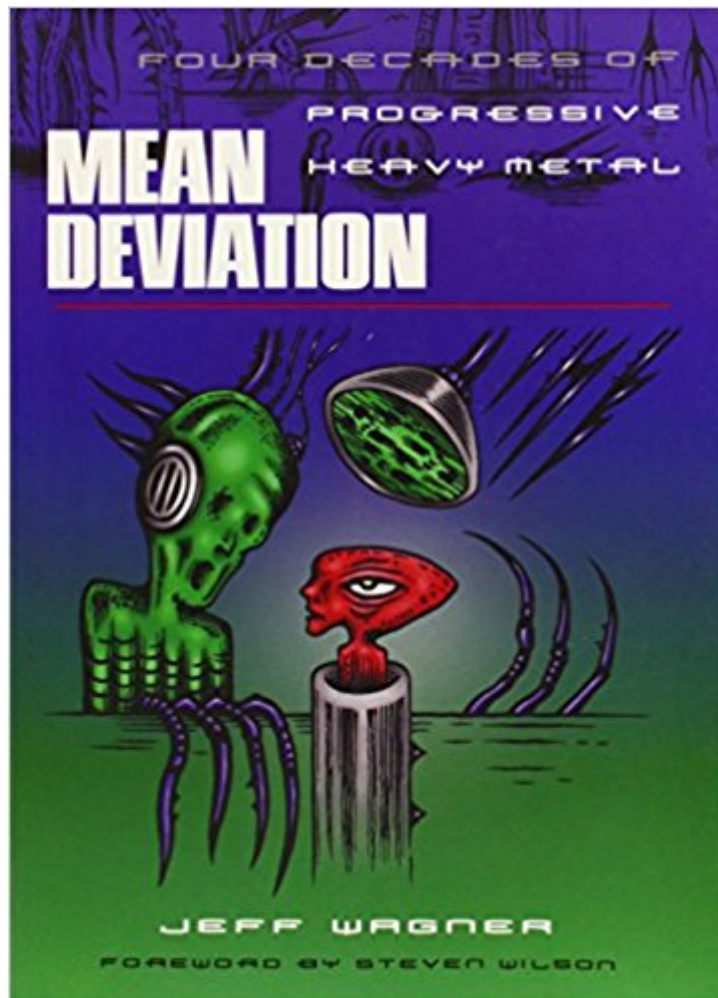




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Mean Deviation: Four Decades Of Progressive Heavy Metal



Synopsis

Revered former Metal Maniacs editor Jeff Wagner analyzes the heady side of metal in this exhaustive narrative history of a relentlessly ambitious musical subculture. Beginning with the hugely influential mid-1970s efforts of Rush and King Crimson, Wagner unfurls a huge tapestry of sounds and styles, including Queensryche, Fates Warning, and Dream Theater; extreme prog pioneers Voivod and Celtic Frost; Norway's post-black metal avant garde acts Ulver and Arcturus; and the 1990s global movement that spawned Ayreon, Pain of Salvation, and others. Fighting a tide of tradition and conservatism, progressive metal has proven to be one of the most viable, malleable forms in all of modern music; here its preeminent scholar tells the tale.

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Customer Reviews

Mean Deviation zeroes in on heavy metal's more cerebral, challenging, and even geeky side. •Ghetto Blaster• Fans of prog metal would be wise to learn more about Mean Deviation's •Guitar World• A focused, well-organized narrative from the combined musical output of over 40 years and scores of bands from across the globe; excess comes with the territory. •Library Journal• Jeff goes deep into this much maligned music form and presents it with fervor •Vice• An extremely fluent read; sits high on the list of canonical metal texts •PopMatters• An expertly researched love letter to the largely misunderstood and often maligned progressive metal scene •AOL Noisecreep, Holiday Gift List• An impressive historical work •Chromatique [9/10

review]#147;What a massive undertaking#133; knowledge, passion, skills, and class#133; this book should be required reading for any metal follower.â •#151;Blistering.com [9.5/10 review]#147;Mean Deviation is an amazing compendium of everything weird in the world of metal#151;a book as grand and unlikely as the music it documents.â •#151;Hellbound.ca#147;The book looks and feels fabulous. Thank you, Jeff Wagner, for this massive information highway for all things progressive metal.â •#151;Paul Masvidal, Cynic/Death#147;The book is awesome. I read it in two days.â •#151;Glenn Harveston, ProgPower USA#147;Looks cool! Iâ™m looking forward to digging in.â •#151;Jim Matheos, Fates Warning#147;This goes beyond being well-informed#133;kudos for great work!â •#151;Vorph, Samael#147;We now have a definitive book on the relationship between metal and progressive music.â •#151;Steven Wilson, Porcupine Tree#147;Another winner from the folks at Bazillion Points!â •#151;Sea of Tranquility [4.5/5 stars]#147;An invaluable compendiumâ •#151;Nuthousepunks.com#147;Mean Deviation is a comprehensive history of the genre that fans will enjoy, and future music scholars will use as an essential reference guide.â •#151;About.com#147;Jeff Wagner nailed it#133;another triumph for Bazillion Pointsâ •#151;Metal Rules.com, 4.5/5 review#147;With great passion and attention to detail#133;a colorful read#133; an impressive achievementâ •#151;Joel McIver, Record Collector#147;Breathtaking#133; pick it up and get lost in another dimensionâ •#151;Terrorizer

If you have a friend who can't stop raving about Dream Theater, hand them a copy of Mean Deviation and force them to read it cover to cover. This book strives to encompass forty years of a musical offshoot of what is considered heavy metal music. It is a meticulously researched, exhaustive tome. You will find out a lot about bands that you never knew existed, and how their influences are still felt today. If you seek out new musical experiences, pick up this book and seek out the music reviewed within. You'll be introduced to a brave new world...

Even though I'm an avid reader, I never review books. I prefer to share my views on music, especially progressive metal bands. However, I'll have to make an exception for this one. First of all, the foreword by Steven Wilson explaining his love of great bands like Opeth and Meshuggah is only a taste of what's to come in this great book. Mean Deviation: Four Decades of Progressive Heavy Metal is an absolutely essential piece of work. Written by former Metal Maniacs editor Jeff Wagner, the book is both very easy to read and informative. There are long chapters dedicated not only to the big names in prog but also to more esoteric groups from all across the globe. None of the

chapters read like boring biographies about when and how these bands were formed, who the original members were, their discography lists, etc. Rather, while touching on the essentials, Wagner analyzes the music: how it was created and how it influenced other bands' work. The index section at the end lists all the page numbers a band is discussed, so one can also use Mean Deviation as a resource in the future. You can read the book from beginning to end within two days if you are interested in prog metal or you can simply open it up and read about a 'scene' or a certain album you want to check out. The bands are not limited to Dream Theater, Queensryche, Fates Warning, Crimson Glory, and their followers. Acts on the more technical side of the spectrum are also analyzed in depth: Watchtower, Psychotic Waltz, Sieges Even, Spiral Architect. Wagner also touches on the thrashy progressive acts detailing the discographies of great bands like Voivod, Anacrusis, Coroner, Realm, Toxik, and Hexenhaus. After reading them, I felt compelled to re-listen to these discs and discover their brilliance once again. That's not all. There are chapters devoted solely to other, more unconventional acts: Celtic Frost, Thought Industry, or the Norwegian acts such as Age of Silence, Ansur, Green Carnation, and Virus. How were these bands formed? Which side of progressive music do they take their roots from? How did they decide to blend it with metal's more extreme forms? It's all in this book. Wagner does not only relay his own views. He has actually conducted interviews with most of these bands. He has read a million articles, interviews, and reviews. I was extremely surprised to see him quote a part of my write-up while discussing how the Evergrey fan base was divided on their more recent output. You will learn so much about bands' internal affairs -- why they decided to write or produce an album a certain way, why they couldn't sign to bigger record labels, how vastly different the progressive scene in Europe was from the one in the USA, and so much more. I have read hundreds of biographies and books on heavy metal (and its various subgenres). This one is easily the most important one because it is the first and only book focusing entirely on progressive metal. Highly recommended.

A well researched and written study of progressive metal. It was great to see a genre of music that I love so much treated with intelligence, passion and thorough care. Many of the bands, eras and genres are extremely well researched and discussed in great depth. And even though I thought I knew quite a bit about prog-metal, there were still some pivotal bands that I knew very little about. The book discusses obvious bands (Fates Warning, Dream Theater) contemporary bands (Opeth, Mastodon) and some obscure gems (Damn the Machine). And stylistically the book talks about bands much closer to prog-rock (Spock's Beard) and those much closer to extreme metal (Cynic). Also there is a great distinction between bands that are truly progressive in terms of pushing

musical boundaries (Pain of Salvation) and bands that are happy just with slight variations on the tried and true Dream Theater format (Pagan's Minds). While I think both types can be enjoyable, the genre sees much more of the latter than the former. Reading about how these visionary and pioneering bands expanded the musical landscape is extremely fascinating. If you have gotten this far into my review it is because you have some knowledge/love for this type of music. Given that interest; this book is a must own.

In my humble opinion this book is what some would call the progressive metal bible. I personally feel that this is what this is. If you like music like Opeth and Dream Theater, they are in there but not a lot, if you like bands like Rush and Queensryche then this book is for you (I happen to like them all). The author indeed knows his stuff and enlightens the reader with the beginnings of prog rock to the most progressive metal today. The history of prog is a lengthy one, but this book is short (to me anyway) but it is amazing. I've read it twice since I got it, of course I do that with books about metal, well the good ones anyway. This one is one of the best. If you don't know anything about progressive metal or progressive rock or think you know everything about it then this book is for you. Just get it already. Also the seller I bought it from had took great care of it and it was and is in mint condition. wanted to buy it back from me but good luck on getting it away from me. Also in combination with Choosing Death, Swedish Death Metal and The Headbanging History of Heavy Metal you will be informed on the best music ever made. So get to it and buy this book already, you will be glad you did.

A good and insightful read, spanning the whole breadth of the "progressive" genre, up until the present day. I've enjoyed Jeff Wagner's writing back from the Metal Maniacs days, and I had a feeling that he would release quality material. I would recommend this to anyone who's even marginally interested in bands of this mindset. Two gripes, however: 1.) While there were quite a few quotes from luminaries of the genre, I would have perhaps like to have seen some more. 2.) If Jeff Wagner had used the word "clutch" one more time, I would have been tempted to make my way up to VA to punch him in the arm. But really, these are just minor and personal things. Go read it!

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