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20
QUESTIONS WITH
**Amy
Lynn
Grover**

GAMES REVIEWED



ALBUM REVIEWS

Common

The Dreamer/The Believer



The Black Keys

El Camino

Exclusive Coverage
The Life and Times
PLUS
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Allen Epley

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6

Amy Lynn Grover

February Cover Model
20 Questions with Amy
Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Inara Akin

10

Pit Pass

Get In The Driver's Seat
Featured Car:
Mercedes-Benz AMG C63 Black
By Nicolas Bates

16

All Access

The Latest Albums Reviewed
Albums Reviewed:

Common
The Dreamer/The Believer
By Jeremy Weeden

The Black Keys
El Camino
By Katie J. Norris

20

All Access Spotlight

Artists/Bands Featured:
Attack Attack!, Nada Surf & Elzhi
By Silas Valentino & Jeremy Weeden

On The Cover
Photo by Andrew Gates
Hair & make-up by Inara Akin

www.RUKUSmag.com



24

Live & Loud

Live Show Reviews
Featured Artists/Shows:
Exclusive coverage of
The Life and Times Concert
PLUS Exclusive Interview with
The Life and Times' Allen Epley
By Nicolas Bates & Paul Lyons

28

Coming Up

Models To Keep An Eye On
Featured Models:

Leng Yein
Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia

Rose Suiza
Union City, CA

36

Game On

The Latest Games Reviewed
Games Reviewed:

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
By: Heather Spears

Star Wars: The Old Republic
By Jesse Seilhan

This Page
Photo by Andrew Gates
Hair & make-up by Inara Akin

Going Green

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20 QUESTIONS

Get To Know Your Cover Model

Amy Lynn Grover

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Inara Akin

my Lynn Grover was raised in Toronto, Canada and is of Canadian and British ancestry. Amy has always been very conscious about fitness and her body. Although she has always been active and body-conscious, it wasn't until she moved to Los Angeles, CA that the light went off and her passion was realized. Since she has always had to look her best in front of the camera, it just made sense to make helping other people look good in front of the camera a career. Amy has been on the cover and featured in many magazines, calendars and billboards, as well as hosting three seasons of *Get Out* on HD Network. She is a Yogini and has been practicing for over sixteen years. Amy believes in healing the body from the inside out and is on a pursuit to share her techniques with the world. There are no fad diets, quick fixes or diet pills for this beauty. Can you say, "All naturale"?





20 QUESTIONS

1. What's your Ethnicity?

Canadian, Caucasian and British.

2. What's your zodiac sign?

I'm a Leo. A typical raging one...

3. Where are you from originally?

Toronto, Canada.

4. What did you like most about growing up in Toronto, Canada?

There was always something fun to do depending on the season, regardless of the temperature. Summers were the best. I would go camping, cottaging, boating, water skiing and swimming. In the winters, I loved going snowboarding, skating, snowmobiling and watching hockey games! I love when the leaves change to the fall colors and the energy that comes from springtime; the new life brought to the city and everyone getting so excited for summertime!

5. What kind of mischief did you get into growing up?

I was actually an angel when I was a kid. It's when I got my driver's license, starting modeling and living in the city when I starting having a lot of "fun"!

6. What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

I jumped out of a plane...I mean, I went skydiving. I completely surrendered to the force of gravity—it was incredible. Probably the most exhilarating, adrenalin-rushing activity I could ever do.

7. What's your favorite hobby and why?

Yoga. I teach and practice it because it's my passion. I love everything about it. It helps me manage the constant balancing act of my life; it gives me clarity to do everything else; it's cleansing and healing. I love the physical workout—feeling strong, long, lean and flexible, and, of course, I love helping others receive all these benefits, too.

8. What's your guilty pleasure?

Dark chocolate and red wine.

9. Who do you admire?

My parents. They are both amazing for different reasons! My Dad is so smart and strong. He inspired me to be a businesswoman, follow my dreams and have courage to stand up for

myself. My mother is so loving, caring and endearing. I get my teacher-like qualities from her.

10. What's one of your personal goals?

To spread and share my lifestyle philosophy of health, fitness and nutrition to as many people as possible and to encourage them to reach their own personal goals.

11. What do guys compliment you on the most?

My hair, eyes and legs.

12. What's your favorite body part on yourself?

They all work together to serve me well.

13. What's your least favorite body part on yourself?

My feet. I beat the hell out of them when I was dancing. They aren't gross, but they hurt and cramp up when I'm on them too long or wearing 6" heels.

14. What do you look for in a guy?

I don't really look for things... I know exactly what I like and what I don't like (as I get to know a person), but for sure he's got to have his life together and know how to treat a lady.

15. What's the first thing you notice about a guy?

How he holds himself, how he speaks/listens and how he looks at me.

16. What's your ideal first date?

Most of my first dates have been a surprise to me. Like, "oops, I guess this just turned in to a date," kind of thing. If I'm on a first date that has been planned to be a date, I find that it's way too awkward. I like when things "just happen naturally," or fall into place the way there are supposed to.

17. What turns you on?

Confidence. I need a man that knows how to grab me, but also knows how to hold me.

18. What turns you off?

I can't stand when people are selfish or don't pay attention, especially to the little things—they matter the most!

19. What's your biggest pet peeve?

When people move slowly, especially if we are late. Pick up the pace!

20. Who's your celebrity pass?

Ryan Gosling. Have you seen him lately? He's working out for a new movie!

RM

PIT PASS

Get In The Driver's Seat

It's The New Black

By Nicolas Bates

Mercedes-Benz has been the automobile of choice for an extremely eclectic bunch; from royalty, to high-end executives to sports and movie stars, and, well, anyone who wants one of the nicest automobiles money and can buy...and actually has that money. Mercedes-Benz has always been known to make vehicles of absolute luxury that are still among the sportiest and quickest around. Throw in their subsidiary, Mercedes-AMG, and what you get is an even more sports-oriented vehicle, with the same amount of class. Bearing that description in mind, know that Mercedes has just released the 2012 C63 AMG Coupe Black Series—a car that is just as every bit menacing as the name would insinuate.

Upon first glance, it'd be fairly easy to target the car as just another C63 Coupe (as if that isn't half the beauty of Mercedes' AMG division, right there); however, upon closer inspection the flared fenders come in to view, the aggressive front fascia with a splitter comes in to view and those little numbers (with such a big meaning) come in to view: "6.2." Only this car is a tad more special than just any old AMG; it's a Black Series. What is a Black Series AMG you say? It is an AMG Mercedes on steroids, that's what.

Named after the American Express Centurion card, offered in exclusivity to those who buy Gulfstreams by the dozen, AMG Black Series cars are exceptionally rare. The C63 AMG Coupe Black Series will have a cap of 100 cars shipped to the states, with the grand total cap around 500-600. Cars will sell for \$125,000, or close to it.

The standard C63 was already crafted to be a quick and sports-oriented car. So how much more powerful and race-driven is the C63 AMG Black Series in comparison? The C63 AMG Black Series is powered by a 6.3-L DOHC V8 with variable valve timing. The standard C63 puts out 451 hp and 443 lb-ft of torque. Truly, not bad...however, the AMG Black Series is capable of putting out 520 hp and 457 lb-ft of torque. The AMG Black Series is said to be able to reach 0-60 mph in 4.2 seconds; however, Car and Driver Magazine test drivers were able to launch the car from 0-60 mph in 3.7 seconds. The car will have a limited top speed of 186 mph. And, like many hot ticket sports cars on the market, the C63 AMG Black Series will be unavailable with an actual stick in which to shift. Instead,



SPECS

2012 Mercedes-Benz AMG C63 Black Series

Price:	\$125,000+
Engine:	6.2-Liter V8
Torque:	457 ft/lb
Horsepower:	510 hp
0-60 MPH:	3.7 secs.
Top Speed:	186 mph
EST. MPG:	13/city 19/hwy
Available:	Contact Mercedes-Benz



a seven-speed MCT automatic handles gear-changing duties. It is said a larger transmission cooler was installed because the standard C63 tends to go into gearbox limp mode when abused in hot weather. And what's a C63 AMG Black Series you can't abuse? Yes, that's right, virtually useless. To get you back down to a "civilized" pace, the six-piston calipers up front and four-piston calipers out back, will do their job, and smother the front 15.4" and rear 14.2" disks until you bring the 3,800 lb. car to rest. Suspension has been beefed up, of course, and the car is outfitted with coilovers on all fours. The front and rear have Black Series-specific anti-rolls bars for reducing that grody ol' body roll.

There really is no denying how sexy the C63 AMG Black Series is. First off, you have full stealth capabilities with this car. This car has class, and doesn't advertise what it possesses. This car looks like an unsuspecting standard C63, but will challenge most cars that pull up to a light. This car is virtually a chameleon. Take it to a red carpet event, or thrash it around the corkscrew at Laguna Seca. No matter what it is you choose to do with the car, I guarantee it will be happy doing it. **RM**





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A woman with short, blonde hair is posing in a black bikini. She is standing in front of a background of vertical metallic slats. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. Her right hand is near her chest, and her left hand is on her hip.

*“I need a man
that knows how
to grab me.”*



STATS:

Birthday: July 28
Height: 5' 7"
Weight: 130 lbs.
Measurements: 34C-25-36

See more of Amy at
[Twitter.com/AmyLynnGrover](https://twitter.com/AmyLynnGrover)

ALL ACCESS

The Latest Albums Reviewed

He's Back on Top

Written by Jeremy Weeden

Hip-hop veteran Common is back with his ninth studio album, *The Dreamer/The Believer*. After 2008's Grammy-nominated album *Universal Mind Control* failed to appeal to the general public, one could not blame Common if he decided to focus on his other successful career as an actor, and leave music behind. Despite appearances in multiple movies and currently appearing on the hit TV series *Hell On Wheels*, Common makes it known that hip-hop is his first love by dropping the carefully crafted masterpiece, *The Dreamer/The Believer*.

Since his first album in 1992, Common has been one of the most consistent and multifaceted artists in the rap industry. On his debut, *Can I Borrow A Dollar?*, most of the production on the album was from a young producer by the name of Immenslope (a.k.a. No I.D.)—who would later become the highly successful producer and mentor to Kanye West.

Two years later, Common released his second album, the classic *Resurrection*, on which No I.D. would again produce the majority of the songs, including the controversy spawning classic "I Used To Love H.E.R." The song was revered among hip-hop fans for its story about a man watching the woman he loved being used and disrespected by others. The song was a metaphor for the different directions in which hip-hop was going and the ways in which Common felt it was being commercialized.

The following year, Common released his third collaboration with No I.D., *One Day It'll All Make Sense*, an album that was inspired by the birth of his daughter. This would prove to be the two's last collaboration together. After this, Common and No I.D. went their separate ways with Common moving to MCA Records and working with the late J Dilla on perhaps his most acclaimed album, *Like Water For Chocolate*, and the experimental album *Electric Circus*. He would later team up with Kanye West to release his most commercially successful albums, *Be* and *Finding Forever*. Now, in 2012, Common is back together with No I.D. to deliver his best album in years.

The Dreamer/The Believer delivers the conscious thought and lyrical excellence that is expected of Common, but he also raps with a passion and hunger that he has not showed over the past few albums, including the highly successful *Be*. The album begins nicely with "The Dreamer" feat. Maya Angelou, in which Common raps about the many facets of dreaming to do bigger things. With hot lyrics from Common like "Getting that Johnny Cash/ Old white folks know me now," the soulful, in your face production from No I.D., punctuated with the wise words of Maya Angelou closing it out, truly make this a standout track. The album only gets better from here. The next track finds Common linking up with hip-hop legend Nas over a classic boom-bap rap track. The track "Sweet" finds Common dissing rapper's like Drake who sing and who he feels are not true to hip-hop. "Blue Sky" samples "Mr. Blue Sky" from Electric Light Orchestra and Common's assertive raps over No I.D.'s soulful track make this easily one of the best songs on the album. The fact that the production on *The Dreamer/The Believer* is handled exclusively by No I.D. gives the album cohesiveness that lasts from the first track to the last and adds to the general excellence of the album.

Overall, Common's *The Dreamer/The Believer* shows that Common still has it after 20 years in the music industry. While it has been far too long since he and No I.D. last worked together, it sounds like they have not lost a step, despite spending 15 years apart. *The Dreamer/The Believer* is a reminder that Common is still one of the elite MCs in hip-hop and shows there is still a place for knowledge and positivity in rap music.

Artist: Common

Album: *The Dreamer/The Believer*

Website: <http://ThinkCommon.com>

★★★★★

Label: Warner Bros. Records

Release Date: December 20, 2011





Keys to Success

Written by Katie J. Norris

It doesn't get any more classically modern than this. Guitarist/vocalist Dan Auerbach and drummer Patrick Carney are the slightly unsuspecting duo that comprises The Black Keys. They hail from Akron, Ohio and have recently relocated to Nashville, TN, where they found a new home for themselves and their studio. This is their seventh studio album and it is safe to say that they have found the sweet spot in existing on the fine line between mainstream and free-falling, soulful-garage blues-type rock. They have evolved past the darker side of garage-rock revival and into the light of today's popular choice. In the past, they have landed themselves a few singles—one being Grammy-winning, "Tighten Up." They also have a history of working the licensing market like an art, as several of their previously released songs landing prominent spots in TV episodes, blockbuster movies and commercials.

El Camino is their best work to date. It's hard to be critical of an indie-rock duo that makes one set of songs fit so many occasions. It's hard to decide where to pin them down on this album because, while the music is bright and dirty, the lyrics are passionately pained from lost love; and yet the production takes the whole thing and turns it into all-around driving music, where, preferably one is driving out of a dusty town after robbing some nasty trouble makers, and making out like a bandit.

The album opens with "Lonely Boy," a gritty song that would be melancholy, except for the colorful melody and the choir of back-up singers for the chorus: "Oh, Oh, Oh, I got a love that keeps me waiting..." It's classic blues that you can move to. In the second song, "Dead And Gone," they capture all the glory of the first song, but the lyrics are delightfully bait and switch. Auerbach sings, "Don't call me, I'll call you/Is what you say/I'll obey." The drums chug us through to an earworm of a chorus melody. "Gold on the Ceiling" then follows and their ZZ Top influences shine through the cracks in their garage. "Little Black Submarines" takes us down to a soulful acoustic, with just guitar and raw vocals. Light percussion hugs around the direct, yet indirect, lyrics about desperation and an exposed heart. "But everybody knows/That a broken heart is blind." And it doesn't let us down, picking up the intensity two minutes in with electric guitar and a full-band explosion. "Money Maker" follows a flashback to the dark corners of rock n' roll terms of bending vocal melodies and subject matter. "Run Right Back" could quite possibly be a number one favorite. In this track, the guitar opens with a wailing melody that is also the chorus. An instrumental-driven chorus never felt so singable. All the while, essence of ZZ



Top is now dripping off the track. “Sister” delves into the conundrum that is the anticipation of a break-up; is he leaving her or is she already out the door? Only it’s done in a boogie groove with badass distortion effects on the keys and a driving rock beat delivered by Carney. “Hell of a Season” blends bluesy vocals and garage rock again, but wait, in chimes a reggae skank “riddim” from the guitar. “Stop Stop” has some cleverly apparent lyrics that create visions of a spicy love; Auerbach comparing it with an illegal weapon. It dances into present time, making it anything but a typical, pondering reflection of a static situation. And the music helps allude to the intended getaway theme of the album. “Nova Baby” is a lighter bounce of syncopation painted under lyrics about a girl who is causing the singer heartache; this time because “you don’t know what you want.” The closer, “Mind Eraser,” couldn’t have been a better song to end the album. Piano chords enrich the funk in the track and the melody twists around melting transitions that compliment the lyrics. A very apt chorus for the last track exists in, “Oh, don’t let it be over...”

Part of the reason this album came together so effectively is due to the assistance of producer, Danger Mouse. You can spot his fingerprints all over it. He doesn’t intrude on the raw, genuine soul and blues of the duo; he hones in on it, adding a sparkle that has caught a lot of the attention this album has received. One interesting thing about *El Camino* is that, though it is not really noted, The Black Keys do not write one single bridge for any of their songs. In its place, instead, are clever instrumentals followed by a last repeat of an energy-riddled build of the chorus.

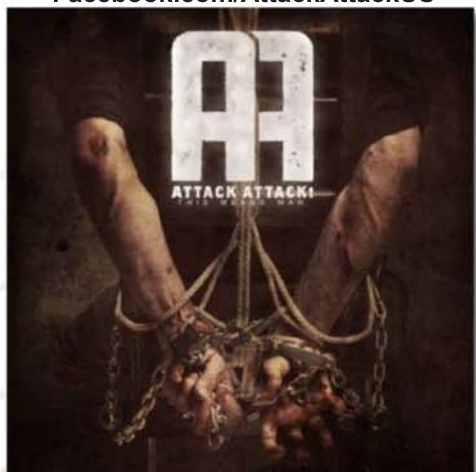
Out on the road, as in the Spanish translation of *El Camino*, The Black Keys are on a touring frenzy. To scout dates for their arrival in your city, to get the album that’s shaking things up, and to get on their list for everything else, go to www.theblackkeys.com.

Artist: The Black Keys
Album: *El Camino*
Website: <http://TheBlackKeys.com>

★★★★★
Label: Nonesuch/Warner Music Group
Release Date: December 2, 2011

ALL ACCESS SPOTLIGHT

Facebook.com/AttackAttackUS



Attack Attack!, *This Means War*

Back in November of 2010, Attack Attack!'s co-vocalist/guitarist Johnny Franck left the band to pursue his religion. Since then, fans have wondered how Attack Attack! would evolve and what new musical zones they'd trespass into. Their third album, *This Means War*, answers those questions, but the answers are short. The music reflects the album cover: chained and beaten. Even though Attack Attack! are musically stationary, they are still making heavy-hitting metalcore with harmonious choruses squeezed in between.

The album was produced by frontman Caleb Shomo in his home studio, but there isn't a hint of lo-fi anywhere to be heard. *This Means War* is an album of revolution, motivation and eradication—pretty much everything metal music represents. Most songs are built around the same formula of “djent” guitar chords, loud rhythm sections and vocal-chord destroying vocals. Franck was known for attributing the clean vocals and he was easily replaced. *This Means War* is for any metalcore fan who likes A Day to Remember or former Attack Attack! member Austin Carlie's band Of Mice and Men. *This Means War* is heavier than most other music but softer than many other metal acts.

Written by Silas Valentino & Jeremy Weeden

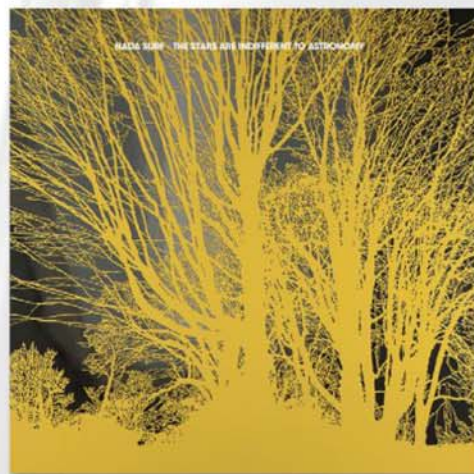
Edited by Nicolas Bates

Nada Surf, *The Stars Are Indifferent To Astronomy*

New Yorkers Nada Surf have been making power-poppy records since the early 1990s, and have recently released their seventh album, *The Stars are Different to Astronomy*: a collection of ten tight, sweet songs layered with hooks and melodies. Nada Surf were written off as Weezer knockoffs after their first album *High/Low* debuted back in 1996, but after a decade and a half of existence, the trio have crafted their own unique approach to indie rock.

Nada Surf came out of nowhere during the summer of '96, and their hit single “Popular” became the summer anthem. Throughout the 2000s, the band's popularity grew and their music was featured on multiple popular television shows such as “The O.C.,” “One Tree Hill” and “How I Met Your Mother.” The music of *The Stars are Different to Astronomy* is simple but engaging. Even though there are only three members, Nada Surf make quite the indie-rock commotion. Standout track “Waiting for Something” showcases the bands ability to mix throbbing power-pop music backed by a chorus line that is sure to take residence somewhere in your brain. Nada Surf is for any music fan who loves the sweet vocals of Matt Pond PA or the head-bobbing thrust of Rouge Wave.

Facebook.com/NadaSurf



Facebook.com/Elzhi



Elzhi, *Elmatic*

Remaking a classic hip-hop song is a daunting task and not often completed successfully by most artists. To remake an entire classic hip-hop album could be considered a fool's errand, but that is exactly what former Slum Village member, Elzhi, is doing on his *Elmatic* mixtape. As you can tell from the title of the mixtape, Elzhi is remaking Nas's highly esteemed first LP, *Illmatic*. On *Elmatic*, Elzhi reinterprets the tales Nas told of gritty New York street life, and transforms them to the streets of Detroit. For example, “Detroit State of Mind” replaces “N.Y. State of Mind.” Elzhi is known for his lyricism and he further illustrates his considerable skill on the mixtape with lines like “Nowadays, I need the green and the cash, just like the next man/ Using my mind to make shit move, like an X-Man.” The production on the album is handled by Will Sessions. Sessions uses live instrumentation to recreate the classic beats from *Illmatic* and the result is a familiar, yet fresh sound. This helps allow Elzhi to make the mixtape his own, all the while paying homage to one of rap's legends.



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LIVE & LOUD

The Live Show Reviews

The Life and Times

Photos by Nicolas Bates
Written by Katie J. Norris

Three-piece alternative space-rock band, The Life and Times, opened their show with love for their instruments, jamming like they were sparking the cosmos with every note they created. The band played quite well and they were incredibly on-point with their parts, despite the overall lack in dynamics. And I'm not entirely sure if the first song was all verses or all choruses, but that goes hand in hand with their unique, carefree approach to alternative music. They definitely have an indie-rock core with a flavor of a better-than-average band.

The second song stepped everything up a notch! And a sound engineer seemed to have found their way into the FOH booth to help out with some reverb-a-licious mic effects. The song itself had some clever changes and interesting rhythmic journeys, but again, it didn't have too much in the way of contrast of instrumental force. By the third song, I was really sold. They are a very tight group and I really enjoyed the combination of hard garage-rock with a sung psychedelic melody and complimentary use of guitar distortion. The next song was relatively punk in the terms of guitar riffs, but Chris Metcalf kept a rock beat on the drums, sticking like glue to their root sound. This song was also the first to satisfy my desire for use of stops and instrumentation staggering, creating levels in the song which brought attention to the vocals. The bass player on this song played long, prominent notes that acted as harmony for the legato vocal lines—a very cool effect! It almost sounded as if someone was singing back up to Allen Epley on lead vocals.

The next song was "Exist," by request from a relentless, screaming fan in the audience. Some cheers followed and without further ado, The Life and Times appeased their audience who chimed in on the distinguishable chorus: "Get what you need." And the Nord Electro 2 that had been set up on stage next to Epley finally got used for the first time in their set. One thing about Epley and Eric Abert is that they seem to really enjoy taking turns; when one has the guitar, the other picks up the bass. And a song or two later, they switch it up again, including, of course, interjections of Epley's keys, guitar and vocal-juggling act.

The next tune they played was "Day Three," off their new album, *No One Loves You Like I Do*. They are on tour to promote this new album which dropped on January 17, 2012. "Day Three" is track five on the CD. It opened with some swanky variants on percussion using the kit in crafty ways. It was a powered-through performance. The next song, "Day Eleven," was one of the most enjoyable. A simple piano line with highly delayed echo, rippling drums, and some simple distortion on electric guitar paralleling the keys is just the opening of the song. The lyrics guide the song to a deep-space rock tune, barely skimming the surface of pop. They take their time with this one, adding a break down at their own pace and eventually bringing it full circle to the lyrics again. Near the end, without fail, the song bleeds into their comfort zone of hard, garage-band rock.

They continue with the next song which starts with a melodious ballad opening as far as vocals go, but the instruments keep the alternative jam, holding the crowd on the fine line of standing on their feet for grunge rock and bobbing their heads in mild head-banging temptation. It's an energy and a sound that fits this crowd of fans quite well. The last two songs begin with ambient guitar that build like an orchestra; an orchestra floating through the colorful abyss. "Day Two" jet lands into machine gun punk-rock riffs and the rhythm hits under slow, airy vocals. The mix is a little strange, but it works for their style. There is a slight curiosity that arises to hear just how far they might go to test their own parameters.

"Day Twelve" was their closer. This is, by far, the hot ticket on the album and in their live performance! It encompassed something for everyone and incorporated some clever transitions. The audience sang along from the beginning. The chorus was true to its word; "No, I can't get you outta my head." They played their demanded encore, another head-bobbing beat that wound down an interesting chordal path all the way to the end.

Venue: The Satellite

Website: <http://TheLifeAndTimes.com>

Date: January 22, 2012

City: Silver Lake, CA

Allen Epley



Chris Metcalf



Eric Abert



Allen Epley

Photo by Drew Reynolds
Written by Paul Lyons



Guitarist and frontman Allen Epley is no stranger to the music scene, having spent over ten years in the Kansas City-based indie band Shiner. In 2003, Epley formed The Life and Times with bassist Eric Abert and Chris Metcalf, and they've since gone on to release three EP's, and three full-length albums, including their brand new release, *No One Loves You Like I Do*. I caught up with Allen Epley during a break on the band's 2012 world tour.

RUKUS MAGAZINE: The Life and Times, where does that name come from?

ALLEN EPLEY: The Life and Times... I was always kind of perplexed by that phrase growing up. I don't know why. I liked the ring of it. I liked the fact that it was kind of open-ended. We didn't want it [The Life and Times] to define us in just the name alone. So that was the reason, we liked the ring of it; we liked the imagery you could put along with it.

RM: Let's talk about how The Life and Times began. You're originally from Louisville, Kentucky, correct?

AE: Yeah, great town.

RM: What brought you to Kansas City, Missouri?

AE: Oh, college. I got a free ride at this college where my Dad was teaching. It's called William Jewell College, just north of KC. It was an offer too good to turn down. I took it; we had tuition-free school. That was my ticket to Kansas City.

RM: ...and Kansas City is what brought you to Shiner.

AE: Indeed, yeah.

RM: Was Shiner formed at school?

AE: It wasn't. It was right after school, with a buddy of mine whom I had been in a band with, and who now directs all of our videos...and does all that stuff. His name is Clayton Brown.

RM: What brought about the end of the band?

AE: I think we felt like we were creatively...not feeling it. There was some internal stuff, but nothing more than any other band.

RM: How did you meet up with Eric Abert and Chris Metcalf?

AE: Eric had a band called Ring, Clcada from St. Louis, that were a really great instrumental band. Chris, I had known from his band in town, called The Stella Link, and he was just a really talented guy. Honestly, we had tried out so many drummers for like six months. It was kind of comical. Chris is just an amazing drummer. We just feel lucky to have him.

RM: The interesting thing about Chris is that his drumming is almost purposely evocative of Zeppelin's John Bonham. Your sound feels like a great combination of Radiohead and Coldplay mixed with the heaviness of Led Zeppelin.

AE: That was a really great compliment; I will take that! That is really cool, and wouldn't you want to be in that band too? [laughs] That sounds awesome. Chris is influenced by so many radically different areas, but Bonham obviously is a big one.

RM: You certainly favor Chris in the mix, particularly on the new record. You can really hear that kick drum. There's a real natural resonance to it.

AE: That was definitely intentional. We wanted to get the best sound possible. Our friend Casey D'Orio helped record us at Matt Talbot's studio (Matt is the singer in the band Hum). We wanted to hear the paper on the drums...see the stick marks on the drum kit, and really feel that. It's important. Same with the sound of the bass guitar—I want to hear the strings kind of grind against the wooden neck. Same with the voice—you want to be very present, and almost hyper-realistic.

RM: When you started The Life and Times, was there a deliberate effort to make it sound different than the kind of music you made with Shiner? Shiner was really straight-ahead raw rock and roll, while The Life and Times has a more orchestral, bigger sound.

AE: Yes, I think that's pretty accurate. I certainly didn't want to try to compete with what Shiner did. It wouldn't have made sense; the fans didn't want to hear it.. At that moment it was definitely time for a palette-cleanser, and so we went for something prettier, like bigger, exactly like you're saying...more orchestral, more maybe symphonic...but also still with this kind of...blown-out, distorted, beautiful sound on it.

RM: You can really hear that on "Shift Your Gaze," one of my favorite tracks from the first Life and Times record, *Suburban Hymns*. That feels like a mini-masterpiece of sorts. It really reaches out and grabs you, even from the first couple of notes.

AE: Thank you, so much. That was written at the very end of Shlner, when Shlner was still a band. Ostensibly, it could've been a Shlner tune. I just listened to *Suburban Hymns* the other day for the first time in years, and I was struck by that tune.

RM: Your new album just came out in January. It's called *No One Loves You Like I Do*; a very provocative title. The curious thing is that the song titles are listed as days and numbers. Is it true that you recorded the album as a project where you wrote a song a day for twelve days?

AE: Yes, but I should note that the twelve days were spread over, maybe, a year. So, it wasn't twelve days in a row. We would hook up, and write for like three or four days before a tour. As we would write and record, we figured we had to get something done since we all live in different cities. Eric was living in New York, I was in Chicago, Chris was in Kansas City, and we figured we had to use the most of our time; get the best out of it. So we had mics set up every time we rehearsed, and just actually recorded everything we ever played.

RM: So you recorded the entire album at Matt Talbot's studio?

AE: We ended up doing most of it, the great bulk of it, down in Champaign at Matt's. We recorded it there, then we would do overdubs back at our home studio here in Chicago—it's called *Electronical*. It's a tiny little studio in the shadows of Steve Albini's *Electrical* studio. Only by proximity do we call it "Electronical."

RM: You have an album that deals with a lot of really deep, personal, romantic pain. There's a pleading kind of feel to it. Yet, the songs themselves...there's almost a detachment with the songs, because of the titles. You have one song pleading "I can't get you out of my head," but the name of the song is "Day 12." Was that a conscious decision?

AE: I think that may have been an unconscious decision. I like the way, even though it was "Day 12," it kind of forced us to listen to the lyrics about what it was about, if that makes sense, without laying on a pre-conceived notion about what the song might be about. There is a sense of snapped detachment that's happened. It's almost as though this person has kind of, snapped.

RM: The dark side of obsessive love.

AE: Absolutely, that's true. There's a couple I know. I realized that I wrote from...afterward, I kind of found myself writing from the girl's point of view in this relationship. There's a guy and girl I know; all of these songs apply very deliberately to their relationship, especially from her point of view. The guy just could not get free, and she just was not hearing it. She didn't understand that the guy wasn't getting it. She was like, "I'm the one. You don't even understand. I'm the only one." It was a very strange scenario.

RM: This a real couple that you knew?

AE: Yeah, and I know them now.

RM: Have they listened to *No One Loves You Like I Do*?

AE: Yes, although this hasn't been discussed among everybody. Surely it hits home. The guys know, but the girl does not know.

RM: The name of the album is *No One Loves You Like I Do*, which is very commanding, yet the cover of the album is, what looks like, two aliens shaking hands.

AE: Exactly. The title of that piece from the artist is "The Embrace/The Grip/The Proposal." So as I saw that piece, this artist William Test, from here in Chicago, it struck me as perfectly appropriate. It's difficult for me to tell from the two robots, the two aliens, whether it's a proposal, or it's actually the grip...like he's got him on his knees...or it's actually a loving embrace, or maybe it's all of those things. I found it perfectly appropriate for the music.

RM: Where did you find the piece?

AE: I was aware of his work from a friend of mine, who has a band called Sweet Cobra. He turned me on to William Test, and I was able to look through some of his work and I was like, "That's it!" We liked the idea of it not being "perfect." It's kind of scrawled, kind of one-line drawing, but it's also really purposeful and highly artistic. There's a lot of detail to it, intentional detail that we were really drawn to, that was really iconic.

RM: I noticed the songs are best experienced when you listen to the album as a whole, because it's really one musical piece, as the songs flow into each other. The best example are my two favorites: "Day 2" going right into "Day 12." Was that a conscious decision as well?

AE: Yes, it absolutely was. I'm a fan of kind of getting on with it. I certainly wasn't worried that people would get bored by any means; you don't get bored in a three second pause between songs. I liked this idea of just constantly moving forward, and this sense of contiguity between the songs. It kind of spoke to us, and we just literally listen to whatever speaks to us. There's no other larger, guiding force, honestly. If we like it, we generally just use that as our guiding muse.

RM: How has the tour gone so far?

AE: The whole tour was amazing. Historically, it's probably our best tour. We've had a chance to kind of build up our crowd, and it's kind of paying off. We laid a lot of groundwork from our last record, but I think we're seeing the payoff more now. I thought the show in L.A. was pretty well attended, and that was pretty representative for the rest of the tour. So, it's good.

RM: How are the new songs coming together in concert?

AE: Very well. There's a live sense of vibe that we go for. We never try to emulate everything on the record. We want the live experience to be its own organic thing, where if you record it, you get a cool live version of it, not just a really stripped-down version, but something that's really interesting in its own right. It's really fun. We're doing, I think, seven or eight songs from the new record every night. That's a lot to ask for an audience to sit through, but everyone has been very, like I said, the tour's been crazy...everyone was very receptive; already had the record. Many people were already singing words at us already. That was nice.

RM

COMING UP

Models To Keep An Eye On

LENG

YEIN

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Leng Yein

Leng Yein never intended on being a model, but one fateful day she was approached by the state's pageant organizer for Miss Pahang/Malaysia World Pageant who said she had what it took to be a beauty queen. She joined the pageant, won and then went on to win more than 18 beauty pageant titles. Leng is also no stranger to being in from of the camera. Since her big break she has been featured in countless magazines, newspapers, posters and billboards. She is also a trained pianist and has been playing since she was 5-years-old. Leng plans to launch two of her own brands in the near future called *Kumo* and *Runway*, so keep an eye out for those. Whatever life brings this Chinese beauty, we are sure she will take it and run with it.







THE STATS

Birthday:
April 18

Zodiac Sign:
Aries

Measurements:
32D-22.5-35

Height:
5' 5"

Weight:
97 lb.

Ethnicity:
Chinese

Hometown:
Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia

Turn Ons:

A great mind and great personality turns me on most. I am very attracted to people who have awesome personality; people who are very different from people that I've met. People who are smart and funny at the same time—the feeling of the uniqueness in them turns me on.

Turn Offs:

I can't take guys who are too much in love with themselves. They always do that empty talking. Guys who are a total show-off; boastful guys who are disrespectful towards women are a major turn off.

Guilty Pleasure:

Branded bags and shoes. Most of them are totally over valued, but it gives me great pleasure and satisfaction.

Pet Peeves:

[People] tapping to the beat on the table while I'm eating, or clapping their hands or stomping legs in the car following the beat of the music playing when everyone around is quiet and calm. It just annoys me because they break the peaceful, happy, easy, slow day of mine.

Celebrity Pass:

Seriously, none. I only crush on people that I know personally.

See more of Leng at
[Facebook.com/LengYein](https://www.facebook.com/LengYein)

COMING UP

Models To Keep An Eye On Cont'd



ROSE

SUIZA

Photography by Andrew Gates
Make-up & hair by Cynthia Luran

R

ose Suiza, originally hailing from the San Francisco bay area, is a merchandising and marketing graduate from FIDM. She never expected to be a model, but after moving to Los Angeles, that's exactly what happened. It may have taken a few years for this Filipino-Spanish mixed beauty to find the modeling world, but she's definitely making a mark. After being introduced to modeling by some new-found friends, Rose landed a few bikini and lingerie fashion shows, promotional modeling gigs and magazine features. She plans to continue her career in modeling while pursuing her other career in fashion as a buyer. Whatever her goals, we are sure she will make good on them all.





THE STATS

Birthday:
August 7

Zodiac Sign:
Leo

Measurements:
32D-24-32

Height:
5' 2"

Weight:
100 lb.

Ethnicity:
Filipino and Spanish

Hometown:
Union City, CA

Turn Ons:
Good personality;
charming, tall, nice teeth
and smile, being handsome
and funny.

Turn Offs:
Bad teeth, short guys,
messy, can't hold a
conversation and can't
make me laugh.

Guilty Pleasure:
Rocky Road ice cream.

Pet Peeves:
Being on time; I hate when
people are late. I don't
like messy people. I'm not
a neat freak, but I can't
stand a mess. Clean up
after yourself.

Celebrity Pass:
Channing Tatum, Paul
Walker, Brad Pitt and David
Beckham.

See more of Rose at
twitter.com/roses120

GAME ON

The Latest Games Reviewed

Raise Your Sword

Written by Heather Spears

One of Nintendo's famous faces is finally back and grabbing some attention. With the release of *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* in December, gamers finally had a reason to pick up their Wii remote and start playing again! The game can be compared to Nintendo 64's hit classic *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and if you have followed the Zelda series at all you would know that comparing this new release with the absolute renowned greatness of the classic is really saying something. *Skyward Sword* stands on its own with an amazing story, classic game play and recognizable characters and enemies. It is by far the best Wii game I have played... but why is it not as great as *Ocarina of Time*? What keeps *Skyward Sword* just a step back from the previous record setting classic on the Nintendo 64?

The game starts off with your character Link, ironically sleeping in his bedroom. Link is suddenly awakened by Zelda's trusty bird companion, known as a Loftwing. The two are living within the town of Skyloft. This town was thrown up into the sky by a goddess many years ago to save the remaining people of the surface from everlasting darkness. The young people of Skyloft were set to recreate this ancient happening with a ceremony. In the ceremony, one young man who wins a race is set to become the town's newest knight. Of course Link wins the race and when he and Zelda take off on their Loftwings to go celebrate the two are caught in a black tornado which rips Zelda from her birds back sending her down to the surface. It becomes Link's job to carry out a legendary quest and save his friend Zelda.

The game play of *Skyward Sword* is very similar to that of *Ocarina of Time*. You take control of Link in a somewhat open world setting as you battle monsters and progress through temples. Uncovering more of the story and gaining new weapons is satisfying beyond imagination. The way you navigate the menu and the familiarity of enemies is a breath of fresh air. Having *Skyward Sword* mimic the greatness brought to gamers in the past is exactly what the Wii needed.

Even if I stated that this is by far the best Wii game I have played to date, there are two problems I face while playing. The first problem is that you simply cannot relax while playing the game because with the Wii motion control you are forced to swing your arm around the room as if you are holding a sword to control your player. When I sit down to game, I sit down to game not run around a room to try and get my character to move correctly. The other issue with *Skyward Sword* is very minor. The save system just isn't how it used to be. Players are forced to save at statues instead of straight from the start menu.

Even with the two errors in this game I am able to see past that and name this the best title for the Wii. It has seemed in the past that Nintendo seemed to forget what set them apart from other consoles with iconic characters and interesting story. *Skyward Sword* reminds me, as a gamer, that Nintendo hasn't forgotten its roots. *Skyward Sword* is a step in the right direction and I hope Nintendo will realize this and continue to make games as compelling as this.

Game Title: The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

Producer: Nintendo

Platform: Wii

Website: <http://Zelda.com/SkywardSword>

★★★★★

Ratings: E10+

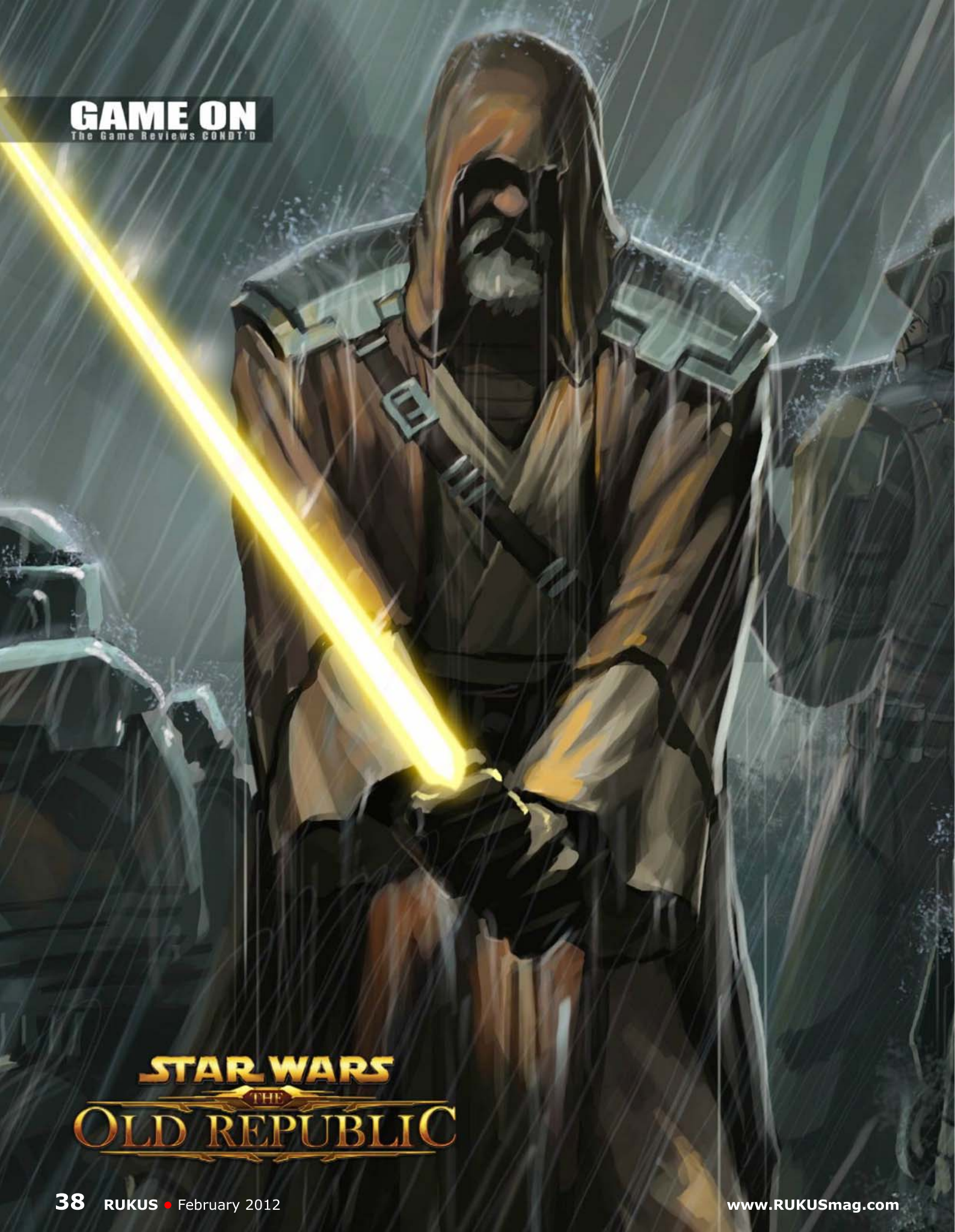
Genre: Action-Adventure

Release Date: November 19, 2011



THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
Skyward Sword

GAME ON
The Game Reviews CONT'D



STAR WARS
THE
OLD REPUBLIC

Control Your Destiny

Written by Jesse Seilhan

Massively multiplayer games are special. They have special rules that no gamer would ever follow in traditional games; they get away with not doing certain “non-negotiables,” all the while charging you for a persistent connection. For that reason, reviewing them is an insane task, with each unique character harboring enough content to warrant the game’s initial \$60 price tag. The hundreds of hours poured into one class in one faction doesn’t say anything about the other seven, and spending time doing quests and missions versus time spent guilding, raiding, or PvP’ing is completely different. And while everyone wants to be Darth Maul and Luke Skywalker, you ultimately choose your destiny in a game like *Star Wars: The Old Republic* and that is exactly what developer Bioware does so damn well. Take games from their pedigree (*Mass Effect*, *Dragon Age*) and add in perhaps the most popular franchise of all time, and prepare for a highly-anticipated, yet barely original, massive multiplayer online battle royale.

With development and production costs pegged at over \$200 million, the one aspect that this game reigns supreme in is presentation. From the menus to the cut-scenes, time was taken to deliver a polished, clean interface beyond the engrossing cinematics and gripping story moments. Combat is another key piece, with dramatic fights highlit by well-animated exchanges between enemies. The lightsaber work is especially cool, and makes up for the fact that I’m just pressing the 1 key on my keyboard. Player vs Player combat works well enough, but the uncapped level structure had experienced vets destroying noobs, until a huge patch fixed (and then subsequently re-broke) that. Jet setting around the expanded Star Wars universe is also thrilling, even if some of the cities and environments are slightly barren and the walking speed is atrocious until you hit a certain level. It’s impossible to make every zone in every city on every planet interesting, so the team made up for this by providing you with group-run mini-missions, called Flashpoints. These are by far the game’s best feature, as they provide short bursts of well-planned team-driven levels. Additional content is planned through 2013 already and Flashpoints are going to be a huge focus as they get the most action on any given night, as they are able to be re-run for additional gear.

The merit of this game comes down to what experience you are looking for when you install the game. I took Bioware’s amazing RPG pedigree to task, asking for a solo experience unmatched by contemporary games, with some of the best sound, UI, mission, and story work in the industry. To that end, I’m a completely satisfied customer with dozens of hours of content yet to explore. But if I bought this game looking for a *WoW* killer, something that has learned the lesson from a revolution nearly 10 years ago, *The Old Republic* is not it. It is close, and the universe it’s set in may prove more appealing, but it is still a slave to the foundations laid by *WoW*, *Everquest*, and everything else that charged you monthly before this game was ever a thought in George Lucas’ skull. Each solo character has enough content to warrant the games initial \$60 price tag, but if a new way to think about online gaming is what you desire, play your buddy’s account first and see if the force is with you before paying monthly for it.

Game Title: Star Wars: The Old Republic

Producer: Electronic Arts

Platform: PC

Website: <http://SWTOR.com>

★★★★☆

Ratings: Teen

Genre: MMORPG

Release Date: December 20, 2011



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