INTERVIEW WITH DREW GODDARD
OF AUSTRALIAN PROGRESSIVE METAL ACT
KARNIVOOL

ALBUM REVIEWS
* PERIPHERY II: THIS TIME
IT'S PERSONAL
PERIPHERY
* ONE
TESSERACT

GEAR: HEAD2HEAD
EMG 81* 85 VS SEYMOUR DUNCAN BLACKOUTS
EMG EMG* ZW ZAKK WYLDE
81* 85 SET

Sound
Firstly, the output level is excellent. The sound is very clear, the 81 in the Bridge has great tone and definition and when Palm Muted it has a really nice crunch. When I play odd Chord shapes, all of the strings come through clear as a bell. Nothing gets lost in the mix. I play in C# and I am currently using a Peavey 6505+ Head with a Peavey XXX 4X12 Cabinet. The 85 in the neck position is only ever used for clean channel and it really helps add more depth and tone to what is a decent but not quite Stellar clean channel on the 6505. I am very happy with the sound. // 10

Reliability AND Durability
The pickups came installed from the factory. I bought a used ESP LTD MH-400NT about 6 months ago and I haven’t had an issue yet. The pickups seem to be pretty easy on the 9V battery. They don’t seem to suck a lot of juice and the fit and finish impresses me as top notch. There is no unusual noise from the pickups when no notes are being played and they seem like they will last a long time. I have absolutely no apprehension about the reliability and I never feel nervous about having any kind of technical issue on stage. // 9

Impression
There is plenty of low end crunch, but there is also a wealth of Mid and High range tone and the sustain is quite good. For the 85 when in clean channel, it sounds very clear but there is also a softness to the tone, especially when strumming as opposed to picking. I never use the 81 in clean because I absolutely despise the twang. My only gripe about the pickups is the noise level when I’m muting the strings. The fact that the 6505+ is a high gain amp doesn’t help either, nor does my lack of a noise suppressor. // 9

SEYMOUR DUNCAN BLACKOUTS AHB* 1

Sound
The sound on these pickups is bloody brilliant. Output level is very high as expected, yet noiseless. For cleans you’ll need an amp that won’t break up easily as these pickups push out a lot of sound. That said, I could get nice bluesy tones out of them in the neck position with just a touch of gain to round out the sound. For lead/distortion they are extremely heavy and tight sounding. I play all kinds of stuff and with the right EQ, it can be awesome for anything. As for Tone, I would describe it as being heavy and a little scooped. // 10

Reliability AND Durability
The pickup seems very durable and all the parts were there except for height/mounting screws. This was a problem because the pickups couldn’t take the original mounting screws, so now they are just stuck into place. It can definitely depend on it. I tried all afternoon to make them come off justas a test but they stuck. If your mounting screws fit, then there’ll definitely be no problem. // 8

Impression
I love how it can handle almost all the stuff I throw at it. It sounds really smooth and imo, it’s much nicer than comparative EMG pickups that I’ve tried. I only hate the fact that mounting it was a pain. They are installed in a B.C. Rich afterburner warlock and I’ll be getting the phase-1 7 string versions for my Kramer. It came as a set of both neck and bridge pickups. // 9

OVERALL RATING: 9.7

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Australia’s Karnivool made the progressive rock album of the year in 2009 with their second full-length Sound Awake. Actually, scrub that, it’s simply one of the best albums we heard year in 2009 with their second full-length Sound Awake. Actu-
ally, scrub that, it’s simply one of the best albums we heard from any genre. Sound Awake is a stunning display from talented musicians pushing the envelope with an incredibly deep and layered record while never losing sight of great melodies in great songs.

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What was your main gear for this album? "Main guitars were Paul Reed Smith, that was my first real guitar suppose, a SE 24. But I also have a Custom 24. Hos has got a Custom, but I prefer the CE’s bolt-on construction, I don’t know what it is, but I’ve just come to know that guitar better over the years. We used a bit of Les Paul too, and a Tele here and there for the more chimmy top end stuff.

“We used heaps of amps – anything we could get our dirty mits on! We made a big stack, a Great Wall Of China of amps around the studio. We had a Marshall JCM 800, an old ’73 Super Lead plexi head, which was awesome. “That was used in combination with the main amp, that was used on pretty much every song; a Peavey 5150. That’s my old brick that I’ve had for years – a one trick pony but I think the one trick it does, it does extremely well. It’s the meat of the meat and potatoes. That’s my main amp live.

“We also used a Bad Cat. Amazing boutique amps. We used that for a lot of the clean stuff – good for the mid-range if you want to hit a really precise spot. We used a Sherlock Fathead too – a local manufacturer. It’s a guy called Dale Sherlock, he custom makes these amps and we used them on the clean parts as well.”

Is there one piece of gear that you couldn’t live without? “Probably a delay – I think I’d be lost without my delay. It’s like when the lights are turned on in a nightclub at the end of the night and you’re like, Oh shit! If I had to pick a favourite unit it would be my [Electro-Harmonix] Memory Man – it’s just such a distinctive sound. Plus I love the noise you can get when you make it feed back like in Set Fire To The Hive.”

You seem to be very comfortable playing in unusual time signatures and make that work really well melodically. Do you think that is because you also play drums and just approach things from a different place compared to most guitarists?

“I think that’s got a lot to do with it. The odd time signatures aren’t because we consciously sit down and decide a part has to be in 7/8 or whatever. It just happens; we jam and it comes out that way. It’s the tension and release – or the rise and fall – you feel when that kick or snare needs to happen.

“When I come up with guitar ideas, or the songs stem from guitar ideas, they’re approached from a rhythmic perspective. You’re a drummer at heart then?

“A lot of the time when I come up with a riff, I think about it rhythmically. It comes through, bouncing and falling.

“From the whole album, that kick or snare has to happen. “Main guitars were Paul Reed Smith, that was my first real guitar suppose, a SE 24. But I also have a Custom 24. Hos has got a Custom, but I prefer the CE’s bolt-on construction, I don’t know what it is, but I’ve just come to know that guitar better over the years. We used a bit of Les Paul too, and a Tele here and there for the more chimmy top end stuff.

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What other guitarists have inspired you? “Kim Thayll from Soundgarden was a big influence, even Kurt Cobain too. He showed me you don’t have to be a very good guitarist to write great songs. I grew up on the whole grunge thing. But Dimebag was unbelievable, Fredrik from Meshuggah has been a big influence. It’s more bands as a whole that inspire me though – what the musicians create together rather than just the guitarists.”

Looking back, was Ian [Kenny, Karnivool singer] an influential person for you when you first started playing guitar?

“Definitely – Ænima really resonated with everyone in the band. If came out in ’96 and I was so intrigued by this dark, expansive music. It’s the music that I really get into – the music you don’t quite get at first but it draws you back into it. You have to give it a bit of attention and when then you finally get a more intimate relationship with the album as time goes on.”

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PERIPHERY
PERIPHERY II: THIS TIME IT’S PERSONAL

At its worst, Periphery II is a thoroughly enjoyable guilty pleasure. At its best, it’s a goddamn fine album. What makes it work is the band’s grasp of dynamics: the record ebbs and flows through stuttering lower register riffs, sugary choruses, and atmospheric softer parts. Instead of a kitchen-sink approach to songwriting, there are, well, actual songs here, with memorable parts that make them distinct. When the gooey melodic parts start becoming indistinguishable like peanut M&Ms stuck together at the bottom of a bag in a hot car, the song around them still retains its own personality. Which is why Periphery II’s 69 minutes (lol, sigh) generally aren’t a chore. They’re enjoyable, occasionally evocative, and often brilliant.

Take, for instance, the album’s best two songs: “Ragnarok” and “The Gods Must Be Crazy!” The former opens with a pretty bold-faced ripoff of something off Meshuggah’s latest (though considering the timeline of that, who knows who’s ripping off whom at this point) unraveling into some great melodic parts punctuated by a killer high note hit by vocalist Spencer Sotelo followed by a two-minute coda of swirling processed guitar and drum machine that fades into the latter: the band at their catchiest, producing something certainly more memorable than anything rock radio has spewed forth in the last decade (if only we lived in a world where growling or screaming didn’t guarantee you a spot on the mainstream bench), those songs just kick off the second half of the record, which includes a predictably ridiculous John Petrucci solo and This Time It’s Personal’s heaviest riff at the end of “Masamune”, which closes out the record.

Tesseract have undoubtedly been dragging their feet over the last few years; excitement regarding the release of their debut has swelled and subsided following the band’s frequent mutations, contractions and expansions. Even though a substantial of the material comprising their debut full length was composed nearly five years ago One drops belatedly in the new decade, eleven aural entities stepping lightly off the hype train and onto the solid ground of critical reality. Mercifully, for the most part it was worth the wait; although unforgivably overdue One is without a doubt a paradigm of pristine yet emotive musicianship, part raging tempest, part whispering breeze; these are sinuous and seductive siren songs calling out for shipwreck. Musically, comparisons have been made mirroring Tesseract with the other luminaries of the Djent scene, Meshuggah andTextures especially.

This is inevitable, and yet it does the young English band no real disservice; being compared with some of the most forward thinking artists in metal of recent years is surely no bad thing. The instrumentation is top notch and at times simply jaw dropping; one would expect nothing less. Seven string guitars rip through riffs like scissors through fabric, tearing frantically at the aural cloth before subsiding into achingly beautiful acoustic passages that flutter like silk in the echoing space, interspersing the turbulent maelstrom with much needed moments of quiet and calm. Postones and Williams handle the low end perfectly, their flowing serpentine flesh around the body of the song in an tantalizingly gentle embrace before suddenly choking the frail and trembling pot of agonizingly lopsided rhythms that wind their flowing serpentine flesh around the body of the song in an tantalizingly gentle embrace before suddenly choking the frail and trembling melodies in iridescent coils. After a few mesmerizing spins it becomes fully apparent; Tesseract have as a complete musical entity succeeded in forging and stamping their own ubiquitous seal on the tech-metal scene.

The vocals are an enticing mixture of mid range screams and the clean, soaring wails that have unfortunately become somewhat of a cliché in the metal scene in recent years; for the most part, however, they suit the music perfectly. Parts of familiar epic Concealing Fate aside, final track Eden is without a doubt the band’s crowning achievement; a nine minute melting pot of agonizingly lopsided rhythms that wind their flowing serpentine flesh around the body of the song in an tantalizingly gentle embrace before suddenly choking the frail and trembling melodies in iridescent coils. After a few mesmerizing spins it becomes fully apparent; Tesseract have as a complete musical entity succeeded in forging and stamping their own ubiquitous seal on the tech-metal scene.

OVERALL RATING
9

8.5

The ALBUM REVIEWS