

Human Rhythm's solid debut offers hope to disaffected music fans

Human Rhythm, *Moment In The Sun* (Firehead Records, 2001).

By Eddie Konczal, New Brunswick Underground

Human Rhythm's debut effort, *Moment In The Sun*, employs soaring vocal harmonies, virtuoso guitar work and sleek production values in evoking a pre-grunge pop-rock sensibility. This consistent 11-song set should find an audience with those alienated by the fragmentation of musical genres over the past ten years.

Human Rhythm is essentially a duo, led by lead singer and guitarist James Douglas and the multitalented Mike Zaffarese, a guitarist by trade who also produces and plays other instruments. Human Rhythm's sound bears a superficial similarity to early 1990's hard rock supergroups such as Mr. Big, Damn Yankees, and Extreme. However, their influences extend far and wide, echoing 1970s progressive artists such as Genesis and U.K., arena rock bands like Journey and Van Halen, and genre-busting fusion guitarists Allan Holdsworth, Pat Metheny and Jeff Beck. Human Rhythm incorporates its influences into a seamless, consistent wall of sound that stands alone as a musical statement.

Douglas unveils a vocal style greatly improved from his Herbal Junkie days, instantly evident on the catchy opening track "Angel in my Eyes." "Pull Me Through" deftly alternates a funky verse with a power-chord driven pre-chorus, eventually segueing to a lushly harmonized chorus. "Moment in the Sun" features an intro reminiscent of Sting's "Fortress Around Your Heart," and a spine-tingling extended outro, which cycles through major and minor chord progressions evocative of late 1970's Yes and Genesis.

Far from being merely a "musician's band," Human Rhythm offers simple yet eloquent lyrics written by Douglas. The songs are mostly based on personal experiences, but exhibit an uncanny prescience when they venture into social commentary and current affairs. Written in the summer of 2001, "Just Another Day" eerily presages both the World Trade Center attack ("The laws protect the guilty as they plant their demon seed") and the Enron fiasco ("The Corporate axe is trimming, see the markets rise/Crushed in debt, a thousand mothers cry.") "A Better Life" explores domestic abuse while "What's Inside" is a thoughtful look at drug abuse.

Moment In The Sun is a solid debut that improves with repeated listenings. Human Rhythm brings life to endangered music genres, and establishes a signature sound that augurs well for future efforts.