

## Existence - Small people, Short Stoires Little Crime (Ca bp 00)

It's not very often that on first listen to anything it goes over my head, but this one lost me. I couldn't get to grips with it. Then again it was 2-30 in the morning and I couldn't sleep. Now on second, third and fourth listen I'm finally starting to get my head round all that's going on. Firstly the most striking thing to this CD is the inner book that came with it. It's only 56 pages long!! Imagine a TV guide and you get the idea of where the books are. The music, is very much sorting the men from the boys when it comes to new progressive intense rock land. Lots and lots going on, a full concept piece that follows the story of life as it travels around. From the start we get *Therapy (Pt1)* spoken words telling you "There's not much I can do to help you enjoy life", follow this with a one minute drum solo. What follows this is over an hour's worth of music from this Canadian band. *Beauty Teen* is a rocker, very much fixed into the 70's sound of Rock 'n' Roll and I liked the inter-working of the French spoken female vocals. *No Hero* and *The Journey* still have this 70's sound in them, not making things sound dated just drawing from days gone by. The next track is the main stay of the CD *In the Kingdom of Madness*. This is a progressive rock fan's utopia, everything from piano to guitars to strong vocals and complex arrangements. Split into 6 sections, the instrumental opening of *Dripping clouds* impressed me, if only for the violin work. Through to the dangerous sound of *Darkness* which sees the hero of this story entering a world he'd sooner not know. The feel of the music continues, using the guitar and violin interplay to spark the feeling going on inside this track. Section 4, *Delirium*, goes into a somber mood of piano again before picking on an avant-garde classic feel. Section 5 and for me the most important of this suite is *Open letter To My Friends*, another piano led piece which would have fitted on to the end of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* without effort. The pain and despair of our hero is now showing. Now entering into the final section, *Farewell From a Lone Poet*, no one is left with out any doubt where this has finally come to. Drained by the previous 23 minutes we get *Whispers (part IV)* I'm unsure if this is an end to *Madness* or not, but fitted well, a subdued instrumental piece that gives you time to recharge a little before the final 20 minutes of music. *Business as Usual* is very fitting back again to the straight forward progressive touches of the opening tracks, leaving behind the epic you had just listen to. *Flowers won't Do, Another Fine Day Of...* and *Overtime* finish the CD off and fit again into Existence's prog sound. This 5 piece from Quebec have given a blistering performance here. From the mini masterpiece progressive opera of *Madness*, the rest of the CD is held up with some fine guitar work. The use of what some might see as more unusual instruments is also another interesting side to this band. This has been a long review to write, maybe even longer in the thinking after the thought provoking music and I'd just listen to it for the fifth time!!. Progressive rock fans are going to love this. I didn't think on first listen I was ever going to reach the end of it, let alone understand it. But now I do, I think!! Your attention should be drawn to Existence, a first class CD and a tough one for anybody to try and follow. The last track on the disc, is the spoken one line of *Therapy (Pt 2)*, asking "ANY OTHER QUESTIONS ?", you can work that out for yourselves.