

DECIBEL

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record reviews



MASTODON

Once More
'Round the Sun

WARNER BROS.

**All that and
cheerleaders, too**

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There's a special fraternity of bands that display an almost exponential trajectory of artistic and musical growth over the course of their first four full-lengths—Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Metallica. With a few years of hindsight, it's obvious that Mastodon belong to that elite club. Unfortunately, such membership comes with a price: lofty expectations. The Atlanta group tried to sidestep those with *The Hunter* by not trying to top themselves, but instead searching for an identity that they could settle on, a defining sound to move forward with. They didn't quite succeed. *Once More 'Round the Sun* takes another shot at it (as the name even kind of implies)—and this time they hit their mark.

Their mix isn't an easy one to tame, either. They've covered a lot over the years: everything from hardcore to space rock, psych to sludge, metal and post-metal, rock and post-rock. It turns out that the key to making it all come together is embracing the "rock" part. Fortunately, on this revolution, they've enlisted Nick Raskulinecz (Foo Fighters, Rush), a man who knows how to bring that aspect to the forefront. Grounding it in such a straightforward form has allowed them the freedom to take off from there, do a few aerial twists, and then come safely back down to earth.

Going over individual songs would require a lot more space, but rest assured: Even if they never go back to being the heavyweight bruisers they once were, this record proves that Mastodon are still far too ambitious to produce a *Black Album*. —JEFF TREPPEL