

ASG fails to 'Win Us Over'

BY LUIS TORRES
STAFF WRITER

Wilmington, N.C., four-piece ASG (formerly All Systems Go) is at its best for exactly three minutes and four seconds of its fourth full-length album, *Win Us Over*.

That's how long opening track "Right Before Death" lasts, establishing the false image of a band with a healthy grasp of alternative rock and metal.

Over palm-muted guitar experimentation that supplants a chorus, the band opens its album in regal fashion.

Well-harmonized soaring vocals complete a track that is distinctive, energetic and entertaining.

But the same can't be said for the rest of *Win Us Over*, where ASG gets into a rut of droning alt-metal that sounds like a post-grunge band such as Puddle of Mudd running out of ideas.

Guitarist Jonah City keeps things chugging at varying degrees of fast, opting for power chord jamming instead of technique or style.



MUSICREVIEW

ASG
WIN US OVER
ALTERNATIVE METAL



When City does stumble upon a good riff, such as on "Ballad of Richard K.," the band wisely chooses to forego vocals and let it stand alone as sort of a "Hey, look at what we can do" kind of thing.

But the good riffs don't come often enough, and his playing quickly gets tedious.

Making matters worse, too many

of the songs sound all too similar, with vocalist Jason Shi singing his way through the album as though every track is a different verse to the same song.

To ASG's credit, the band does pull off one gimmick song: "A Number to Murder Two" comes with a surprisingly adept acoustic guitar and mandolin arrangement that is hampered only by the fact that Shi sounds completely out of his element trying to sing over a bluegrass tune.

There are a few other shots at variety, but does anyone really want to hear an alt-metal band attempting John Mayer-like slow jams ("Coffee Depression Sunshine") or misguided stabs at screamo ("Dream Song")? I didn't think so.

ASG is known for having its music played as background music for snowboarding videos and "Viva La Bam." A close listen to *Win Us Over* confirms that in the background is where it should stay.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu

CALTROP: NO BLACK T-SHIRTS

Caltrap's brand of rock music is thick, heavy and powerful. It's loud and dynamic. The band even gets its name from a brutal weapon. But don't call it metal.

The Chapel Hill foursome is more likely to cite the blues or indie-rock bands as influences.

Diversions Editor Bryan Reed caught up with the band to talk about music as a lifestyle, and how the band found its sound.

Caltrap plays *The Cave* on Saturday with equally dynamic old friends, Fin Fang Foom.



DTH/BRYAN REED

The bearded legion that is Caltrap plays Saturday at The Cave. The mighty rock band will be flanked by Fin Fang Foom's dynamic indie rock.

Diversions: A lot of people have compared Caltrap to Slint, at least in some respects. Did that have anything to do with choosing to record with Brian Paulson?

Sam Taylor: No. But the fact that he recorded Slint sure as hell doesn't hurt.

The fact that he recorded Slint, or that we've ever had any comparison to them is less important than the fact that he's got a kickass quality of sound and a lot of experience.

Adam Nolton: I actually knew him from the Wilco stuff, so I had no idea that he'd recorded *Spiderland* and all that. I was probably a little more reticent than the rest of them, but he's awesome.

Dive: So now it's just a matter of trying to find a label to help put it out.

Sam: Well, you know, we spent a fair amount of money recording it, and we could self-release it, but our distribution would be limited to wherever we travel.

So, ideally, someone with the infrastructure in place to mass-produce and distribute it will do that for us.

Dive: Now that you're out of the recording process, I'm just wondering where you see the touring going.

Murat Dirlik: I'll say, just at the basic level, I'd love to tour Europe as a ragtag unit any time we got the chance. Touring the U.S. — any long tour — I think what we'd like to do is get on with some band that'd draw some quantity of people.

I mean, if we make it town to town, I'm happy.

Sam: We're stoked to tour and travel. We all live lives that allow for it. We all make it a priority.

Murat: The band dictates our

jobs.

And it's not that we're not gratified. I mean, we get tons of love in Chapel Hill. We want to spread this. We just want to be able to play more.

Adam: It's kind of like, if you listen to other bands, like Modest Mouse, their first few albums are kind of like (grumbles), but then they hit a stride, and I'm not comparing us to them because we sound nothing like them, but the point being, I feel like as a collective, we've all woodshedded and like, sat in our houses learning what we want to do, and now we're doing it.

Murat: Did you say "woodshed?"

Adam: It's an old blues term. You sit out in the woodshed to learn your licks.

Murat: Man, I always thought it meant you were getting taken out to get spanked (Laughs).

Adam: No, it's like you're so horrible, your parents are like, "Man, you gotta go learn to play guitar in the woodshed. I can't stand to hear that s--t." And then you kinda get your sound.

Dive: It's interesting to hear a band so frequently called metal reference a lot of indie-rock bands and the blues.

Murat: I think we could reference just about anything better than metal. We have divergent tastes.

Sam: "Metal" is a little bit of a misplaced catchall phrase for us.

Just because we're loud as f--k and we can play some riffs — I listen to some metal bands with the

double kick drum and the licks and the speed —

Adam: And it's hateful. It's all so angry.

Sam: And they kick our ass at that. I used to love bands like that.

Adam: *Reign In Blood*, dude.

Sam: Yeah. It kicked ass. It's high intensity and power. But we like to supplement that.

Murat: It's kind of an instinctive direction we've gone. We've always sort of tended toward heavier — driving and dynamics. I think there's more to it.

Adam: It's kind of like when we played that metalfest in Athens. We were probably the loudest band there, in the decibel sense, but man, we were the only guys without black T-shirts on. Literally, the only ones

Sam: We just get psyched and get into it.

Volume's a wonderful thing. You feel it. It's self-indulgent, but it's fun.

Murat: We're trying to write the soundtrack to the world, as we see it. I'm sure some of what comes out in that sounds like metal.

Dive: Is there anything else you wanna say to get people to come out on Saturday?

Adam: Come give it a shot if you feel like it.

Murat: Don't get shot!

Adam: (Laughs) Don't get shot, if you feel like it.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

'U2 3D' a stunning experience

BY JORDAN LAWRENCE
STAFF WRITER

If there is one band in the world qualified to be presented in 3-D, it is U2.

No other band in the world is as outsizedly larger than life as the Irish foursome.

So it makes good sense that the first ever live action digital 3-D movie, "U2 3D," finds Bono, The Edge and company preaching and posturing and rocking harder than any 40-year-olds should be capable of.

The performances are constantly entertaining, as Bono owns the four Latin American stadiums featured in the film in a way no other lead singer can.

Like an unavoidably impetuous

MOVIEREVIEW

U2 3D



court jester, the man, whether you gleefully accept him or outright despise him, is completely galvanizing in his political frolics, as portrayed in the film.

When the band plays "Love and Peace or Else," it's hard not to stare in awe as he covers his eyes with a blindfold adorned with a Muslim crescent, a star of David and a cross.

But the real star of "U2 3D" is the film technique of directors Catherine Owens and Mark Pellington.

Seamless and all-consuming, the movie is the closest anyone could get to the orgy of political spirituality that is a U2 concert without actually being there.

The close-ups in gigantic IMAX, however, are a bit much.

No one needs to be that well acquainted with The Edge's stubble.

And the sensory overload of pop-up words that pervade "The Fly" is likely to give the viewer an epileptic seizure.

But when confronted by the powerful mass catharsis of the closing performance of "With or Without You," it's hard to nitpick.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu

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