



albumreview

Thrice

The Alchemy Index, Vols I and II: Fire and Water
Vagrant Records

JONN KMECH
Art & Entertainment Staff

Concept albums allow a band to experiment with an expansive sonic range beyond their normal limits, allowing them to push themselves both lyrically and musically. Conversely, they can also result in bloated, self-serving vanity projects that collapse into themselves, not unlike a neutron star of self-righteousness. In each of these cases, the result is at least entertaining, unlike the boring, unoriginal mediocrity of Thrice's latest experimental offering.

Before listening to the excessively titled *The Alchemy Index, Vols I and II: Fire and Water*, I said to myself, "I'll bet that the Fire disc contains aggressively

raging, guitar-driven punk and the Water disc will feature moody, liquid ambience created by synthesizers."

I couldn't have been more misguided, and apologize to Thrice for such unjust preconceived notions—the Water version also contained several electronic samples. But while it's obvious what the band was going for with the overall idea, it isn't immediately clear why all the songs are such throw-aways. After listening to both discs several times, not a single tune stood out. They weren't terrible in any sense—just painfully average.

Another glaring issue with

Alchemy Index is the annoying way it's packaged. Containing just over 20 minutes per CD, it's frustrating to continually switch when there's barely enough music here to fill half of one disc. The liner notes also delve deeper into Thrice's extremely cerebral element concept, displaying cryptic symbols and medieval imagery without the slightest dash of pretension.

While the band's upcoming addition isn't based on the elements grey poupon and sommelier, as one might reason, it is predictably *Earth and Wind*, though it's unclear how these elements can be represented differently. More "earthy" acoustic guitars? Singing wine glasses?

Bands working to continually evolve their sound are commendable and help to prevent a world of Nickelbacks, but doing so shouldn't be at the expense of solid songwriting. While attempting to do something unique, Thrice unfortunately forgot about the songs, leading to a decent but immemorable addition to their catalogue.



albumreview

KT Tunstall

Drastic Fantastic
Virgin Records

KELSEY TANASIUK
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Drastic Fantastic, the new album from KT Tunstall, only lives up to half its name; while it's certainly a fantastic collection of music, there's nothing drastic about this album.

Everyone's favourite Scotswoman returns to this side of the pond with a new album, which sounds pretty much

like her old one, *Eyes to the Telescope*, only with a bigger budget. *Drastic Fantastic* has a very full sound when compared to its sparse, instrument-light predecessor.

Perhaps the most unexpected thing about Tunstall's new album is its artwork. The CD booklet displays no lyrics;

instead, each page says the name of a song on the album, and then tells the story of the song through a few beautifully rendered comic-book panels. Of course, the interpretation of the panels are up to the viewer, as their meaning isn't necessarily clear. While such strange liner-notes don't really seem like Tunstall's style, it's apparent that she might be an odder songbird than she first appeared.

Overall, *Drastic Fantastic* is catchy, bouncy, and pleasantly addictive. Tunstall's lovely vocals and equally pleasant lyrics are never a disappointment. It's not a great departure though, so for a super fan or a new listener, *Drastic Fantastic* is a great album to pick up, but casual fans who already have her first album might want to skip it for something a little different.



LAURENSTIEGLITZ

DANGER HAIR Chimaira tore through the Dinwoodie Lounge on Saturday, bringing their '50s style do-whop harmonies. Naw, they just played hard metal.

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