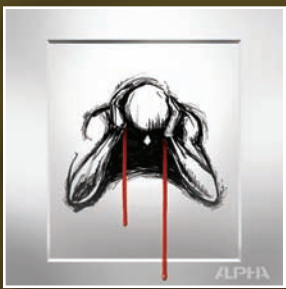


# MUSIC REVIEWS

## SEVENDUST

### Alpha

★★★★★ metal



Sevendust has recently spent time recording their sixth studio album. With five in the

bag, one might wonder what to expect from the band known for their angry, riff-heavy albums. The simple answer: even more angry, riff-orientated music. This, of course, handily accommodates Sevendust's loyal fan base, who have come to expect intense high-energy alternative rock/metal ballads from the Atlanta-based outfit.

According to the band, *Alpha* is a return to their roots, the heavy fist-pumping music Sevendust are known for, "gone are the acoustic guitars and overt electronic inflection of the last couple records and reenter the raw complexity of the *Home* years." Choosing a raw sound as their goal is a brilliant and exciting direction for a band oozing with intense talent. With two extremely lurid years behind them, *Alpha* is a dark and depressing introspection. In the last two years Sevendust have had to deal with the untimely exit



of former band mate/riff-engineer Clint Lowery (Dark New Day), as well as extreme label drama, leaving members of Sevendust with an embittered approach to their new material.

One glance at the track listing reveals the pain and heartache that highlights *Alpha*. Songs like, "Suffer," "Beg to Differ," "Confessions of Hatred" and "Aggression" lend to the idea that this album comes heavy-handed. "Deathstar" opens the album with an extremely frenzied pace, which rarely lets up. Nearly every song taps into a formula so precise it's a surprise Sevendust haven't patented it. This formula involves big fat riffs and angry tortured lyrics coupled with fantastical hooks iced with graciously layered soaring guitars. With this cookie-cutter song-writing formula in mind, the twelve tracks comprising *Alpha* sound all too familiar to one another. With repeat listens, *Alpha* begins to blend into one pool of trashing guitars, double-kicks and roaring

vocals.

Sevendust show their extreme musicality on *Alpha*, but besides three obscure minutes tied to the end of "Burn" by a single sustained piano note, they didn't take the time to try and push the musical envelope. The few attempts at soloing were surprisingly weak at best. This album also stumbled lyrically. Most songs rant on and on, guided by bland lyrics. "Feed" ushers forth the dandy line: "Pity is a four letter word/ And so is quit/ And so is left/ But I'm right where you wanted me." Not all the songwriting is a bust, "Confessions of Hatred" shows more lyrical maturity and of course Lajon Witherspoon once again has a voice to be reckoned with.

Despite certain pitfalls, *Alpha* stands on its own amongst previous Sevendust work. Tracks like "Drivin" (the album's first single), "Deathstar," "Aggression" and "Burn" show Sevendust at their best. **Jason Lockerbie**