wife Marion. An energetic number with some great playing by the guitarist the track fades into *Psychosonia* which is somewhat of a shame as it has the makings of a classic extended Hawkwind piece. Still, I guess RCA were calling the shots and such indulgences were frowned upon in the 1980s. The start of *Psychosonia* would have fitted well on the *Hawklords* album of a few years earlier although the second half of the song is rather gibberish.

Rather better is *Virgin Of The World*, a simple synth piece, and *Angels Of Death* which was already a few years old by the time the album was released, having become something of a live favourite. *Living On A Knife Edge* was one of the first pieces recorded, having originally been demo'd by Brock at his farmhouse in Devon. It's an okay song, but as with quite a few of the numbers on the album, seems to rely on repetition and a degree of meandering, although having said that the closing minute is distinctive Hawkwind. Moorcock recites the lyrics to *Coded Languages* and if you have ever heard Moorcock doing his stuff you'll know what to expect - as a vocalist, Moorcock is a fine writer! Quite frankly, his voice seriously distracts from Bainbridge's otherwise fine musical backing. *Disintegration*, a brief piece which emphasises the quality re-mastering for CD, links into *Streets Of Fear* which exemplifies the fact that Brock had lost none of the musical abilities that made Hawkwind such a potent force in the seventies. This song would have fitted easily onto such essential albums as *Warriors On The Edge Of Time* or *Hall Of The Mountain Grill*. The original album ends with *Lost Chances*, another Brock-Moorcock composition, although this time we are saved the writer's vocals and the instrumental ending brings the album to a fine close.

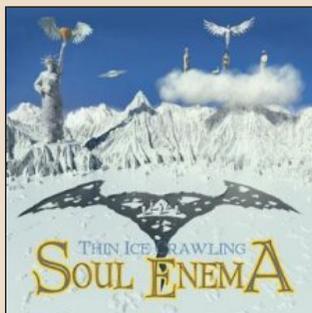
The second CD contains a mixture of demos, alternative versions and extended versions (although these are, I guess, how the songs were originally envisioned and recorded before they were edited down in order to keep the album's length to the standard LP running time of about 40 minutes). However, proceedings kick off with both sides of the single that was released on the same day as the album. I much prefer the single version of *Angels Of Death* as it is more succinct and packs a stronger punch. The b-side, *Transdimensional Man* is also a very good number that channels the spirit of The Hawklords through it. The longer demo version of this song (entitled *The Speed Of Light*) is rather more primitive, given the drum machine and less keyboards, but holds a certain charm, particularly if you prefer the somewhat rougher edges and less polish. The first version of *Sonic Attack* suffers the same as the final version although I think I prefer the musical accompaniment on this rendition. There are three previously unreleased numbers on the second disc, two of which (*Out Of The Void* and *Devilish Dirge*) are instrumental pieces, both of which would fit on any number of Hawkwind albums and are both enjoyable in the context of linking pieces. Indeed, *Devilish Dirge* is actually rather lovely. *The End Of Earth City* is a spoken word story that is better than much of the Moorcock stuff. Although it is not a piece that would fit easily on a regular album, as a narrative piece for a stage show it is very good and it is well worth its inclusion on this 'bonus' CD. The 'extended versions' of *Lost Chances* and *Living On A Knife Edge* are not radically different from the released versions but are more rounded without the fades and truncations imposed on them, and, again, I find them preferable to their shorter counterparts. The alternative (and not alternate - I wish people would use dictionaries!) version of *Streets Of Fear* is also longer than the final version by over a third and unlike a lot of alternative recordings it does sound quite different.

With a packed and informative booklet which includes the Sonic Attack tour programme reproduced in full, this is another very solid release from the Hawkwind back catalogue excellently put together by the people at Esoteric. Although not up there with the classic albums released on the United Artists label, it still has its moments and the additional CD (which is arguably better than the actual album) makes it a good addition to anyone's Hawkwind CD collection.

Conclusion: 7 out of 10

MARK HUGHES

Soul Enema – Thin Ice Crawling



Country of Origin:	Israel
Format:	CD
Record Label:	MALS
Catalogue #:	MALS 354
Year of Release:	2010
Time:	67:07
Info:	Soul Enema
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *The Land Derailed (7:30)*, *The Last Night (8:41)*, *Quicksand Lies (5:28)*, *Crystal Territory (7:10)*, *Splinter (7:09)*, *Other Line (7:43)*, *Unholy Ghost (6:09)*, *911 (8:59)* *Thin Ice Crawling - Outro (7:54)*

Although **Soul Enema** have been around for nearly nine years now this is their first ever album release other than a five track demo EP which appeared in 2003. Given the years in preparation, *Thin Ice Crawling* has obviously been something of a labour of love for the band which is evident throughout its 67 minutes playing time. Keyboardist and sometimes vocalist Constantin Glantz is clearly the bands visionary being responsible for the production and the majority of the compositions. He is aided and abetted by Yevgeny Kushnir (electric and acoustic guitars), Irina Sherr (vocals), Max Mann (bass guitar) and Oleg Szumsky (drums).

There is a clearly a concept that binds the album and on first glance the artwork and track titles would indicate an ecological theme. Further investigation of the lyrics however reveals an anti-war message and more specifically a contemporary critique on the war on terrorism. (If any band members are reading this review and I've got it wrong then please let me know). Characters appearing in the songs include 'Uncle Sam' and 'Brother Bin' (no prizes for guessing the thinly veiled references here) whilst singer Irina Sherr portrays the main protagonist Monica, an innocent who seems to be caught in the middle.

In keeping with the story telling approach the lyrics are often delivered in a theatrical style with Irina's confident and gutsy singing initially putting me in mind of **Toyah** and **Hazel O'Connor** amongst others. That's certainly true of *Crystal Territory* which boasts the kind of melodrama that wouldn't sound out of place in a **Lloyd / Webber** musical. Just occasionally (and amusingly) the words lose something in translation resulting in such gems as "Drunk rats are starting to sink into bittersweet vomit of chimney pipes" (I kid you not).

It's the magical interplay however between the lush and melodic keyboards and the muscular and contemporary sounding guitar work that proves to be the album's strongest asset. Glantz's smooth and flowing neo-prog synth lines compare favourably with the likes of **Mark Kelly** and **Martin Orford** and I particularly liked the authentically ethnic Middle Eastern sounds he creates during the opening *The Land Derailed*. For his part Kushnir provides a finely judged balance between soaring solos and weighty riffs. His chunky power chords assisted by bassist Mann during *The Last Night* and *911* add an appropriate air of pending doom. The latter song is possibly the album's highlight in a **Dream Theater** vein, heightened by rapid fire drumming from Szumsky who excels throughout.

The urgent instrumental exchanges reach a zenith during *Splinter* which contains more chops and changes than is seemingly feasible for one song. Here the clever instrumental touches seem to come and go within the blink of an eye and also worthy of special mention is the incredibly infectious synth hook that concludes *Other Line*. The only exception to the busy and strident style is the disappointing album closer *Thin Ice Crawling - Outro*. It's a mellow affair where gentle piano and keys blend effortlessly with guest Stas Gorodov's soulful alto sax playing. It fades around the three minute mark and after a protracted bout of silence it resurfaces with the sampled sounds of loud snoring, piercing screams and finally applause.

Despite the disappointing and ambiguous ending, *Thin Ice Crawling* is an excellent debut album that bodes well for Soul Enema's future. It's an extremely entertaining release that ticks all the right proggy boxes with superb musicianship, catchy melodies, surreal lyrics and fine lead vocals. In fact singer Irina's performance actually seems to get better as the album progresses reaching a peak during the penultimate *911*. Drama, bombast, neo-prog and a touch of prog metal, it's all here to enjoy. In common with the recent CD's from the MALS label it comes housed in a rather neat and slim line case that's certainly more discrete than the music contained within.

Conclusion: 7.5 out of 10

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