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COREY NIKOLS

**FILTER**  
The Trouble  
with Angels  
(ROCKET SCIENCE)



**INDUSTRIAL ANTHEMS:** With their first three albums—1995's *Short Bus*, 1999's *Title of Record*, and 2002's *The Amalgamut*—Filter delivered a plethora of killer songs, the majority of these hard edged monsters driven by huge guitars and the towering voice of main man Richard Patrick. After a time in the wilderness, the band returned with 2008's *Anthem for the Damned*, and while it had a few good songs, their trademarked bite was absent. But fans can rejoice, because *The Trouble with Angels* sees Filter back at full force and churning out the kind of songs they rightly should. It's with the intro of second track "Drug Boy" that the hairs on your neck stand up due to a sinister and rolling guitar riff that is as thick as it is pissed off, and throughout *The Trouble with Angels* the band consistently matches muscle and melody perfectly. Patrick's voice is also fantastic, proving that he still possesses a scream that can rival that of Devin Townsend's (the two of them really need to hook up for the mother of all duets), and his is firmly heart on his sleeve. For fans of the band's lighter fare, there is also the anthemic "Fades Like a Photograph" and closer "No Re-Entry," which are both suitably stratospheric, and altogether *The Trouble with Angels* is a towering return to form for Filter. Welcome back, boys.

~ Dan Slessor

collaboration from 1996, which, to be fair, not many people have heard, although it's probably a fair bet that Amott has. Of course, since Amott can only play fast, there aren't really any doomy songs here, just midpaced ("Lost in Yesterday") and speedy ("Believed in Me"). For variety, there is a live jam, "We Are Free," the Gary Moore sounding "Coming Home," and the atmospheric Iron Maiden-esque "Spirit of the Wind." It's just amazing that Amott's freaking side-project blows away most bands that do this style for a living. ~ Jeff Treppel

opener "Intro" and revel in it across the next 17 impeccably written cuts that join the fury of punk with rock 'n' roll good times and the rough 'n' tumble street wisdom that only a Boston act can convey. Sometimes the blend is overt, as on the acoustic/accordion build to uptempo punk on "Wood Road." Sometimes it's all about raising a glass to fallen comrades or slurring the words arm in arm in the finest Celtic style ("Poor Poor Jimmy" and "Bobby Powers"). Often it is fast, infectious, and lets the gang shouts fall where they may ("Freedom" and "In Stereo"). *Street Dogs* is a splendid representation of the American punk rock tradition and is guaranteed to get asses out of the seats. On "Punk Rock and Roll," McColgan sends the message loud and clear, "They say that punk rock has died away / I don't believe a word they say." You better not either.

~ Scott Alisaglu

would perhaps like to be, they are adventurous. But it's the coherent and smooth way that they meld various styles that's truly noteworthy. On the ironically entitled album closer "Stagnant Progression," Caluwé's caustic male vocals tear through the song midway in tandem with Milman's beautiful female melodic vocals to the backdrop of frantic metallic noise. And this precedes a calm melodic guitar dénouement. Taking notes from Cryptopsy's *The Unspoken King*, System Divide realizes the importance of making fluid transitions rather than haphazardly piecing together disparate parts. ~ Jay H. Gorania

Tankian's voice and politics annoying before won't change their minds. And real fans will hope that Tankian gets back together with System of a Down soon. But in the meantime, Tankian's solo career is bringing some fresh, innovative, and catchy music to the masses.

~ Robert VerBruggen



**STREET DOGS**  
(HELLCAT)

**PUNK ROCKING:** The self-titled fifth album from acclaimed Boston punk rockers Street Dogs is defined by two striking qualities: unforgettable anthems and the kind of working class, Celtic flavored, and totally rockin' punk spirit that few bands can match. The fact that Street Dogs is led by original Dropkick Murphys vocalist Mike McColgan has a lot to do with the pub sing-along attributes and Irish punk pride vibes. You'll feel it as soon as the bagpipes enter on

**SYSTEM DIVIDE**  
The Conscious  
Sedation  
(METAL BLADE)



**MELODIC DEATH METAL/DEATHCORE:** System Divide's diverse lineup is drawn from Belgium, Israel, and Ohio. The band includes vocalists Sven de Caluwé (Aborted) and Miri Milman (ex-Distorted), as well as Cole Martinez (ex-Years of Fire, Antenora), Andrew Lenhe (Antenora), and Mike Heller (Malignancy). The logistics involved in pushing forward this transnational project must be nightmare inducing. System Divide initially "set out to revolutionize the conventions of the over-saturated melodic death metal genre, proving that extreme metal can have more depth than blastbeats, while female vocals do not have to conform to the precepts of the goth genre." While System Divide might not be as groundbreaking as they

**SERJ TANKIAN**  
Imperfect Harmonies  
(SERJICAL STRIKE / REPRISE)



**METAL'S WEIRDEST SINGER BACK FOR MORE:**

Say what you will about metal from the late 90s and early 2000s, but System of a Down was one of the quirkiest and most talented acts the world has seen for some time. The band as a whole is still on hiatus, but singer Serj Tankian has been doing a great job of filling that hole in fans' hearts. *Elect the Dead* was a solid and diverse collection of tunes, and now *Imperfect Harmonies* follows in its footsteps. The record gets off to a thunderous start with "Disowned Inc.," a schizophrenic jumble of orchestration, pianos, distorted guitars, haunting vocal melodies, and a brief dance beat. "Boarders Are" is a bit more coherent, with synthesized strings forming the background for an intense performance on Tankian's part. Tankian made "Beatus" into a ballad that grows in ferocity without succumbing to his urge to add spastic heavy guitars. While there's nary a filler track, other highlights include the piano heavy "Gate 21," the haunting "Yes, It's Genocide," and "Left of Center." Of course, those who found

**TARJA**  
What Lies Beneath  
(THE END)



**OPERA METAL:** For fans who were heartbroken when Tarja Turunen was unceremoniously ejected from Nightwish, and subsequently disappointed in that band's ensuing work, there is good news. Even though Tarja's latest solo record, *What Lies Beneath*, is no replacement for another proper Nightwish record, it fills the void nicely. The classically trained Turunen has arguably the most beautiful voice in all of metal, a powerful instrument that wrenches every ounce of emotion out of the words and arrangements. The pop, classical, and metal seem much better integrated than on her last effort, and *What Lies Beneath* covers all the bases you would hope for. There are bursts of symphonic metal ("Until My Last Breath" and "Dark Star"), soaring ballads ("Underneath"), industrialized crunchers ("Little Lies"), gorgeous should be show tunes ("Rivers of Lust"), and creative use of a harpsichord and backing vocals from the a cappella metal group Van Canto ("Anteroom of Death"). She even throws a bone to those listeners that loved the more epic journeys ("The Crimson Deep"). And it's all devilishly catchy! The production of *What Lies Beneath* shines, and the hired gun session musicians all do a fine job. The only thing that's really disappointing is that it isn't actually a Nightwish release. ~ Jeff Treppel