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REVIEW

Music Review: Flotsam & Jetsam - *Drift*

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Flotsam & Jetsam has been largely an unknown quantity in my musical life. *Cuatro* was my introduction way back in 1993, now, in 2008, I have been able to sample the albums immediately before and after that landmark release. Hearing these neighboring albums has created an interesting timeline for the band and the development of their music. Listening to all three in succession quickly reveals a band in a state of flux. Now, while *Drift* does not fly quite as high as *Cuatro*, it does come fairly close.

The band got its start way back in the early 1980s, releasing their debut album, *Doomsday for the Deceiver*, in 1986. At the time, Jason Newsted was their bass player and primary songwriter, however, before they could release their second release, he left the band to replace the late Cliff Burton in Metallica, sealing the band's fate. They will forever be the band that Cliff's replacement came from regardless of the quality of their music. Newsted's influence continued on 1988's *No Place for Disgrace*, with a few songs featuring his writing skills.

Now, I have not heard either one of those first two releases. Their third album is called *When the Storm Comes Down* and it sounds like a band in search of itself, with a few good cuts, but with songwriting that is all over the map and lackluster production values. *Cuatro*, arriving in 1992, finds the band finally comfortable in their own skin and the music shows it. The trend of strong songwriting continues with 1995's *Drift*, which is easily the most mature of the albums I've heard and sounds like the logical next step following *Cuatro*.

Drift has a decidedly darker sound than the prior two. A little research uncovers that bass player Jason Ward had developed as the band's primary songwriter and that his brother, Jeff (drummer for Nine Inch Nails, Ministry, and others), committed suicide in 1993 after murdering his girlfriend. This understandably had an effect on Jason. The result is music that is somewhat dark. I am sorry that he had to go through something like that, but there is no denying the positives that came from Jason's work.

Drift is dark and the music is haunting. Something else that comes out in this album is the thrashiness that was a big part of their earlier career. I noticed it with *Cuatro* and it is even more pronounced here. There is a trend away from thrash and towards melody. There is still speed to be had, but it is hardly the same as what brought them their initial notice. This is not a bad thing, as they seem to be at their best when melody is the primary element of the song. Also, the songwriting grew over this three album span.

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Christopher Beaumont spends much of his time writing about entertainment when he isn't sitting in a movie theater. He is known around the office as the "Movie Guy" and is always ready to talk about his favorite form of entertainment and offer up recommendations. Interests include science fiction, horror, and metal music. His writings can be found at [Draven99's Musings](#), as well as [Film School Rejects](#).

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