

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

GUAPO

FIVE SUNS

CUNEIFORM

2004

Line-up: **Dave Smith** (Drums, Percussion), **Matt Thompson** (Bass, Guitar, Electronics)
Daniel O'Sullivan (Fender Rhodes, Organ, Mellotron, Harmonium, Guitar Electronics)

"Guapo...is all about a strain of prog you don't take home to mom. When early prog was heavy, it was heavier than Sabbath. King Crimson's hammering 1974 album *Red* and most of the Magma discography...steered prog away from audiences that believe little people live inside trees. **Put your head around a much cleaner Lightning Bolt (or Ruins and This Heat), then add a touch of Meshuggah's histrionics for the Guapo agenda."**
–Andrew Earles, *Magnet*, V. 12, No.63

"This British post-everything trio return with a planet-bombing slab of prog rock somewhere between King Crimson's *Red* and the debut album from *This Heat*. Not appearing on this summer's Warped Tour."
–Jason Pettigrew, *Alternative Press*, April 2004

"Guapo makes rock music that includes elements of various sub-genres: progressive, experimental, space and noise. ...*Five Suns*...is powerful music, anchored by Matt Thompson's thunderous bass-lines and Dave Smith's heavy-handed percussion. ...Daniel O'Sullivan adds swaths of electronics and keyboard textures (including many vintage seventies prog machines like mellotron and harmonium) - both Thompson and O'Sullivan contribute spacey guitar lines. ...**formidable in conception."**
–Christian Carey, *Copper Press*

"The press announcement pronounces similarities to prog-rock icons such as Magma, King Crimson, and minimalist composer Terry Riley. A good analogy at that! ...this British keys-bass-drums trio lays it all down with swarming sheets of sound. ...the group transmits a protocol rooted within the '70s progressive rock scene."
–Glenn Asatrita, *All About Jazz*, Winter 2003

"By approaching modern noise acts like the Boredoms and Mr. Bungle with a '70s vibe of Mellotrons and swirling, repetitive guitar patterns, *Five Suns* is chock full of enough time signature changes and discordance to sate your inner prog child. The 46-minute title track is divided into five sections...The second starts off faintly like Fantômas'... Part three breeds geometrical patterns and equations as it is cleansed by Mahavishnu Orchestra's *The Inner Mounting Flame*, while part four waltzes through the court of the Crimson King.**Guapo are pure architects and *Five Suns* is their anti-rock."**
–Chris Ayers, *Exclaim*, April 2004

"Guapo is a British trio dealing in the heavier and darker aspects of prog. On *Five Suns*' opening forty-seven minute title track...there are some catchy riffs and melodies...and some gritty sonic passages... **"Mictlan"...**minimizes the Magma influence, and brings in a nice blend of space-rock...horror-movie atmosphere, and some dysfunctional quirky noise that would endear them to contemporaries like Deerhoof. "Topan" is...the most compelling piece. It features a chiming chord progression reminiscent of the hypnotic music on Soft Machine's 7, and a deep-space folk denouement after seven minutes that feel like three."
–Signal to Noise, Spring 2004

"...Guapo's penchant for sonic hijinks has often propelled them into the more experimental stylistic territory of cut 'n' paste audio collage, improv noise metal, and/or claustrophobic, demon-spawned dronescapes. However, on this relatively civilized and even arguably retro CD, Thompson respectfully captures the heavy so-called Zeuhl-style bass of Magma and its derivatives, while Smith's high-energy drumming straddles the line between jazz and rock... Thompson also switches to howling space guitar on occasion, and he and O'Sullivan use electronics to give certain pieces a sci-fi quality that might evoke memories of vintage Hawkwind... The title piece...occupies the first 47 minutes...its aura of brooding melancholy might also turn the listener's mind to thoughts of early King Crimson or perhaps Univers Zero, as well as Magma. ...**a solid piece of work.** [AMG Rating: 3 stars.]"
–Bill Tolland, *All Music Guide*

"...Guapo create highly progressive music that is as all-encompassing as it is addictive, layering down texture upon texture of material in soundtracks of colorful sonic experimentation. ..."*Five Suns*" is a meticulously detailed composition that carries threads of momentum through hypnotic percussive passages, simmering with dark overtones....**...Guapo render the very concept of a vocalist obsolete. ...material vanishes and re-emerges as the journey progresses, and Guapo even add electronic elements as they make noise itself an artform amongst the breathtaking throes of sound.... Both brooding and ethereal, "*Five Suns*" is an album that will engross and enthrall, making the perfect introduction to Guapo for the unacquainted. ...those seeking a monumental slab of musical escape need look no further than Guapo."**
–Chris, *I Ate Your Microphone*, July 2004

"Intensity drips from this music like sweat from an equatorial worker at high noon. Guitars squeal and grind... Monumental drumming only increases the dizzying altitude, propelling the tunes to more exhausting heights.
...A percentage of Guapo's arcane sound derives from their use of vintage equipment, like Fender Rhodes piano, mellotron and Moogs. **In conjunction with the band's hardcore rock energy and...trance-inducing repetition, these retro instruments make for a wild excursion into demented harmonics."**
–Matt Howarth, *Sonic Curiosity*

"The music is grave, heavy, with influences of Zeuhl, but mostly with that impressive decorum we normally find in Swedish music, especially Anekdoten and Anglagard...there's a bit of earlier day King Crimson to be heard. ...Guapo have come up with a grave album that haunts and can easily compete with many of their influences. Remarkably enough the album is more accessible than your basic zeuhl or Cuneiform disc, which opens it up for a larger audience. Chapeau!"
–Roberto Lambooy, *Axiom of Choice*, May 2004

"...the UK's finest noise-skree-experimental rock duo, Guapo return as a trio (!) and with a brand new album... *Five Suns* takes the obvious instrumental prowess and prog potential present on the first record, and turns Guapo into the only modern prog combo that could possibly threaten Christian Vander's Magma throne. Hyperbole? Hardly.
The centerpiece of *Five Suns* is the five part, 46 minute title track. So gorgeously grand, so compositionally daunting, so fucking good, words fail us. ...The Ruins is still a definite reference, but all sort of other influences inform Guapo's unique take on prog, the cyclical hypno-rock of Circle (...the rhythmic propulsive psych/drone of classic Krautrock), the blessed out skree of Skullflower and Sunroof! As well as post rock, free folk, metal and

all sorts of other disparate sounds. ...**every second of Five Suns is perfectly placed, and perfectly played**—but without losing its organic, free feel. ...**This record is fucking massive. If there was any sort of justice in the world, Guapo would be spoken of in the hushed tones reserved for bands like Magma or King Crimson.** As far as we're concerned, starting right now, they will be.” – “Allan's Favorites 2004”, *Aquarius Records*

“When a band displays all the ferocity that could rip my muscles off my body sinew by sinew, it gets my pulse going, and that's exactly what Guapo have [done] on this. ...*Five Suns*...as a result of almost incessant repetition...cannot be endured in one sitting, but the pure aggression and brave reaching is tantalizing all over. When taken in portions it is a delicious and fulfilling meal. ... “Mitclan” and “Topan,”...share the same aesthetic but become far more melodic and structured... There is beauty in their simplicity...Guapo has created a sound for this record drenched in solidarity, and when they keep it simple, they just soar.”
–Rob Devlin, *The Brainwashed Brain*, 3/28/2004

“The week's record pick... *5 SUNS* ... *5 Suns*...a single piece of music around 46 minutes long... holds **fantastic power as a fully realized, structurally and thematically solid piece.** ...**there are great changes in dynamics, from spare neo minimalism to full tilt scree.** ...The bass sounds monumental. Very deep and low, detuned, riding up and down the neck playing everything but the obvious. ...
...the new Guapo sound trusts the listener to invest more patience and allow this huge work to unravel and expand. ... **Prog nuts will love it, grown up alternative fans with taste for Tortoise and Godspeed will fall hard.**”
–Andrew Zincke, *Smoking Beagle*

“Not since the Red era of King Crimson has a trio of musicians made such intense music. *Five Suns*, the 46-minute title track, is a sonic tour-de-force. ...Throughout the whole piece **careful use of hypnotic repetition fused with periods of driving rock maintains the interest.**... Infused with ‘micro-riffs’ taken up and rapidly abandoned by various instruments...listen intently to what is unfolding...

I found the album to be most enjoyable...a breath of fresh air as progressive albums go. **Something that would definitely appeal to fans of the more manic Crimson or even Magma without the distraction of the vocals! Conclusion: 8 out of 10.**”
–Mark Hughes, *Dutch Progressive Rock Pages*

“When a band breaks out the gong and uses it...numerous times throughout the first four minutes of a 46-minute proggy “suite”, you know it ain't kidding around. ...Guapo frightened me at first: its ominous sludge riffs, dank atmospherics, and Halloween synth tones... the music gradually made its shift from devilish to more of a hard rock drone attempt to recreate *Bitches Brew*...

...There's always this feeling of impending doom...
To place them next to contemporary company, Guapo seems...somewhere between the plate tectonics of Tortoise and the space prog of the Mars Volta.”
–Zeth Lundy, *PopMatters*, July 30, 2004

“...brutally intense rock... This is not for the faint hearted, nor for those who seek out pretty symphonic music – there's nothing pretty here, unless getting buried by a ceaseless avalanche of ferocious bass, crashing cymbals and drums, and searing guitars is something you consider pretty. The framework is provided by electric piano, holding this massive structure together. ...many parts of the title track remind me of Magma, like the more repetitive parts of *Kohntarkosz* mixed with the brutal force of “De Futura,” but the blistering angular guitar workouts might remind the listener of Present or early Univers Zero. ...Cathartic.”
–Peter Thelen, Roundtable Review, *Exposé*, April 2004

“Guapo plays with passion and intensity and there's an ominous and dark quality to their compositions. ... It's atypical for a band to use fast-driving drums and bass and then add mellow guitar and keyboard parts on top, but Guapo makes it work. ...Zeuhl fans will surely dig this.”
–Mike Grimes, Roundtable Review, *Exposé*, April 2004

“The most obvious influence here is Magma, in terms of the repeating bass-led grooves building intensity over long periods of time. ...Guapo is somewhat noisier, though, and largely **forsakes the jazz and soul influences of Magma in favor of a more martial, nihilist form of rock.** They also are more willing to employ keyboards in a prominent role...reminiscent of YETI. ...Guapo fits in well with the many modern bands taking the Zeuhl sound but modernizing it, and comparisons to Flying Luttenbachers or Tarantula Hawk would not be totally off the mark. **One of the best current Zeuhl releases**...followers of this sound and label will find *Five Suns* a no-brainer acquisition.”
–Sean McFee, *Exposé*, April 2004

“Guapo take their prog obsession and turn it into a full fledged prog rock freakout experience on the frequently gorgeous and overwhelming *Five Suns*. ...

The album's raison d'être is the title track, a sweeping 46-minute epic... You're immediately encapsulated in a swirling bed of persuasive, lolling drums, gentle piano keys and shimmering gongs. It builds, growing subtly louder...
...Track one sets the tone of the album; ...**Guapo takes these same (multi) dynamics and stretch them to sometimes unfathomable lengths.** A propulsive rhythm will go on and on... Little distractions pop up... And then once again, after you've settled into a groove built so meticulously, it's split open with some animalistic drumming, orchestral organ or guitar histrionics. ...
Five Suns is a journey... Full of twists, turns, trapdoor exits, detours, blocked paths and indeterminate stretches of road where the only end in sight is the vanishing point on the horizon. ... (8/10).”
–Joshua, *Maelstrom Magazine*, May 2004

“Apparently someone somewhere once said that Guapo resembles *Larks Tongues in Aspic's King Crimson*, which is pretty much like comparing Weezer to Slayer, golf to rugby, or picturesque stream to incoming asteroid storms. ...Guapo is not a King Crimson, Guapo doesn't want to be a King Crimson. Guapo doesn't need to be a King Crimson. And with the incessant onslaught of Dave Smith's drums and the maddening drive provided by cohorts Daniel O'Sullivan and Matt Thompson, it's clear why: **these guys don't intend to share the world with anyone soon.**

And they won't have to, unless the boys in Magma (well, they actually aren't boys anymore) decide to duke it out with them in a death duel... **the intensity they conjure is simply bewildering.** ...the core of the piece is so obliterating, so perversely sinister, and so unforgiving... Noisy drones here, pseudo-jazzy licks of concentrated darkness there, unstoppable walls of crushing marches further along the path, and a constant sense of alluring trance are all weapons of choice in Guapo's arsenal. ...**Guapo cannot be stopped.**
...**a world of precisely placed dynamics, intelligent structuring, and sheer power.**” –Marcelo Silveyra, *Progressive World.net*, Sept. 20, 2004

“This...might just be the most ominous, intense CD you hear all year. Like a head-on collision between King Crimson, Magma, Univers Zero, and perhaps NeBeLNeST, Guapo’s *Five Suns* is a gripping and haunting platter of progressive rock that at times will send chills up and down your spine. ...This is creepy yet compelling stuff, squarely in the prog rock camp, yet there is an abundance of jazz sounds as well as post-punk aggressiveness, especially...molten guitar solos... This is a superb release from the always intriguing roster of Cuneiform artists. ...Score: 4 ½ stars”

–Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, February 18, 2004

“...it’s an extremely good album; all instrumental, lots of bass, lots of drums, bits of guitar, keys and sax. ...
...**The piece’s Main Riff is superb; a grinding, Mellotron-driven, bass-heavy zeuhl-fest to rival the masters themselves.** The ‘Tron (all strings) drips in and out of the piece, along with occasional bursts of Hammond, MiniMoog and Taurus pedals, although the Rhodes is the album’s chief keyboard.... **Superb. [Rating: 4 ½ TTT]”**

–Andy Thompson, *The Ultimate Mellotron Recordings List*

“This is muscular music that even the most anti-Progger could not fail to be seduced by, with its ferocity and real live wire activity. The title track...almost engulfs your every cell... ‘Part Two’ is a really cinematic track... ‘Ben Hur’ directed by David Lynch!
...Guapo...take these influences in...with their own hyperactive and creative flair, presenting something with an altogether different angle from what they’ve ingested...
I bet they bloody slept well after finishing the recording of that first track. ...
...if you like the broad expanse that is sometimes called ‘modern Japanese prog,’ the twist on genres of the likes of “Kohntarkosz”-era Magma or...the early and mid-70s Crimson material and liked the dark, brooding and crashing instrumental segments, while not caring for the soft ballads, then you’ll CERTAINLY like to add this CD to your collection.”

–Tim Jones, *Head Heritage / Unsung*, January 3, 2004

“Somewhere between Miles Davis’s *Bitches Brew* and Metallica instrumentals like “Orion” lies a dimly lit territory in which musical experimentation stretches the climax to unheard-of extremes. This is the netherworld inhabited by Guapo... Combining organ, drums and guitar, Guapo creates intricate structures that combine the meticulous planning of prog-rock with the spontaneity of jazz and the wild abandon of tribal drumming. ...that sense of tension creates an appropriate analogy for the band’s sound.
Five Suns is dominated by its title track... This momentous introduction creates expectations akin to...“Jahya” on Skinny Puppy’s *The Process* -- but where Puppy’s overture creates release...Guapo never lets go. ...From there, the dense sound ebbs into a more subtle section that utilizes space with the same skill exemplified by Miles Davis. ...
...this is indeed an addictive album...the constant sense of expectation and climax...is undeniable thrilling. Sting may boast of hour-long climaxes in the bedroom, *Five Suns* is proof that Guapo has achieved them on record, and done so using textures, tones and sensations that will never appear in Mr. Sumner’s repertoire.”

–Jason Jackowiak, *Splendid*, 4/15/2004

“...Guapo: with *Five Suns*... have fashioned an entire album in homage to a single Magma song. Playing lengthy, minimal experimental prog featuring buzzsaw bass, insistently busy drums and that old Rhodes, their music is often at the mercy of the infamous “De Futura”, a track that Chicago’s Flying Luttenbachers also felt the need to sacrifice virgins to...
...**Guapo also share an affinity for aggressive, near-chaotic expansion with bands like Lightning Bolt and Hella.** In all cases, **the bass/guitar and drums provide a rock-solid base of rhythm under which explosive noise and endlessly repetitive thematic development ends up as oppressive rock fury... Where Guapo differ is in their preference for large-scale symphonic forms and love of sinister, dreadful moments of calm** between outbursts. They offer an inventive...update on the Magma template.
...**If you ever want a bit more bite in your instrumental post-rock, Guapo have you covered.** Hamatai!”

–Dominique Leone, *Pitchfork*, Jan. 21, 2004

“...*Five Suns* is an album that is highly occupied by a Fender Rhodes and many layers of reverberating drones. ...**It has an amazing sadistic quality that never ceases to deliver...**
The three members of this British ensemble have mastered the art of constructing very complex art rock. ...there is something swelling underneath every one of these songs. ...the best moments here are when things are slowed down and allowed room to focus on the subtle arrangements rather than...walls of sound.”

–amneziak, *Tiny Mix Tapes*

“*Five Suns* add the hardcore/noise elements of The Flying Luttenbachers and the thick, ominous keyboards of NeBeLNeST to a fundamentally Magma-esque foundation. **This is dark, heavy, loud stuff: more often than not the band is coming at you full force, with thunderous, repetitive bass and lots of tellingly familiar Rhodes.** Take Magma circa “De Futura”, crank up the distortion and the volume, take out the funk... I might criticize *Five Suns* for wearing its influences on its sleeve...but I enjoyed it so much that the point is pretty moot.”

–Brandon, *Ground and Sky*

“...the 46 minute title track...begins innocently enough with a curious otherworldly keyboard theme to which **guitar churn and militaristic drums incrementally build to almost chaotic levels.** This is the mere opener in a **series of precipice-hugging instrumentals that alternate with passages of lyrical beauty.** The only other British band I can think of operating in this field would be Mountain Men Anonymous, whose *Krkonose*...shares...relentlessness, but with a less “eyes on stalks” intensity. ...**An unreserved thumbs-up here, it’ll be fascinating to see how their muscular prog moves will develop in the future.**”

–Steve Pescott, *Adverse Effect*, Winter 2004/2005

“...upon first listen, musical hints of Neurosis and ELP flood my mind. **There seems to be no limit as to what this group of only a drummer, guitarist and organist can do. The epic proportions of their song writing, the overall power and depth of the production, “Five Suns” is an excellent album** on all fronts. Instrumental rock with direction, no noodling...Fans of Pelican and King Crimson’s “Red” album can also take note.”

–Jason Verhagen, *Fever Pitch*, #10

“Guapo still have at their core a power rock focus of bass and drums with metal guitar, but the music is much more a hybrid of old heavy instrumental Anekdoten cum King Crimson, with liberal doses of Zeuhl/RIO in the vein of Present, Univers Zero or Happy Family. **In fact Guapo do have the feel of a Japa-Zeuhl combo, though they’ve a lot more sense of composition and dynamics than someone like Koenji or Ruins.**”

“...I always enjoy getting albums from...the Cuneiform label. Usually you never really know what to expect and they often have more than one ace up their sleeve. This time I was treated by an album by...Guapo entitled “Five Suns.” ...this is no classic symphonic rock, the focus of Guapo is based on repetition, drones and eruptions much like we can expect from Magma. However...some of Anekdoten’s more loose and manic sides are also well reflected as [is] a fair dose of “Lark’s tongue”–era King Crimson. ...aficionados...are in for a treat. As **with Guapo Cuneiform have scored another winner.** [Rating: 4 stars]”
–Maurice Dam, *Background Magazine*, June 2004

“...this is already beyond professionalism. **It’s impressive all the technical ability of these guys and it’s even more impressive what just three musicians can create.** ...The adventure is long, thrilling, sometimes almost suffocating, but Guapo knows how to drive the listener...slowing down here and there to let him better absorb...delicate landscapes... An excellent work...giving this band the exposure they deserve and exciting the curiosity for their previous releases. [Rating 9.0 /10]”
–Spulit, *Prog-PT*