

The True Spirit Of Independence

AUGUST 2002



Codeseven - "The Rescue"

(The Music Cartel)

Epic melancholia and big loping riffs from this US five-piece. Codeseven are what I imagine Radiohead could have turned into if they'd decided to go hardcore instead of ambient. The vocals tread that Yorke-esque fine line between winning and whining, while the music's a mix of delicate atmospheric, lyrical guitar lines and impassioned grooves that move fluidly between levels and moods. There's beauty here, from the fragile floatiness of 'Obsolete Folksong', to the sleepy shuffle of 'The Camel City', but the guys aren't scared to rock out - in the long build-up of 'Southie', or the frantic intro to 'The Rescue'. There's almost too much changing between light and dark on this album, but on the whole Codeseven succeed in crafting excellent, emotionally-articulate rock. 8/10.

Jane Boxall

Medusa Cyclone - "Tangier"

(Small Stone Recordings)

As Babylon Zoo so memorably put it, "Spaceman, I always wanted you to go into space, man!" Medusa Cyclone's album is concerned above all with sonic space-trekking, conjuring up moody soundscapes over ten fully-instrumental tracks. From the rumbling synth and guitar reverb of opener 'Orange Sunshine' to the ethereal wave sounds and edgy electronic swells of closing epic 'Tangier', Medusa Cyclone draw you in with their warm, enveloping textures and hypnotically mumbling riffs. The album's the brainchild of American multi-instrumentalist Keir McDonald, and there are a few guest drummers and bassists, but most of the tracks are guitar-led, with changing moods constructed over sustained harmonies. Euphoric and blissed-out - though not in a crap-chillout-album kind of way - 'Tangier' manages to combine the contoured dynamics of Mogwai with the space-scape fixation of early Pink Floyd. Great stuff. 8/10.

Jane Boxall

Everon - "Bridge"

(Mascot Records)

In the world of German four-piece Everon, the 1980's and 90's might as well not have happened. This is pure seventies prog - earnest, overblown, technical, irony-free... but really good all the same. The traditional concept-album format is firmly in place, as the album is bound together by the theme of, erm, a spooky bridge. Musically, it's all big gestures and epic vocals, executed with great precision and polish. Oliver Phillips' vocals are clearly influenced by the old English progsters - in particular I was reminded of a slightly more 'metal' Phil Collins. In a good way! This is less irritating than you'd think, and you can't help but be carried along by the band's emotional passion and sweeping dynamic changes, as delicate instrumental intro's give way to immense stadium-rocking choruses. Piano and keyboard sounds add another dimension to the hefty guitar riffs and virtuosic drumming, and the CD booklet contains an apology to Billy Joel for nicking some of his piano chords. Against the odds, Everon get away with such unabashed cheesiness, and 'Bridge' is a really listenable album. Admittedly, anyone who's seen Spinal Tap will have trouble taking this album entirely seriously, the larger than life histrionics of tracks such as 'Ten Years Late' and 'Across The Land' conjuring up images of Tap-esque stagershows and descending mini-Stonehenges... But, if you're able to suspend your cynicism for the duration of the album, you might well find you like it. 6/10.

Jane Boxall

Chang - "Self Titled"

(Self-Released)

Seven cheeky tracks from South Wales boys Chang, this demo bungs together frantic, punky riffs, itchy drumbeats, and vocals which Vic Reeves would probably describe as "in the club style". Amazingly, it all works beautifully, yielding small-but-perfectly-formed three minute nuggets of cartoonish power punk. The choppy rhythms mean it's never a dull listen, and there are little sonic oddities like glockenspiel solos and bass slides to catch you unawares. Like it! 7/10.

Jane Boxall

Aura Sun - "Tattered Fragments Of Broken Conversations"

(Self Released)

There are lots of good things about this demo. Aura Sun possess the emotional sweep of the Deftones, the crushing rhythm-section assault of Glassjaw, and plenty of light and shade in terms of dynamics. The production's pretty solid too - though perhaps a little top-heavy on the drums - and the songs are well-shaped. The only letdown is the occasionally unconvincing vocals - but wandering, sometimes aimless melodies and a straining, faltering style of delivery belie the fact that this UK five-piece have been together barely a year, and have not yet polished their sound. Hopefully some more experience and confidence will see them achieve great things in future. Check them out at www.aurasun.co.uk. 7/10.

Jane Boxall

Clench - "Self Titled"

(Attack Records)

The drummer from Clench is a talented guy. Not only has he written half the tracks on this album, but his tom-heavy grooves are the driving force behind the songs, with drum production that's simply beautiful - full and crunchy. The rest of the band? They come across like a really pissed-off Boy Hits Car, with abrasive shouty vocals over heavy, forceful rock. Straightforward slabs of aggression like 'Hate' and 'Break' sit alongside more mellow, vibey tracks - there's even a didgeridoo solo at one point. Overall, it's pretty good, though I found singer Davide's barking style began to grate after a while. The rhythm section work really well together, with Fabio's grinding bass sound complemented perfectly by Fabri's versatile beats. The album's a mixed bag - between the programmed beat that kicks off opener 'Different Worlds' and the ethereal synthy instrumental closing of 'Spacedustwave', there's plenty of variation in both style and quality. While most of the songs are kept interesting by heavy grooves peppered with stop-start dynamics, some of the riffs have a tendency to become leaden and dull, and sometimes things get a bit too repetitive to hold your attention. But altogether, if you fancy checking out some heavy, angry American emo, this album is well worth a listen. 5/10.

Jane Boxall