



Genre: Power Metal
SPV

"Across The Seven Seas"

ARTLANTICA

It says much for the strength in depth of modern power metal that while Artlantica's debut won't quite sink without trace, it will probably travel its seven seas largely unnoticed. And that's a shame.

Nowhere near as grandiose as Rhapsody, or as thrashy as Iced Earth, Artlantica nevertheless combine elements of both on ten well-executed tracks set to please anyone who values melody as well as muscle.

Formed from the ashes of American-Swiss metallers Artension, Atlantica have roped in a number of high-profile guests, most notably Sadius/Testament bass wizard Steve DiGiorgio who puts his fleet-fingered stamp all over tracks like the super-powered "Devout" and the instrumental "Return Of The Pharaoh". No offence to our fine, four-stringed friends, but if we're getting excited about the bass parts, then we know it's a special album.

But this is no one-man show. Performances are strong across the board and it's pleasing to note that for all the mightily impressive chops on show, Artlantica never lose track of the most important thing of all – the song. This is an album without a weak song and each one is taken to a new level by the startling voice of John West, a man clearly living and loving every note and word.

Even the obligatory ballad, "Ode To My Angel", fails to dampen the spirits too much; its sickly-sweet sentimentality redeemed by a classy arrangement straight from the Scorpions school of lighter-waving schmaltz.

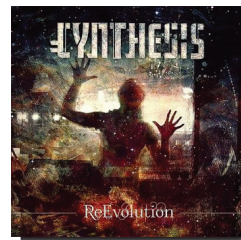
Ballads, bass and banging ahoy – don't let this sail under your radar.

POWERPOINTS: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧

MARCUS JERVIS

SHO!

CYNTHESIS
"ReEvolution"
Genre: Progressive Metal
Sensory Records



I reviewed "DeEvolution", the debut album from Cynthesis, very positively at the time of its release in 2011 but since then, the album has seen a frequent return to the stereo and has continued to get better and better over the ensuing couple of years since its release. My anticipation levels for the follow-up have therefore been very high for some time and I'm delighted, not to mention relieved, to report that I am in no way disappointed.

In actual fact, "ReEvolution" is the second disc in what is hoped will be a dystopian trilogy and follows a shaman that, in the course of gathering more slaves, discovers a tribe, from whom he eventually realises he was taken and sets them free. Jason Tipton is again the main song writer and so compositionally, "ReEvolution" pretty much takes up where Cynthesis' debut album left off. Joined once more by his brother Troy (bass), former Zero Hour vocalist Erik Rosvold and Enchant's Sean Flanagan (drums), the music is, as you would expect, out of the very top draw. It is undeniably progressive metal at its core and there are plenty of impressive technicalities to be heard throughout, particularly where the string instruments are concerned. And when the guitar and bass are both in full flow, it is difficult not to be reminded of the excesses of Zero Hour.

However, in keeping with its predecessor, the complexity is tempered significantly by some wonderfully lush melodies and all-encompassing atmospherics. Swaths of keyboards drench large passages of the material, often only accompanied by quiet picked guitars and Rosvold's impressively passionate vocals. As evidenced on "The Noble Lie", this relative simplicity can also create some of the best and most emotional moments on an album that is dark and oppressive and yet seductive and addictive. That said, the epic "Release The Deity" has to be the finest moment on this record. It is over thirteen minutes long but flies by as it gently builds from a very delicate opening right through to an outpouring of aggression and emotion in its final movement. The crescendo is stunning and is one of those moments when, as you listen for the first time, you are stopped dead in your tracks, goose bumps appear and whilst it plays out, nothing else matters. If you liked the debut, then "ReEvolution" is utterly essential.

POWERPOINTS: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

MATT SPALL

NECROPSY
"Tombs Of The Forgotten – The Complete Demo Recordings"
Genre: Death Metal
Century Media



With its own brand of morbidity and decay, the Finnish death metal of the late 1980s and early 1990s was bound from day one to prove burgeoning on a global scale and having spawned cult classics such as Demilich, Convulse and Depravity, this was of course the case. Now, thanks to Century Media, we see the release of a 3CD

compilation package containing every demo from obscure genre classics Necropsy, all within one manageable and easily accessible package.

Over the course of its three discs and near three-hour length, the compilation trudges through demo release after demo release with each offering the band's distinctive take on the death metal formula, one that applies an often thrashy and cerebral yet equally as often primitive, barbarian and Celtic Frost reminiscent dirge on to the Finnish tone and aesthetic. Whilst disc one contains the band's first three demos, each largely bordering on thrash metal, the second moves on to the band's next three releases, beginning with "Promo 91" and ending just prior to the split with Demigod, here presenting a sound that may retain the thrashiness of disc one, but portraying a generally darker, foreboding atmosphere that's more typical of death metal. Continuing on in chronological order, the third and final disc

