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I'm guessing the Quad Cities-based metal outfit won't approve of my labeling them "soft," but I intend it as a compliment. And I don't mean the quintet is a bunch of poseurs; they're still metal, but they're not made of titanium.

Because of its aesthetic constraints, metal often strips bands of credible emotional content, obscured by the muscle and attitude. And if one strays too far from the formula, it risks losing its bad-ass credibility.

In All Its Glory, on its self-titled debut, strikes a balance between sensitivity and a hard edge.

The opening track, "Comfortable with Pain," doesn't break out the power chords until the chorus. That's not unusual for a power ballad, but it's not how a metal band usually starts a record.

Soft Metal: In All Its Glory, April 11 at Hal's Wagon Wheel and April 25 at RIBCO

Written by Jeff Ignatius
Friday, 10 April 2009 10:34

And the instrumental break on "Illusion of Independence" is another give-away, a hypnotic, nearly delicate, Eastern-tinged blend of guitars, drum, and bass instead of the typical shredding. The band – particularly guitarist Anthony P. Rosata, who arranged the album – pays real attention to nuance and dynamics in a genre defined by its force.

Yet it's not fussy or too busy. On "The Art of Confession," the simple but sturdy intro and chorus melodies are built with big blocks of rhythm-guitar tones. Produced by Tom Tatman at Catamount Studios, the album sounds perhaps too clean, but the instruments are discrete and each given appropriate weight.

The lyrics, almost exclusively by singer Cody Ristau, take the style of journal soul-baring, touching on everything from relationships to pain to disillusionment to hope, and those terms reflect the lack of specificity and art in the writing.

It doesn't turn out to be a problem. The words are often incongruous with the flat-toned metal aggression and the guttural screams that punctuate the record, but they're generally *sung*, and sung with conviction. Ristau's voice is strong and confident enough that he can hold his own against the guitars without strain, and Tatman's mix doesn't overwhelm the vocals.

That type of screaming – neither expressive nor musically compelling – is my least-favorite musical trend of the past two decades, and it remains annoying here. But it's thankfully sparse, and on one of the scream-heavy tracks – "To Amount to Something" – the band has enough balls to offset it with some poppy *wooooooooooooooooo*-ing.

In All Its Glory also has songs that work even in the absence of any gentler elements. "This Path I Walk," despite what sounds like pitch correction in the chorus, is a rock-solid anthem built on rhythm-guitar hooks and climaxing in low-key guitar harmonies.

It's a fine line, however. The closing "Attack of the Cowards" scuffs things up and recalls Motörhead, but it's just cock rock.

The band is much better when it shows *some* vulnerability. This record clearly establishes In All

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Its Glory's metal credentials, but it also offers glimpses of human flesh beneath that armor.

In All Its Glory will perform on Saturday, April 11, with Leftwitch at Hal's Wagon Wheel (1708 State Street in Bettendorf), and will celebrate the release of its self-titled album on Saturday, April 25, at RIBCO (1815 Second Avenue in Rock Island) with Three Years Hollow and The Post Mortems.

For more information on In All Its Glory, visit MySpace.com/inallitsglorymusic .