

No Victory for the Vikings

BY THOMAS PRESNALL

A T 3-5, THINGS ARE not looking good for the Minnesota Vikings. Twice, they have lost in overtime, the first coming during the very first regular-season game against the Cincinnati Bengals, and the latest coming against the Baltimore Ravens. They have also lost an additional pair of games by less than a touchdown. Against the high-powered Arizona Cardinals and Kyler Murray, that's fair. But since the second loss came against Dallas Cowboys and backup QB Cooper Rush, it makes things a lot more concerning. It's been said over and over again: this team is too talented to have this record. But, on the other hand, to make the playoffs, the Vikings have to prove that they can beat a playoff team, something they have yet to do.

It would be great if the Vikings were now facing a stretch of relatively weak teams where they could work out their kinks and prepare to make a push for the playoffs, but they're not...yet. Their next two games are against the L.A. Chargers and the Green Bay Packers. Both are teams with elite quarterbacks, offenses capable of dropping thirty points on any

given Sunday, and defenses that should not be taken lightly. They're teams with legitimate playoff expectations. However, after them, the Vikings may catch a bit of a breather that they desperately need.

San Francisco, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. That's who the Vikings need to play their best ball against. San Francisco is having a lot of bad luck and it should be relatively easy for Kirk Cousins and Co. Detroit has the threat of an 0-17 season looming over their heads, and while they fight and claw in every ball game, Minnesota is better on both sides of the ball and should win. Pittsburgh and Chicago may prove to be the biggest challenges of the lot. Both have defenses led by scary talent, but they also have offenses that can be taken advantage of. The Bears have a rookie QB in Justin Fields and the Steelers have Ben Roethlisberger who is a shell of himself.

The question remains the same: What do the Vikings need to do to win? There are a few answers because, unfortunately, there is more than one problem plaguing this team. The first is that they have to finish games. It's that simple. They have had 6 games that

have been decided by less than a touchdown. Of those games, they are 2-4. The task of closing out games falls on both the offense and the defense.

The second is that they have no identity. They have Dalvin Cook, so should they run the ball more? They also have Adam Theilen and Justin Jefferson on the outside. Shouldn't they be throwing the ball all over the field? The offensive coaching staff needs to get this figured out because having a talented roster doesn't mean a thing if it isn't being used correctly. With that said, they also aren't a defense-led team as their defense has been too inconsistent to be leaned on by the offense, especially now that Danielle Hunter has been placed on the injured reserve.

Whatever the Vikings have to do to right the ship, they have to do it soon. Their season is at the halfway point, and if they fail to reach the playoffs, then anyone on the hot seat, and there are many, will find themselves kicked out the door.

Music Review: Muun Bato - Paraphonic Vapors

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

ADORE PSYCHEDELIC ROCK. I've listened to it since I was in middle school, starting when my uncle introduced me to The Beatles, particularly their albums *Revolver*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *Magical Mystery Tour*. These are some of the earliest examples of the genre, which continues to thrive today. Though it fell off in the 80's, it started to make a comeback in the 2010's with bands such as Tame Impala and the like. Muun Bato, a local psych rock band from Minneapolis which formed in 2018, released their new record *Paraphonic Vapors* on October 1st, 2021. It became an instant favorite of mine after my first listen, and I would be so bold as to say this will stand as one of the greatest psych rock albums released this decade - maybe even this century (yes I feel that strongly about it).

It's easy to see where this band draws its influences. I hear many sounds reminiscent of the golden age of psych rock: mid-70's Pink Floyd and Hawkwind, even some Moody Blues. There is also clear influence from modern day artists: Tame Impala and Mac DeMarco in particular come to mind. The band also lists the shoegaze and dream-pop genres as being a part of their vibrant sound. A few of the tracks incorporate Eastern sounds, using interesting alternate scales as well as the inclusion of a sitar.

The brief instrumental "Overture" is the perfect opening track for *Paraphonic Vapors*. It immediately gives you a feel for what the album has in store for you. The lush instrumentation and evocative chord progression do a perfect job of introducing the album before a smooth transition to "Golden Lyre," which contrasts the previous track's hypnotic feel with a fast rocking beat. "Smoke Vision" is probably my favorite track here. It exemplifies everything I love about this album; interesting instrumental arrangements, chord progressions and melodies that demand actively listening, and lyricism dripping with mysticity, surrealism, and magnitude. Overall, this just screams Pink Floyd. Both this track and "Sound Cisdumb" have a similar laidback feel, though the latter is a bit more groovy. Funky wah-pedal guitar and bass work set it apart from "Smoke Vision." One thing I love about this album is the prominent use of Farfisa organ and

mellotron - both severely underused instruments heralding from the primetime of the 60's - along with the occasional synthesizer. It helps set this band apart from others. They're sounds which are rarely found in music today but are used extensively here and I'm all for it. "Thrall," the drifty last song of side one, opens and closes with beautiful sustained keyboard chords.

Side two opens with "Corn Woman," the only single pulled from this album. It immediately reminded me of the immense, heavy hitting sounds of Hawkwind's 1975 album *Warrior on the Edge of Time*, my favorite album by them. "Society of Spectacle," on the other hand, sounds very close to the lo-fi indie style of Mac DeMarco, which I mainly hear in the vibrato guitar and vocals. This track was composed in a nice, relaxed 3/4 time, which makes it stand out against the rest of the tracks which are in 4/4 time. As we get nearer to the end of the album, "Agamemnon" lulls us in a stoney lullaby, transporting you to a world within your mind where truth and reality are negligible. Once you're there, the song transforms into a collage of sustained guitar and keyboard lines framed by a grooving rhythm section, with distorted, echoing voices dispersed throughout the thick texture. As the album seems to come to a gentle end, "Super Fluorescent" kicks in to give *Paraphonic Vapors* one last hyperenergetic kick of life that you just can't help but headbang to with your stankiest stank face.

I purchased this record off of Muun Bato's Bandcamp page. It's a high quality physical release, and is stunning to look at. The cover art is unique, almost like M. C. Escher meets Storm Thorgerson. Messy but organized, surreal but grounded in reality. The record itself looks like art, too; a deep, rich, transparent blue with bright orange splatters throughout. There was a small quantity of opaque orange and white marbled records, but those have sold out. As of me typing this, there are 13 copies remaining of the transparent blue and orange splatter remaining on their Bandcamp page. I would highly recommend checking this album out and grabbing a copy before it's too late. But even if you miss out, both of their albums are available on all platforms for listening. This is an album you absolutely cannot ignore.