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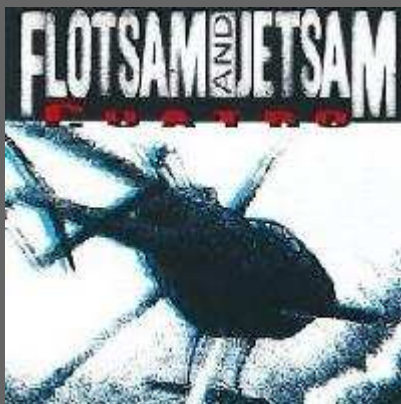
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Flotsam and Jetsam

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Flotsam and Jetsam are the bet's band you've never heard of. Touring and recording almost relentlessly since the early 1980's the band are well-known among die-hard fans of heavy music (although they are better known as "the band Jason Newsted was in before he joined Metallica" which has likely helped and hurt them over the years). The band even appeared on a major label for a trio of albums in the early nineties. "Cuatro" is the second of those albums and the band's most widely available recording to date.

"Cuatro" is the band's first album with longtime bassist Jason Ward, who go on to become the band's primary songwriter beginning with the next album, "Drift." While this album follows the quasi- experimental "When the Storm Comes," it returns the band to its roots; sucking the longtime fans back in before they'd shift again with "Drift." "Natural Enemies," "Swatting at Flies" and "Never to Reveal" have a thrash-tastic core to them that reminds the listener of Metallica's pre-"Black" album days and filled a void for thrash fans everywhere as thrash bands were dropping off like flies at this point, and Nirvana's "Nevermind" was hot on metal's trail in general. The band's slower songs are the better material here, especially "Wading Through the Darkness" and "Forget About Heaven," which both border on being arena power ballads but maintain just enough edge and groove to keep them seen as having some street credibility.

Overall this is one of Flotsam and Jetsam's most traditional albums. Nothing strays to far from the guitar slinging mix of speed and groove that

the band made a name for itself with, so if you prefer your music to be in tune with the genre playbook (which they helped write) then you'll love "Cuatro." If you like to hear genre-defining band's taking risks then I suggest trying on "Drift" first and working your way backwards. If you are looking to replace you're worn out old copy of this album then this is the definitive edition as it features the entire album as well as a radio edit, industrial mix, and video for "Wading Through the Darkness," the edit for "Cradle Me Now," and the bonus track "Date With Hate."

Bottom Line: An essential and heavy work from this groundbreaking band.

Key Tracks: "Natural Enemies," "Never to Reveal," "Wading Through the Darkness"

Reviewed by: **Mark Fisher**

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