Helms Alee *Stillicide*

Tribal chants, metallic riffing, and progressive compositions combine to great effect on Helms Alee’s fourth album.

Over the course of four full-length releases, Seattle’s Helms Alee has developed into a virtuosic power trio capable of blurring genre lines. The band’s most recent album is packed with towering chord progressions and absurdly accomplished drumming from Hozoji Margullis, who deserves extra kudos for also handling lead vocals on many tracks.

Margullis’s work behind the kit strikes a balance between speed and power, using caffeinated double-kick action to escalate tension rather than relying on it as a default setting—a creative approach that keeps
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listeners from becoming desensitized to louder sections.

While the heavy drumming, epic production, and screamed vocals occasionally scan as metallic, there’s enough variation in the speed and tonality of the songs to disorient anybody attempting to pigeonhole this band. Propulsive, chugging riffs stop on a dime and transform into cavernously large grooves layered with soaring vocals. Despite odd time signatures and entire songs that refuse to resolve into predictable backbeats, Helms Alee has a knack for writing complicated instrumental parts as catchy as any teen-pop hook; see “Andromenus” and “Untoxicated.” (Sargent House)

Keaton Lamle