

## Black Country Communion

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Mascot Records

2010 would appear to be the Year of the Supergroup, with Chickenfoot and Them Crooked Vultures, together with the return of Transatlantic and the latest of Jack White's seemingly endless stream of all-star ventures. This latest conglomerate is possibly the most interesting to date, however, signalling as it does not only the return of Glenn Hughes to full-on rock mode, but also

feel and will please anyone who appreciates a bit of southern boogie and blues in the rock. **MB**

### Circle II Circle - Consequence Of Power AFM Records

Singer Zak Stevens formerly of American heavyweights Savatage formed Circle II Circle around 2002/2003 and this is now their fifth album of superior power metal. In many ways, Savatage rewrote the book of rock and Stevens was a major part of their glory years heading up vocals from 1992 to 2000 and his new band are more or less a continuation of the high grade metal that Savatage simply revelled in. Stevens is the archetypal American rock God vocalist and his soaring voice stamps his authority all over the proceedings and leaves you simply in admiration of his power and range. However, this is a true band effort and in Mitch Stewart (bass), Johnny Osborn (drums) and Andy Lee (guitar) he has one hell of a team to work with. Lee is the master of the rock lick and he embellishes his loud and proud riffs with some glorious soloing with Osborn and Stewart literally shaking the foundations with their thunderous work. Maybe you have not heard of Circle II Circle before and if so then this is no bad way to start your education. Inspiring metal from a masterful band. **TC**

### Coma - Excess Mystic Production

It should now be clear to readers of CRS that Poland is producing some very fine rock

the involvement of fast-rising blues-rock guitar hotshot Joe Bonamassa and drummer Jason Bonham (fresh from his Zeppelin involvement). Completing the line-up is keyboard player Derek Sherinian, who has played with both Kiss and Alice Cooper, but is probably most familiar to readers of this magazine from his time with prog-metal standard-bearers Dream Theater.

So, is it any good, or is it a Blind Faith-type let down? The answer, thankfully, is resoundingly the former. Hughes has publicly stated that this is intended to be a strong, no-nonsense slab of classic British rock, and so it proves. Never afraid to wear its influences on its sleeve, the album mixes in large doses of Free, Zeppelin, Purple, even AC/DC, while always managing to remain equal to the sum of its impressive parts.

Hughes will probably come in for the most scrutiny, and his vocal performance throughout is impressive, displaying more maturity and control than the occasionally screechy lapses of his Purple days, and he indeed seems to have lost little of his range with the advancing years. The real star of the show for me however is the astonishing performance of the hugely impressive Bonamassa. Always restrained, and never flashy for the sake of it or overpowering the song, his guitar work is a master-class of taste and technique.

The best track on offer, to my ears, is Song Of Yesterday. One of three tracks sung by

bands. After playing a gig at Shepherd's Bush Empire in April, Coma are the latest to try their luck at our CD market, aided by new record company Mystic. Their brand of metal only tangentially borders on Opeh territory; the "soundscape" is more often reminiscent of other Polish bands, it being clear that they have now developed their own sound, in much the same way that "Rock Progressivo Italiano" did. This is inventive, with plenty of bass in the sound, good guitar work and a fine vocalist. Coma are already very big in their home country, having released three albums that have all sold well and placed well in the charts, as well as having won three Polish "Grammies". "Excess" is the English version of their best-selling record and it's easy to see why it shifted the copies back home. It's very, very good! If you've ever enjoyed Polish bands, for instance like Riverside, then you'll enjoy this too. **8/10. APT.**

### Days Before Tomorrow The Sky is Falling

[www.daysbeforetomorrow.com](http://www.daysbeforetomorrow.com)

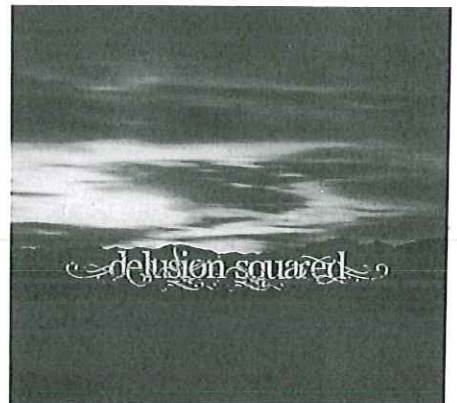
There is far too much good about this refreshing 2009 debut release to cram into this review. It distills the essence of plenty of top rock history into an all-too-short experience. Top quality prog handiwork meshes perfectly with soaring AOR hooks and choruses, Eric Klein's excellent vocals remind me of Cairo (Bret Douglas) and the music at times touches on Kansas, Floyd, Hogarth-Marillion, Mystery, Little Atlas or Presto Ballet. The songwriting is impressive: compact and con-

Bonamassa, it is, as the title might suggest, a clear homage to Free (very close in name to their own track Songs Of Yesterday), and features some absolutely terrific guitar work, with Bonamassa channelling the soulful spirit of Paul Kossoff in a way that I have heard few people do. A ballad which is certain to have the lighter (or mobile phone) waving crowd out in force when performed live, it is a triumph.

Other highlights include the reworking of the old Trapeze chestnut Medusa (which eclipses the original), the straightforward catchy appeal of the radio-friendly One Last Soul (surely a hit in a world with any justice), and the statement of intent that is opener Black Country itself, but it's hard to find a poor track here. Some might gripe that a couple of the later tracks are eked out to longer length than they can really sustain in a studio context (such as the 11-minute closer Too Late For The Sun), but that would be picky, and the live arena will be where such tracks stretch out and come into their own anyway.

Overall, this is simply a great, unapologetic rock album in the grand Classic Rock tradition. If that's what floats your boat, and as a CRS member there's a good chance it is, then you will almost certainly enjoy this album. It wears its influences with pride, and promises you a good time. Go with it. **Steve Pilkington**

cise, diverse and modern, clever yet with heart, and all done with impressive flourish and total mastery of instruments. With first-rate, crisp production from renowned Ron Nevison, this is the kind of uplifting, joyously accomplished US music that warms the cockles of my prog heart. **DP**



### Delusion Squared - Delusion Squared Independent Release

This debut release by a very promising three-piece is a concept album set in a dystopian post war society where people live in biospheres and are controlled by artificial intelligence. Even procreation is artificial, so when our heroine decides she wants to have a 'natural' baby she is cast out into the big bad world to fend for herself. Musically this is a real gem. It is modern guitar driven prog rock with Porcupine Tree type riffs, Gilmour like subtlety, and some great acoustic guitar work too. There is everything from gentle