



## AT WAR WITH SELF

Choose a Release

"Acts of God" (Sluggo's Goon Music; 2007)



Reviewed by Christopher J. Kelter



I was introduced to Glenn Snelwar via the debut Gordian Knot CD and became further familiar with Snelwar's guitar and musical exploits via his own At War with Self project. There is no need to repeat that history here, but it is nice to say that in the span of two CDs over a couple of years I identified Glenn Snelwar the artist as an intriguing musical force.

Glenn Snelwar remains the center of the At War with Self project. However, this time around, as with the At War with Self's second disc "Acts of God," Snelwar has recruited an old friend and musical foil Damon Trotta to be the main collaborator on this version of At War with Self. Obviously, the prospect of an emerging artist building and expanding on their artistry must be daunting. However, with "Acts of God" Glenn Snelwar shows the world that he is fearless.

The first two-thirds of the opening title track "Acts of God" features lovely acoustic guitar before drastically turning ominous as an intro to the Arabian-styled melody that informs the beginning of the next track "911" – and it is disturbing. This particular pairing of songs is no doubt the intent of the artist as the events of 9/11 clearly were no 'act of God.' "Martyr" begins with cinematic-styled washes of sound before slowly drawing the listener in to an acoustic driven melody that expands into a bass-driven progressive masterpiece. However, "Martyr" bleeds its way into a quasi-industrialized ending and results in a disconcerting echo of the finality of a man's choice to die for whatever he believes in.

I freely admit the prospect of vocals being added to At War with Self was not a stimulating nor thrilling idea at the time I was made aware of it. However, I was able to reasonably assure myself that the vocals were not going to be "pop" in nature which would be an extreme departure from the modus operandi of At War with Self. Additionally, I'm always looking for real emotion in the songs that I listen to and admire. The vocals that have been added to the At War with Self sound on "Acts of God" go a long way to a new emotional perspective to the band's music. Tracks like "No Place" and "Ursa Minor" exhibit the kind of emotion that elicits feelings no one wants to feel unless the conditions creating those emotional responses are forced.

The vocal impact is immediate as the third (and, by the way, promotional) track "Threads" maintains a sense of 'catchiness' while forging forward with staunch progressiveness and unique independence. The vocals on "End in Blue" are very Peter Gabriel-like; and this is very cool as I've recently had a new found appreciation for Peter Gabriel's voice and music, particularly outside of the "hits" that he is known for.

With "Acts of God" Snelwar and his musical companions are brave and ferocious. The results can be heard in the manner in which the songs each have their own identity; or, in some cases, multiple identities within each song. Snelwar and his contributors stretch the songs to the near breaking point. Yet, somehow "Acts of God" seems like a complete work and indeed, it is music without boundaries.

"Acts of God" is not a clone of "Torn Between Dimensions" – and for this I am thankful. "Acts of God" is the sound of an artist stretching his artistry to new and uncharted realms, forging headfirst into progression, reconnecting with a musical companion, and leaving the results for all to see.

"Acts of God" was produced by Glenn Snelwar and Damon Trotta.

At War with Self is Glen Snelwar on acoustic and electric guitars, mandolin, E-bow, synths, string arrangements, and programming; Damon Trotta on bass guitar, vocals, synths, resonator guitar, E-bow, Dideridoo, and programming; Mark Sunshine on vocals; Steve Decker on drums; James von Buelow on guitars and programming; Manfred Dikkers on drums; and Dave Archer on synths.

For more information visit <http://www.glennsnelwar.com>.

## "Torn Between Dimensions" (Laser's Edge / Free Electric Sound; 2005)

[CLICK HERE To Buy It!](#) 

Reviewed by Christopher J. Kelter



When reviewing Gordian Knot's debut self-titled CD I was familiar with all of the contributing musicians save for one – that one musician was Glen Snelwar. "Who the hell is Glen Snelwar?" I thought to myself. Even after reviewing the CD I knew very little about the guy except that he fit right in with the stellar cast of players contributing to Gordian Knot. Needless to say, I was convinced through Snelwar's limited contributions that his musical abilities were top notch.

And then I seemed to hear very little about him or his music projects. Finally, word got out that his At War With Self project with Michael Manring (Attention Deficit) and Mark Zonder (ex-Fates Warning) was coming to fruition. The project is titled "Torn Between Dimensions" and is billed as a collaborative effort - but my guess is that Snelwar is the main force for At With Self – and the songwriting credits bear me out on that observation.

The album is carefully crafted progressive rock that incorporates elements of technical metal and fusion. Musically the album is strongly rooted in a progressive mindset that favors mood and atmosphere over flashy brilliance for its own sake. While most of the songs are squarely prog-rock and fusion/jazz there are a number of tracks that stretch into technical metal areas.

As I understand it, the album I supposed be 'conceptual' in nature although the lack of lyrics and vocals makes that hard to hear upon the first few listens. Repeated exposures to the sonic diversity and varied textures makes you realize At War With Self isn't something that was just thrown together for fun. The music, while progressive in nature, never forgets that musical direction and concise ideas rule the day. The music seems to fit the artwork in that a man's internal mental struggles can create the kind of tension that is rather debilitating.

Glen Snelwar proves himself to be an accomplished guitarist, musician, and songwriter with "Torn Between Dimensions." Snelwar shows considerable constraint as he clearly views the songs, rather than his own playing skills, as the primary reason for the album. After hearing Attention Deficit's debut way back in the day, I wasn't particularly enamored with Michael Manring's bass playing, but "Torn Between Dimensions" presents Manring in a far more positive light as his bass playing seems a lot warmer. And what can be said about Mark Zonder that hasn't already been said? Zonder is widely recognized as a phenomenal drummer and his efforts within At War With Self will help people understand why his creative energies are better off at this point in his career in projects like this rather than Fates Warning.

"Torn Between Dimensions" was produced by At War With Self with Ken Golden.

Glenn Snelwar plays electric and acoustic guitars, mandolin, e-bow, keyboards, and string section programming. Snelwar is joined by Michael Manring on fretless bass and e-bow, and Mark Zonder on drums

and percussion.

For more information visit <http://www.glennsnelwar.com/>.

"Torn Between Dimensions" (Laser's Edge / Free Electric Sound; 2005)

[CLICK HERE To Buy It!](#)

Reviewed by Snidermann



Bands that focus on instrumental music have a greater challenge of releasing and recording music that will be accepted by the general public. Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of crappy singers in music today, but at least they get the band's point across verbally.

The music on At War With Self's "Torn Between Dimensions" just never caught my attention and I found myself never really getting caught up in the experience. The music was progressive rock'n'roll with the usual instruments including a lot of keyboards mixed in, but the jazzy, sleepy overall picture was just not my cup of tea.

Glenn Snelwar plays electric and acoustic guitars, mandolin, e-bow, keyboards, and string section programming. Snelwar is joined by Michael Manning on fretless bass and e-bow, and Mark Zonder on drums and percussion.

For more information visit <http://www.glennsnelwar.com/>.

## Rating Guide:



A classic. This record will kick your ass.



Killer. Not a classic but it will rock your world.



So-so. You've heard better.



Pretty bad. Might make a nice coaster.



Self explanatory. Just the sight of the cover makes you wanna hurl.

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