

Raven Soul

100 Bleeding Hearts (Arctic Music Group)

Portugal's Raven Soul has made a name for itself in Europe with a catchy hybrid of progressive, gothic and stoner metal. Early tracks on the quintet's U.S. debut—a 35-minute EP called *100 Bleeding Hearts* that's already been available in other parts of the world—recall The Mission, and Márcio “Mac” Caetano can take his voice from throaty to downright pretty in just a few notes. He's backed by a tight group of musicians that sound hungry for success. Although razor riffs and majestic keys are marred by heavy bottom-end production, Raven Soul covers a lot of musical ground, offering both a hair-metal guitar solo straight out of 1988 on “Why...?!” and mysterious progressive atmospherics worthy of early Evergrey on “Chaos.” But it remains unclear what type of band these guys want to be.

—Michael Popke