Before long, listeners will find them—certainly not the best, cracking and barking voices laid down by the other four members of Socratic. While his voice is regular instrumental formula. He will use the piano as a supplement to the other instruments, making the piano sound significantly louder in the mix than usual, allowing for each song. This is accomplished by previous band, Socratic pianist Vincent Rider’s favorite sons release dazzling debut By Bill Greenwood

Before signing to well-known indie label Drive-Thru Records, Socratic bassist Adam Swider was a full-fledged Rider student. Now, he’s making some of the best piano-driven punk rock since Something Corporate’s album Leaving Through the Window. Now, after three long years of waiting, his band’s debut full-length album, Lunch for the Sky, has finally been released, and it was definitely worth the wait.

Despite the endless comparisons to labelmates and fellow piano-rockers Something Corporate, Socratic’s music is anything but derivative. Unlike the previous band, Socratic pianist Vincent D’Amico provides the primary melody for each song. This is accomplished by making the piano sound significantly louder in the mix than usual, allowing it to stand out more from the traditional guitar, bass and drum tracks that accompany it. This is a huge departure from many other similar bands, who simply use the piano as a supplement to the regular instrumental formula.

Vocalist Duane Okan does an excellent job of emoting over the first-rate tunes laid down by the other four members of the band. His voice is certainly not the best, cracking and going off-key in several places, it fits in perfectly with the structure of the songs. Before long, listeners will find themselves unconsciously singing along to the insanely catchy verses and choruses contained in almost every track.

One song without so much as a vocal hook, however, is the opening track, "Theme From Your Mother’s Garden." An instrumental number highlighting D’Amico’s incredible piano-playing skills, the track provides an excellent jumping-off point for the rest of the record.

The instrumental opening is followed immediately by "Alexandra as Our Lens," a mid-tempo song featuring some of the most interesting lyric choices. In today’s musical climate, dominated by arcane, hard-to-decipher concept albums, it is rare to find a song that manages to tell an easily understandable, yet still satisfying, story—in this case, that of a female school bus driver who “adopted” a sickly child when she was young. And neglecting her health so long.” She’ll never drive children of her own.”

While nearly every song on the record is a winner, the two main standouts are "I Am the Doctor" and "The Dense Indents." The former glides along on a bouncy piano/guitar combo attack augmented by an outstanding bass line courtesy of Swider while the latter brings D’Amico’s incredible piano-playing skills to the forefront while the rest of the band rocks out. Listened to independently of the album, these tracks alone are a good representative for Socratic as a band: melodic and thoughtful piano-rock throughout with a powerful edge, courtesy of today’s punk scene. Lunch for the Sky is far from perfect, however. Clocking at just under an hour, the disc is entirely too long for its genre. As a result, listeners may develop a tendency to latch on to certain songs, playing them over and over again, while completely ignoring others. In addition, the album may sound disjointed and oddly arranged to some first-time listeners. However, as time goes on and the band’s sound becomes more familiar, everything starts to fit together, rewarding those patient enough to let the record grow on them.

Despite these shortcomings, Socratic has released a real winner in Lunch for the Sky. Rider University should be proud of Swider’s accomplishments, and losing himself in the continuous stream of moments of truth, Grocz illustrated the purest of intentions. It is a rare pleasure to witness a band of individuals play together because each man is constitutionally compelled to play. Music can touch a person in a way that nothing else can. Get touched by the refreshing authenticity of Ashes and Nutritious. Check out art at ashesnutritious.com, or on purevolume.com and Myspace.com.

Rider’s favorite sons release dazzling debut

By Casey Sky

At a time when fascism is steadily creeping into federal policies and consumerism is homogenizing everything from jeans to dreams, radiant choirs of “hallelujah” seem appropriate when things work out. Steady and calm. Certainly schizophrenic spasms of praising the rock ’n’ roll gods are suitable for celebrating a deserving band’s victory.

Without further ado, a truly refreshing central Jersey band must be introduced. Last week, the band Ashes are Nutritious was recognized for its raw musical magic when it won JerseyShows.com’s Summer Showdown Finals, a summer-long battle of the bands held annually at The Rail. With this triumph in its back pocket, Ashes will record a full-length album—finally, because the three-song demo is a killer— and play at Sayreville’s Starland Ballroom on Oct. 9. By its side will be the bands What about Frank?, The Penn royalties, PR.Y.D.E. and many others to perform in this fifth anniversary show.

It is worth driving a substantial distance and paying an unjust cost to watch Ashes because it is a quasi-life-changing experience.

With his singing, reminiscent of Stone Temple Pilots’ Scott Weiland, Scott Scalise plucked at heart strings with bass guitar, not only in other bass players, but also in all those who could not even distinguish bass from guitar.

Likewise, drummer Craig Lawlor captivated the listeners with his intensely personal beats, which sometimes gradually, but always genuinely, transformed the surrounding atmosphere to his state of being. With the perfect combination of single and double bass, Lawlor kept every heel from the pavement.

Paul Grocz collected these ingredients and added melodically hypnotizing guitar solos to balance the band’s four corners of expression, shrewdly creating a sound unmatched by today’s mainstream music. Swaying rhythmically, forgetting about being in the spotlight, and consumerism is homogenizing steadily creeping into federal policies.

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