



NEO: *Broadcast*, Pendragon: *Past and Presence*, Andromeda: *Playing Off the Board*

Three Metal Mind DVDs of varying types of prog played live. The reason I clumped these three all together is that they all are rather impressive DVDs with lots of interesting extras. Each CD has an interview with members of the band, extra live archive footage and even rehearsal footage plus the normal personal videos, weblinks and pics. At 140, 180 and 250 mins these releases certainly do not skimp on material.

NEO is a British prog second-wave supergroup, consisting of members of Arena, Palas, IQ, Pendragon among others. As with my progsters most of these guys have played on so many albums of others its rather hard to keep track of in the end. The band play songs from each of their members bands, of various vintages, but try to make them interesting by mixing things up with different lead singers or even different arrangements.

What is quite good for those who do not know the afore-mentioned bands is that the songs tend to be shorter varieties of their originals. This makes the tunes accessible to the neophyte. I would recommend watching the interview on the history of the group as its quite interesting.

Pendragon are a very English, well with that name what do you expect, prog act of some age. This DVD is to celebrate the release of *The Jewel* their debut, 21 years ago. They never have quite made it to the level of Marillion or Yes but they deliver solid prog music with talent and tenacity. Pendragon and prog fans will lap this DVD up and its good to see Metal Mind putting so much effort into this release.

Finally we have Andromeda who are not English. Listening to this band, of whom I had not heard any tracks, reminded me most of Dream Theatre at their most accessible. This is power prog played with oodles of talent and attention to detail. Tracks like "The Words Unspoken" really shine on here and might prompt those new to the band to seek out their studio work. Great stuff from a talented band.

Rick Wakeman: *Amazing Grace*

Rick Wakeman has produced a lush DVD/CD set of inspirational instrumental versions of popular hymns. The bonus vocal track is sung by his daughter Jemma Wakeman with the English Chamber Choir. The DVD is rather unusual. Instead of the normal live performance of his twiddling with his keyboards we see pastoral scenes that are meant to be relaxing. The DVD part of this CD is meant to be not only background music but visuals as well.

The CD that included has even more hymnal tracks as well as yet another version of Amazing Grace. I am sure most of you know who Rick Wakeman is, but in case you don't let me remind you. Wakeman is former keyboard player with the prog powerhouse Yes. He began his keyboard rise to stardom with The Strawbs. The man is prolific and continues to work and release music when most people are happy in their retirement. There is no doubting his talent and its all on show here.

While instrumental versions of hymns might not be the regular fare of most of the people who read my columns or normal reviews you can't fault the quality of this release. Its nicely packaged and you get quite a bit of music for yer money. Futhermore this would be a great present for your favourite religious Christian. And lets face it, a rousing redition of Jerusalem always does one good.

Well on that inspirational note I end this column. As always make sure you stay safe, rocking and check out any live music you can as often as possible. Oh, one more thing, do any of you dear readers have any contacts in the country music biz? Its a bit out of my genre as you might imagine.

Oh yes, one more thing. As a bit of bonus after my [recent review](#) of Beatallica they were kind enough to give me an interview. Here is the result.

1. Describe to those who have not heard you yet what you sound like and who?

Grg Hammettson: Beatallica is not a tribute band. We are an affectionate homage to the Beatles and Metallica. We play a mash up of Beatles based songs the way we think Meatallica would play them. So expect a lot of headbanging metal but with the Beatles at it's core.

2. How did all of you get into music and how young did you start playing?

Grg: When I saw my first Ibanez Explorer 2 with mother of pearl fret inlays and the rock it created I knew I just needed to play the guitar. I bought "Ride the Lightning" when it first came out because I loved "Fade to Black". I got it home, put it on and turned it up but what came out was the first tune "Fight Fire With Fire" and I was confused for a moment by this odd metered heaviness. But then it hit me and I realized that this was amazing. I started playing late, around 17 or 18 and didn't take lessons for years. But I practiced quite a lot. One of my ex-girlfriends said that I played guitar as a nervous habit. She loved it.

3. Would you care if you were only big in Japan or Germany and not the US?

Grg: To be even remotely "big" in today's music industry is a mind numbing blessing, so I wouldn't mind being big anywhere. But If I had to choose then I pick Germany because I adore schnitzel.

4. What do you think of what is currently in mode on the radio?

Grg: Radio is tough for me because I have the whole CD of the one song they play and I know that there are 9 to 15 other cool ass tunes on there that will never see the light of day. I guess this bugs me.

5. Do the guys in Metallica and the remaining Beatles know about you?

Grg: I know that Metallica has heard us, and even said in interviews that they like us. Which is amazing. Of course they could have been misquoted. Larz has been in contact with us and helped us greatly in the past with some legal issues. He is a cool dude. I am quite sure the Beatles have never heard of us, I mean come on, Paul has better things to do I'd bet.

6. How hard were the song choices?

Grg: Do you mean which songs to include on our new CD coming out on July 10th at a record store near you? Well we had a bunch picked out and we even recorded some that we couldn't get permission to use. So in that sense it was easy to choose, we just picked the best ones we could get the rights to mash up