

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Isis Review - In the Absence of Truth

Craig St. Jean
Contributor

Writing album reviews isn't particularly hard. Writing good album reviews can be challenging, though. A single spin of a new cd often isn't nearly enough to pick up on all its nuance, but the more listens you give it, and the more the music sinks in, the harder it is to be objective.

Knowing what I know about the Los Angeles band Isis, this is the very challenge I'll face with their newest effort *In the Absence of Truth*, which saw light on Oct. 31 via Ipecac Records (Nov. 21 in Canada). Immediacy is not their intention. Their albums are dense, sprawling sonic tapestries that are impossible to absorb without paying close attention. Since their 2000 release *Celestial*, Isis have steadily moved closer and closer to the forefront of the heavy music stage, and are arguably now at the level where they've got nothing left to prove, only new artistic directions to explore. *In the Absence of Truth* indicates that that's exactly what they're doing.

Despite the acclaim, Isis have drawn many (maybe too many) comparisons to the Bay Area sludge/post-hardcore legends Neurosis over the years. The sonic similarities are

there, but the comparison has often been used in detraction, suggesting that they've simply been riding the tidal wave that Neurosis created. They're both damn heavy, and they employ a similar style of heaviness, so the comparison is apt in that regard, but there's more to it than that. Neurosis's brand of bludgeoning is like the soundtrack to a natural disaster; the Isis sound has a healthy dose of mother nature too, but it's much more atmospheric and ethereal. If Neurosis is earth and fire, Isis is air and water. The tribal-style drumming that underscores much of *In the Absence of Truth* is the lone Neurotic vestige to be found this time around. Here, Isis have delivered the logical extension of 2004's much touted *Panopticon* – it took the clean, pretty bits of 2002's *Oceanic* and expanded upon them, painting a picture of a decidedly calmer ocean. Now, Isis have almost made the leap to full-on post-rock, pushing the moody and pretty parts that much further.

Unlike *Panopticon*, it's hard to pick standout tracks here, because the album flows as such a cohesive whole. As a result, there's more emphasis

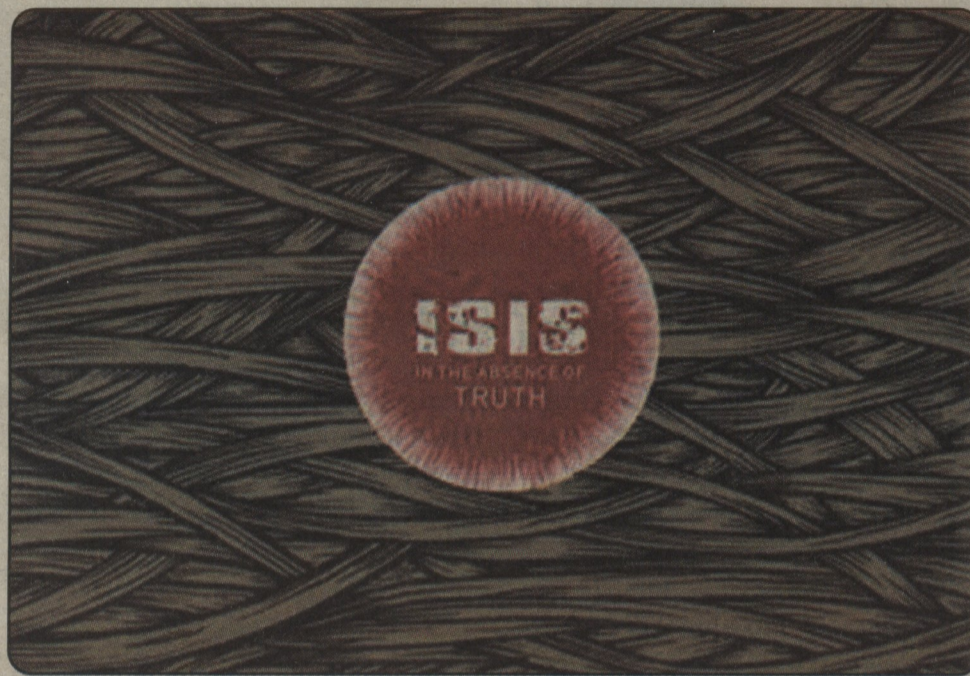


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In The Absence of Truth

placed on the overriding mood, and less emphasis on the juxtaposition between the lulls and crescendos that made *Panopticon* so spectacular.

Though it lacks some of those sublime moments, *In the Absence of Truth* is simply a different animal. There are layers upon layers of things to discover (as is true of all Isis material over the last 5 years), but the

ever-present murky, watery aesthetic and the primarily downbeat mood make the album a pleasing listen as simply background music. For those who are unfamiliar and are considering making the plunge into Isis's ocean, give a listen to the last track "Garden of Light." It plays like a highlight reel of their last two albums, so it's a great introduction to the band. Check it out....and then go buy all their albums.

The School for Scandal - It's time to get cultured

Marcel Pellerin
Reporter

The School for Scandal, presented by ACT (a community theatre) and UPEI Theatre Studies opened Thursday November 16 at the Guild in downtown Charlottetown.

The school for Scandal was a play written in the eighteenth century by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. For it to still be funny today takes a lot from its actors. A few stood out but overall everyone seemed to put on an excellent show. Even if I saw someone in the audience fall asleep. The play was acted out in a "Theatre in the Round" style which looked pretty hard to me. "Theatre in the round makes the audience feel like they are a part of

the show - in this show the goal was to make the audience feel like they are part of the gossip and were sitting in Lady Sneerwell's dressing room or in the Surface's house etc..." said Colin Macdonald who played Sir Benjamin Backbite.

"It was hard during rehearsals to get used to not trying to adjust your movements to face the audience in the front, because with this style the audience is everywhere," Ashley Clark said, who played Lady Teazle, a student of court gossip and the young wife to Sir Peter Teazle.

The play was about gossip, and there was a lesson in there with it being

a comedy of manners. The lesson learned was a warning about the dangers of scandal making.

There was a lot going on in the play and the cast did a great job in creating an environment for the imagination with very little props, and the detailed costumes added much to it. The characters were entertaining and progressive; believable in their movements and were easy to understand, but some won't like the older style English.

"Terry (our director) has a very clear idea of the period, and we had a few 'crash courses' in 18th Century etiquette and movement, which was a lot of fun. The older style is difficult

at first. But after reading and rehearsing the play, you really get to understand the lines. I think part of the actor's job is understanding what he or she is saying, because if the actor knows what is being said and understands the lines, it is automatically reflected in the performance, and makes it easier for the audience to understand as well," Clark said.

Overall it was a successful opening show. If people can wrap their heads around the old English they would find it witty and sharp. The School for Scandal plays on the 19th and 23-26 with a matinee on the 19th at the Guild.