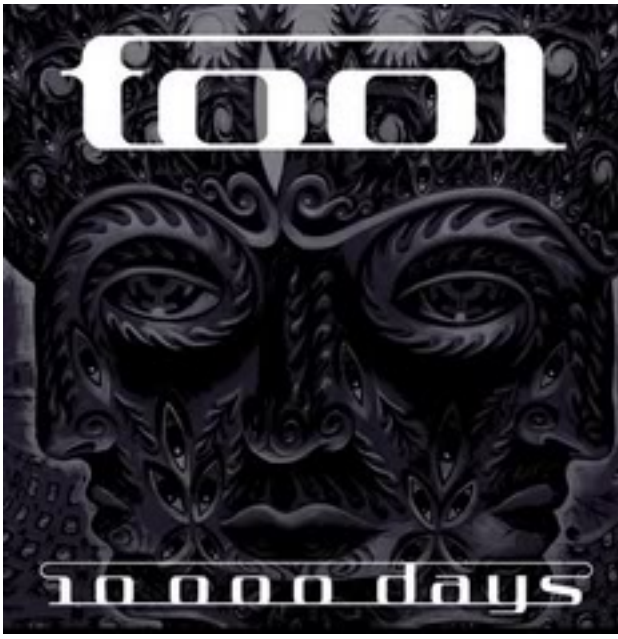
We here at Da Blurbs love when Hiko cranks something out for us. Dude is very funny, and a very talented writer. He has carte blanche to write about whatever he chooses for us, and was kind enough to review Tool's new album in his latest piece.



Let me start off by stating that I have no musical criticism background. I was not trained in music; I play no instruments. And I don't really listen to that much new music any more, because all my contacts that used to turn me on to new and interesting bands have died and gotten married, soon thereafter pre-setting their car stereos to 80's stations.

The only thing that really qualifies me to write this piece is that I am a very big fan of Tool, and have listened excessively to everything they've done. In my opinion, they are the best band currently still making music. Their creativity and range can be touched by no one of their generation, not to mention the unmistakable voice/scream of the lead singer, Maynard James Keenan. I like angry music, I like eerie music, I like creative music, I love Tool.

Of course, as I bought the new Tool album, 10,000 Days, I was nervous. There are such large gaps of time in between new Tool albums that you can't just blow off a bad offering, because a bad offering might just be their last. And then you're stuck with a great band that produced far too little work and went out on a sour note.

I was nervous before I bought Lateralus as well, but that album turned out to be quite good (although not quite the equal of its predecessor, Aenema). It was different from Aenema, as Aenema was different from Undertow, but it was still unique and uniquely Tool.

Well, now I've listened to 10,000 Days the customary 10 times (to ensure that I give it a proper chance to grow on me). And… I am not happy.

I consider briefly the idea that this album is supposed to be like one long song, much in the way that Lateralus was, and that individual tracks are unimportant as compared to the album as a whole. But, if that's the case, then I am so unimpressed with the album as a whole that I am forced to analyze each track, hoping to glean some excellence from this mediocrity.

***All song ratings out of a possible 5 stars.

Track 1: Vicarious – As it starts off, I keep expecting Maynard to start crooning "I know the pieces fit.." The song gets a little harder, has a nice guitar riff. It's actually a pretty good song, but it sounds as if Maynard was hissing the whole time. I keep waiting for it to explode, and just when you think it will, it just sort of levels off. It gets one more chance to break loose at the end, but doesn't quite make it. This unfortunate trend is seen throughout the album. Three and ½ stars.

Track 2: Jambi – The riff isn't so different from the first song. Once again, Maynard isn't so much singing as he is talking. And just when you expect him to rip into a scream, he pulls back. Has he lost his voice? It's like Jafar from Aladdin is now lead singer for Tool. This song isn't bad, but it's certainly nothing special. The guitar solo near the end is high quality, but not as creative as I'd expect from them. Three stars.

Track 3: Wings For Marie (Part 1) – And now suddenly I'm listening to A Perfect Circle (Maynard's personal side-band). Not that I have any problem with A Perfect Circle, I think they put out quality music. It's just that I've always referred to them as Tool Lite, and as much as I appreciate the stuff they do, I'd rather have regular Tool, thank you very much. If Maynard wants to do his little side project/exploration of sound then that's fine – just don't start polluting Tool's sound with the more Cure-like sound of APC.

This song would probably be pretty good if I were preparing to commit suicide or laying on my bed tripping on acid desperately trying to go to sleep, but since that ain't my bag no more, baby, this song is just taking up space on my Tool CD. Two stars.

Track 4: 10,000 Days (Wings Part 2) – This is Part 2 of "Wing for Marie". On

Lateralus, they did a similar Part One, Part Two song ("Parabol" and "Parabola"), and Part One was considerably different from Part Two, making a quite interesting song if you considered both Parts as one whole. However, this Part Two is really only distinguishable from Part One because of the thunder effects in the background. I look at my CD player – this song is already 3 minutes old, and it is going nowhere.

Towards the end, the song tries to make a comeback, but it's half-hearted, really. It goes from incredibly melancholy to mildly irritated. It was actually better when it was just really depressing. Then it spends about two minutes at the end just… droning… on… each… word… lasts… forever… Yawn. Two stars.

Track 5: The Pot – A female voice (or a distorted Maynard) starts off this song, which is quite unexpected. I don't listen to the radio much, but this song seems to me the most likely candidate to get air play. It doesn't sound like Tool, but it is somewhat catchy. And Maynard is making an attempt at singing (finally). It actually has a grunge-era Soundgarden feel, save for the fact that a post-prime Maynard doesn't carry a vintage Chris Cornell's jock. Not very creative, but at least it somewhat rocks. Three and ½ stars.

Track 6: Lipan Conjuring – I assume this is their first attempt at the interesting "sub-tracks", as I like to call them. On Aenema, they had the electrical storm and the baby crying and the German egg-speech ("Die Eier Von Satan"). At the end of Lateralus, we had the insane man babbling about aliens ("Faaip De Oiad"). At the end of Undertow, there was the excellent sermon against the heartless ravaging of vegetables ("Disgustipated"). And on this one, we get… Indians chanting. That's it? Indians chanting??!! As far as Tool is concerned, that is a creative triple-bogey. Who doesn't have Indians chanting on their albums? One and ½ stars.

Track 7: Lost Keys (Blame Hofmann) – A more interesting sub-track. Some guitar with people talking over it randomly. Nothing exciting, but at least it's something new. Two and ½ stars.

Track 8: Rosetta Stoned – And it leads directly into this, which is, in my opinion, by far the best song on the album. The lead off with the multiple tracks of the angry voice speaking quickly is very interesting, and then we get what sounds like a slightly impassioned Maynard. Basically, this is the only track that would belong on Aenema. It's long, meandering, creative, alternately angry and quiet. Very

nice. I'm thinking: The only thing this needs is a nice Maynard scream. And then he lets one go. After this, I start having hope that the rest of the album will end strong. Four and ¾ stars. (Five stars is reserved for songs of the quality of "Eulogy" or "Third Eye".)

Track 9: Intension – Bad "Intension"! Sigh. Back to A Perfect Circle, I see. There's really no reason to review this track, since I said it sounds annoyingly similar to Tracks 3 & 4. Apparently, Tool is alarmed that they woke me up, and are trying to lull me back to sleep. And how long is this friggin' song? It feels like I've been listening to it for seven hours and it still hasn't changed. I find myself counting hangnails. One and ½ stars.

Track 10: Right In Two – One is not really able to tell where "Intension" leaves off and "Right In Two" begins, but this is a superior song to its predecessor. Despite my previous gripes about the slow melancholy nature of many of these tunes, I enjoy the tone this song sets. And then it builds strong at the end. You start to get excited (this might be the song where Maynard really explodes!) - a la "Prying Open My Third Eye!!!" – but, alas, it falls a little short. Still – a strong effort. Three and ¾ stars.

Track 11: Viginti Tres – Here we go with the typical bizarre sub-track Tool finish. Some industrialized sounds, perhaps a blowtorch, and a building wail. Then a deep eerie voice, and some electrified sound effects. Hey, I like this shit. This is Tool. Maybe it's a slight disappointment, but only because I know this is the end, and I would've preferred that it was preceded by a lot better music. Three stars.

After listening to the whole album, you just find yourself wanting to quickly listen to one of their older works. It's like sitting in the theater watching Phantom Menace, and you really really wish you were watching The Empire Strikes Back again instead.

You feel almost dirty until you quickly slam Aenema into your CD player and hear Maynard screaming "Don't you step out of line! Don't you fucking lie!"

"Ahhhhhhhh," you say, leaning back on your couch and opening a beer. "Like a musical enema."

I realize that Tool is an evolving band, and as they grow older, their sound "matures". Tool themselves made a musical reference to this in "Ticks and

Leeches" (Lateralus), which is the only song on the album where they really rip into it old-school, screaming the lines "This is what you wanted – well this is what you're getting!"

Yes, Maynard, that IS what I wanted. If I want to hear your "mature" sound, I'll listen to A Perfect Circle. What I wanted was some anger, some creativity. What I wanted was Tool.

Call me a Tick or a Leech if you will, but just give me what I want, you self-proclaimed sell-out. Maybe you can do that for me when you release your next album, probably sometime in 2012, where we can expect an even more "mature" sound. I shake my head in sadness.

Until then… add up the stars, divide by 11… carry the one… multiply by the square root of pi… (plenty of time to do the math while waiting for freakin' "Intension" to end)…

10,000 Days – 2 and ¾ stars