

# Rock Guitar Daily with Tony Conley

I don't listen to music I don't like, so why would I write about it?

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

## Dave Kilminster - ...and THE TRUTH will set you free... - Art For Art's Sake



Dave Kilminster returns with another excellent solo record that continues to display that he's above all, an artist. Touring with Roger Waters on his spectacular The Wall tours has enabled Kilminster to be seen by untold millions, and if he was a calculating cat, he could take the easy road, do an album that would ape the Pink Floyd legacy, and ride it to the bank. Instead, he chooses to spend his time off the road to chase his muse merrily around the recording studio, and play what's on his mind.

And The Truth Shall Set You Free is a heady record - of course, coming from one of the world's most highly regarded virtuosos, it's filled to the brim with fantastic guitar playing, but it's not flash for flash's sake, it's art for art's sake, and it's museum worthy. The guitar solos alone make this one worthy of great regard, but the real story is what's going on leading up to the inevitable trips that seem to always end in blissful and mind-blowing explorations of guitar playing that redeem all. Lyrically, the album is deep, and complicated. With titles like Messiah, Save Me, Thieves, and The Fallen, you'd hardly expect a light hearted romp, and this is clearly not. That being said, it's a great trip, full of majestic music, soothing to the soul in it's hope seeking walk through the dark.

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I spoke with Dave while he was working on the album, but I'm guessing that after our talk he may have re-thought things and went in a bit of a different direction. He disappeared into his world having talked about a trip into the world of rock, but he came out with an epic statement about the state of the soul. He obviously followed that muse where it took him, and listening is as much a part of a musician's journey as making glorious noise.

Messiah opens the album, and it's as if CSNY had eaten a Led Zeppelin record. An eight minute study that's in no hurry, a classically British acoustic introduction eventually gives way to powerful but clear and tonefully distorted chords that announce the chorus. Kilminster's vocals are soothing and pristine - he's no shouter, but he's become a fine, fine singer who is given to melody and precision. As a writer, he's complex and sophisticated, but in a manner that seems very natural and not forced - the same can be said of his rather prodigious arranging and production skills. By the time the rhythm section is throbbing, the vocals are layered, and the strings are singing, you're deep into a good trip. Then comes again those gorgeous acoustics, and you're out on a cloud.

Opium soaked slide guitars signal the arrival of Addict - "There's no escaping when the dragon comes to play," and you get the impression you're reading an autobiography, but the addict isn't the writer. This tune features some incredible guitar orchestrating that brings to mind a mixture of Page and Brian May that is brilliant in it's resemblance to the way some drugs can hold you within their thrall. Kilminster's solo is a masterful blend of angry distortion and emotional containment. These tunes grow and grow, they're never as simple as they sound at first, and you just get drawn into the mystery and the beauty.



Thieves turns up the heat and the volume, and it's a funk fueled stomp that makes me miss Eddie's better rhythm work with it's pinched and slightly overdriven chording before the heavier chunk comes in, and the vocals lift the tune into the stratosphere. The dynamics at play in Kilminster's guitar playing are dazzling - he shifts seamlessly between clean tones, slightly chorused grit into full throb distortion and back without ever being jarring. There's a great string interlude that

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## Tony Conley



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leads into a shredding but musical solo, and before it gets to be even remotely close to overindulgence it's back into the song, and we're left loving and wanting more, and that's exactly what you want from a guitar solo.

Back into the mellow mood making, Circles returns to sophisticated chording and multi-layer vocals that suggest a Steely Dan/Hall & Oates style of making pop that isn't in any way dumb or obvious. It turns out you can have it all if you work hard enough to achieve it. Kilminster is becoming a better and more effective singer with each release, and he's an agile stylist with great ideas in the way of vocal arrangements. He goes almost five minutes before he sets off the guitar fireworks, and they are majestic indeed. The bends are super soulful, the brief expositions into harmony are enthralling, and the technical prowess is typically undeniable. Stick around for the fade on this one, it's classic soul. Great stuff.


A big, full acoustic guitar introduces Save Me, and its perfect - it fits, and that's much of what makes this record so compelling. Dave is an artist, and I don't think there is another record he could have written at this point in time. This is deep stuff, not too far from the emotion laden ways of Aimee Mann at her best. The string arrangement on this song is sublime - it takes the song into another place, a place further into the soul, and like a dream that wakes you in the middle of the night, it captures. There's great hope in the deepest desperation.



Cassiopeia is a constellation in the northern sky, named after the vain queen in Greek mythology who boasted of her unrivaled beauty - and Kilminster creates the perfect sonic and lyrical representation of what happens when she wins our hearts, as she has. This is an almost nine minute trip that couldn't be a moment shorter, and when it's done you wonder how it went by so quickly. The guitar solo section is truly a trip high into the galaxy - this is Kilminster at his best, and it's interesting that a guy who is such a spectacular player does it within the realm of songs and arrangements, and not endless and uninspired instrumentals. It's little wonder that he spends his days in the company of folks like Roger Waters and Guthrie Govan - he is the state of the art in 2014.

The Fallen sounds like what I always wanted Todd Rundgren's Utopia to sound like - it marries Philadelphia soul melodies with heavy guitars, and progressive tempos in a stunningly successful way. This one's going to be on my playlists for some time - I haven't mentioned it much, but the rhythm section on this record, Pete Riley (drums) and Phil Williams (bass), well, they're as good as it gets.

Stardust closes out the album, and it's a meditation that rides out what is truly one of 2014's best moments. This is a record for the ages - it never hits you over the head, but it gets under your skin, and stays there. Dave Kilminster has considerably upped the ante, and the stock in his solo career with this record. I wondered if he'd match the level of his last album (Scarlet - The Director's Cut - review), but in fact, he's gone way past it, good as it was. This is a great album that should end up on a lot of year end top 10 type lists, but more than that, this is an album that you should buy immediately, and cozy up to all winter long.

Posted by Tony Conley at 7:18 AM 



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