



The Bull got musically epic and listened to A SOUND MIND

HARMONIA WORD OF MOUTH MUSIC

Despite the creative hive that is Melbourne, making any kind of mark as a live band in the Victorian capital can be as difficult as finding a street that doesn't sell coffee. While a number of Australian artists have made the jump to stardom from humble beginnings, the industry can be a tough nut to crack. But sometimes all it takes is a little talent, firm feet on the ground and band name pulled from the pages of Ralph magazine to make yourself heard. Following a seemingly long line of successful acts, Melbourne-based 4-piece A Sound Mind are taking on the world a little differently from Victorian predecessors such as Something for Kate, The Getaway Plan or Kate Miller-Heidke. From first impressions, the band's debut record *Harmonia* released July 2007, essentially resonates familiarity with textbook guitar and drumwork, reasonably catchy melodies, and solid vocal performances. But ASM are not content to rest on their laurels. Songs that could have easily become uncomplicated 'pop-rock' or Coldplay mimicry swiftly become epic five-minute masterpieces with a sense of optimistic power and maturity to their music that can only be gained by experience and experimentation.

ASM have chosen to play the kind of music they want to play and the result is a highly energetic and empowering blend of orchestral, synth and hard-rock in a beautifully progressive (but hardly boring) style that is downright difficult to explain. Right from the first of three instrumental tracks on the record we are greeted with a very different sense of contemporary music, one of epic sweeping strings and touching piano melodies worthy of a pensive moment or two. Not every band is so optimistic in their opening track, with a beautiful initial balladesque song 'Empathy' deriving power from the soaring vocals as Kupinic declares such anthemically empowering mantras as 'Hold your own head above the water'. Following such an inspirational proposal, 'The Power to Dream' carries a little more pop influence but unfolds into an stirring 'orchestral rock' number that just makes you want to stand up, dance, rock out and save the world all at once.

Continuing through the first half of the album you get a sense that this slightly softer sounding band is not what you signed up for. But fear not enthusiasts of head-banging, some simply awesome double kicks rock through the last part of 'Enjoying the Pain', a fantastic song not to be discarded. Appropriately the second instrumental gives some leverage, the aptly named 'Comma Hiatus' or simply 'intermission'. Such an explicable delay is just long enough to align the universe for 'Venus and Mars', an absolute scorcher of a song with climactic melodies, vocals, timing, accents and pure win littered throughout. This six and a half minute, string-laden, heart-thumper is besieged with an incredible amount of pure unadulterated musicianship courtesy of bassist Andy Bishop, who doubles as a film score composer on his days off.

The rest of the album is a beautiful continuation of the orchestral/rock blend with lengthy blockbusters containing superb melodies and ambitious arrangements that make this band stand out so much from the bout of Melbourne musicians marking their territory. 'So Thankful' and 'Always and Forever' are the more touching songs that Kupinic claims are "for the fans" while the instrumental title-track rounds out this sonically luminous album. Epic, potent, stirring and inspiring, A Sound Mind have achieved an incredible amount for humble Melbourne lads in four short years together. With a second album under wraps, a promise to be even better is a dream this reviewer can't wait to see become a reality.

Julian Carr



THE BULL GOT RIDICULOUSLY TOASTY AND DONNED A SNUGGIE™

Embrace your newborn, work the remote, AND look like a twat, all from within the snug confines of a blanket... with sleeves! Couch-dwellers who want to save on a heating bill or avoid difficulty in answering their phone as the poor dears have to take their fingers outside the toasty realms of a blanket, can now invest in a Snuggie: infotainment's saviour for the nippy season. One-size-fits-all and sleeves roomier than the finest circus tent, synthetic fleece provides the wearer with a backwards scrap of temperature security. Sage Green, Burgundy or Royal Blue, this granny garment even sports its own Wikipedia entry, praising the first Slanket by Maine inventor Gary Clegg in 1998, and Facebook itself even toting "The Snuggie Cult". But despite worldwide popularity, it cannot be overlooked that the wearer of a Snuggie looks like a downright noob with three letters conjuring in the mind of this midnight commercial-watcher: W.T.F? With the wearer looking somewhat like Friar Tuck complete with Hail Marys this reviewer can't quite decide whether or not this is a good idea that could look quite fetching with Crocs or just laziness gone horribly wrong. Something about this religious-esque garment seems likely that such a purchase would come with instructions on how to crack the Da Vinci Code and use a Cat-O-Nine-Tails to relinquish the sin of poor heating. Or at least command magical brooms with Disney and Paul Dukas. But on the bright side if you order one today you get a book light. Zing. Sign me up for social ridicule, a late night Twilight-session without wind chill, and Catholic guilt all for the low price of \$19.95.

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