

CONCERT S SOUTHERN EMPIRE & DAMANEK, 24 NOVEMBER 2018, CULTUURPODIUM DE BOERDERIJ, ZOETERMEER

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This evening had been stuck in my agenda for a long time. The last Southern Empire album " **Civilization** " had blown me off my socks in the summer of 2018 and I also liked the last Damanek album " **In Flight** ". I did not want to miss this joint performance. Especially to see if Southern Empire could 'live up to it' live. More about that later.



For a moment I was worried that only fifty people had found their way to Zoetermeer this evening, but fortunately many people appeared to be in the cozy stage café. In the end, the lower hall was certainly filled for half. The German **Seven Steps To The Green** took the stage first at 20:00 hrs . I was curious how this band would do it live. Their last album " **Fetish** " got a positive review from me. You can quietly label their music as 'ADHD-prog' and I wondered how it would be on stage.

I must say that they were positive to surprise me. Their music is jam-packed with ideas, strange tempo changes and creativity, and that also ended in a live setting. Bass guitarist Michael Schetter caught my attention because of his smooth play. It would be the bass guitarists anyway, because the two colleagues who would follow later, played even more impressive. Singer Jana-Christina Pöche has a beautiful voice and is a charming appearance. Too bad they had so little to do, it is singer Lars Köhler who took care of most of the vocals. He did not do that without merit, except for that attempt at grunts in *Still Searching* . In just over 45

minutes the company ensured a good warm-up. That was exactly long enough, by the way. It remains ADHD music.



The contrast with **Damanek** (according to Guy Manning you put emphasis on the second syllable when pronouncing the name, but Sean Timms did not agree) could not be any bigger. In all respects it went up quite a lot of teeth. Their symphonic pop sounds like a clock live! What a professionalism and flexibility. Guy Manning feels at home on the stage and gives you as a visitor the feeling that you have come across the floor in his home. Story here and joke there, nice and relaxed. His singing was fine too, but every time he had to look at his keys he turned away from the microphone so that parts of it could still fall away.



Regarding the occupation, flutist James Capatch was borrowed from Southern Empire. Guitarist Luke Machin is not a regular member of the band, but can be heard on the album as a guest guitarist. The man is very modest and I think he would prefer to be behind the scenes, but he did notice his flexibility and especially the beautiful sounds he managed to get out of his instrument. Nice to see how he went all the way. The rhythm section of this band is impressive. Dan Mash is a great bass player who effortlessly combined different styles and drummer Brody Green is really a drum beast. As far as I'm concerned, *Nanabohzo And The Rainbow* (from the album " [On Track](#) ") and the long *Big Eastern Part II: The Shaking Earth* the highlight of their performance. Hopefully we will hear and see more of this band.



Then it's time for the main characters of this evening, the Australian **Southern Empire** . They recently produced a surprising and well received new album, colleague Erik Groeneweg was extremely enthusiastic and even mentioned it in terms of feeling in one breath with "The Kindness Of Strangers" by **Spock's Beard** from 1997. A good level of expectation. And another step higher on the ladder of professionalism, with respect for the previous bands, it was clear that the main act of the evening was here.

It all sounded very solid and driven, from the very first notes of *Forest Fire* , the opening song this evening. An energetic, violent rocker, played with a leading role for the impressive antics on solog guitar by Cam Blokland. Striking: a great contribution to guitar by singer Danny Lopresto, also in the solos. *Cries For The Lonely* is one of the great pieces of music on the new album. With this time an important role for James Capatch on both soprano sax and flute, he occasionally has trouble keeping his head above water with so much heavy stuff around him. Four-part (!) Backing vocals make the second part a lot quieter, but that is only short in nature in this twenty-minute prize number. Beautiful guitar duet by the way. *How Long* is from the debut album from 2016, the saxophone and the rhythm are reminiscent of **Toto** 's *Africa* , the strange mix of jazz, Caribbean, power rock, ballads and Unitopian music make this song a very pleasant and especially sing-along song. .



The Crossroads will become a classic on the stage in the coming years, watch my words. Strong themes that are also repeated, bizarre transitions, from loud to silent, slow tempo to double speed, thundering bass, excellent solo voice, Mellotron, guitarist delights, singing harmonies, everything is present in this thirty-minute epic. An eclectic collection with influences from **Yes**, **Unitopia** (of course), Eastern music and fusion / jazz and then I will undoubtedly forget a few more. Impressive, intriguing, a dramatic ending, 'I listen to your voice', comes together in a grand finale. The completely overwhelming audience rewards the band with a few minutes of applause. *Goliath Moon*, with its strange text about lost gems on deserted planets, is the encore, the band rocks stronger than before. Thankfully the enthusiastic applause of the frenzied audience is received, the band is clearly delighted with the response of the fans.

Singer Danny Lopresto seems to have run away from a Mad Max film with his cockscomb, black make-up and a somewhat demonic appearance. He turns out to be a pleasant stage personality who is able to forge a good relationship with his fans. He is also not only an excellent singer, but also a great guitarist, especially in duet / duet with Blokland. With his red dreadlocks, 'best hair in the hall' according to Lopresto, and his five-string bass guitar, Jez Martin exudes power, but his play is both powerful and subtle. Drummer Body Green, known for his firm hits, is also a good background singer, especially in the higher regions. Guitarist Cam Blokland has a **John Petrucci** - like style mixed with **Steve Vai** influences, he alternately plays his white Ibanez guitar and a Sunburst Lauda. As is often the case with virtuoso musicians, the danger lies in wait to show how good he is. Because of all this violence, the saxophone / flute of James Capatch sometimes threatens to drown in a sea of notes and volume of his fellow musicians, his subtle, jazzy contributions are as refreshing as necessary. The keys of founder / composer / singer Sean Timms, known for his important role in the legendary Australian band Unitopia, provide sufficient counterweight for the guitar caprioles of Blokland and Lopresto. His tasteful contributions and sparse solos serve a progressive sauce over the sometimes prog-group sound. The action takes a total of approximately eighty minutes.



And to answer the previously asked question: the Aussies know the complex music of the excellent studio albums without fail. The band from Down Under makes a tight, responsive impression, a well-oiled machine after various shows in Europe. An overwhelming occurrence of these relative newcomers within the genre. Tribute to the Farm for programming this kind of bands, ultimately the future of the genre. Unfortunately that does not always translate into a high turnout: as mentioned earlier, it was not that busy at the start but in the end it was estimated that more than two hundred visitors, including many true fans and connoisseurs of progressive rock music, especially appreciated the price. to set. After midnight the cold could be looked up again,



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