

FIREWORKS

ROCK METAL



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ALBUM REVIEWS

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ESP 2.0

'22 LAYERS OF SUNLIGHT'

(Sunncreative)

PROGRESSIVE

The debut gently washed over you at times and this follow-up has the same gorgeous wave-like feel with Tony Lowe showing how he can open out this music to delight.

'God Of Denial' has a softly pulsing feel with a Roger Waters-type delivery and soundscape intention. It starts with a big canvas, never urging, always bringing you to its beguiling notes gently. A lot of this is driven by ex-Big Country's Mark Brzezicki's jazzy drum fills – the end of 'Algorithm' particularly – and by the time we get to the title track, there's a very nice eighties sounding chorus and faux orchestral middle that blooms into a more portentous Prog period. The drums and Pete Clark's bass allow some sweet Hammond Organ and guitar stabs from Lowe during 'Ride Through Reality', perhaps the most usually proggy track on the board, and his guitar solo in 'Smiling Forever' is positively bereft.

We have a suite, of course, lasting nine minutes, but not hidden with riddled words; this is the 'Butterfly Suite', it's such lovely and meandering head-space stuff with Lowe's winsome vocals. This never seems like they are saying, "sit up straight, this is the album centrepiece!" The music wanders beautifully and reminds us that what we find when we just wander is worth a million to-do lists. That it occasionally sounds like early Genesis is a huge plus...

This doesn't really offer modernist soundscapes; it sits in the middle between that and older school Prog contemplation, with some odd moments of sounds shooting out. It's very impressive at times, even more so when you realise that this is mainly Lowe and lyricist Peter Coyle, who has provided a cyborg backstory which is welcome.

This is an album that will reward your time with real richness. Listen to it in the summer sunlight and be caressed by the sound.

Steve Swift