

Rolling Stone



Down

Down III: Over the Under *ILG*

Pantera singer excoriates his demons on one of the year's best hard-rock records



EX-PANTERA SINGER Phil Anselmo doesn't believe in A's for effort. "Never try/You either do it or don't waste your time," he growls in "Never Try," in a voice etched with scars from his own blues and trouble (the messy breakup of his old band, a personal war with hard drugs—he's been clean since 2002—and the near-destruction of his New Orleans home to Hurricane Katrina). But *Down*, originally started as a Pantera side project, are a clear-cut victory in their own right, making Southern metal of depth and color as well as of scrap-iron constitution. Guitarists Pepper Keenan (from Corrosion of Conformity) and Kirk Windstein stutter in furious Thin Lizzy tandem in "N.O.D.," then swim like black-fuzz snakes through swamp water in "Beneath the Tides." The backing harmonies in "I Scream" have the scuffed-brass sheen of classic Van Halen, while Anselmo has hit on a strange but perfect vocal truce of James Hetfield and Deep Purple-era David Coverdale: avenging metal and overheated white soul. *Over the Under* is not yet the hard-rock album of '07; there is some time to go. But it is a main contender.

DAVID FRICKE

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Down

I Scream

Ex-Pantera frontman Phil Anselmo combines neck-brace metal with white soul to sing about his favorite anger-management method.