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## (SIC)MONIC

*Somnambulist*

### Aural Music



Phoenix, Arizona's (Sic)monic are going AWOL. No boundaries. No explanations. No permission. Just out there. Not entirely deserting the metal genre, but so far outside of it most of the time they're not really serving us with what I consider satiable metal. Imagine Linkin Park, Nonpoint and maybe a little System of a Down going all progressive. Even trying to be superfast, and death-y and experimental sometimes. But not all the time. Then trying to squeeze a bunch of lullabies in the mix.

Definitely hard to categorize, (Sic)monic confuses my aural senses. Flip-flopping between pleasant and unpleasant noises, it's tough to decide if the good outweighs the unsavory. I'll apologize ahead of time that there's so much going on in the music, it's impossible to keep this short.

The instrumentation sounds good for the most part. Mostly guitar talent. But it can easily depend on vocals to make or break an impression of an album because they're all over it. And boy are they ever all over this album. Vocals can be overlooked if the music is worthy enough. For (Sic)monic, the vocals seem to be THE focal point. The emphasis. It drowns out a lot of the good music and you have to really search for it underneath. Then if the vocals are not good consistently, why try so hard to find the rest? Throwing in a few screams and growls in there didn't help much. Just covered up even more instrumentation. I'm pretty sure the percussion was great, I just couldn't really hear it much.

Vocalist Taylor Hession certainly has some major talent, but only a little bit of soul. He can belt it out almost as well as the hired vocalists that tour with Trans-Siberian Orchestra one minute, like in parts of "Paradiseum" which was a great ballad that's almost so pretty it starts to get annoying eventually [not metal]. Then in every other song he's rambling in a near Rastafari style that irritated me. I didn't go for that aspect of his singing at all. It seemed a little high (young) and soft for ranting which gave his great singing voice a rotten/off sound. He sings like that all over the CD. I immediately thought this was like a Nonpoint resurrection (who died after the few catchy songs on the first album couldn't carry over my respect to any consecutive releases). I was driving back from NYC when I threw Somnambulist in the player for the first time. All cocky, I swore I recognized the unique voice. Then looking it up later, to my utter surprise, I found out it wasn't Elias Soriano at all but a different singer. It totally sounds like Hession would be surprised to learn that his style isn't unique. [cough.. linkinpark..cough ahemmmm hmm].

In some songs he'd try to perfectly pronounce every single word like in "Requiem" and "Just How Far Down Do You Want to Go?". That's a bit weird in metal and if you're going to insist on being that clear, you had damn well better rhyme right. I really wished he would bring the soul out more. What bugged me most was they spent an overabundant amount of time making lullabies. Or

working pieces of them into most of the other songs (even the real heavy ones and vice versa), then calling it experimental.

I can't say any one track was great because Taylor had so many different styles of vocals mashed into every song. It took away from the better ones. Of the 11 + 4 bonus tracks, *Somnambulist* had three main styles. Heavy, alternative/mid-paced, and lullabies. And a whole lot of choppy songs with all three. Not consistent at all. "Fist to Throat" would have been best track as it had this really cool thrash riff but the 'off' vocals ruined it. Which leaves that and the deceiving opener "To the Fiendz" as the most appealing points of the album. They had more metal aspects than probably the rest of it combined. There was also some guitar that stood out here and there along with maybe a vocal melody or two on some of the pretty songs. For all the lullaby stuff, only two stood out; I enjoyed most of "Illumination" (I can actually remember a guitar solo in that one) and some of "Paradiseum". These were the first highlights of *Somnambulist* that I could easily find.

"Just How Far Down Do You Want to Go?" sounded way too much like Linkin Park and opened with some sloppy thrash-fiddling that Charlie Daniels would shake his head at. (Sic)monic actually covered "Devil Went Down to Georgia" at the end of this album and I suppose I should be thankful that a band could even cover that song, but it was a tad sloppy, too. I did like the metal aspects they added, but the fiddle wasn't played near as well as Charlie did it. However, they do get kudos for trying.

I couldn't stand "Seven Inches Deep" because of that vocal style I didn't care for. I hate it when singers add stuff to words. Such as adding "heeee" to the end of words that end with -ay (stay-heeee, way-heeee) or fabricating extra syllables in words like those that end in -ize (realize is re-a-li-hize, eyes becomes ah-hize). That probably shouldn't bother me but it does. "Requiem" absolutely sucked. First of all, I can understand what he's saying and that's sooo not metal. Second, it sounds extremely similar to "Total Eclipse of the Heart" or something Meatloaf-y and that's too damn pretty to be metal. Third, I really don't like Meatloaf at all so all I have to say is ewww. Ewww! Broadway or metal. There is no mixing. You can't do both. You don't have my permission. It's just not allowed.

What's funny is they describe themselves as jazz-fusion influenced I didn't hear that at all. Flighty maybe. The only thing I felt was jazzy was the length of the songs or the vocal spiraling. And the violin thrown in, too. The other tracks that I didn't mention, weren't worth mention thus far. I'm afraid, that after several rotations, I find myself becoming acclimated and starting to enjoy parts of this album and even looking forward to those moments coming around again.

Unfortunately, the unpleasant outweighed the appealing traits of *Somnambulist* on the earliest passes. And it was a tad too flighty for my immediate tastes. So I have to stand true to my initial impressions and not my more biased acceptance after repeated tries. I don't like to have to dig relentlessly through an album to find the positive and truly entertaining points. I like it when they jump right out at you and are hard to ignore. Where sometimes his voice sounds fantastic, then most other times I don't even want to try, I'm not going to force it. Especially for a band with little to no history.

C -Alesha