

BLENDER

DOWN

DOWN III: OVER THE UNDER

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Singer from Pantera issues his first album since undergoing serious back surgery and kicking heroin

Between Hurricane Katrina and the shooting death of his estranged Pantera bandmate Dimebag Darrel, you might think that New Orleans metal icon Phil Anselmo's world of hurt would come across more vividly than ever. On the third album from this super-ish group, including members of Corrosion of Conformity and Crowbar, Anselmo seemingly alludes to both tragedies, bellowing on about poisonous tides and immutable regret (the all-too-literally titled "I Scream"). But as they grind out gravelly guitar textures, his band falls more than ever into ponderous stoner-rock ruts, and Anselmo's complaints, perpetually voiced in cocksure Viking mode, wind up running together (Take that, organized religion! Forget you, apathetic citizenry!). One thing you don't often hear on a metal record: Having gone through rehab, Anselmo—who's spent his career preoccupied with drugs—even renounces LSD.

NICK CATUCCI

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