

You know you're in for serious chops when the booklet devotes a page to each band member posed unsmilingly with his gear list. (And do they have a lot of hardware – especially keyboardist Dan Pluta and guitarist Peter Rubinetti, whose leads blaze most of the trails on these eight meaty instrumentals.)

Carpe Nota is Latin for “seize the note”, which this new Pennsylvania foursome – including percussionist Phil Derenbecher and bassist Ken Sundling – does with gusto, many times over. Thankfully, the guys bring melody and a compositional focus to the proceedings, which tread familiar symphonic-rock territory incorporating touches of fusion and classical. Yes, they indulgently shred and wail along the way: with six pieces from about nine to eleven minutes that's expected. What matters is whether they're worthy, and Carpe Nota definitely rocks with requisite skill.

Lengthy opener “Thoracic Park” lays it all on the table, propelled by heady shifts in both meter and mood while closer “For All Time” moves episodically, like a mini-suite. Everything in between easily should keep you awake during the long ride home down Route 95.

-John Collinge
Editor/Progression magazine