

Dipiazza's Long Beach, CA

Contact: band@neverwonder.com

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Players: Fabienne Grisel, vocals, acoustic guitar; Jay Wise, guitar; Andres Ramos, drums; Vincent Ramos, bass

Material: It's an odd name, Neverwonder, and yet it's oddly appropriate because you never have to wonder what this Los Angeles-based band is about. The brainchild of the two brothers who make up the rhythm section, guitarist Wise and Swiss vocalist Grisel are fairly recent additions but it feels like they've been in the group for years. From the moment the band strikes the opening notes and beats to the opening song, it's clear that this is a talented and tight hard rock/metal unit. Songs such as "Spell" (which Grisel tells us is the first song this foursome wrote together) and the glam fun of "Movin' On" have a driving rock vibe that, combined with Grisel's powerful vocals, offer a sound that sits somewhere in the middle of Heart, Fleetwood Mac and Doro.

Musicianship: No complaints here. The fact that the rhythm section is composed of siblings translates to a solid spine for the other two to work off of. Wise has proven to be a thrilling addition—his buzzsaw intro to the aforementioned "Movin' On" recalls the decadent and delicious Sunset Strip of the '80s while, elsewhere, he proves to be more than adequate at the art of the riff. And then there's



Grisel, who has a classically trained voice, with a Stevie Nicks/Pat Benatar thing going on. Not only that, but on the power ballad "Fortress," she proves to be an excellent acoustic guitarist, adding a whole other dimension to the sound.

Performance: While Andres Ramos puts every bit of his energy into his drumming, and his brother and Wise pull out some impressive rock guitar poses and facial expressions, the performance aspect of this show is really all about Grisel, who starts the night in a Stevie Nicks-esque dress (to hammer home the influence). Whether she's pacing the stage

and staring down everyone in attendance while belting out the tunes, or strumming the acoustic guitar, she's a charismatic and gifted frontwoman.

Summary: Dipiazza's in Long Beach is a fun place to watch a show. The pizza restaurant-turned rock bar is always lively, the crowd baying for quality rock & roll. If Neverwonder are to progress to headlining venues bigger than this, they'll likely need some songs that are more memorable. But for now, they're building a fanbase, they're having a blast, and they're getting better all the time. — **Brett Callwood**



Sonia Cambridge, MA

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Players: Jojo Mayer, drums; John Davis, bass; Jacob Bergson, keyboards; Aaron Nevezie, sound and processing

Material: To say Swiss-born Jojo Mayer was born to play the drums isn't just hyperbole—his mother proclaims he was kicking to

the rhythm while still in utero. After hitting the skins at age two, he started touring at 18, backing masters like Nina Simone and Dizzy Gillespie. After later logging stints with Intergalactic Maiden Ballet and Screaming Headless Torsos, he formed Nerve in '97 and they've been freaking audiences ever since. A drum 'n bass by way of jazz trio, their instrumental tapestry spirits listeners upon a trans-dimensional journey they're unlikely to forget.

Musicianship: What else can be stated regarding someone who Modern Drummer magazine named one of the instrument's 50 greatest? Mayer's inventive licks, combined with his speed and delectable feel, bend minds. Bassist John Davis lays down a bed of soul-hugging fuzz that acts as the ideal backdrop to Mayer's virtuoso skinsmanship. Layering this are Jacob Bergson's keyboards and Aaron Nevezie's prismatic gamma rays, suffusing their dub fusion motif with a welcome dash of electronica exotica.

Performance: Musical purists, Nerve allow their sound to speak for itself, jamming for 50 minutes before offering player introductions and a brief soliloquy regarding the nature of their creative process, then plainly rounding out the rest of their hour and a half set. A lone, albeit classy, logo adorns Mayer's kit. This lack of extraneous elements could be perceived as a weakness, but in the case of Nerve it underscores the seriousness of their artistic intentions.

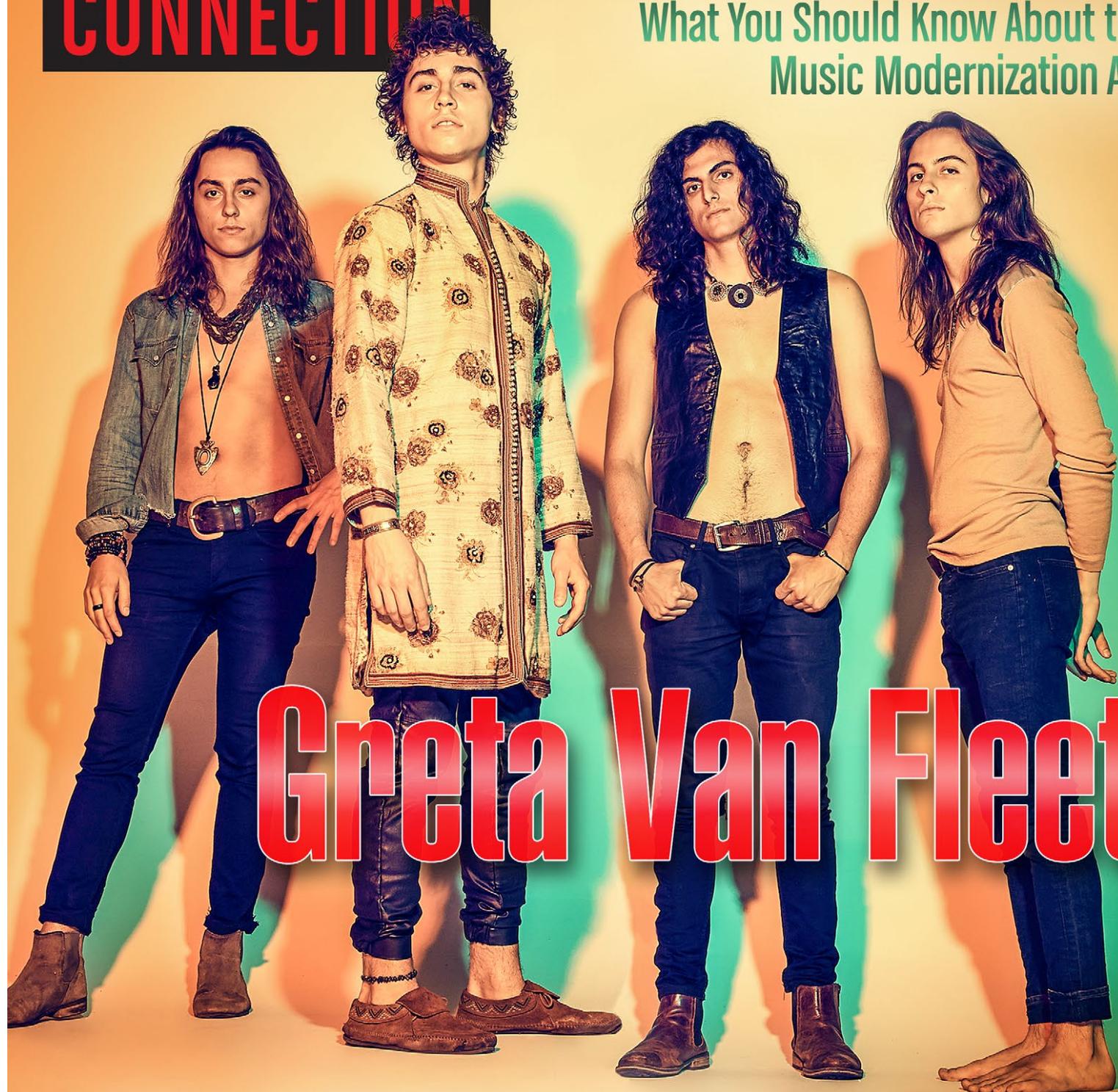
Summary: Nerve is about shattering musical boundaries, unapologetically traipsing through a multitude of interconnected genres—jungle, glitch, dub step, rock and jazz—to formulate something altogether fresh. The end product is pure exhilaration. The sole downside is that they seemingly eschew any focus upon commercial viability. This isn't to say they haven't already achieved notoriety, having appeared on the cover of Drum! as well as Mayer's overall recognition as a notable influencer. What's absent is the wider acknowledgement and financial deserts Mayer and his cohorts unquestionably deserve.

— **Andy Kaufmann**

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