

Cistern ALBUM REVIEW

Head Full of Questions

Cistern's debut album, Head Full of Questions, released in 2024, is best described as organized discord. The Squamish based four-piece's sound is fresh and inventive alternative rock that seamlessly blends awe and anguish into something beautiful.

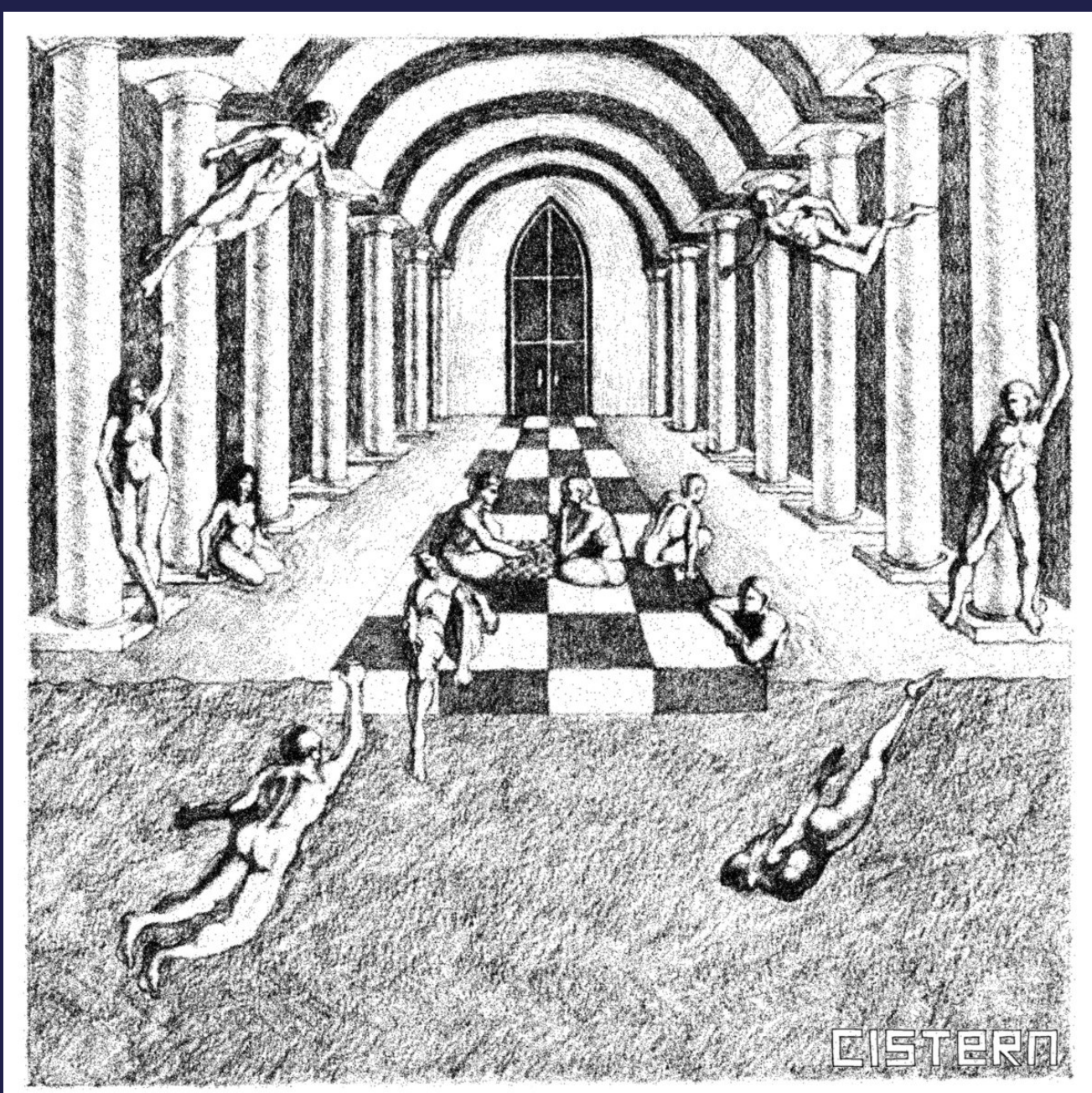
Tracklist:

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|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Saddle Up | 6. Fast but not Far |
| 2. Worry | 7. Cistern |
| 3. Glandilis | 8. Grandpa |
| 4. Take as Directed | 9. Sluster |
| 5. Martyr | |

"I worry all the time / Or not at all

And sometimes to a fault / Place your confidence

In my resolve" - Worry.



Head Full of Questions album cover, courtesy of Bandcamp

With less than a thousand followers on Instagram and their monthly listener stats on Spotify sitting at 1,858 a month, the band has obvious room for commercial growth. However, after listening to *Head Full of Questions*, it's clear the only work-in-progress aspect about the band is their popularity. The album features 9 tracks and is 35 minutes long, and is an inviting mix between off-kilter and accessible, and sits in a comfortable spot right on the border of strange.

“Saddle Up” opens the album with the strum of a guitar that sounds both right in your ear and very far away, both intense and apprehensive. The lyrics are spoken more than they are sung, and the bass is placed right at the forefront, right in your ears. “Worry” features instrumentals that perfectly convey the feeling of the title. The vocals are pulled back and almost muddled, the drums switching between rhythmic and sporadic.

“Glandilis” is pure angst and existential dread-filled lyrics over stimulating and a well-crafted symphony of bass, guitar, drums, and keys. The stop-and-go nature of the instrumental conveys a feeling of “stuckness” that perfectly matches the lyrics. “Take as Directed” immediately dives into the melancholy with the addition of horns that seem to blend and dance with the layered and harmonizing vocals. The majority of the track is spent drifting through instrumentals and crashing into drums when they appear. “Martyr” immediately switches it up with chant-like vocals and upbeat, fast-paced guitar work.



“Head Full of Questions” is Cistern staking their claim on their small corner of the music industry. Despite their newness as a band (formed in 2023) the four men clearly have a grasp on their sound, their aesthetic, and themselves. As far as debuts go, theirs is exceptionally strong.

“We’ll never fill these empty
walls
we’ll never fill these empty
seats
we’ll never touch the ceiling in
this place
we’ll never change the way that
we love” - Glandilis

“Fast but not Far” slows it down again with an opening guitar riff and dreamy, layered vocals that mix together to create the feeling of driving home late at night with only neon gas stations signs and streetlights to guide you. Dreamy and melancholic, soothing in a “this is the end of something” kind of way. “Cistern” brings back the horns, which are pulled so far to the edge of the production that they feel otherworldly, almost alien. A droning key and sluggish vocals guide you through the song while a jumpy guitar riff works to keep you in the moment.

“Grandpa” begins with steady percussion, rhythmic and soothing in its intensity. The song feels as though falling through water; slowly, but you know you’re going down. Lonely and isolated but intimate in its sentiment, the track tiptoes over despair into something more hopeful. “Sluster,” the closing track, has an inevitability to it, a slow descent into dread. The minute and a half instrumental intro of the four minute song makes you wait for the vocals to come in. The closing track grows in volume and intensity. The vocals having a sinking despair to them, matched well by the well-crafted and soothing instrumentals.