

WEB EXCLUSIVE



RICK'S PICKS: ATLAS PLUG

written by Rick Damigella on Wednesday, February 23, 2005

At first glance, Atlas Plug's *2 Days or Die* looks just like a video game soundtrack album. From the tentacle-headed alien cover art to the songs themselves. Any of these tracks would feel right at home in a game (actually a couple of them are in games) and for good reason, since the artist behind Atlas Plug is no stranger to the game music world.

Atlas Plug is the nom de guerre for composer [Tom Salta](#). On this debut release for Atlas Plug, Salta has put together ten tracks that demonstrate his ability in combining electronica, rock, hip hop and orchestral themes into an extremely listenable album.

If you are not familiar with Salta, here is a quick primer. He has composed music for TV shows and commercial themes, movies, game soundtracks and major music artists, including Peter Gabriel. A sampling of his game music contributions include *Ghost Recon 2* (co-composer of the theme), *Get on Da Mic*, *Sprung*, and scoring the cinematic sequences for *Need for Speed Underground 2*.

Recommended If You Like...

It goes without saying, though I am anyway, that if you are a game music aficionado, this album will instantly appeal to you. Need something new to listen to during one of your games that lets you customize the soundtrack? Atlas Plug is it. Need something new to listen to while playing any other game that doesn't let you customize the soundtrack? Shut off the in game music and put this on the stereo.

There is always an inherent danger in drawing comparisons between artists, but this is sometimes necessary when trying to familiarize an audience with a "new" artist. Saying that, *2 Days or Die* should be on the must-have list for fans of bands like the Crystal Method, Chemical Brothers and anyone who likes their orchestral electronica fused with elements of rock.

From the orchestral big beats of "Truth Be Known" and to the metal-meets-techno-meets-preacher-shouts-to-the-faithful of the title track, this album delivers on multiple levels. The comparison to the Crystal Method will be immediately noticeable to those who hear the lead off track, "Halfway Till Bliss" and its "Busy Child"-esque synth sounds.

There's a reason Salta's music has appeared in multiple driving games. It works really well as a behind-the-wheel soundtrack. My first spin of Atlas Plug was while driving. I tracked through the album while never hitting the advance button once. The album was literally that engaging. (Just be careful with that accelerator.)

As I've said before, it's time for another DJ challenge. Digital jocks who aren't afraid to spin something from CD should really consider plugging in some of the tracks from *2 Days or Die* to help add a unique groove to their next set.

Track by Track

"Halfway Till Bliss" A barn-burner of an opening number which had me immediately hooked. The aforementioned Crystal Method-style hooks are just one of the multiple layers of this amazing track.

"The Ace, The Only" Rock-tronica fused with hip-hop vocal lines and Salta's signature orchestral sounds.

"2 Days or Die" The title track of the album was also the opening cinematic theme for Microsoft's Xbox racer, *Rallisport Challenge 2*. The big beats, metal guitar, techno themes and calls of "somebody shout amen!" from the track's preacher voice combine into another frenetically paced piece.

"Rule the World" More big beats with a megalomaniacal sci-fi villain's voice punctuated throughout. This track is featured in Namco's *Street Racing Syndicate*.

"Get Rolled On" Easily one of the best examples of trip-hop performed at its best. This is the most vocal-laden track on the disc.

"Truth Be Known" One of the most orchestronica-sounding pieces. Even more sonic variety here, starting from a languid mellow mood, shifting into a military-game-sounding orchestral moment, then to a frantic techno-meets-Middle Eastern melody eventually combining all of these elements equally.

"Crimson Phoenix" A very similar track to the previous in terms of relying heavily on orchestral sounds. Again, would be right at home in a squad-based shooter or full-scale futuristic military blow 'em up.

"Winds of Sand" Why is it that Middle Eastern musical themes blend so well with electronica? Whatever reason that is, if Arabic chants and strings beneath a throbbing beat and pulsing synths appeal to you, this will be another enjoyable track.

"Steel Run" A mid-tempo number that shifts between mellow and all-out techno bursts. It also uses a nice juxtaposition of both female Arabic chanting and old-school robotized speech as its vocals.

"Infiltrate This" The most laid-back cut closes out the album. Will someone please roll the opening credits to any as-yet-to-be released spy-themed stealth action game here please? Oh shoot! Sorry, didn't mean to step on you Mr. Solid Snake, sir. Or was that you, Sam Fisher? Hard to tell in that camo.

On Further Listening

Atlas Plug's *2 Days or Die* isn't a game soundtrack in and of itself (save for the pair of tracks mentioned above). But while it plays like it could be one, at the same time it doesn't sound like game music, proving the versatility of Tom Salta as a composer. You can sample all the tracks on the [Atlas Plug website](#) and also get your own copy of *2 Days or Die* on disc or as an iTunes download. Whether you are driving in the real world or on the rules-free roads of your favorite game, or if you just enjoy adventurous themes in electronic music, I can't recommend this more. It's a must-listen.

RICK'S PICKS

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