



Photo courtesy of last.fm

Angels and Airwaves' new album, "LOVE," was made available online for free on Valentine's Day, and it doesn't disappoint long-time fans of the band.

"LOVE" available free



BY COREY BOMMEL
Reviewer

Angels and Airwaves

Tom DeLonge has always pushed to make his latest side project, Angels and Airwaves, larger than life. Recently, he invested his own money to self-release AVA's third studio album "LOVE" and allow it to be distributed for free. "LOVE" was made available to the public on Valentine's Day free of charge and will be released as a CD with bonus tracks at an undetermined date.

AVA has made a niche for itself by creating a sound that is instantly recognizable, although heavily influenced by U2 and The Cure. This space-rock-themed album is full of clean, thumping drums, dynamic guitar riffs and DeLonge's distinct vocals. The band also uses effects and synth, adding to the space opera mystique as well as amplifying DeLonge's voice to overpower the music. It has a very progressive rock feel to it.

Although the band has established its sound with the last two albums, it seems to be afraid to deviate too far from it. Many of the songs on "LOVE"

seem like they have been done before. Several guitar intros and riffs are recycled from earlier releases. DeLonge's vocal range is also limited. He uses the same inflections on nearly every song, but that is to be expected of him.

"LOVE" is full of stand-out tracks, opening with the instrumental "Et Ducit Mundum Per Luce," which makes you feel like you are drifting in space. "Young London" offers a departure from the familiar with an underlying dance beat, while "Letters to God, Part II" is a nod to longtime Blink 182 and Box Car Racer fans. "Epic Holiday" has a synth beat that is pseudo R&B as DeLonge shouts, "Let's start a riot / Nobody's right, nobody's wrong / Life's just a game, it's just one epic holiday."

Despite its similarities to earlier AVA releases, "LOVE" is still a great album. It is unlikely to win any new fans, but longtime listeners will have a reason to fall in love with Angels and Airwaves

Story of the Year

Why mess with a formula that has yet to fail? That is what Story of the Year probably asked themselves when creating their fourth studio album, "The Constant." The St. Louis quintet has been rocking the post-hardcore scene since the mid 1990s, and "The Constant" follows familiar formulas to create another great album.

Story of the Year boasts one of the highest-energy

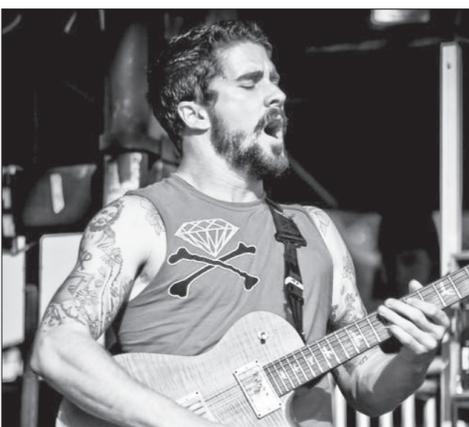


Photo courtesy of last.fm

Story of the Year sticks to what they know and delivers a hit with "The Constant."

live shows that can be seen right now. They try to imbue their albums with this same energy and succeed on most accounts. Almost every track causes the listener to want to jump and mosh, regardless of their more docile atmosphere.

The band stays true to its sound: a mixture of metal, pop-punk and power-pop rock to create driving rhythms that never seem to end. The guitarists Ryan Phillips and Philip Sneed try to keep up with vocalist Dan Marsala's pace as he blasts out the lyrics.

The first single off the album, "I'm Alive," is one of the slower tracks but offers the largest potential for radio play. It is immediately followed by "To the Burial," which has the highest energy on the

album and gets it back on track. "Won Threw Ate" is one of the most polished tracks, blasting through your speakers in high fashion. Marsala's screaming vocals, along with the band's scorching music on the song, prove that Story can be heavy when they really want to. It is a welcome recovery from the preceding ballad "Holding on to You," which falls short of its intentions.

"The Constant" is a flat-out rock album that is unlikely to win any awards for massive creativity. The songs will no doubt find themselves anchored into Story of the Year's live repertoire. It gets people out of their seats and moving and offers a warm retreat from the cold months still to come.

Bioshock 2 offers sound presentation



BY ALEX CARLSON
Reviewer

Deep beneath the ocean's surface lies a world unlike any other. The bright neon lights piercing through the shadows and giant sea creatures swimming past the colossal buildings are only the beginning. The ruins of this underwater city call out to you. This metropolis is dead, but its memories remain alive. Welcome to "Bioshock 2."

"Bioshock 2" takes place in the same moody world of its predecessor: the underwater utopia-gone-wrong, Rapture. The story of "Bioshock 2" takes a unique turn for the series, taking place after the events of the first "Bioshock." The player takes the role of a Big Daddy, an experiment gifted with the capability to not only smack enemies around with a giant drill, but also shoot lightning or fire from the player's hands.

The story mostly is told through collectible audio recordings, which add a cryptic and suspenseful vibe to the storyline. When compared to the story of the original "Bioshock," however, it falls critically short. The story in "Bioshock 2" has almost no relation to the original "Bioshock," making "Bioshock 2" feel less like a proper sequel and more like a spinoff. Returning to Rapture definitely is worthwhile, but "Bioshock 2" ultimately fails to live up to the sky-high expectations that its predecessor successfully maintained.

"Bioshock 2" is a more linear game than the original, so much of the exploratory elements are put on the back burner. This takes away much of the mysterious, Twilight Zone-like charm of the series. What made the first "Bioshock" so amazing was the encouragement of exploration. The world was disturbing but worth investigating. The players wanted to know what was going to happen next. "Bioshock 2" still is captivating, but the lack of a real emphasis on exploring the ruined world of Rapture is a critical flaw.

The gameplay's mix of first-person shooting and role-playing ability customization is a unique blend that ultimately works, even if little has changed from the original "Bioshock." The player can

use weapons like the typical machine guns, pistols and shotguns, or try something a little more inventive and shoot lightning or ice from the Big Daddy's hands. Mixing and matching these abilities and weapons allows one to find a perfect combination to suit Big Daddy's needs in battle. Enemies are aggressive, so finding the player's niche is a demanding experience. The shooting feels controlled, and using the different abilities is visceral and fun.

The multiplayer has an experience-based level-up system, which is even more of an incentive to find a perfect combination of guns and abilities to use. As the player wins games, guns and attacks become more potent and powerful, and the player's originally basic combination can grow to a super-powerful offensive strike in multiplayer. One of the best features of "Bioshock 2" is the multiplayer, with a strong community of gamers and plenty of things to unlock.

The beautiful disaster of Rapture is portrayed incredibly well, thanks to a wonderful presentation that captures the disturbing aspects of the nearly flawless world. Each room is painted with amazing lighting effects and stunning water reflections. Elemental attacks spark and flare with energy. Hunched and deformed enemies attack. The audio tapes offer plenty of storyline factors to hear, and its static-filled recording quality keep the surreal and haunting world of Rapture close to the heart. The presentation of "Bioshock 2" is atmospheric, technically advanced and downright unforgettable.

"Bioshock 2" might not live up to the legacy of its incredible predecessor, but the inclusion of a challenging and engaging multiplayer coupled with some great combat helps the game overcome its linearity issues. The world of Rapture remains the series' greatest quality, and although "Bioshock 2" doesn't take advantage of the world to its highest potential, it still feels teeming and frightening. The expansive multiplayer mode offers plenty of abilities and weapons to unlock, and taking on your friends and rivals online is a real treat. The single-player isn't perfect, and the game doesn't offer as much exploration as it should, but "Bioshock 2" has just enough engaging elements to be worth a serious recommendation.

Scorsese's latest contains thrilling plot



BY KEN DUSOLD
Reviewer

The mind is a powerful and amazing thing. It stores our fondest memories, warns us of pain that threatens the body, and it controls our every movement. It also is responsible for nightmares. Nightmares feed off fear, which is made possible by those experiences and memories we have stored in our brains.

Martin Scorsese's psychological thriller "Shutter Island" gives the Academy Award-winning director the chance to play with the mind, leaving his audience frightened and thoroughly entertained.

The movie, set in 1954, begins in a foggy haze that blankets the waters off the coast of Massachusetts. U.S. Marshalls Teddy Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Chuck Aule (Mark Ruffalo) are journeying by ferry to an island prison reserved only for the most dangerous of the world's criminally insane. Their arrival follows the escape and disappearance of child murderer Rachel Solando (Emily Mortimer). Upon reaching the island, the two agents are met by a deputy warden (John Carroll Lynch), who instructs them to release their weapons, and see Dr. Cawley (Ben Kingsley), the chief psychiatrist on the island. Cawley updates them on the situation and offers to help them in any way

he can. Almost immediately, the limits to how far Cawley will go to help them become apparent — Daniels and Aule are on their own.

From the very beginning, it is obvious this case will affect Daniels more than it would the average person. He regularly suffers from disturbing flashbacks of his participation in the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp during World War II. He also hears the voice of his deceased wife (Michelle Williams) in his head, warning him to be careful and to get off the island. To call this film spooky would be an understatement.

Scorsese is one of the world's greatest directors because of his success in working with the finest actors to create stunning works of cinematic art. "Shutter Island" is not a masterpiece. Scorsese has made better films. However, his latest flick is a triumphant success and, as usual, it benefits from the hard work of a few talented performers.

DiCaprio has come a long way since his big break in "Titanic." He has grown as an actor and proven himself to be more than just some good-looking, A-list celebrity. His performances in Scorsese's "The Aviator" and "The Departed" were his tests — and he passed. In "Shutter Island," DiCaprio continues to deliver as a consummate actor destined to impress audiences for decades to come.

Ruffalo, by contrast, seems out of place in this picture. Ruffalo spends most of his scenes trying to beat DiCaprio at a game of 'who can make the more believable angry face.' DiCaprio wins. Ruffalo, who is seven years older, seems like an acting rookie, hoping to learn something valuable from his "veteran" co-star.

Fortunately for DiCaprio, Ruf-



Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com

Martin Scorsese directs "Shutter Island," which satisfies viewers with a thrilling plot-line and a strong performance from Leonardo DiCaprio.

falo is the worst support the film has to offer him. Kingsley gives a great performance as Dr. Crawley, who is too charming for someone surrounded by barbed-wire fences and mentally ill criminals. Kingsley's smile, usually a comfort to audiences in films like "Gandhi" and "Schindler's List," is very discomfiting. Kingsley succeeds at making us distrust his character. That takes talent.

Three more performances are of particular note. Actor Ted Levine's appearance as Shutter's warden is reminiscent of

his role in "Silence of the Lambs" because of how uneasy he makes both the other characters and the audience. Screen legend Max von Sydow, who always brings a smile to this reviewer's face, is additively sinister as Dr. Naehring, who seems to enjoy nothing more than a good drink following questionable experiments on his patients.

The third performance to praise is that of the musical score. With well-used and perfectly timed flats, sharps and classical symphonies, the music is a sepa-

rate character. Without it, Scorsese's film would not succeed.

"Shutter" is its weakness is its failure to explain a number of hallucinations Daniels experiences while on the island. However, the viewer does not have time to think about those details once the movie is finished. You are too busy realizing that the pounding is no longer coming from the musical score but from your chest. If you can handle mind games and hair-raising scares, then buying a ticket to "Shutter Island." It should be fun.