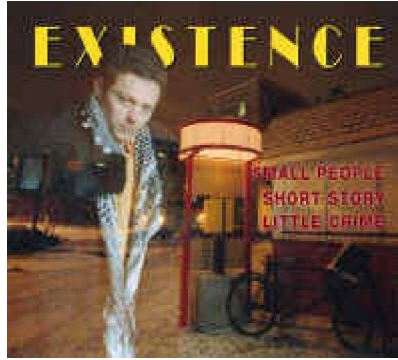


## In The Spotlight...



### The Band:

Existence is an moody and eclectic band from Quebec, Canada that clearly deserves to be heard (and seen, which will become clear later). They began life in 1991 when Alan Charles and Serge Delisle came up with the idea of creating a nameless band that would be designated only by the current project. The novelty of the idea wore off quickly, and the band held on to the name of the first project. After numerous setbacks, Existence released *Fragile Whisperings of Innocence* in 1994, which was greeted with a great deal of success from the college radio scene. However, the hard work ended up with the departure of two band members, including Delisle. A few years and personnel changes later, Alan Charles decided to move the band back to its concept album roots and began work on the *Small People, Short Story, Little Crime* project in 1998.

The current lineup of Existence features a talented group of musicians that plays a diverse blend of dark music that pulls at the emotions of the listeners and draws them in to the complex and fascinating story lines. Imagine a more experimental version of *Siren*-era Roxy Music with additional violin. The mood ranges from aggressive to melancholy, with an underlying current of unease. The music is inherently tied to the lyrics and conceptual story line, but manages to avoid overdoing the emotional content. Existence takes a similar path of Salem Hill's *The Robbery of Murder*, but pushes it to a whole other level, with its genre-crossing diversity. This band is relatively unknown outside of Canada, but has limitless potential, and they will leave many listeners wondering how they could have been missed.

### The CD:

Before even one listen, *Small People, Short Story, Little Crime* will undoubtedly make an impression. The CD packaging is one of the most ambitious presentations that has ever been put together. The booklet is a 56 page glossy magazine that tells separate stories from the underside of city life and the decadence of society: like a seedy version of Reader's Digest. The stories are narrative, but contain the song lyrics as embedded boldface text. As difficult as this should be, the magazine designers (a whole list of credits to their own) pulled it off exceptionally well. The tracks of the CD follow along with the magazine, telling the stories with conviction. The first one, "Beauty Teen" sets the tone with an interesting tale of an interviewer's unprofessional fascination with a 16 year-old femme fatale. This, and "No Hero" are angry rockers. With the instrumental "The Journey", the album launches into a series of powerful progressive tracks that work to perfection. The 22 minute suite "In the Kingdom Of Madness" is a melancholy masterpiece that tells a riveting story of a poet, the Internet, and a shocking suicide. Alan Charles' piano and keyboard playing, coupled with the Francois Beaugard's soaring and crying violin provide the perfect emotional backing for Gaston Gagnon's Brian Ferry-inspired vocals. The album ends with the tight, jazz-tinged "Overtime". *Small People* has a great deal of complexity, both in music and in characters. It will take numerous listens to fully take it in, but it is well worth the effort.

## The Songs:

The Therapy, Part I (0:53)  
Beauty Teen (5:28)  
No Hero (4:18)  
The Journey (4:03)  
In The Kingdom Of Madness (Total time: 22:38)  
\* Dripping Cloud (3:07)  
\* No Sun Can Shine (5:49)  
\* Darkness (3:48)  
\* Delirium (2:13)  
\* Open Letter To My Friends (4:37)  
\* Farewell From The Lone Poet (3:04)  
Whispers, The Theme Part IV (2:25)  
Business As Usual (5:08)  
Flowers Won't Do? (5:21)  
Another Fine Day Of... (7:29)  
Overtime (4:48)  
The Therapy, Part II (0:02)

## Highlights:

- **In The Kingdom Of Madness:** I can't say enough about this suite of tracks. Anyone who likes melancholy emotional music *must* hear this, and make sure to read the magazine story as well. It will leave an impression.
- **Another Fine Day Of...:** Great progressive fusion piece with a bit of a Middle Eastern flair. The whole band comes together to pack a real instrumental punch.
- **The Journey:** A brooding mostly-instrumental piece that builds on itself to perfectly present the growing sense of unease that pervades the album.

NOTE: Both "Another Fine Day Of..." and "The Journey" are available for download in their entirety in MP3 format on the Existence web site. Every Prog-Net reader should take the time to listen to these!

## For More Information and sound clips...

Visit the official Existence web site: <http://www.blackpearl.qc.ca/Existence.htm>

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