



Aftertaste
Helmet
Interscope Records

Vicious, heavy, loud, melodic, talented, Helmet. *Aftertaste*, the band's fifth release, kicks a little too much ass to describe simply. Sure there are the cliched phrases ("It rocks," "It's really cool," "It's well done," etc.) that bombard us everyday whenever reading

reviews, but this album deserves more respect.

First off, Helmet is now down to a trio. Rob Echeverria, former rhythm guitarist, left Helmet after their last release for another band, leaving Paige Hamilton (lead guitar), Henry Bogdan (bass) and John Stanier (drums) to hold the fort. Chris Traynor has signed on for live performance purposes but has yet to be included as an integral part of the band. Now, on to the actual album and music.

Aftertaste exceeds even my expectations on quality music and lyrics. This is no small feat considering my disappointment in the last release, *Betty*. Not that *Betty* was a terrible album, but many of it's songs strayed from the normal Helmet sound we've all grown to love and adore. The lyrics were less focused and at times incomprehensible. Not this time.

Helmet nailed this one beautifully.

Hamilton truly displays his exceptional songwriting talent this time around. Wry metaphors, dark humour, and double meanings riddle the new release: "In the people that you hate/Draw them close and pencil thin/Then they're easy to erase" from "Birth Defect" and "Now I've got time to kill at last" from "Driving Nowhere" are two examples. Hamilton is back to ranting against the pressures of society, the apathy of the general populace, and the loss of individualism, themes quite prevalent in their earlier releases *Strap It On* and *Meantime*.

Stanier exhibits his phenomenal talent as a drummer on *Aftertaste*, something that was unfortunately a little overlooked on *Betty*. Using a higher pitched snare drum, Stanier gives Helmet less of a booming, throbbing feeling that similar bands like Tool capitalize on to drive their anger home. Instead, Stanier manipulates the music into intricate beats and rhythms as opposed to straight, repetitive pounding.

For those unfamiliar with Helmet's sound, they take a former jazz drummer, flat, choppy power chords, a mean-sounding bass, and put it together with Hamilton's voice. Yes folks, Paige Hamilton actually sings, not just screams near key like way too many popular

bands out there...although he is quite an accomplished screamer, if need be.

Overall impression of the album? Amazing — I've been listening to it about 22 hours a day. I find myself wishing there were

more songs, a longer album, a Helmet show near my house — anything to keep me from remembering that I'll have to wait at least another year for an album of it's calibre to be released.

JEREMIAH HIERS

Automotive Art



The Honda Accord SE

BY RAHUL KRISHNAN

Hondas have a reputation of being practical, relatively sporty and nimble on their wheels. This philosophy of building cars has been used at Honda to create a family oriented sedan in the \$20,000 market, the Accord.

As a result of Honda's automotive philosophy, this unsuspecting car has been the "benchmark" for other sedans in its class over the past four years.

The new look introduced in 1996 has been carried over to the 97 models and it portrays a more aggressively designed front with a humble rear view. There is nothing overtly flashy about the car's design and the same applies to the interior. Everything inside has a nice tight fit about it with no slack anywhere. The console panel, neatly crafted with wood print in the Special Edition (SE) Accord, is straight to the point and tidy.

The seats in this car are pleasantly comfortable. With excellent lateral support and the right extension for your legs, the seats are a pleasure to sit in and are therapeutic for strained backs. The standard Accord offers amenities such as adjustable seat belt height, adjustable steering column, cruise control, AM/FM stereo cassette deck, tinted glass, remote side-view mirrors and dual airbags. The airbags happen to be the slowest deployed in the car industry, which helps prevent injuring children sitting in the passenger seat. The SE Accord had extra options which made the cabin environment — impressively optimized for interior space — more comfortable. But despite the CD player, the sun

roof, remote keyless entry, leather-wrapped steering wheel and a plump list of even more extras, the SE Accord is not a flashy car.

The technical highlights of this car are quite remarkable. The Accord is lighter, faster and more fuel efficient than the other competing sedans (which happen to have V6 engines and thus lower mileage). The car weighs in roughly 450 pounds lighter than the Ford Taurus, a difference which is noticeable when the car takes corners.

In addition, the Accord has an edge during the optimum suspension test — the local potholes. The Accord has a four wheel independent multi-link wishbone suspension. What that means to the average car buyer is that the Accord uses one of the better suspensions available. This system offers a good feel of the road with excellent handling capabilities.

In the SE model, there is a four speed automatic transmission which features a logic system that accounts for the car being on a gradient. This keeps the transmission from unnecessarily shifting gears when travelling up a hill. From my experience with the car, there is no doubt that it does a good job. The transmission has a 2.2L in-line engine to work with. Noisy as it may be, the engine is responsive and powerful due to the lean curb weight of the car. Honda's intricate technology allows the engine to breathe through 16 valves.

From the outside, the Accord does not hint towards its excellent driving abilities and very comfortable and spacious interior. But behind the wheel, all the qualities come to life.

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