

Tool

Lateralus (Volcano/Jive)

★★★★

Tool proved their unrelenting force on both 1993's *Undertow* and 1996's Grammy-winning *Aenima*—*Lateralus* is just an extension of the drug they gave you earlier. Having come through legal bouts and lead vocalist Maynard James Keenan's stint with platinum-selling sensation A Perfect Circle, the band is back in full swing.

After "The Grudge," the first eight minutes, thirty four seconds of a decimating 74 minutes, the foundation is set and the album works into a short East Indian-like guitar solo ("Eon Blue Apocalypse"), which blends into "The Patient" and could almost pass a ballad. "The Patient" continues, with Maynard chorusing, "I'm gonna wait it out" softly over drummer Danny Carey's vicious climax, then strips down to Chinese gongs and a metallic guitar solo by Adam Jones.

With "Parabol," the last of three one-minute intros, and "Parabola," the band plays around with their "intro-song" format. "Parabol" progresses through a vast array of sound in which Keenan's voice dissipates into the background of flanged bass and monk-like "ohms." "Parabola" then begins with a loud, heavy, rhythmic pattern accented by ear-piercing guitar solos and chaos.

Then, just when you thought the "intros" were gone, the band brings "Parabol" back in for the last few seconds.

On "Ticks & Leeches," Tool reminds you that they're still obsessed with weight, bringing you down hard and heavy just when you thought the song was ending. Adding to the yin and

yang of Tool, Keenan's near-silent epilogues roll slowly between choruses and cycle into each other, fooling you into thinking the song is either ending or a completely separate track. Then the band blindsides you with roaring noise and Keenan piercingly screaming, "Suck me dry/Is this what you wanted?/Cause this is what you're getting/I hope, I hope...you choke," as if speaking directly to their money pinching lawyers.

With *Lateralus*, Tool shows us once again that in their music you can enjoy full excess, yet their restraint is extraordinary. Songs like "Schism," "Lateralus" and "Triad" give the mathematical side of music its dues, while "Ticks & Leeches," and the tabla rhythms of "Disposition" and "Reflection" show their diversity and strength. They have the imagination and power to immaculately produce utter noisy chaos, suddenly drop into nothing and blend in mellow rhythms, just to remind you who you are listening to.

— Dan Marek