

points with a lot of Prog elements adding to the musical tapestry of ‘Headed...’ and with the odd time changes, weird guitar runs, strange chord progressions and much more to contend with this might not be for everyone; but do you know what? I love it.

Title track ‘Headed...’ opens the album and the Kings X influence is prevalent from the very first note, but SOMA aren’t a rip off act, far from it. Their own identity is stamped on each and every song and the shared lead vocals of drummer James “Ed” Collins and guitarist Doug Henthorn give the songs a different feel to a lot of similar bands who play in this musical style. ‘Overrated’ is a big riffing song with a killer hook, but if one song sums up SOMA then it’s the weird and brilliant ‘Pain Duplex’ where the verses have an almost off-putting time signature that morphs into a highly addictive chorus, complimented by some superby intricate guitar work mid-track before reverting to the odd verse chorus combo once again. Other songs I’d like to steer you towards are the riff-tastic ‘Freight Train’, the wonderful instrumental ‘London Fog Quartet’ where the band really show how good they are as musicians with guitarists DeAcutis and Henthorn taking top marks for their stunning guitar playing, ‘Thinking’ and finally ‘Cylicyben Trixhead’, another song with strange time changes and a peculiar sounding chorus but it’s also a song bursting with musicality and experimentation.

Different, weird, eccentric, strange, but in a good/great way is how I would describe this album. If it had been released back in the day who knows just how far SOMA would have gone, but that wasn’t to be, thankfully it’s here now and I know that a lot of Fireworks readers will love this record - give it a try.

Ian Johnson

**SONS OF SOUNDS  
‘SOUNDPHONIA’  
(El Puerto)  
HARD ROCK**

Brothers 3 (+ 1) bursting out of Germany by way of Siberia, Sons Of Sounds have made music a family endeavour. The three brothers are all offspring from

professional musicians who have clearly ignited the pathway for their children. Roman, Wayne and Hubert (“H”) Beselt have all followed in lock-step with their parents who come from a Classical and Jazz background. However, they buck the trend by pursuing a style that is completely contrary to their mentors which is playing hard, electrified music. The band falls perfectly into the fairly nebulous category of Heavy Rock; heavier than Hard Rock and milder than Heavy Metal.

The songs all have a personality unto themselves, but nothing really reaches out and pulls at those all-important heartstrings. Surprisingly, ‘Soundphonia’ ranks as fourth in the discography of this band. Hardly strangers to the studio, the production clearly illustrates their technical knowledge. Sonically, the mixing and overall production is executed well. Although staying in the lower range of the spectrum, vocalist Roman Beselt has much in common with the timbre of Grand Design’s singer and Ralph Scheepers (Primal Fear). Every other member is accomplished at their respective instruments and the music has a wonderful synergy.

They are certainly not at all afraid to venture into a Heavy Metal landscape. Songs like ‘Streetmutt’ and ‘Reset’ (which might be the finest performance of vocalist Roman Beselt) are delivered with strength, precision and confidence. ‘Time Machine’ and ‘Flowers On My Grave’ are two deep tracks that showcase SOS at their best. The former is classic Heavy Metal with a fabulous chorus resplendent with guitar harmonies and fantastic lead playing.

The more I listen to tracks ‘Wolfskind’, ‘Streetmutt’ and ‘Reset’, the more I hear the influence of Iron Maiden version three when Blaze Bailey entered the vocal spotlight. To disparage that iteration of Maiden and/or associate SOS with that (arguably) lesser received iteration is not the point... these are Maiden-influenced tracks that they themselves would most likely be happy penning.

This is a very confident, mature and worthy album, but I remain of the opinion that the best from this “band of brothers” is yet to come in (hopefully) the near future. ‘Soundphonia’ is their definite springboard

to greatness, so it is necessary to give it a spin and maintain a keen eye on their development.

Brent Rusche

**SPIRIT BOMB  
‘TIGHT’  
(Independent)  
ROCK**

This comes with a comic book! Sometime soon, apparently. In the meantime, we have ‘Tight’ from this French force and its a bit of a doozy.

They kick down the doors with spiky ‘Take It’, until it decides to go all early Red Hot Chili Peppers, yep, Rap Rock and it works. Even more so when they lay back slightly on ‘Come Out’ and the plucked bass and jousting guitars of ‘Only’ are a bit of a treat. They can turn it down a little too, there’s a bluesy basis to ‘Bad Words’ but the funky workouts are the real thing here, the bass line and rap to ‘Brand New Scars’.

Rap Metal is coming back, you know. Whether you like it or not! This band do it very well, but it’s the Chili Peppers vibe that really delights. Tight. To get loose.

Steve Swift

**STARLITE CAMPBELL BAND  
‘LANGUAGE OF CURIOSITY’  
(Supertone)  
BLUES**

Husband and wife Simon Campbell and Suzy Starlite formed the band after falling in love on stage and marrying soon after. With their fresh taste of original seventies British Rock and Blues, the duo released their debut album ‘Blueberry Pie’ to rave reviews. They have played all over the world, from Australia to the main stage at The Great British Rock & Blues Festival in the UK. They have had international radio play on BBC Radio 2 and charted Top Ten in the UK, Australia and The Netherlands. The band are Campbell (vocals, guitar), Starlite (vocals, bass), Steve Gibson (percussion) and various keyboard players. The lyrics cover all sorts of topics, like passion, sex, war and space travel.

Opener ‘Distant Land’ is a tremendous mid-tempo tune with a catchy guitar refrain. ‘Gaslight’ follows and is the latest single; it has a keyboard intro and a cool slide guitar with a Rolling Stones vibe going on. With ‘Language Of Curiosity’ both vocalists do the melody in harmony; it’s very reminiscent of sixties sounds with a chiming guitar. ‘Bad Sign’ is the first slow song; it has a lovely background piano and acoustic guitar which changes midway into a Bossa Nova-type section. This is followed by ‘Take Time To Grow’, another slow tune with great keyboard work, lovely melodic harmonies and a tasty guitar solo towards the end of it.

Subsequently ‘Said So’ has the same riff as The Kinks’ ‘You Really Got Me’, but it changes directions a few times, and then morphs into a Psychedelic feel before returning to the main riff. ‘It Ain’t Right’ has a dreamy acoustic sixties sound with Starlite on lead vocals. ‘Stone Cold Crazy’ is a seventies Rocker complete with double-tracked guitar and sounding so very much like Bad Company.

The final two songs are ‘Lay It Out On Me’ which is a Blues tune; the lyrics are very emotional, the vocals terrific and the Gilmour-styled guitar solo is short and sweet. Then there’s ‘Ride On Cowboy’, which is a gentle tune with Starlite again on lead vocals.

This album has many different styles going on, but its roots are stuck firmly in the sixties and seventies, which in itself is not a bad thing. There are many memorable songs that have ear worm choruses and

guitar pieces. The more you listen to it the more you will love it.

Paul Gregory

**STARSET  
‘HORIZONS’  
(Fearless)  
MODERN/ALTERNATIVE**

Starset’s first sci-fi album ‘Transmissions’ debuted on the Billboard chart in 2014. The group’s sci-fi themes continued, and they subsequently released the concept album ‘Vessels’ in 2017, followed by ‘Divisions’ in 2019. This latest album continues the voyage through the science fiction narrative, and according to Dustin Bates (vocalist) “It delivers a cinematic soundscape that accompanies the listener through pain, love, descent and triumph. The world has been consumed by synthetic methods of escaping reality, and it is with this technology that we are able to explore life through other user’s experiences — finally, the ability to be someone else”.

Opens ‘Unveiling The Architecture’ and ‘The Breach’ are the perfect way to start the album; huge chorus lines, driving heavy guitar and orchestration backing it all up. ‘Otherworldly’ follows, and is another great song with a more melodic chorus. With ‘Icarus’ and ‘Earthwise’ there are again very melodic choruses, distorted guitars and orchestrations. These are followed by ‘Leaving The World Behind’, another slower song with multi-tracked vocals in the melody.

‘Devolution’ has a keyboard introduction, some spoken lyrics narrating the story, great drums, some gruff type vocals and the ever-present strings. ‘Annihilated’ and ‘Alchemy’ are mid-paced songs containing various keyboard effects before that heavy guitar riff joins in. ‘Disappear’ is a pleasant ballad with vocals, synthesizer and orchestration. ‘This Endless Endeavor’ and ‘Symbiotic’ has the orchestration to the fore, before going into songs that Within Temptation would be proud to have made.

‘Dreamcatcher’ and ‘Tunnelvision’ are faster-paced tunes than the previous few with tremendous melodies, orchestrations and synthesizers. ‘Infected’ is, for me, the best track; it has a great sing-a-long chorus and is easier on the ear than the rest of the album. The final song is ‘Something Wicked’ and is a fitting song to end with.

Starset’s epic Symphonic Hard Rock will not be to everybody’s taste. This album is heavier than their previous works; it contains sixteen tracks and is seventy-two-minutes long. There are songs that sound very similar and the album flags a bit in the middle; however, for their fans this is an album full of everything that the band are known for. Having seen them previously supporting Shinedown, I am sure that it will be an amazing spectacle when they perform it live.


Paul Gregory

**STEPHAN GEORG  
‘THE FIRE STILL BURNS’  
(Tight)  
HEAVY METAL**

I’m sure it’s less than a year since I reviewed guitarist Stephan Georg’s sophomore album, and suddenly here he is again with a brand-new studio opus. Third time around, it is very much business as usual musically, which is fine by me. For ‘The Fire Still Burns’, his rhythm section is comprised of the rock steady pairing of Stefan Dress on bass and Marco Verbücheln on drums who prove to be consummate professionals throughout.

Georg has yet again pulled in some high calibre help vocally – David Reece (Accept, Bangalore Choir, Bonfire), Alexx Stahl (Bonfire), Uwe Köhler (Bonfire),

**THE MURDER OF MY SWEET - ‘A GENTLEMEN’S LEGACY’ (Frontiers) SYMPHONIC**



This is my third The Murder of My Sweet review for Fireworks and I am nothing but fortunate because they get better with every album. In times past, Angelica Rylin's voice is the most captivating element of the band. However, this album showcases the band as a whole at its most cohesive. The album is a direct reflection of how they have matured and settled into a magical groove that simply resonates.

As much as they all contribute to the album as a whole, each song stands on its own. Songs like ‘Wheels Of Time’ show how TMOMS can pen a brilliantly accessible song. This album flows smoothly to the point that you have no idea whether or not it is a proper concept... Pink Floyd’s ‘Dark Side Of The Moon’ and Extreme’s ‘Extreme II: Pornograffiti’ are two such other examples where the quality of the songs eclipse the purposeful (however obscure) storyline.

‘Six Feet Under’ sets the stage for yet another epic offering from TMOMS. This elaborate introduction ushers in the fabulously melodic, sprawling and devastatingly beautiful ‘A Ghost Of A Chance’. Rylin delivers the lyrics with a relaxed and supreme grace. The songs all segue with uninterrupted ease. As a matter of fact, the end of one song gives you an intense feeling of anticipation with regard to what comes next. By the time you get to ‘Trick Of The Devil’ (track nine) you should have already come to this conclusion.

You can literally pluck any track from this album and target it as a single to represent this remarkable song collective; this is an album that represents a band at its absolute apex. This clearly showcases the magic that TMOMS is able to achieve and only hope they can ride this wave for as long as possible. They are able to tell a cogent story while swimming in the blissful waters of proper popular song-writing, glorious melodies and deliver it all with aplomb.

This is, without question, a fabulous recording on every level. If you get to ‘Kill Your Darlings’ and don’t agree with me, I’m not sure what you search for in a great recording. As for myself, ‘A Gentlemen’s Legacy’ is unquestionably not only one of the best albums of 2021 but one of the best of the band’s career...job incredibly well done.

Brent Rusche

Chris Richter (Universe), American blues singer Lisa Mann, singer and model Lydia Pané, and finally, the curiously named Manouca. The different vocalists help give the album a distinct range of styles and flavours, making it thoroughly interesting throughout. A further guest-star on ‘The Fire Still Burns’ is ex-W.A.S.P. legend Chris Holmes, who adds his usual fire to proceedings.

Georg is a very potent guitarist in his own right and is well respected within the German Heavy Metal scene, so it’s always surprising to me that he’s not been more successful in his own right. His music is always worth listening to, he is not only a fine guitarist but a very good songwriter to boot, I can’t figure why bigger labels aren’t queuing up to sign him! If you love old school Heavy Metal, the sort of thing you would roar along to at a festival like Wacken – then buy this album!

Chris O’Connor

**STEVE STEINMAN  
‘TAKE A LEAP OF FAITH’  
(Independent)  
ROCK**

From chef to Meatloaf impersonator and on to a starring role in the amazing theatre Rock Musical extravaganza’s ‘Vampires Rock’ and ‘Anything For Love’ highlight Steve Steinman’s passion for music, and the break in shows caused by the COVID pandemic gave Steinman time to put flesh on the bones of something that he has longed to do for a while now, to create an album of original music.

The first track ‘Take A Leap Of Faith’ builds from a kind of musical box/fairy-tale intro into a powerful kick-ass rocker replete with melodies and riffs galore. Steinman’s voice dominates the track as the master storyteller. Lyrically and musically brilliant with passion, emotion and soul in every verse! ‘Going To Hell’ bares more Meatloaf-esque trademarks and could be the bastard child of ‘Bat Out Of Hell’ and ‘Paradise By The Dashboard Light’.

A hauntingly beautiful Saxophone piece by John Wolfenden launches ‘I Don’t Know About Love’ which is slower paced but still keeps the tension and emotions

riding high with Steinman’s enigmatic vocal delivery. ‘Survive’ kicks off with Greg Morton on piano as this meaty Rock track heats up and takes no prisoners with it hooky chorus. Back in anthem mode comes ‘Fight’ as the lyrics conjure up more images as Steinman regales the tale. A pounding guitar rhythm and a stellar solo is to be found here courtesy of James Marsh. ‘Never Leave A Lover’ does the typical Meatloaf of starting with a gentle piano then pull out all the stops and raising the roof. If this track doesn’t make you smile, jump and generally celebrate great music then nothing will!

The album closer ‘Northern Star’ is a duet with Emily Clark who has appeared as part of Women In Rock and in many of Steinman’s musicals. Clark has a fantastic voice in her own right and compliments Steinman perfectly here. The song itself is more theatrical and less rocky than the others found here but shows just how versatile the man is.

Steinman is more Meatloaf than Meatloaf is these days and pulls it off beautifully. There is still a twist of individualism here which makes it all the more exciting. Steve Steinman is assured even more success after this release. With a persona on stage that’s larger than life itself, the live performances of these tracks is going to be a blast.

Paul Sabin

**STEW  
‘TASTE’  
(Uprising)  
HARD ROCK**

Stew are a Swedish trio with their roots firmly entrenched in the early seventies Rock scene. These new kids on the block formed in 2017 and following on from their 2019 debut ‘People’, they are ready to cook up their latest recipe book of Rock. Using a pinch of Sabbath, a dash of Purple and some heavy Cream, Markus Asland (vocals/bass), Nicklas Jansson (guitar) and Nicklas Dahlgren (drums) have prepared nine dishes to see if they can tempt your taste buds.

‘Keep On Praying’ is the opening course; a slow-cooking tune with a dirty

deep sound with a huge solo breaking out in the middle, followed by a Gospel-sounding chorus to keep you on the straight and narrow. ‘Still Got The Time’ has an almost Progressive feel to it. The huge blend of styles mixing together, highlights the versatility of the band. ‘You Don’t Need Me’ chills things down, whilst still adding upbeat melodies. ‘Earthless Woman’ is a ripping rocker with some lovely guitar tones coming to the fore.

The dishes keep coming, ‘Heavy Wings’ adding a lovely soulful vocal built on top of an infectious beat followed by the rockier ‘Stranger In The City’. The final two bites, ‘New Moon’ with its up-tempo grizzly guitar sound, and the finale ‘When Lights Go Out’, a nice mellow way to end proceedings, leave the listener full up after a smorgasbord of nine fantastic treats, all presented in style.

Stew are another of the young guns coming out of Scandinavia delving deep into the heavier side of the Blues, whilst adding a slice of the doomier ingredients to their sound. The band are tight and show a great maturity in both song-writing and composition, which is well thought out and played with aplomb. Whilst the market seems to be expanding into the Blues, Stew have created their own identity and are not just imitators. The album has a wonderful groove and some great riffing Rock ‘n’ Roll. They have enough energy to be at the vanguard of the New Wave Of Blues Rock, and as such ‘Taste’ might well whet your appetite.

Mick Parry

**STONE DEAF  
‘KILLERS’  
(Coffin & Bolt)  
MODERN/ALTERNATIVE**

It’s hard to pinpoint the music of Stone Deaf. In summary, it is both an Industrial and grungy version of Indie Rock with the added punch of intensity and purpose. Above all, there is an edge to the music; it is strangely unabashed and compelling with dominant bass and half-spoken vocals cutting through a dense soundtrack. Importantly, the band clearly has a following with several tours under their belt and ‘Killers’ being their third album since forming in New Castle, Colorado in 2014. A romantic setting, I am sure, with vast landscapes and natural beauty surrounding small town life - thus forming ideas for the

expansive songs on the album.

The music provides a soundscape to a high tech but geographically remote thriller in your mind with an almost vocoder affect to the vocals in places. Underneath it all though there is a heartbeat of basic Rock ‘n’ Roll, but this is a band that is not basic and the atmosphere evoked by their music is impressive. The cultist vibe of the band is appealing with echoes of comradeship with the counter-culture pioneers William S Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. Something different but satisfying.

Rob McKenzie

**STRANGE MAJIK – ‘STRANGE MAJIK AND THE RIGHTEOUS WRONGS’ (Bang Bang Boogaloo) ROCK**

Strange Majik is David Pattillo, Blues Rock cult hero from New York City, famed for his Tuesday night residency in Tribeca. At the beginning of March 2020 Pattillo released ‘20/20’, the end of March bought the Pandemic and ‘20/20’ sunk without a trace; which is a crying shame because it’s a great album, I’d recommend anyone to track it down and add it to their collection, pronto.

The Pandemic has been spent writing and recording songs for the post pandemic release, ‘Strange Majik And The Righteous Wrongs’. Pattillo’s Blues Rock style has heavy English influences; as with ‘20/20’ the vibe is very much late sixties, early seventies when album tracks hit the charts as Pop songs. Opening track ‘Dose Of Love’ has some real Stones vocals and saxophone zings provided by Geoff Burke (Harry Connick Jr). ‘City Is Burning’ is sixties discotheque that conjures up panda-eyed girls in Quant dresses shimmying in the background. The lava lamp atmosphere continues with the sultry ‘Queen Of Cool’, a melee of Major Tom Bowie meets the ‘Stones. Pattillo’s guitar on ‘Kingfish’ is sublime and soulful, all the parts are intrinsically English in sound but the overall effect is undoubtedly New York.

‘Swing For The Fences’ is jazzy and depraved; a louche brew of organ and sax, it is wondrous. ‘Midnight Promises’ takes the pace down to hot smoochiness, the slithery drums (on the whole album) provided by Pattillo’s seventeen-year-old son, Owen, showing a skill for “just what’s needed” that’s beyond his years.

‘Can’t Remember To Forget Your Name’

**THE PARADOX TWIN – ‘SILENCE FROM SIGNALS’ (White Star) PROGRESSIVE**



This is a Progressive masterpiece, music itself can be a paradox. It can leave the listener perplexed by the vast array of colour that the sound creates as it passes through a prism as it merges into an all-encompassing sound that embraces the senses. This is the second album by the band and is a swift follow-up to the ‘Importance Of Bedlam’. The subject matter is very personal to main writer Danny Sorrel. It deals with sibling difficulties as one of his sons has autism, something I know a bit about as I work in this area. The album tells a complex story of twins who see the world differently.

Don’t be put off by the subject matter as Paradox Twin have created an album with Progressive pulses of pure patterns that will engulf the listener. Vocally and instrumentally, it is full of grandeur. It rises and falls as it is filled with melodrama; the use of male/female vocals enhances as the story of this brother / sister is told.

Set aside some time and give this a go, but be prepared to have your every preconception tested. I guarantee if you give this Berkshire-based band a listen your every expectation will be eclipsed. This really is an album of depth and feel, Sorrel who takes the male voice and Nicole Johnson the female, should be congratulated for tackling such a topic with sensitivity.

When you listen, you don’t need to know the story line, the musicianship will wash over you in waves that will carry you through the entire record. It is both dramatic and restrained and quite simply sublime! A special mention must go to John Mitchell who is the musical mastermind, he creates the platform for this story to be told. It features eight songs, with titles like ‘Sea Of Tranquility’, ‘I Am Me. I Am Free’ and ‘Specular’

It could be my album of the year.

Paul Rhino Mace