

January 10, 2009

Hi Guys-

Here' the Low Gravity review. Nice kids, but no go-go boots.
Talk soon, Yr pal, Big P-

Low Gravity
January 7, 2009
After Dark club, Exarchia
Perri Pagonis

For every artistic trend there is an obligatory aesthetic backlash, which, theorhetically speaking, is supposed to bring balance and harmony to society's creative mindset. This phenomenon has been seen endless times in our culture. In the late 70s and early 80s synthesizer-driven, new romantic music a la Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet were the loyal opposition to, then fading, punk rock. Recently, this thesis/antithesis event has manifested itself with the friction between dark-groove emo music and trendy, high-production teen-pop.

Mainstream music, at this point in history, has become the creative equivalent of a snake eating its own tail: post rock and metal have developed as far as acoustically possible without becoming pure white noise. In contrast, two cute guys with a synthesizer can take over the pop market in a few months with proper video/airplay and management. Form and content have become equally meaningless, therefore the cute guys with pretty hair probably have a better shot at being career musicians than low profile, virtuoso guitarists who suffer for their craft day and night.

Low Gravity is a local band centered in the Exarchia area of the city. Their instrumental style of play ranges from funk-rock to space-rock with generous amounts of jazz-fusion a la mid-late period John McLaughlin thrown into the mix. Their musicianship is remarkable and holds one's ear to the piece being played, while still giving the mind enough room to fantasize and create visual backgrounds to their work. The four-piece ensemble are tight as a submarine hatch when they need to be disciplined to the piece, and loose-jointed and slippery when it's time to take off the gloves and really rip the guts out of a song.

Their intimate show at the After Dark club in Exarchia was a 90-minute, high-voltage soundtrack that had the crowd aurally riveted to their performance like devotees before their masters. As one listened to their presented songs, one could visualize high-speed cinematic car crashes, picaresque gangsters rushing down narrow alleys, wild carnival rides, extreme sports competitions, psychotic skateboard kiddies careening down vertical tubeway staircases, etc. They could easily work as film soundtrack musicians and rival such greats as the Italian band Goblin, and American writer/director/musician John Carpenter in the musical compositions for film genre.

If there is constructive criticism to make about Low Gravity it would be that their show needs some sexing-up and higher degree of animation from the musicians if they wish to remain a tenable, live act. Although their playing ability is top-notch, there is almost no kinetic movement to keep the eye moving.

Low Gravity is also low profile in the wardrobe department. They have the regular-guy look down to a science. There have been lots of everyday-look bands before them: Talking Heads, Pink Floyd, etc. However those bands used multi-media, extra musicians, light-shows, lasers and background film-clips to keep peoples' attention moving and not give them time to become eager for the next development of the stage presentation.

Their current CD on Studio 2 Records, *9 Improvisations Against Urban Noise*, is an auditory mirror image of their live show. It ranks with some of the best instrumental and soundtrack albums of recent memory and is a must-buy for anyone interested in the current Greek underground music scene. Guitarist Jason Leontidis gives the listener hurricanes of guitar improvisation and plenty of raw, chunky riffing on the remarkably clean live recording. Keyboardist Kostas Stergiou nicely underpins the foreground guitar melodies with atmospheric layering and droning without his touch ever becoming gaudy or heavy-handed. Highlights of the disc include "Dirty Funk #2," "Electric Samba," and the drop-dead, hair-raising masterpiece "Voodoo Blues."

Low Gravity is something of an early 21st century paradox. They've got talent and content in spades, but not a scintilla of form or showmanship. In an era where almost anything goes, because there are no tangible rules anymore in the music world, it may be best for them to add a bit of zest and flash to their live show. If this thing were to happen, who knows how far they could go. But take my word for it- right now, at this very moment in time, they're the best soundtrack band in Greece, bar none.