

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

AHLEUCHATISTAS *EVEN IN THE MIDST...* 2007 CUNEIFORM

Line-up: **Shane Perlowin** (guitar), **Derek Poteat** (bass), **Sean Dail** (drums)

“... *Even in the Midst...* at times takes a more measured approach to the tangled phrases, sudden turns, and flailing dissonance by which the band has defined itself-- think of what the Magic Band might have sounded like on *Trout Mask Replica* without Captain Beefheart at the helm.

As in the past, the band not only eschews post-production, but most live effects as well. ...

The band's core dynamic stems from the way they ride the line between tight, odd-metered groove and outright chaos, and the divide between disunity and unity gives the first track...its structure. ... "K-Bit" has an excellently tense build-up in the middle...the outro is one of the band's most melodic moments.

... *Even in the Midst...* ...still possessed of many moments of beauty and mayhem...and in joining those moments together with their sense of composition, they've made a record that a lot of fans of complex yet unadorned instrumental music will find rewarding.”

– Joe Tangari, *Pitchfork*, October 2007

“...Ahleuchatistas' fourth album...takes everything one step further. ... tighter, more frantic, more creative, more restless -- more. It might even be more subtle. In the field of math rock, where complexity, intricacy, and virtuosity are essential, groups often achieve these key elements at the cost of feeling. Even in the *Midst...* is not an album that will get all moody, mind you, but...Poteat... Perlowin, and...Dail manage to squeeze in a few moments of passion and tenderness -- in that regard, "Take Me to Your Leader Never Sounded So Alien" is a masterpiece. ... Tracks...are a bit longer than this group's average, with four pieces over five minutes -- epic proportions for Ahleuchatistas. ...those longer tunes quickly become album highlights. Despite the fact that they contain so many ideas per minute, they remain coherent and exciting... However, the shorter tracks don't disappoint... A strong opus.”

– Francois Couture, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

“...the hyperactivity and woozy syncopation of "Take Me to Your Leader Never Sounded So Alien" is so distinctively this band's own. ...such qualities are symptomatic of impatience with form...passages...are shot through with ineffable beauty.

... The results are... playful...a group playing at such a simpatico level because they can and not out of any facile desire to impress.

On one level "Swimming Underwater With A Cat On Your Back" invalidates any thoughts of Beefheart as anything other than a point of reference.

...there's a greater sense of collective will, shaping the music in the moment, a point which just might account for its relative fluidity.

...the sheer joyous angularity of this music is in relatively short supply and that simple fact has the effect of taking it to another level.“

– Nic Jones, *All About Jazz*, March 30, 2008 , www.allaboutjazz.com

“As a teen growing up in the 1970s, I was enamored by the complexities of a budding transcontinental progressive-rock scene. Odd-metered time signatures and jazz-like explorations were a feast for the ears, thanks to bands such as Gentle Giant, King Crimson and others. Fast-forwarding to the millennium, a new harvest of performers is perhaps ruling the roost.

...this North Carolina-based trio,...approaches from every conceivable direction via an intricately-carved and mind-bending approach to the rock idiom. ...

Structured upon a wiz, bang and thoroughly in-your-face gait, the trio amplifies the knotty time divisions and metrics heard by fabled musical warriors of a bygone era. And it's balls-to-the-walls all over the place throughout *Even In The Midst...* ...

Ahleuchatistas fuses punk, grunge, free-rock and spacey improvisation into punishing, discordant riffs and polyrhythmic cadences, with Shane Perlowin's twangy guitar lines eliciting a crossbreed stylization that merges country, psychedelia and avant-garde concepts. It's partly about diametrically opposed and mathematically correct forward-motion.

...the trio conveys remarkable depth... ..irrefutably stimulating, this album stands on its own amid the sometimes murky waters of contemporary rock. ”

– Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, December 3, 2007, www.allaboutjazz.com

“If you think you've heard everything that is possible using the traditional setup of guitar, bass, and drums...then you probably haven't heard the music of Asheville, North Carolina's Ahleuchatistas. These three guys play extraordinarily complex instrumental music that doesn't sound like anyone else currently cruising the planet. This, the band's fourth full-length release, contains strange, frantic, obtuse music that will astound and amaze many listeners...while sending others running for the hills... This trio's music sounds something like an instrumental punk version of Captain Beefheart's Magic Band. ...these guys are unbelievably proficient and tight on their instruments. ... *Even in the Midst...* is a wild ride indeed... Unique. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)”

– *Babysue*, November 2007

“Continuing their tradition of dissonant and chaotic, yet surprisingly precise instrumental rock, critically acclaimed Asheville trio Ahleuchatistas meander their way through 45 minutes of mathy rhythm flux and noisy confusion on *Even In the Midst...* Without compromising the frantic pounding and technical splendor of epic tracks... Ahleuchatistas also manage to churn out more accessible melodies against a backdrop of unorthodox time signatures on simmering jams like “Take Me to Your Leader Never Sounded so Alien”... From a production standpoint, the record is about as bare bones as they come, abandoning overdubs and effects pedals for raw energy and improvisation. ...*Even In the Midst's* brilliance lies in the winding free-form guitar-rock, cacophonous post-hardcore and experimental ambience...”

– Dane Smith, *Mountain Xpress*, December 7, 2007, www.mountainx.com

“...Ahleuchatistas assimilated its complex, highly technical playing and its edgy, avant garde leanings into compositions that stretch out a bit more and deliver in a more dramatic and lyrical way.

The compositions are varied and intricate, carrying tones that range from reflective and sensual to disturbing and aggressive, sometimes within the

confines of a single track... Moreover, the album has a rare, expressionist, narrative feel...

On the more ambient-oriented moments, most noticeably on the circulating and slightly meditative (yet still packed) closing, "Where We Left Off," a comparison with the UK trio Guapo is evoked, but Ahleuchatistas...comes off pointier and brighter.

...an Ahleuchatistas review cannot be completed without mentioning Sean Dail...his dense, complicated drumming sounds unbelievably natural. In other words... Simply amazing! [rating: 9.25/10]"
– Avi Shaked, *Maelstrom*, www.maelstrom.nu

"2007 TOP LISTS...OUR TOP 50... Ahleuchatistas / Even in the Midst... (Cuneiform)" – Francois Couture, *Delire Musical/Delire Actuel* (CFLX)

"The attack of "...Of all this", which constitutes both the first track and the conclusive part of the titling sentence, would not be out of context on a Quentin Tarantino soundtrack; think Dick Dale meets early XTC, just before guitarist Shane Perlowin, bassist Derek Poteat and drummer Sean Dail launch a new assault against the cathedrals of four-on-the-floor by interlocking their virtual horns in chains of absolutely irregular metrics and contrapuntal audacity. ... One of the intriguing aspects of this trio, apart from an obvious technical command, is the nudity of their timbres. Ahleuchatistas are exactly what every garage band should aspire to, namely remaining exactly that while becoming knowledgeable players. ... "The bears of Cantabria shall sleep no more" ... Instantaneous rage tempered by mental discipline: that's a great asset, and it's not Ahleuchatistas' only one. Party music for those who hate parties. Excellently rough stuff."
– Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, May 2008

"...the legendary Imaginarium opened my eyes to Asheville, NC's Ahleuchatistas three years ago. ...
...their music sticks with you. It is a sick combination of jazz, punk, maybe a little metal, and homegrown political protest folk... Other artists may be taking the same spirit with them...but nobody sounds quite like Ahleuchatistas.
... In the case of Even in the Midst...this group is at its strongest. ...this in fact is their smartest and most vindictive record yet. ...they kick your ass. It's not just the constant pulsing of the drums ...or the unhinged chaos... It's one of the reasons so many people have grouped them into..."math-rock," ... Just as Battles...with Mirrored so too do Ahleuchatistas have a vulpine menace that suggests they'll sink their teeth into you if you don't take them seriously. ...

One of the reasons this is such a complete album and better presented than past efforts is that the artwork accompanies the music perfectly. Local artist Courtney Chappell has painted a vivid but pessimistic picture in the eight-page booklet. ...
...Ahleuchatistas play, and they play hard. You, you shut up and listen. The reward is that. ...you come to find that this very special band is doing something more than mere math-rock, or jazz-punk, or even politically charged music on a very broad level. They have made another subtle step forward that has produced their most carefully constructed and brilliantly executed album to date. If you turn out to enjoy this as much as I did, do yourself a favor and go make a memory of your own by seeing them live. ..."
– Patrick Masterson, *Audiversity*, October 02, 2007

"...North Carolina's Ahleuchatistas...may be what the Minutemen would be like if they'd been an instrumental band. It isn't...that Ahleuchatistas sound like the Minutemen, because they don't... But, like the Minutemen, they don't sound like anyone else. And while Ahleuchatistas could be grouped in with punk or with metal or with some sort of avant-jazz, they aren't exactly any of those things. They are simply a tight three-piece making their own noise and cranking out great albums...

The most refreshing thing about this band is that they sound political. Their name...is as difficult to get a handle on as their music is. But, unlike so many artists labeled "difficult", the band isn't excluding us. They want us in the fray with them...

Their formula seems to be that they don't have one, and that is what keeps this all so surprising. They maintain an energy throughout ...Even in the Midst that is truly astounding, and their ability to turn on a dime, switching time-signature and pace two and three times in a song without blinking, makes even the longest entries on this record seem fresh from moment to moment. Perhaps the most deceptive thing the band does is appear disheveled. ...like a deconstructionist mess. But, if you listen close, you can hear one of the instruments...keeping the thread going.

And while their song titles, particularly "Take Me to Your Leader Never Sounded So Alien", are not terribly subtle, the way they approach politics is. Taking a cue from their hero Charlie Parker, they make music that represents a frustration both germane to our times and tragically timeless. ... Ahleuchatistas...illuminate institutional problems by transmogrifying the frustration and confusion and anger and exhaustion that the individual can feel in a world divided into music as jarring and brash as it is controlled and unified, as minimalist as it is intricate.

... There's tension all throughout ...Even in the Midst, as the band takes on something bigger and stronger than itself. But, rather than letting themselves get beaten down by the uphill battle, they are charging back up...

And, somewhere, the Minutemen are smiling and raising a can of beer in approval. [rating: 8/10]"
– Matthew Fiander, *PopMatters*, December 4, 2007, www.popmatters.com

"... Since their inception they have constantly challenged ideas of form and structure through their complex, abstract compositions... Even in the Midst continues their Faraquet via The Magic Band line of hugely unpredictable, jazzed-up math-rock.

And "unpredictable" really is the word here as the band veers from pretty melodic hooks to crazed, infinitely-complex free-jazz wig-outs, through explosive noise-rock-influenced discordance and back again...

This juxtaposition can produce some stunning results, such as in "Red Coated Emergency Exit" ...

... Even in the Midst has been recorded in a bare-bones fashion that serves to showcase the trio's incredible musicianship and provide as accurate a document of the band's compositions and interactions as possible. There is almost no use of effects...barring a few notable exceptions... "Where We Left Off"...uses backwards guitar swells to provide a counterpoint to the fidgety rhythms beneath.

It is, perhaps fittingly, the confrontational nature of Ahleuchatistas' music that is both their greatest strength, and their own worst enemy...

... Even in the Midst is a thrilling, if not entirely exhausting, listen..."
– Kris Illic, *The Silent Ballet*

“...Midst possesses the kind of emotional power in its vocals-less performance that few bands can only hope to meet. Ahleuchatistas’ ability to construct beautiful instrumental passages is made all the more captivating by bookending them with mind-bending Lightning Bolt-esque speed breaks. Pedal-free performance is the name of the game, as the band explore the limits of their own instruments-and brains, if the stop-start changes and off-the-wall time signatures are any indication. Music doesn’t get much closer to the edge than this.”

– Sam Sutherland, *Alternative Press*, February 2008

“Like a secret meeting between free form jazz and math rock comes the fourth release from instrumental trio Ahleuchatistas. ... What you get on *Even In the Midst...* is complex, weaving, ballsy music, sort of like what you would get if you took three punkers and fed them a steady diet of King Crimson, Mahavishu Orchestra, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Present, John Zorn, Massacre, Happy Family, and Dysrhythmia. ...this stuff is pretty ferocious, but instead of beefing up their attack with distortion and bombast, Ahleuchatistas got for the juggular with pure technical prowess and a raw intensity that is quite impressive. Even when they opt for more gentler and avant-garde tones...the results are equally chilling. ...marvelous synergy and tight improvisation ...at times recalls another Cuneiform Records band, Upsilon Acrux. It’s all quite tricky, often times charming, and very enjoyable complex music that should appeal to prog, jazz, math rock, and avant-garde lovers of all ages.”

– Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, October 16, 2007

“...there’s a wider variety of mood and tempo, but the trio’s arrangements are still dauntingly complex and their song titles are still political, but the (all-instrumental) tunes are still approachable and fun even as they challenge... Very nice.”

– Rick Anderson, *CD HotList*

“ALBUM OF THE WEEK ... Wow. This is Ahleuchatistas’ fourth album, following hard on their breathtaking 2006 release ‘What You Will’ - and it’s even better. More than ever, Ahleuchatistas are a contradiction... super complex instrumental music made easy. A simple, relatively unadorned guitar-bass-drums arrangement, yet endless variety of texture and feel. The production is just right, natural, clean and live... This natural warmth somehow rounds the harsh edges of all those twists and turns... There’s enough tunes and riffs and contrasting textures...to match the contents of most record collections - yet something about the Ahleuchatistas’ approach makes it, well approachable. ...

... Between them their tastes cover progressive rock, hardcore punk, jazz psych and metal and avant classical - and it shows. Since forming in 2003 they’ve gigged relentlessly...(somebody at SXSW wrote that their playing “made Mars Volta a band to yawn at”)

There’s a couple of handfuls of bands around the world making this rarified high-end intricate rock now - you could list Hella, Ruins, Koenjihyakkei, X-Legged Sally, (early) Dillinger Escape Plan, Farquhar, Tera Melos, Upsilon Acrux and Ahleuchatistas as the standard-bearers. What makes Ahleuchatistas stand out...is the unforced ease of their playing, the warmth, the immediacy: even when they’re hammering through some weirdass counterpoint with ninety-degree turn at the end. Everything they do is about communicating... Ahleuchatistas’ particular combination of emotional maturity, imagination and stratospheric musicianship is unique. ... ‘Even In The Midst...’ takes the good stuff a little further. ...more passages of straight tunefulness breaking through tension and darkness, more moments of stillness and delicacy up against their furious rock-outs. There are little surprises and joyful twists and a quite brilliant way of balancing a ‘predictable’ riff with an unexpected flourish. The whole has the best qualities of a good soundtrack, a musical journey that’s vivid in itself. There’s a coherent purpose underlying the sound, another quality that sets Ahleuchatistas apart from their peers: their overt political and world-aware references in the artwork and song titles are more than a garnish. Take the album and the first track’s title as a statement of intent...even in the midst of all this... violence, chaos, fear... of these times... there is beauty. It’s an outlook similar to that of Godspeed! You Black Emperor, despite their sound being very different. ...its all about fragile humans and their trials and joys. ...

... ‘Even In The Midst...’ might dazzle technically, but ultimately it’s the emotion and empathy radiating from every moment, and the sheer delight at what they’re creating, that makes this ‘difficult’ music so accessible.”

– *Organ*, #234, December 13, 2007

“they...remind me of the disjointed avant-rock of Captain Beefheart’s Magic Band. ...

Ahleuchatistas...play a...rewarding blend, less flash and technical, or in-yer-face, and with an instrumental blend that takes the Magic Band riffing style closer to the classic High Tide related Rustic Hinge. They apply finesse and complexity to the brew, dynamics, power and restraint, all adding up to a tasty brew that constantly leads you on, wanting to guess what’s coming next.

...the 51 minutes of *EVEN IN THE MIDST*... seem to be over way too soon, which is probably a good sign of an album that will be a grower. ...”

– Alan Freeman, *Audion*, issue #54