



Music: Flotsam and Jetsam: Cuatro

Our Take

Three years after the release of *When the Storm Comes Down*, Flotsam and Jetsam finally released their fourth full length *Cuatro*. While *When the Storm Comes Down* had been a disappointment for many this album was met with quite a bit more fanfare, and for good reason. On this release, the group had improved their production values immensely and moved from traditional speed driven thrash to a mixture of thrash and hard rock. And while they still had room to grow on this release, *Cuatro* is still a great release that listeners should love.

Some fans may miss the non-stop speed that Flotsam and Jetsam offered on their earlier efforts, but this is made up for by the fact that the songs are now more memorable than they were before. *Cuatro* is certainly closer to much of the hard rock albums of the time rather than their thrash peers, and this ends up being the right direction for them to go in. Though there are a few songs that do blend together, there are also plenty of noteworthy tracks that feature textured melodies that really stand out. Tracks such as "Wading Through the Darkness" still hold up very well within the context of today's hard rock genre, and listeners who haven't experienced this group before will be impressed with what they hear. And as I mentioned earlier, the production values are now much higher giving this release a crisp and polished sound.

As I mentioned in my review of *When the Storm Comes Down*, on that release Eric Knutson experimented with some falsetto style wailing and the results just weren't that great. Thankfully on *Cuatro* this style of vocals is entirely absent and Knutson focuses entirely on using clean singing that emphasize the natural qualities of his voice. Now that he isn't trying to push into extremely high ranges, it is clear that Knutson's normal voice still has quite a bit of range and is very strong. Because of this, listeners will likely find that they enjoy this material a lot more than Flotsam and Jetsam's last efforts.

Looking back, some people may criticize the band for heading in a more mainstream direction with their sound but this really wasn't that bad of a decision considering that the results were stronger and more memorable than before. Flotsam and Jetsam still had some room to improve (as there are a couple of tracks here and there that sound almost exactly the same), but overall this is a much better effort than its predecessor and is one of the band's reissues that is worth checking out. This reissue also gives listeners some bonus tracks, remixes of "Wading Through the Darkness" and a music video and this does give the release some value for those that may have had it in the past.

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