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Rob Dougan gets ‘Furious’ with his music

ArtsEtc

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Whether it was during a Lincoln Towne Car commercial, the beginning of a televised basketball game or in the films “The Matrix” and “The Matrix Reloaded,” you have more than likely been exposed to the music of Rob Dougan and not even known it. Don’t worry — most people probably don’t.

It is not surprising that the diverse and cinematic nature of the musical creations produced by Dougan can simultaneously be used to complement an intense battle scene or expand upon the elegance of a retirement automobile without a single alteration. The term “eclectic” doesn’t even begin to do justice to the description of the musical and artistic depth created by this Australian-born, London-dwelling composer, arranger, producer and vocalist.

Originally trained as an actor at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts in Sydney, Dougan escaped the “Land Down Under” after a love affair went awry. In 1995, Dougan unflinchingly compiled his artistic talents for theater, visual art and music to create his first London underground dance club hit “Clubbed To Death.”

Combining the epic nature of a 122 piece orchestra with a classic cinematic heart-wrenching solo piano all over a standard hip-hop beat complete with rave sound effects and fixings, Dougan’s darkly-ambient debut track rightly earned its place on the first Matrix soundtrack, alongside the likes of Marilyn Manson and Rammstein.

Now with his first full album release *Furious Angels*, Dougan further demonstrates his musical intelligence and uncanny skill in the realm of juxtaposing symphonic beauty with electronic soullessness alongside the darkest of human cynicism. In the title track, one gets a glimpse into the mind of this somewhat unheard musical mastermind.

As the title track opens with the static rumbling of string bass, Dougan’s deep, gravel voice (reminiscent of Bruce Springsteen with the biting sensual anger of Nine Inch Nails’ Trent Reznor) procures a warning to a loved one about to walk out the door of his life that furious angels will avenge all wrong doings.

In “Left Me For Dead,” Dougan again uses his artistic muses and personal experiences to help him develop an orchestral opus that describes the feelings accompanying a friend’s betrayal and abandonment.

While the first vocal numbers of *Furious Angels* dwell on feelings of depression and anger, the symphonic numbers “Will You Follow Me?” and “Instrumental” unconditionally compete on the levels of the best of John Williams’ uplifting cinematic soundscapes. Even the accompanying orchestral work in Dougan’s vocal numbers proves impressively superior when compared to the canned background synthesizer-produced string pads found in most popular music releases today. To demonstrate this point elegantly, *Furious Angels* comes packed with a second disc containing the instrumental works of the vocal tracks found on disc one.

In all honesty there is not a single track found on *Furious Angels* that can, for even a moment, be deemed as a throwaway. Whether it is the soothing combination of guitar, synth and hip-hop beats of “Nothing At All,” the articulate staccato string sprints of “Speed Me Towards Death,” the jazzy, Sinatra-esque “Drinking Song,” or the born-again feeling achieved from aurally experiencing the climactic “One And The Same (Coda),” each number found on *Furious Angels* builds and then flows into the next with both artistic and emotional intelligence.

If anyone thought that this album couldn’t get any better, one view of the music videos for the tracks “Furious Angels” and “Clubbed To Death” found on the second disc will certainly drain any adrenaline left from the listener. These cinematic masterpieces, directed by the acclaimed music video director Howard Greenhalgh, blur the line between short film and music video. With special effects that could leave even the Wachowski brothers speechless, Dougan and Greenhalgh further emphasize the grand nature and emotion of these already artistically deep musical arrangements.

While very few discs exist which can be equally enjoyed after an exhausting day at the academic grindstone with the lights dimmed low and a glass of fine wine or while disemboweling your roommate in a no-holds-barred Halo deathmatch, *Furious Angels* proves to be one of those albums. Possessing both emotional and artistic diversity, *Furious Angels* is a sure bet if you’re in the market for an atmospheric album suited for both studying and relaxing.