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Roswell Six - 'Terra Incognita: A Line In The Sand'

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ARTIST
Artist [Roswell Six](#)

TITLE
Title [Terra Incognita: A Line In The Sand](#)

LABEL
Label [ProgRock Records](#)



In its own right and as a standalone album this is a very fine release.

If you read Issue 37* you would have encountered my effusive review of the debut album from this 'project', which is based around the writings of Fantasy/Sci-Fi author Kevin. J. Anderson, in which I claimed it to be a Prog classic and a 'must have' release.

With the sophomore release one should be prepared for a surprise, because aside from the presence of Michael Sadler (ex-Saga) the cast this time around is completely different and as a consequence the sound and feel represents a considerable change in style. The music for the previous album was created by keyboardist, Erik Norlander (Rocket Scientists), whereas this time around that baton has been passed to multi-instrumentalist, but predominantly guitarist, Henning Pauly (Frameshift, Chain), whose sound comes from a different camp, so don't expect the grandiose soundscapes and the huge pomp themes of the original. In fact, I do Pauly a disservice as he's that talented that he plays all the instruments on the album.

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As a consequence, 'A Line in the Sand' sits more in the Hard Rock/Prog Metal genre rather than the Symphonic Prog of its predecessor.

The album opens with 'Barricade' and it's quite strange to hear one of my all-time favourite vocalists (Steve Walsh – Kansas) sounding like he's doing an impersonation of Ozzy Osbourne (my mate Jon reckons it's like Steve Souza when he was in Exodus). When we get to the chorus the song takes on the style of one of Walsh's former bands, Streets, which is no bad thing. There's also a Dream Theater vibe going on during the instrumental section. 'Whirlwind' follows with a good edgy riff before it changes to an almost funky bass lead theme that accompanies the lovely vocal timbre of Nick Storr (The Third Ending). He's paired brilliantly with Sadler who shares the lead duties and Pauly plays some magnificent guitar runs that really underpin the song. The chorus is huge and the song fairly sprints along.

'The Crown' maintains the pace and brings Sass Jordan to the fore on a Bluesy number that is perfectly suited to her husky voice. Pauly does a fine Bonamassa style solo, which is a long way from the style that we heard on the debut.

'Loyalty' is up next and it takes the pace right down. A lovely piano refrain introduces this ballad, which could only be for the inimitable Sadler to perform, which he does with alacrity. After the first chorus the pace picks up a little with drums and bass joining in, and Sadler's vocals become even more impressive and impassioned. Pauly's Michael Thompson-esque solo is just right. Arjen Lucassen (Ayreon etc.) provides backing vocals. This is a wonderful song and a highlight from the album as far as I'm concerned.

'My Father's Son' sees the return of Walsh, but this time in conjunction with Charlie Dominici (ex-Dream Theater). It starts with a Middle Eastern style refrain before bursting into a heavy riff. I'm reminded of Walsh's 'Glossolalia' album in terms of feel and song construction as it's rather florid and staccato.

'When God Smiled on Us' has Storr and Alex Froese (Frameshift) sharing the vocals on a song that starts with a fine lazy beat and features another strong riff. This time I am reminded of Avantasia as a comparison with the dual vocals and underlying song arrangement. 'Need' is another highlight and like 'Loyalty' is a more relaxed number with another lovely piano refrain. This time Jordan gets to demonstrate her vocal qualities on a power ballad, which she does with immense skill as the song builds. The chorus is a delight and again Pauly creates solos and accentuations that fit the song superbly.

'Spiral' takes us back to Prog Metal territory and an opening that has me in mind of Lucassen's work at the outset but morphs into something that again harks at Streets when Walsh's vocals arrive. There is a breakdown section that is hard to explain, but it sounds impressive and complicated. 'Battleground' is an instrumental that has an epic, cinematic opening and some major power chords. Pauly gets to show his chops with multiple guitar leads and solos on which he uses a variety of sounds to great effect.

'Victory' closes out the album in rather enigmatic fashion because I have to say that the chorus is rather lame and can't even be saved by Sadler's vocals whereas the rest of the track is pleasing in a latter day Saga way.

In its own right and as a standalone album this is a very fine release but if it was intended as a sequel or continuation of an ongoing franchise then I'm not sure it works due to the lack of continuity in the sound.

Gary Marshall

(* ... of [Fireworks Magazine](#), available from the [Rocktopia Shop](#))

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