

that don't minimize the song. Violins add a cinematic feel to dramatic instrumental "Surface Raid" with some rare Walton shredding. Third Track "The Bear" crams a million motifs in three minutes. "UPE" is Phish on steroids but still veers into familiar Dreadnaught territory, loping along from bent pop to beautiful and back. Closer "Trophy Bride" allows bassist Bob Lord to cut loose with a series of snakey runs either guiding or anchoring the complex cherry atop this slice of musical ear candy. Definitely worth the wait.

—WARREN BARKER

DREAM THE ELECTRIC SLEEP

Heretics

2014 (CD, 73:05)
INDEPENDENT RELEASE
PROGRESSIVE ROCK
RATING 15.5

Heretics, the successor to this Kentucky quartet's astonishing debut *Lost and Gone Forever*, is another winning effort that honors eclectic influences while further defining its own distinctive sound.

The band's core trio — Matt Page (vocals/guitar/keyboards), Joey Waters (drums/vocals) and Andrew Hilbshman (guitar) — is joined by bassist Chris Tackett (ex-Hyatt), who helps push things in a heavier direction. But *Dream the Electric Sleep* still mixes in ample folksy melodicism and the resulting musical tension — between heavy and soft, light and dark, acoustic and electric — is compelling.

The disc's 11 tracks hit a sweet spot between early Pink Floyd and Porcupine Tree with bits of U2 histrionics, Radiohead quirkiness and classic progressive rock. High points include the title track, a darkly satisfying hard-rocker that kicks things off; moody Led Zeppelin-esque "Utopic"; the anti-love song "To Love is to Leave"; and elegiac heavy-metal rave-up "Ashes Fall."

Throughout, Page's sweetly soaring tenor brings theatricality to the proceedings placing him in a league with Thom Yorke, Chris Martin, even Bono. On every track he and his band mates clearly aim to push the envelope, lyrically and musically. —NICK TATE

DRUCKFARBEN

Second Sound

2014 (CD, 56:43)
INDEPENDENT RELEASE
PROGRESSIVE ROCK
RATING 13.5

Those unfamiliar with Canada's Druckfarben will find much in *Second Sound* that sounds familiar, starting with Phil Naro's voice. But its close similarity to that of Jon Anderson in this Yes-meets-Genesis-on-a-street-corner-in-Kansas setting is just one example.

Druckfarben comprises veteran musicians possessing a strong compositional sense for vintage prog motifs without sounding derivative. Elements of Genesis, Gentle Giant, King Crimson, Rush, etc. proliferate yet aren't immediately identifiable as such. Even more impressive is how tightly arranged songs such as "In Disbelief," "Long Walk Down" and "Another Day" are (each under six minutes) with so much going on, while containing fully developed melodies and harmonies.

Of course, *Second Sound* is a prog record, so it concludes with the 19-minute title track occupying more than a third of the album. The piece unfolds in suite-like fashion as Naro's vocals unite passages driven by violin, keyboards, guitars, even a bit of banjo — all very well played.

The name Druckfarben refers to the German term for colored ink used to print on textiles and other media. Plenty of color to go around here.

—MICHAEL POPKE

ECCENTRIC ORBIT

Creation of the Humanoids

2014 (CD, 47:08)
INDEPENDENT RELEASE
PROGRESSIVE ROCK
RATING 13.5

Creation of the Humanoids is named for its 20-minute title track, whose title, in turn, draws from the 1962 cult classic that reputedly was Andy Warhol's favorite film. Beginning with 2004 debut *Attack of the Martians*, this Massachusetts instrumental act has demonstrated a working fondness for kitschy retro sci-fi motifs in both album art and occasionally campy-spacey musical passages.

So it appears obvious that, in addition to featuring violin and synthesizer leads, Eccentric Orbit shares something in common with Canadian prog stalwart FM. Where these folks diverge is through greater emphasis on dissonant angularities and jazzy bits evoking the likes of Jean-Luc Ponty, Mahavishnu Orchestra, etc., amidst otherwise accessible melodic themes.

Eccentric Orbit consists of Tom Benson (violin/guitar synth/electric mandolin), Bill Noland (bass),

Madeleine Noland (wind synth/keyboards) and Rick Landwehr (drums). Their unique sound palette and wittily constructed arrangements make for a freshly unpredictable listen. The band integrates exotically atmospheric Eastern vibes on opener "Breaking Osiris"; Emerson, Lake & Palmer-style fanfares and burbling Pink Floydian electronics in the title track; plus dashes of lurching King Crimson-ish menace throughout, to keep us alert and guessing. Never a dull moment!

—JOHN COLLINGE

ELEPHANTS OF SCOTLAND

Execute and Breathe

2014 (CD, 47:54)
INDEPENDENT RELEASE
PROGRESSIVE ROCK
RATING 14

This second effort by curiously named Vermont act Elephants of Scotland is a fun romp, packed with nostalgic echoes of Rush, Genesis and Jethro Tull. These eight mid-length tracks are most successful when melodies and riffs are at their most inspired, two prime examples being opener "A Different Machine," and "Boxless." "A Different Machine" features a haunting leitmotif, quietly understated and juxtaposed with driving hard rock in the Rush vein. It also doesn't hurt that Dan MacDonald's vocals reflect those of Geddy Lee in phrasing/delivery, if not pitch.

"Boxless" is another matter, opening with a Middle-Eastern Indian vibe for the first half, then moving into the disc's most transcendent tune for the balance. It's the most original sounding track, solidly arranged and hopefully pointing the way to the Elephants' future.

Also notable are "Endless Pt. 1" and "Endless Pt. 2," a 12-minute epic whose first four minutes comprise a prog-rockin' instrumental workout summarizing practically every '70s-era symphonic prog band you've ever heard. To these guys' credit, they've got the chops to make it stick.

—DAVID TAYLOR

ENCHANT

The Great Divide

2014 (CD, 64:12)
INSIDEOUT MUSIC 0629-2
PROGRESSIVE ROCK
RATING 15

Between 1993 and 2003, Enchant released seven studio albums, among the best progressive rock made by American bands at that time. A live album and DVD followed in 2004. Then ... nothing.

In the meantime, Enchant vocalist Ted Leonard took over front man duties from Nick D'Virgilio in Spock's Beard, toured with Transatlantic and participated in side projects like Thought Chamber and Affector. A decade later, Enchant returns with one of its strongest works yet.

The Great Divide sounds like pure Enchant, although lyrically perhaps a bit more hopeful and less bleak than earlier output. (Case in point: "Within an Inch," which reveals Leonard's spiritual side.) Leonard never stopped singing, and it shows. Doug Ott's drop-dead-gorgeous guitar solos also will remind you how much you've missed this band. In fact, Enchant's undeniable chemistry pulses throughout *The Great Divide*, as each of the five members participated in writing these songs.

Every track is a highlight, but "Circles," "Life in a Shadow" and "Deserve to Feel" merit special mention. Enchant easily wins 2014's welcome-back-we-missed-you award.

—MICHAEL POPKE

ENSEMBLE DENADA

Windfall

2013 (CD, 45:02)
OZELLA OZ 053 CD
JAZZ/AVANT-GARDE
RATING 14.5

Breakneck sleight-of-hand interplay between the 15 members of this Norwegian jazz orchestra can be mind-blowing. Performing music written by leader/trombonist Helge Sunde, Ensemble Denada comprises brass, woodwinds and a rhythm section with bass, drums, piano and guitar. It favors contemporary big-band jazz motifs (Don Ellis Orchestra, etc.) as Sunde cites influences from Weather Report, Frank Zappa, Bill Evans and Miles Davis.

The results have a cinematic vibe, evoking kinetic cartoon imagery, perhaps a car chase scene or modern ballet. Moods are mostly melodically upbeat and playful, at varied pacing. While some tracks serve chiefly as springboards for tastefully improvised soloing, *Windfall* is at its best when the ensemble locks into arrangements exhibiting its unified prowess. Appropriately named opening piece