

FramePictures – Remember It



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Format:	CD
Record Label:	Galileo Records ProgRock Records
Catalogue #:	GR022
Year of Release:	2010
Time:	76:07
Info:	FramePictures
Samples:	Click here

Tracklist: *Memories Faded Away (8:57), Remember It (5:35), Call For Me (13:38), Don't Trust My Eyes (6:49), Why Nobody Cares (7:21), Shadows Black And Grey (9:49), My Will To Live (25:58)*

I'm going to begin with a couple of asides before I get into the meat of this review; an entrée or aperitif, if you will indulge me? Firstly, *Remember It* has been available as a digital download for some time now. I've had an MP3 copy since April so I've had a few weeks to get to know this one. The physical CD was released on July 13th and a week prior, a review copy arrived through my post box. My reviewing process is always the same - I listen to the music several times through a variety of sources: my PC, which has a fairly standard sound card but a nice 5.1/Stereo speaker set-up achieving a very solid listening station with dynamic range; I also listen through headphones directly via this system (not the PC headphone socket); A CD Walkman and headphones on the way to work; then the acid test, I play it through the HiFi but I like to have familiarised myself with an album before I treat myself to a genuine HiFi experience, listening closely, immersed in sound. Obviously, a lousy MP3 version of an album precludes all of this and, even though I did burn a CD Audio version of the album to 'go through the motions', I am deeply aware of the inadequacies of the MP3 as a data container for music and similarly aware that what I am hearing is a sub-standard version of the original. Nothing could have vindicated my 'snobbery' more acutely than listening to the CD version of this album once it arrived. It came alive. It came alive to such an extent that it has pushed my score up by two whole points. Without the CD, I would never have come to realise that the production is first class and a bit different. Artur Jorge, the band's drummer, handled production duties and, in terms of sound-staging he has built the album around the drums which sound massive – it's as if the

drums are a giant stage upon which the other musicians are balancing their performances and it works supremely well. Anyway, I need to say it, there is no substitute for CDDA quality (well, there is, but it's irrelevant here). What's more, the MP3 rip, which I purchased entirely legally, was of a particularly poor quality. Well done iTat.

And so to the main menu. For starters, **FramePictures** describe themselves on their MySpace page as, amongst other things, 'Post Prog'. What does that mean? There's a bit of post-everything these days: Post-Rock, Post-Punk, Post-hardcore, Post-Pop, etc, but what does this identify and is it helpful? Does 'Post' in this context mean 'After'? After Prog? Or does it mean postmodern? Postmodern Prog; in other words, we'll borrow fragments, splinters, and shards of anything that has ever been considered prog and reassemble it in a manner of our own making. If by 'Post-Prog' they intend the latter, then I totally get it because that's what this is. *Remember It* takes flashes, specks, moments, strands, molecules and atoms from the prog genetic code and fashions a new prog creature which is recognisable but different; not so much genetic cloning as engineering or forced evolution - mutation. This is 21st Century Prog, the same as 20th Century Prog but with knobs on.

As a species, we humans are naturally inclined to suspicion of anything that interferes with the natural order of things (unless it's a car), which instinct has elicited the sensible aphorism to not fix a thing unless it's broken. With this in mind, I wonder whether FramePictures are setting themselves up as the new Illuminati, secretly guiding the Progverse from underground caves where they live on algae and breathe methane, to discover new kinds of technology, understanding and forms of communication. Or are they the musical equivalent of Dr. Moreau performing cruel but well-intentioned vivisection on what are already highly adapted forms? What is for certain is that they come from Portugal and are five young musical scientists using guitars, keyboards and drums to carry out their experiments. This is the first publication of their findings. The research team are Tiago Delgado who sings, Artur Jorge who drums, Helder da Silva who plays guitar, Ricardo Drumond who plays bass and Mafalda Brogueira who plays keyboards. Standard laboratory conditions would seem to apply, then, except Mafalda is the beautiful female doctor; always a welcome addition to see women having an indispensable and substantial role in a male dominated world. (*For Christ's sake, Bradshaw! You only create a rod for your own back with these stupid extended metaphors, nobody cares! Get on with it! – Ed.*)

It would be easy to say that, in essence, what FramePictures play is sophisticated and original prog metal. There. Review done. However, this would be to pigeon-hole them too handily and pigeon-hole them into the wrong box to boot. Yes, the characteristic markers of prog metal abound but there's more to it than that. The album begins with a heraldic theme on grand piano and remains a prominent feature of the song, reminiscent of **Jem Godfrey** from Frost*. Each player gets the chance to shine on

every track. In this case Helder da Silva provides a good melodic guitar solo dashing through a range of techniques and voices and Mafalda glides an effortless Moog solo underpinned by some lovely bass figures. An odd thing happens in the very catchy chorus when Tiago uses a melody that is part **Tears For Fears** and part **Salem Hill**. This mid-'80s slant to the melodies is repeated in track 2 where the chorus is distinctly coloured with a vibe that **Duran Duran** or their side-project, **Arcadia** might have used – don't let this in any way deter you though. The song itself is a fairly standard melodic rock song with a funky, jazzy verse, the aforesaid Duran Duran-like chorus and a lovely middle section that sounds like *Pieces Of Eight*-era **Styx**. Again, there's an excellent Moog solo followed by another great melodic guitar solo, all carried on the wonderful bass arrangement by Ricardo Drumond. I'll take just a moment to single him out for special praise here. The bass playing on this album is superlatively good. Just as Geddy Lee provides a signature note to Rush's sound, so Ricardo does for FramePictures. What he's doing propels everything and it's highly crafted, virtuoso playing throughout. Whether it's the slap-bass of *Don't Trust My Eyes* or the half-tempo jazz/fusion of *Why Nobody Cares* which treads boldly into **Helmet Of Gnats** or **Karcius** territory, Drumond's work is consistently dynamic, multi-faceted and never less than compelling, exciting and interesting.

The opening brace occupy 15 minutes and already, what I have come to realise is, the way in which this band take fairly standard structural modes from prog metal, AOR and hard, melodic rock then combine them with influences from jazz fusion, pop and old-school prog makes them an unusual proposition. Their strength lies in the interesting choices they make and their apparent determination to not always go for the obvious. I find this engaging. For me this is most clearly demonstrated in track 3, *Call For Me* where things get serious and track 5, *Why Nobody Cares*, both of which are excellent. They are difficult, uncategorisable, and elusive tracks using varied styles to supplement each instruments solo pieces as well as bonkers polyrhythms in tightly structured, instrumental interludes. The weak point, I'm afraid I have to say is Tiago. It seems that his vocals are almost uniformly heavily vocoded so as to sound slightly robotic. This may be because he's simply not good enough to carry it on his own – he sings with bags of conviction, and if vocalists were awarded merits for straining every sinew then this would be a very creditable performance, but his voice is breathy and unsupported making it thin and slightly whiny in places (sorry Tiago, it's just my opinion, but it's my honest opinion). Or, it may be to cover the rather heavily accented delivery (which it doesn't), or it may be a conscious and deliberate aesthetic choice for reasons that are unapparent. In any case, Tiago is simply no match for the intricacy of the musical accompaniment. Coupled with the inconsequential lyrics, this is an area the band could seriously improve upon!

Whilst I'm being critical, I shall address the closing track, *My Will To Live*. At 25 minutes and sub-divided into seven parts, it's presumably a labour of love intended as the album's keynote centrepiece. As you may imagine,

it attempts several stylistic developments over its course: from the symphonic introduction to celebratory pageantry to melancholy introspection; from romantic classicism to choppy and aggressive heavy rock (**Dio** era **Rainbow**). The finesse of the musicianship remains consistent but overall, as a piece of music (I won't describe it as a song), it doesn't really work for me. The dynamism and originality of the preceding tracks is not sustained here. The songwriting seems ponderous and clumsy, the melodies provide nothing to hang to and by the time *Part VI* has come around I'm completely lost and irritated. It's a big shame to have the album go out on a damp squib like this, but it would appear FramePictures are not yet quite ready to tackle the epic, long-form composition. A brave but ultimately flawed effort.

So to my closing thoughts. As you can see, I've had a lot to say and this album has provided me with a complex, engaging, and provocative task. My mind has shifted back and forth in attempting to summarise and has been incapable of doing so with any clarity or ease. I hope, dear reader, that I have managed to communicate something of the positive thoughts and feelings I harbour for *Remember It* in such a way as to pique your interest, as I believe FramePictures to be an exciting prospect. Much as I love Dream Theater and Symphony X, for me the archetypal, crackerjack master-builders of progressive metal, it is great to see the genre being challenged and developed like this. For me it's the second stand-out debut of 2010 after Haken's *Aquarius*. Pursue.

Conclusion: 8 out of 10

[JON BRADSHAW](#)