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Once More 'Round the Sun

Mastodon have come a long way since their debut album, *Remission*. In their early days of rocking Mastodon's material sounded very heavy and was similar to thrash metal. Since then they have taken on more of a progressive metal sound. A series of their albums, starting with 2004's *Leviathan*, were all concept albums. That is, the songs came together to narrate a story. These concept albums explored water, fire, earth, and ether, and the last concept album produced was *The Hunter* which was released in 2011. After this many had wondered what direction the band would head next. As it turns out the band has continued to stick with their prog metal sound.

Their latest album *Once More 'Round The Sun* does not, as far as most can tell, contain a story within. The sound of *Once More 'Round The Sun* has remained somewhat unchanged from their previous work although the band's drummer, Brann Dailor, takes on more vocal responsibilities in this record than he did in records past. Dailor sings on 8 of the 10 tracks usually sharing the singing with bandmate and bassist Troy Sanders. While Dailor and Sanders take on most of the vocals throughout the album lead guitarist Brent Hinds makes vocal contributions to 5 of the 10 songs.

Although this album may not be a concept album, it is still quite similar in sound to *The Hunter* in that they both have some very mellow sounding songs, and some

heavier songs for the real headbangers. Their progressive metal sound can be very clearly heard in some of their songs such as “The Motherload” which has long interludes between choruses, long guitar solos, and a key change which occurs during the interlude. Their eclectic style is also showcased in their song “Ember City” which has a central guitar riff but often changes tempo while the chorus is sung. Along with their constantly changing guitar riffs and tempos is Brann Dailor’s signature brand of drumming which utilizes a lot of jazzy drum fills. The album also features some acoustic guitar to introduce some of their songs, such as “Tread Lightly” and “Diamond in the Witch House”, which is unusual in the metal genre, but that doesn't stop Mastodon from experimenting with their sound. Even though Mastodon’s new album sounds more radio friendly the last song on their newest album is reminiscent of the bands early thrash inspired music. The song that I am of course talking about is “Diamond in the Witch House”, and despite the track having many changes in sound, tempo, and even recording a time of almost 8 minutes, it is the track that sounds most thrash inspired. This inspiration is evidenced through the heavy guitar riffs and the growling vocals that were provided by guest singer Scott Kelly and the band’s own bassist Troy Sanders.

This record certainly has a sound that is different from Mastodon’s earlier work, it is often more mellow and more accessible to someone unfamiliar with metal. That being said it still provides material that will appeal to even the most devout and hardcore Mastodon fans.