



Status Quo: survivors' instinct worthy of salute.

If it ain't broke...

While some aspects of Status Quo never change, looking at what helped make their past great has enabled them to stay relevant in the present.

STATUS QUO In Search Of The Fourth Chord

Fourth Chord

Francis Rossi tells the story of an interview he did with "a very nice woman" from the *Daily Mail* a couple of years back. The inevitable question about the three Quo chords came up, and Rossi asked her, in his affable way, if she knew what a chord was. "No," came the reply. Or, he went on, how many notes you need to make one. Or how many notes you need to change to turn it into a different one? "No," she said. "I should really find out, shouldn't I?"

Therein lies the gap between the perception of Status Quo and the reality. The title of this, their twenty-eighth studio album, represents a kind of acceptance that, while some things might never change, Quo have reached an accommodation with their past. Perhaps such acceptance has set them free, because with *In Search...* they've made a record that operates within their well-defined parameters, and which also crackles with the vitality of musicians at ease with themselves and enjoying their vintage.



There is plenty of Quo's swashbuckling 12-bar boogie; indeed the riffs and guitar lines from the opening *Beginning Of The End* and *Alright*, and later *Gravy Train* and the weighty *Figure Of Eight* are straight out of the 1970s dog days, albeit with a less raucous production.

There are also moments that take their cue from earlier departures: *Tongue Tied* is a sweet, easy acoustic song in the same spirit as *Living On An Island*; *Electric Arena*, in its use of a repeating figure, brings an echo of *In The Army Now*; the chorus of *Pennsylvania Blues Tonight* is as insistent as *Caroline* or *Paper Plane*, yet the synth intro might have come from *In The Army Now* too.

Portions of Quo's hardcore audience will never reconcile themselves to the band's recent past, and the casual followers of their covers albums will think nothing of giving this record a miss, but then Quo have earned the right not to define themselves by the opinions of others. Their inventiveness within a narrow field, not to mention their survivors' instinct, is worthy of salute.

Jon Hotten

HIM

Venus Doom

Warner Bros

Sixth album of dark doom defies expectations.



Anyone who's closely followed His Infernal Majesty's 12-year dominion over the hearts and minds of the goth-inclined would be hard-pressed to count the seemingly innumerable times that founding frontman Ville Valo has promised to make a heavy record. That isn't to say that the terminally melancholic Finn - who has owed as much to the gloomy, metal-laced moroseness of Type O Negative as he has to Chris Isaak for a poetic turn of phrase - hasn't delivered.

It isn't merely that crooning, Marlboro-scraped baritones and metal have never been natural bedfellows. It's that Ville Valo, who presents no modest illusions about HIM being anything other than his vision, has never - until now, seemingly - said: "Take it away, boys," and let his backing band carry the weight for him. But from the moment the opening, eponymous salvo breaks into a heavy riffing snarl and an astonishing, doom-laden chant midway through, it's clear that this is an album that's not afraid of defying expectations and annoying anyone relying on a fix of HIM's more predictably polished and synth-laden gothic singalongs.

Passion's Killing Floor is an infectious groove; *Kiss Of Dawn* a slow-burning groover that treads more familiar territory before; the majestic, 10-minute, prog-minded and heartfelt epic *Sleepwalking Past Hope* pays tribute to doom gods Cathedral and the terminal romanticism of My Bloody Valentine.

Depending on which side of the fence you stand, this album is everything you love or indeed despise about HIM. Either way, this sixth album is HIM's ultimate statement of intent.

Alexander Milas

KINSKI

Down Below It's Chaos

Sub Pop

Third album from Seattle stoners.

Unlike Queens Of The Stone Age's Josh Homme, the man

who took stoner rock to the masses, Kinski has no interest in being rock stars. They've played on big stages supporting Tool, and their last album, *Alpine Static*, received rave reviews in such mainstream magazines as *Time Out*, but Kinski's music remains firmly rooted in the underground.

Fans of Kyuss, Black Sabbath, Mogwai and Hawkwind will find much to enjoy here. Opening track *Crybaby Blowout* sets the tone with guitars switched to 'fuzz', but it's when the band combine raw power and delicate beauty on the eight-minute space-rock jam *Plan, Steal, Drive* that Kinski hit their dizzy peak.

Paul Elliott

JONI MITCHELL Shine

Hear Music

Repaving paradise



The undisputed Queen of singer-songwriters, Joni Mitchell has occasionally suffered from over-regal behaviour of late. But after an ill-advised 'retirement' she's back with an album that intrigues, inspires and annoys - just like she used to back in the 60s.

She intrigues with the opening piano-dominated instrumental *One Week Last Summer*, the jazzy *This Place and Hana*, inspires with the haunting *Bad Dreams Are Good*, the dreamy *Shine* and the optimistic *If* (adapted from Rudyard Kipling's poem), and annoys with a cover of her own hit *Big Yellow Taxi*.

More significantly she remains some distance ahead of her countless imitators, many of whom weren't even born when she built her throne. Like Dylan, Joni Mitchell's perception has expanded with age.

Hugh Fielder

HEAVY TRASH

Going Way Out With Heavy Trash

Yep Roc

A fun road trip through old-school Americana territory.

As frontmen with Blues Explosion and Speedball Baby respectively, Jon Spencer and Matt Verta-Ray are best-known for their anarchic deconstruction of punk and

electric blues. Their Heavy Trash project, however, is a slightly more laid-back affair.

This, their second album, is journey through the rugged Americana of yore, from the hiccupping rockabilly of Charlie Feathers (album opener *Pure Gold*) to the distinguished croon of Johnny Cash (*That Ain't Right*) and the good-time stomp of the Flamin' Groovies (*They Were Kings*).

The album lacks cohesion, having been recorded with three very different backing bands, and it's questionable whether the songs actually add much to their influences, but in general this is too much fun to dismiss.

Ian Atherton

THE LIVING END State Of Emergency

Deck Cheese

Melbourne punkabilly trio's fifth gets a belated British release.

They look like Green Day impersonating The Stray Cats, and its an apposite comparison: guitarist Chris Cheney is a Stray Cats obsessive, and Billie Joe Armstrong has long championed the band.

State Of Emergency takes the usual badly Xeroxed punk template and colours over it in new and interesting ways. There's a disaffected children's choir and subtle

string embellishments on *Wake Up*, a massive Motown drum sound opens *Order Of The Day*, and domestic drama *Nothing Lasts Forever* has a depth punk rarely reaches for.

There's far more variety and invention here than you could rightly expect from a band sharing a name with an early Jesus And Mary Chain song.

Jonathan Lewis

ANA POPOVIC Still Making History

Eclecto Groove

Blonde bombshell engenders plank-spanking plaudits.



A teen star in the former Yugoslavia, Ana Popovic moved to

Holland in the mid-90s, where her accomplished guitar style took hold across three CDs.

Despite a grounding in jazz licks and cocktail-bar texture that makes its mark on the snazzy *Doubt Everyone But Me*, it's the all-out power chords of *Hungry* and the snarling and squealing blues workout of *You Don't Move Me* where she really shines. Her songwriting has broad ambitions too, when on the title track she seeks to explore and make sense of her birthplace's sad legacy of war and destruction.

Throughout, award-winning producers John Porter and David Z provide the sort of

space and setting that could make this an international breakthrough album.

Gavin Martin

M3 Rough An' Ready

Castle

Meet the old 'Snakes, better than the new 'Snakes.

M3 are Messrs Marsden, Moody and Murray from the original Whitesnake. You'll have to live without Lord and Paice, but Mark Stanway and Jimmy Copley do the business, and in place of the other 'Snake fella (what's his name?) Stefan Berggren has a fair old set of pipes (and Doogie White guests on four songs).

Recorded at Burnley Mechanics Club (in 2004) rather than the Hammy O, but even without *Lovehunter* it's a better set-list than 1980's *Live... In The Heart Of The City*. Listening to this takes you back to those halcyon days before Coverdale - ah, yes, that was him - swapped MMM for MTV. But these guys wrote the better songs, and still have the chops to deliver them.

Neil Jeffries

EVILE Enter The Grave

Earache

The blistering rebirth of UK thrash.

The story of British thrash

metal might be a rather haphazard affair, but as the genre's second coming really kicks into gear the emergence of a band as exhilarating as Evile suggests that we'll fare much better this time round.

Produced by Flemming Rasmussen (Metallica's *Master Of Puppets*), *Enter The Grave* is a monstrous, life-affirming metal album that craftily welds misty-eyed nostalgia for the glory days of Exodus, Testament and *Arise*-era Sepultura to contemporary sonic values. Best exemplified by the plectrum-melting riff attack of pro-pit anthem *Thrasher* and the brutal, Rambo-tastic *First Blood*, *Enter The Grave* is a relentless adrenalin rush that sounds more like a lost Bay Area gem than a product of, I shit you not, Huddersfield.

Dom Lawson

TOKYO DRAGONS Hot Nuts

Escapi

Looking backwards is the new moving forwards.



Like the title of their second album, Tokyo

Dragons' music is not subtle. What it is good, honest, 70s-style rock.

Working in Seattle

with Mudhoney and Nashville Pussy producer Kurt Bloch, the Dragons relaxed at the city's Mecca Bar with the jukebox playing their favourites: AC/DC, Motörhead and Thin Lizzy. This influence is evident throughout the album. The sparkling twin guitars on *If I Run, You Run* is Thin Lizzy through and through, while *On Fuel* has a powerful, speeding riff that Lemmy's crew would be proud of.

The Dragons do spring a surprise, though, with an excellent cover of Todd Rundgren's *Couldn't I Just Tell You*.

Hot Nuts wins no prizes for originality, but fans of classic rock will discover that that's its charm.

Jeff Collins

Tokyo Dragons: one for fans of classic rock.



ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder



The Erotics: 'the filthiest, meanest sleaze metal this side of a hungover Mötley Crüe.'

THE EROTICS

30 Seconds Over You

Overit

It may alarm the more hard-core sleaze-beasts among us to hear that The Erotics' new album *30 Seconds Over You* opens with 25 seconds of flamenco guitar. It may positively panic said beasts that nine tracks in,

Erotics front-fiend Mike Trash belts out an honest-to-Christ ballad called *Sunshine*. This, from the same heartless bastard who wrote *Date Rape By Candelight?* Yep, the very same bastard.

But those are the only two instances when these Albany dirt-devils are not stomping your face in with the

filthiest, meanest sleaze metal this side of a hungover Mötley Crüe. In fact the black-souled party-wreckers on this album are so outright nasty that I recommend you get a hepatitis shot before picking this up. And even then, use gloves.

4 real, this one.

★★★★★

ENDEVERAFTER

Endeverafter

Epic

Ten gigs into their career, these hip young dudes were touring with Poison and Cinderella. The only thing left to do was sign to a major label, make a classic album full of ragged-assed Aerosmith sleaze, bang a few starlets and then spectacularly implode. So far, so good. The rehab watch is on.

★★★★★

BLACK GASOLINE

Black Gasoline

Myspace.com/blackgasoline

What we've got here is a dose of headbanging dope-rock from the satanic cornfields of Wichita, Kansas. Four songs stuffed into a slab of cardboard shaped like a matchbook, this grubby little gem of an EP splatters your brains with 16 tons of cowbell and a devastating closer called *Anthem For An American Burn Out* that is exactly that.

★★★★★

KANDI CODED

Time Wasted Is Not Wasted Time

Volcom

Just when you've tossed the last clod of dirt on Seattle's rock'n'roll grave it comes screaming back to life. With nods to The Fluid and Tad, on *Time Wathis this* semi-supergroup offer up some primo purple metal flake music. Grunge-tastic!

★★★★★

DEAD EYED SPIDER

Show Me Your Blood

Bazooka

I was handed many things backstage at Rocklahoma (see report next month). However, this record was the only thing I could safely bring back on the airplane. Retro-fitted Japanese flash metal with insane cartoon guitars and an obsession with American bullshit. Dead Eyed Spider clearly shoot for Loudness here, but land comfortably around, say, EZO.

★★★★★