

Mp3 Bushwhack - Rock: Progressive Rock

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"A swirling and swooping display of progressive metal madness" - Martin Popoff, BW&BK 13 MP3 Songs
ROCK: Progressive Rock, METAL/PUNK: Progressive Metal Details: Fecund, intense creativity in flux. The roar of majesty and power on one hand, a certain whispered exquisite subtlety on the other. That's an apt starting point to describe this unique band of ardent young musicologists, from Bushwhack's high concepts and flights o' fancy within the grooves, right through to the promising personal lives housed within the flesh and blood of the music's makers. Let's start with that. Bushwhack consists of four guys, all 18 or 19 years old. "Outside of music," lists keyboardist Frank Sacramone, "currently, Jamie van Dyck is attending Yale and Brandon Green is attending Northeastern University. I will be attending Berklee College Of Music next year, and then Ben Shanbrom is going to be attending Wheaton College." Not the sort of thing you often hear when interviewing bands, not to mention amusing historical points like, "I met Jamie in first grade, and we started to develop a musical connection together," Sacramone adding that, "We took lessons, we would jam together, and at high school, Jamie became friends with our bass player, Brandon Green, and I became friends with Ben Shanbrom, our drummer. I gave Jamie a call one day and said, 'Hey, we need to start a new music project up here.' And we discussed members we might want to put into this project, and we came to this conclusion that Ben Shanbrom and Brandon Green would be great matches." As it turns out, Bushwhack has been a thriving band for a good two and a half years, thriving in spite of - or because of? - the fact that they are an all-instrumental unit, the band are gaining a reputation for being able to sell tickets, win battle-of-the-bands and garner repeat call-backs to venues in quick succession. Indeed it is the intensity and overflowing maturity of their work that has made the quartet a live must-see, not to mention the guys' manic attack on-stage, this electric foursome building a reputation for shows that between band and fan create an energy more likely found at hardcore or extreme metal concerts - strange and truly delightful, given the band's thoughtful, erudite compositions of high-minded prog rock elegance. Offering insight into how Bushwhack have managed a near magical pastiche of modern musics, Sacramone says, "We're not a band that is necessarily trying to conform to a genre. What we like to do is to take different ideas - it could be from any genre, from Latin to jazz to

heavy metal - and construct pieces that reflect whatever our feelings are on that particular day. We're progressive, to put this into a genre, but if we feel something, we put it in." The end result is a record that is atmospheric, sonically huge, provocative of thought despite no lyrics, and always refreshing. "Mariachi Massacre" carries within its neuron-fired architecture a sense of Dream Theater. "Introspection" evokes thoughts of Tony Levin solo, upper echelon new age, strident, escapist neo-prog, and even the band's beloved Porcupine Tree. "Our songwriting is really a combination of everyone," muses Frank. "Depending on the time or place, there are two different ways we write music. The first way is that someone comes up with an idea while we're jamming, and we find a cool melody or riff, and then we build off of it, together. The second thing we do sometimes, is one of our band members will write a song on a computer software program such as Reason, and he'll construct all the tracks, all the instruments, the whole layout of the song, and then we'll listen to it all together, and edit what parts we think we should change, or what we should add or subtract from individual tracks within the piece. But we all contribute something to it." "The most experimental track is probably "Head Trauma,"" explains Frank, prompted to pick out a few highlights on this sprawling, versatile record of modern prog. "It starts out in 11/8, and in total, it's a really weird song with some interesting harmonies; it's more complex and it's not as stable as the others (laughs). Some of our outstanding tracks - according to our fans, I guess - are "Sea Of Tranquility," "Menace" and "Introspection." "Introspection" has been a long-standing favourite of many people. I think it's because it's more of a ballad. It's got piano in it and is quite pretty and soft, more like a thinking song. A lot of our other songs are quite progressive. They have powerful moments, but nothing to the extent that "Introspection" has. It flows nicely and is more emotional, more about looking inward." "Sea Of Tranquility". Jamie was online looking at Wikipedia. He was thinking about how the moon has these large black spots that they call seas. And they've named the different seas on the moon. They're obviously not actually bodies of water, but they're very black-looking, massive. And one of them was called the Sea Of Tranquility, so he named that one after that. "Mariachi Massacre". we started off writing the song and it was very Latin-influenced, and then it broke down into an epic passage epic, with strings and a minor sound. And the rest of it. it's kind of like a massacre, because the end is powerful and very dark." "The title for "The Greatest Wall" came from the breakdown in the bridge, where the Chinese part comes in. So we thought we had to name it after something pertaining to China. "Sever The Sky" is really a riff-type song. It's got that modern rock feel, with a bit of classic rock incorporated - we wanted it to have an edgy

title." Sacramone offers a bit more detail with respect to where a considerably unprecedented sound like that of Bushwhack could have possibly originated. "Our influences are definitely Porcupine Tree, a little bit of Dream Theater. Our bass player and our drummer are influenced by select funk like Tower Of Power and the Chili Peppers. I play classical piano, so classical influences me, as well as new age artists like Yanni and Enya. But we have that aggressive side, which comes from bands like Sevendust and Deftones, Opeth and maybe a little bit of Tool, but not too much. But yeah, most of us are big fans of Porcupine Tree; they are definitely an influence on what we do." One of the first questions asked of the guys in interviews, has proven to be one centred around the band as instrumental, no singer, no lyrics. Indeed, as intensely exploratory as they are, Frank, Ben, Jamie and Brandon are not averse to the idea of adding a singer, having conducted searches in the past, only to carefully consider the point moot each time. "What we want to do," adds Frank, "is to be able to write the songs using the same methods we've been writing them with thus far. We don't want to have to sacrifice our guitar lines or bass lines or keyboard lines, the drum parts, to have a vocalist to sing over them. Also, the band kind of lives by the concept that everyone has equal power, an equal say in the band, and we don't want a singer coming in and taking over. But sure, I can see a situation where certain sections of the songs could use vocals. But even so, it wouldn't be a vocally-based band. We don't want to have to sacrifice the good instrumental parts we bring to the table." And why the name Bushwhack? "Tough question. we were fooling around with names and we were thinking of bands that try really hard to give some meaningful title to their band, and we didn't want to seem pretentious. We didn't want to seem like we were trying too hard to get something across. We just started blurting out names. Now, a lot of people think that we're a political band. We might have had a little bit of influence from that, as we're a little more Democratic in the band, I guess. But really, the definition of bushwhack is also to chop down shrubs and plants etc., so it can also mean to attack or assault. So it has an edge to it, but at the same time you maybe think of something western or political. But mostly, I think it shows that we're a really pretty fierce band when it comes to music, our songwriting, our technical abilities." "Well, three of us are going to be in college in Boston," answers Sacramone, to those skeptical that four artists with such promising futures can hold a band together, even one as uncommonly worth treasuring as this one is. "And Jamie is going to be at Yale, so we're pretty close. We're really trying to stick together here, because we believe in this project, as do a lot of other people - major heavy hitters in the industry. So we're really into this; this is what we love to do. I

think we're going to stay together and pull something out of it that's going to be a good product for a lot of years to come." Martin Popoff Brave Words and Bloody Knuckles

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